



VIP TRANSCRIPT SERIES

INTERVIEW WITH DR. KAREN DAVIS



Dr. Karen Davis, founder and president of United Poultry Concerns, is a tireless author and lecturer dedicated to advocating for vegan living. She has helped organize ten annual conferences on animal advocacy issues and her book, *Prisoned Chickens, Poisoned Eggs*, has been recognized for its “brilliant” contribution by the American Library Association.

IF YOU GIVE A CLUCK, GO VEGAN!

STEVE PRUSSACK: Hello and welcome to Veganpalooza 2013. I'm your co-host Steve Prussack. It's great to be with you, and we're really excited about our next guest. It's Dr. Karen Davis and her session titled "If You Give a Cluck, Go Vegan". To join me in the interview, let's welcome to the call our co-host and co-producer Dr. Will Tuttle.

DR. WILL TUTTLE: Thank you so much, Steve. I'm delighted to have with us Dr. Karen Davis. She is the founder and president of United Poultry Concerns, a non-profit organization that promotes the compassionate and respectful treatment of chickens and other domestic fowl, including a vegan diet and lifestyle, and a sanctuary for chickens in Virginia. Karen is the author of quite a few books: *Prisoned Chickens, Poisoned Eggs*; *More than a Meal: The Turkey in History, Myth, Ritual, and Reality*; *The Holocaust and the Henmaid's Tale*; *A Home for Henny*, and *Instead of Chicken, Instead of Turkey, A Poultryless "Poultry" Potpourri*. Karen was elected to the U.S. Animal Rights Hall of Fame in 2002 for Outstanding Contributions to Animal Liberation. She has been a tireless worker. I've known her for many years and admired for many years the work that she's been doing. Welcome to Veganpalooza, Karen. Great to have you with us.

DR. KAREN DAVIS: Thank you very much, Will and Steve. I'm delighted to be on the program today.

DR. TUTTLE: We are so glad to have you with us because you have a perspective that not only spans decades but is very focused specifically on chickens and other fowl. Could you please give our listeners some of your insights about why especially chickens but other domestic fowl are so much in need of our concern and protection today?

DR. DAVIS: Absolutely. Several things. One is that traditionally birds have been considered to be somehow intellectually or cognitively inferior to mammals. That tradition has been completely discredited by science, and those of us who live with these birds and spend long periods of the day with them and have done so for years know that chickens and other birds are very intelligent birds. I had a parrot for 24 years, and I certainly learned about the intelligence of birds from my parrot Pecan. But still in the mainstream, there is a perception among many people that birds are somehow less than mammals.

So this particularly affects chickens, as well as turkeys and other birds that people consider to be a food source. Most people in the animal advocacy movement are aware of the fact that chickens are the largest number of land animals being raised and slaughtered for food each year in the United States. Roughly nine billion out of ten billion land animals who are being slaughtered are chickens, and something like 285,000 turkeys and 25 million ducks, and many, many quails and pheasants and other birds who aren't even counted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. So we're looking at two big things. One is that people have this misperception about birds, which has no basis in reality, that we need to challenge and change, and then the fact that birds are the largest number of animals going through the horrible food-producing systems that people then view as nothing but food.

Then there's also a third component, which is that birds are actually, chickens and other birds, are extremely interesting living beings. They're wonderful to be around. They're very alert, and a chicken yard is full of little dramas all day and all kinds of socialization and things that many people are not aware happen among chickens. For one thing, they never see them in a green world, which chickens came from originally since they're tropical forest dwellers by habitat and through their evolution. One of the things that's wonderful about our sanctuary is that people get to see the birds in the trees, sitting under the trees, and in tree branches, enjoying a world that is more like the forest world that is in their genetic makeup and from which they derived.

So there are all kinds of reasons to focus upon the plight of domestic fowl. Certainly when I became involved in the animal rights movement in the 1980s and started learning about the plight of farmed animals, I was quickly made aware of the fact that chickens were far and away the largest numbers, and continue to be the largest numbers, of animals going through a horrible treatment and terrible deaths for human consumption. Their numbers are exceeded only by the number of aquatic animals.

DR. TUTTLE: I know a lot of people think they're doing something good when they give up red meat. Can you say something about that?

DR. DAVIS: One of the sad things about that, among others, is that when people decide to eat less or no red meat, no mammals, and instead switch to birds and fish, they cause many more animals to suffer and die for them because many more small animals have to be raised and killed in order to provide the same amount of animal flesh. For example, if you go into a supermarket and you see three chicken breasts in a cellophane package, as appears everywhere now, or you see a bucket of chicken wings, how many birds are we looking at there? In one case we're looking at at least three dead birds, and in the case of the wings, what we're looking at depends on the size of the bucket. So we're looking at so many birds. Of course, I could say the same thing about fish. The numbers are just beyond imagination.

There's also the fact that if you want to look at the matter from a strictly food point of view, chicken flesh has the same amount of cholesterol as red meat, so there's no real improvement from that standpoint, from a health standpoint. The majority of birds that people are eating are raised in such completely filthy conditions, and they're so filled with all kinds of salmonella and campylobacter and other disease organisms that make people sick all the time, even if they don't report it or think it's just from another cause, that really there is just no basis at all for believing that people are making a healthier food choice when they switch from red meat to eating chicken.

DR. TUTTLE: Can you tell our listeners briefly about what are the specific abuses that chickens go through, both for eggs and so-called broilers that are used for meat? What's the life cycle of one of these animals?

DR. DAVIS: There are two specific types of chickens, although they're essentially chickens inside, but two types of chickens have been bred for the modern industrial poultry and egg industry. The very large white chickens known as broiler chickens, they've been bred to be very large and to grow very, very fast. Then the very small white birds, as well as some brown birds, who have been bred specifically for the egg industry and even more specifically to be kept in cages for their entire lives.

Many people in our movement, in the animal advocacy movement and increasingly in the mainstream, are aware that the majority of eggs come from hens who live in little wire cages their entire lives. That's their life. They are not only in a cage, but they are in a building that is filled with nothing but cages from the floor to the six or seven tiers high. Their life is horrible, and again, I always remind people that chickens have wings, they have legs, they have claws, their whole anatomy and neurophysiology is designed for them to forage a great deal of the day, to be scratching in the ground and running around and being active. So suddenly they are completely immobilized and not permitted to be active at all in these cages.

Before they go into the cage, they are debeaked as soon as they're born in a hatchery. The debeaking process is totally traumatic to these birds. It isn't only chickens, but turkeys go through this, ducks are debilled, birds who are used in intensive confinement. Even these so-called alternative farming methods or conditions, still, if they're going to be used for eggs, they are usually debeaked. So the debeaking is extremely painful to the bird because a beak has nerve endings to the very end of the beak, even from the time that the bird is an embryo. Then it also prevents chickens and turkeys from being able to preen their feathers properly because they can't get a grip on anything.

So they start out as soon as they're born being completely traumatized. Of course, they never have any experience of having a mother or a father, as they would have in nature. They're hatched in huge incubators, totally mechanized. Then they're raised in cages to the age when they will go into what they call the laying cages. They'll live in the cages for about 18 months or so. They may be starved once or twice in the practice called forced molting to regulate the production of eggs, which I don't know I have time to go into so I'll skip that right now, but just suffice to say it's an industry practice of starving the birds as an economic profit-making measure.

DR. TUTTLE: To force them to give more eggs, basically.

DR. DAVIS: Yeah. It's just that most people don't really understand how you can starve birds and still get more eggs, so I could explain that, it's just that it's complicated. But essentially, the industry will argue it is cheaper for them to recycle existing flocks of birds than to keep raising new young birds, who they have to feed for five and a half or six months without their being what the industry calls "productive". That's not economical from the industry point of view.

But I want to get to the chickens who are raised for meat because when I say that nine billion out of ten billion animals being raised and slaughtered for food in the United States are chickens, I'm talking about the chickens who are bred and raised for meat production. We happen to be based on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, which is one of the largest chicken-producing areas in the country, not for the eggs but for the meat industry. At any given time in Maryland, Delaware, and Virginia, there are a half a billion baby chickens sitting in dark, filthy, totally polluted housing. These long, low houses, if you drive by them, you would have no idea that they were filled with many thousands, 20, 30, or even 50 thousand baby birds. All of these baby broiler chickens are slaughtered as chicks, even though they're huge. That is at the age of about six weeks old, or five and a half or six and a half, but essentially 42 days old. They're little baby birds with peeping voices and baby blue eyes.

But just to explain, they are not raised in cages. Many times I see an activist or somebody saying something like, "95% of the chickens raised in the United States are raised in cages." This is not true at all. 95% are the chickens raised for meat, called broiler chickens – they are the baby birds – are not in cages. They are raised on 500-foot-long floors that are mainly made of excrement because the wood chips and shavings and things quickly are soaked with excrement. The birds are sitting in excrement, which turns into a burning ammonia gas, which they're sitting in and which they're breathing. These houses are so filthy and so polluted that there's no way really to describe them. I've been in many of these houses, and the filth is just amazing. These are baby birds.

They're sitting there in all this filth, and because they're forced to grow so large in such a short amount of time, they have all kinds of intestinal problems, just every kind of illness that you can imagine inside their bodies. One of these problems that they suffer from is their skeletal system, their legs, cannot support the body weight. So most of the birds people eat are going to slaughter in extreme pain and lame. These birds are also filled with fluids of various kinds that build up in their bodies. Many, many millions every year have heart attacks in their infancy. Since we've taken in hundreds of birds into our sanctuary over the years, I've seen many of these chickens just go into a heart attack well before they're a year old.

Everything I'm saying about chickens applies to turkeys as well. Turkeys have been bred to grow to this huge size in a short amount of time. They're being slaughtered at three to four months old, when they're basically just coming out of babyhood. They too are very susceptible to heart attacks in their infancy. They too become extremely lame at an early age, and they are in great pain, the way a person who is extremely overweight develops osteoarthritis. In fact, that's one of the diseases that these baby birds actually suffer from.

I do want to say a word quickly too about the slaughter process because the birds represent the largest number of animals being raised and slaughtered in the United States, and roughly 50 billion, conservatively speaking, worldwide at this point, and the numbers are growing. But even though birds represent the largest number of land animals being slaughtered in the United States, they are not covered by the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act. They are excluded. Efforts which we have been involved in and others to include these birds in the act –which wouldn't protect them anyway, but at least they would have some status as opposed to none – they are not covered by the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act of 1958.

What happens to them when they go into the slaughter plants is they are hung upside down on a moving conveyer belt, and their heads and faces and shoulders are dragged through cold, salted, electrified water. It's called an electrified water bath stun cabinet. The thing is they are not stunned or intended to be stunned by the electricity. They are only intended to be paralyzed. So even before they have their throats cut, they are enduring the total agony of electric shocks going through their eyeballs and their eardrums and their hearts. This is what we are doing to these birds prior to their being slaughtered per se, simply so that their feathers will come out more easily after they're dead because being paralyzed leads to this, again, this economic efficiency.

DR. TUTTLE: So being paralyzed does not mean that they're insensible to pain.

DR. DAVIS: Just the opposite. They're filled with a pain that I think we can't even imagine except to think about how if you even shocked your little finger, what a horrible feeling that is. Imagine electric shocks going through your entire body, and just think about how all of the reports of when they're actually trying to electrocute somebody on death row, all of the terrible, terrible torture that has been visited upon one single human being who is intended to be electrocuted, that is, killed by the electricity. But in the case of chickens and turkeys and ducks and other birds going through the slaughter process, they are not intended to be killed by the electricity. They are only intended to be immobilized, so they are fully conscious with the experience of the agonizing electric shocks even before their throats are cut.

After their throats are cut, they are not intended to be dead yet either. They're supposed to hang upside down for 90 seconds while they bleed out, while their hearts pump blood, before they go into the scald tank, that is, the scalding water tank. Many millions of chickens and turkeys and ducks are scalded alive every year. That's because dead or alive, they throw them all in at the same time. There's really no way that we can begin to exaggerate the total misery that we are putting birds through merely to eat their bodies, to have them as a source of food that we don't need at all and that we would be better without from a nutritional, a health, and certainly from a moral and spiritual health standpoint.

DR. TUTTLE: Thank you for really letting us know the basic outlines of the system. I think it's very important to understand, too, that when you say nine billion of the ten billion animals that we kill and eat for food, that nine billion, that's the number that are slaughtered. That doesn't even include the hundreds of millions of animals you're talking about that just die of heart attacks before they ever get there, that die inside these terrible hellholes, or that die when their beaks are chopped off. A lot of them die right on the spot.

DR. DAVIS: Many, many million, maybe billion, die before they even get to the slaughter plant. Actually, those birds are the more fortunate ones. The sooner they die after they're born, the better because they have nothing but misery for their whole life.

DR. TUTTLE: When people hear that, of course, as you know and I'm sure a lot of our listeners know, when we speak to other people, they say, "That's not me. I buy from a package that says cage-free or free-range," either the meat of the animal or the eggs are coming from something that's supposed to be

humane. It would be helpful if you could address this issue on both levels: the humanely-raised things that you would buy in stores, and then the backyard farming-type humane things where people are doing it themselves or in that way, because there are millions of animals suffering in this way also.

DR. DAVIS: Will, you're 100% correct. This new phenomenon of alternative farms and going back to the old-fashioned family farm and backyard chicken-keeping and all of that, and sometimes people are now wanting to keep goats and expand the number of animals they're going to have on their rooftops or in their yards or whatever. Regarding hens raised or kept for egg production who are not literally in battery cages, if they are labeled as cage-free, what this means is that they are totally confined wall to wall, each hen having about one square foot of living space for herself for her entire life. I've been in many of these places. A lot of these cage-free operations also build platforms above the floor. The reason for that isn't for the well-being of the bird so that they can perch, which chickens need to do, but in these cases what they're trying to do is increase the number of birds they can keep in the volume of space. So if you not only have the entire floor filled with hens used for egg production but you also create platforms, then you can add even more hens to that volume of space.

One of the things that happens is the hens who are basically stuck on the platforms, when they do want to try to jump down to the floor, they try to assess where they can jump, and they can't find any place because it's just a sea of birds below them. So many birds end up with broken bones because they don't land correctly. So they end up landing in a way that causes their bones to break. There's also the fact that when they are kept in these extremely crowded conditions called cage-free, the same as with caged hens, they're not getting the exercise they need. Whether it's human beings or chickens or whatever animal it may be, when bones are not exercised, they become brittle or they become soft or both. So that adds to the predisposition to bone breakage by these birds. So cage-free means okay, the birds are not literally in cages, but they are totally confined and they never go outside.

If hens raised for egg production, or the chickens and turkeys kept for meat production, are called free-range, it really depends. They're supposed to have what's called certified outdoor access, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, meaning that there should be some kind of an opening that at least theoretically would allow them to get outside the enclosure for some part of the day. But one of the things we're seeing is that not only are the birds very crowded in these types of operations, these so-called poultry operations, although they're considered alternative to the standard ones, really they're not alternatives. The birds are still crowded. If they can get outside, it's usually just the birds who are very close to the little opening. Then the outdoors often isn't very appealing to them because often it's just a mud yard and there's nothing really there, and often there is no foliage or anything for them to go under. As I mentioned earlier, chickens come from the forest. They don't want to be in just a wide open space without any place to run under if they want or if they need to.

So then there is the fact that the U.S. Department of Agriculture, in collusion with these alternative farmers called organic and free-range and whatnot, have done everything they can to try to allow the farmers to not let their birds outside because the farmers want what is easiest for them as the farmer, rather than what is best for the chicken or the turkey. So what the U.S. Department of Agriculture and these producers or farmers will do is they'll say, "If we let these birds outside, then if a wild bird flies overhead and the dropping has an avian flu virus in it, that could make our flocks sick, so we should keep them inside." They're always looking for excuses to not let the birds outside. I have had plenty of experience going into a lot of these places, and I know Peter Singer and Jim Mason wrote a book a couple of years ago in which they described their visit to one of these so-called free-range organic operations, and they saw and heard the same thing that I have heard and seen here in Virginia. All these excuses to not let the birds go outside.

There's no such thing as a humane animal farming. The two terms don't go together. First of all, even if people see a sort of happy scene if they go to visit a relatively small farm with green grass and a few chickens are running around and few pigs and maybe turkeys and ducks are around, people don't see the back story. They don't see all the culling, the killing of animals, birds, and other animals that goes on routinely if the birds are considered to be not productive, if they're not growing fast enough or they're not laying enough eggs or they're not producing enough milk or whatever it is. Farming is about getting rid of everybody who is not considered productive. So this isn't just factory farming. This is just standard, ancient farming practice. Why should farmers feed animals when it's going to cost them more to feed them than they're going to extract from them?

Then there's the fact that many of these animals are going to be trucked in a totally inhumane way to a slaughter plant, or if they're birds, they're more likely in many cases to be slaughtered on the farm site. Well, many people are mistakenly under the impression that you can have humane slaughter. But as I've explained over and over in writing and in presentations, the neurophysiology of the chicken is virtually identical with that of the human being, meaning that the skin and the throat and the trachea and that whole area where you would put a knife through is filled with pain receptors and many other types of nerve endings. So the idea that you can put a knife through the skin and throat of a chicken or any other animal and have it be humane is simply a falsehood. There's no such thing as humane slaughter.

Then if we hear that the farmer is using what we call a handheld stunner or something, truthfully, if I were going to be slaughtered, I would prefer to be slaughtered rather than have the so-called handheld stunner applied to me first because electricity is as cruel and mean a thing as you can apply to a living, sentient being, whoever they are. These farmers often let their kids use these handheld stunners. They don't even know what they're doing. Again, it's so cruel that, getting back to whether there can be humane slaughter of birds – I'll just confine myself to birds right now – anybody who has seen *Food Inc.*, for example, saw how callous and cavalier Joel Salatin of Polyface Farm here in Virginia is toward the chickens. He's even bragged that chickens and other animals don't have souls, that only humans have souls, that chickens don't suffer. The attitude as well as the treatment of the animals is so brutal and so cruel that it is no different at all from the attitudes that prevail among Perdue chicken farmers or any other industrial chicken farmers.

The other thing I'd point out to people is that it isn't that big corporations took over the sort of Hallmark card small family farm and distorted these small benign farms into these big corporate enterprises. Factory farming was developed by ordinary farmers. Farmers developed debeaking. They started out using soldering irons in places like San Diego County, California. Here on the Eastern Shore, which is considered the birthplace of the broiler chicken industry – Georgetown, Delaware, specifically – they began the broiler chicken industry as a small farm enterprise. A woman named Celia Steele in Georgetown, Delaware, an ordinary farmer, and her husband are credited as the sort of archetypal or ur-beginners of the whole broiler chicken industry. Perdue himself came from a family of chicken farmers, particularly eggs at the time. Arthur Perdue, the father of Frank Perdue, was an ordinary farmer. They debeaked their birds, they started raising them indoors, they started crowding them, they started, they created factory farming. That's my point. Factory farming did not start on Wall Street. It started on the regular farm. So factory farming is just an extension of the practices and the attitudes that go back to time immemorial. It has been traditional for farmers in England, the U.S., or wherever to crowd birds, for example, and other animals, particularly right before slaughter because when you crowd them and they can't move, that makes their flesh softer. Or to raise them in the dark, or to nail their feet to the ground in the case of geese or ducks and keep them in the dark.

There are all kinds of practices which, when you become familiar with the history of animal farming, you discover is a history of just extreme excruciating cruelty. One of the things that the English aristocrats

liked to do in the 18th century was to light a fire and then slowly cook to death a goose or a chicken or a duck, slowly, in front of the fire. I think all of us have probably read that famous essay called “Dissertation on a Roast Pig” about beating a live pig so that their flesh would be softer. There was even a time in England when you were required to bait bulls in order to make their flesh softer, with dogs. So there’s just no place to go if we’re talking about going backward. This idea of resuscitating the good old days is just crap. There was nothing good back then, and it just led to what we have now, so that alone tells you how bad it was then because it led to what we have now.

STEVE: It’s sometimes hard to give an interview and not feel the emotional impact as an interviewer. Everything you’re saying here, it’s horrendous. But let’s look at some of the cultural conditioning that occurs. When we’re kids, we look at some of the images – say here in America, with Snoopy and his pal Woodstock and all of the cute little yellow chickens that we fall in love with. Then there’s this disconnect, and it’s still tied in with the holiday of Easter, with the colored Easter eggs, and still the imagery of the stuffed little chickens everywhere. Where does it change? Where does it cut off where it’s like, okay, and I could look at a movie like you mentioned, and see what really goes on and still eat chicken and not make the connections? How does that happen?

DR. DAVIS: I’m not sure I have the answer to all these complex questions about the psychology of people. Certainly children tend to bond with animals, although I also know that children can be very cruel to animals. Whether that’s just an instinct in people or whether the cruelty is imitating the adults around them or whether it’s a combination of both, certainly it’s somewhat analogous perhaps to how children under African-American slavery. White children were raised by Black mammies and loved them and were nurtured and often literally nursed by them and everything else, and yet there came a time when they were taught that now, you view this individual as your slave and your property, and they’re inferior to you, and they’re a different order of being from you. Somehow, I don’t know whether there are hormonal changes that occur as children grow older and certainly begin to imitate their parents and the people around them in such a way that the love and the desires they had for animals when they were young, whether they’re stuffed animals or they’re real animals, just evolves into a different set of interests and desires and ways of looking at things.

I think it’s really complex. It’s something that I and you and all of us in the animal advocacy movement are constantly wrestling with. Do children, does something happen internally within them? What is this whole enculturation process? Why is it that many children at least seem to have a real empathic bond with other animals, with their dogs and with their chickens, all kinds of animals, but yet at a certain point, for example, through 4-H. 4-H is a kind of initiation for children, and it’s a standard part of standard everyday family farming and community farming where the child is encouraged to raise an animal and to be all excited about maybe winning a prize, and the child is very often if not always very bonded to the piglet or the calf or the goat that they are raising for this purpose. They love this animal and tend to this animal and often have barely an idea of what the real purpose and outcome of it all is going to be. I know that many children are just traumatized when they have to part with the animal, whether the animal won a prize or not, that they have bonded so much with this animal.

But yet, we also see that the next year that they go through this, they’re often a little less distressed. Maybe they have repressed the sorrow that they felt in the previous year. Maybe they repressed it because they found that it just didn’t get them anywhere except cause them absolute misery. Maybe their family and others around them made fun of them for feeling bad and crying, so they don’t want to experience ridicule. But certainly something happens whereby the third or fourth year, those children who loved their animal and cried when they had to part with their animal and pretty much understood the animal was going away to be slaughtered, by that time the children have grown to a place where they’re desensitized, where they’re even willing to raise and slaughter their own animals and not even feel it.

I think a lot of things happen. I know Jim Mason used to talk about this whole thing, how he himself never became okay with branding animals and slaughtering them and sending them off in trucks to be slaughtered. But unfortunately, people like him seem to be in the minority. I just think that part of it is that people in communities, and most people throughout history have lived in very pretty much insular communities where that's where they have to live. They have to live with those people. They have to adjust. They have to adapt. That's where they live, and that's where they're going to spend their life. So people have something, whatever it is, inside them that enables them to adapt to the circumstances in which they're going to have to live. They're going to have to accept and develop and live with the attitudes and the behaviors that that community expects of them. Humans are very adaptable, unfortunately, in many ways.

I remember George Bernard Shaw is famous for saying something like, "People will become accustomed to any atrocity." I don't think that's true of everybody, but I think that is something to consider, that people will become accustomed to any atrocity, that, again, part of it is just self-preservation in a situation where you feel you have no options. People are very, very afraid of being ridiculed. They're very, very afraid of being ostracized. So people will put up with a lot and do a lot of things that go against their better nature and their better feelings rather than to be laughed at or ostracized from their social group. So I think those things all play into why children undergo these changes from sensitivity to insensitivity toward animals, other animals.

STEVE: Thank you. Well answered. The first caller, hello, you're on Veganpalooza 2013 with Dr. Karen Davis.

CALLER 1: I just made the decision to go vegan. However, I have a couple of cats, and my cats are carnivores, obligate carnivores. I think as long as my cats keep eating meat, I will never be a true vegan. I don't know what you can say about this. My cats eat chicken, obviously.

DR. DAVIS: I have a cat. I once had two cats here rescued from the Humane Society up the road. About two years ago, I stopped feeding our cat any cat food with animal products. I switched entirely to Ami cat food, which I order online from Vegan Essentials. Our cat Philip seems totally healthy, totally happy. I know he's healthy because I take him to the veterinarian. He's over 10 years old. He's doing fine. Now, he's an indoor/outdoor cat. I don't get any sense at all that he's supplementing his diet with birds or anything outside. He pretty much hangs around the porch and comes inside and so on. But the thing is he is a vegan cat. He seems to be doing just fine. So I was thinking, when I was considering making the switch to all vegan cat food, this product called Ami, that it was going to be so expensive. And it is expensive compared to the cat food that I would get up at the regular supermarket. But it was like switching from the standard washing detergents to the ecologically-friendly no animal used to make these products. So I found that I was able to absorb these costs, and I'm not a well-off person in the sense of financially well-off by any means.

The point is once I made these decisions to switch to eco-friendly cleaning products and then to vegan cat food, I found that it's just part of what I buy, and I am much, much happier now that I know that my cat is eating all vegan food. So every once in a while, I put a little bit of olive oil in the food, which I feed him all dry. Occasionally, the canned vegan food, but mainly I feed him the dry vegan food. Occasionally I put a little olive oil in it for his coat, his skin, to keep it nice and soft and not dry out. Now the only other thing I will occasionally add, because I have a sanctuary for chickens here and I'm totally vegan, I don't eat any eggs ever, so since I do hard boil eggs from our hens and give them back to the chickens, I will also share some eggs with Philip our cat. So to that extent he's not 100% vegan. But that's what I do.

CALLER 2: This is such a topic dear to my heart because I'm holding my vegan dog, who has been vegan now since I became vegan almost seven years ago. I have six cats and two dogs. They are in incredible shape. My cats, my oldest is 14, my youngest is eight, and they have been, the puppy who I'm holding here, who is almost seven, was a vegan from eight weeks of age. They are on Evolution diet. I don't have to really supplement anything. That particular pet food, even my vet, who puts me down for being a vegan, says, "Your cats and dogs are in incredible shape." They're soft, and it's not real expensive. And it's amazing. And I live way out in the country, I get my pet food through delivery, and it reconstitutes and pet food needs to be reconstituted because if an animal is catching anything, and if they're a carnivore, their food is not going to be dry. It's going to be moist. And all pet food needs to be reconstituted. I'm in the process of writing a book about my experience as a vegan with eight vegan pets. Actually I had nine and I just lost one a couple of weeks ago, not due to being a vegan. My pets are in incredible shape. I get constant compliments, "What a coat your dogs have. Are they puppies?" I have no young animals anymore. The youngest are eight and the seven-year-old puppy here, who is in very beautiful shape. So I want to tell you about, I want everyone on Veganpalooza to know, that it's doable. I decided when I became a vegan if I have to feed my cats and dogs huge land animals, which they would never eat anyway, or chickens, or anything, they wouldn't eat these things, I was going to get rid of them. I was just not going to have pets. But I found a company that has worked for me beautifully. It's been in existence for 25 years, and Eric Weisman is also a vet, and I want him on Veganpalooza next year, I hope. And I hope to be on it myself because if I write a book maybe I can get on. Thank you so much. I feel like crying every day because I'm a vegan because I want the world to change so badly, but I'm on fire all the time for the vegan cause, and I spread the word every day. Thank you so much for allowing me to share that.

CALLER 3: I was going to ask the same question the other person did about the cat food, but since she already asked that, I don't need to. But is that Ami?

DR. DAVIS: Yes.

CALLER 3: And how do you order it?

DR. DAVIS: I order it from veganessentials.com. You can just Google that and go right to the website and you can order the food by using your credit or your debit card.

CALLER 3: Thank you. And the other brand was called Evolution?

DR. DAVIS: Yes. Evolution Diet.

CALLER 3: Thank you. I've been feeding my cat wild-caught salmon and tuna, and it's just that it's not exactly cost-effective. So recently I bought some organic chicken, but after listening to Dr. Karen, I have vowed that this will be the last package of chicken. It's just so heartbreaking to hear that story. Then I look at this in the refrigerator, I just say, "Oh my god." It's heartbreaking. But it's so nice to hear about these alternatives. I've been trying to feed my cat a raw food diet because I'm a raw foodist, but maybe in this case, it's not practical. Or maybe I can mix the salmon and tuna with this stuff. But it's about the chicken. I just felt so guilty about the chicken. But thank you for listening.

DR. DAVIS: Thank you very much. And do keep in mind, with all due respect, that fish are now known to be fully conscious, fully sentient, and so we really need to extend our compassionate living to include all the animals who live in the water because they suffer just as horrifically as the land animals.

DR. TUTTLE: That's a great point. Do you want to say anything, Steve, before we wrap it up here?

STEVE: Thank you again, Dr. Davis. It's always eye-opening. Thank you.

DR. DAVIS: Thank you, Steve, and thank you, Will. I really appreciate the privilege and the pleasure of being able to participate in and contribute to Veganpalooza. It's been wonderful, and it's such a great opportunity to educate people and to speak up for the birds and to let people know that these birds and these other animals, they need our voices. They're not voiceless, they have voices, but they need our Voice in the public arena. We need to speak up and speak out for them and never apologize for caring about them, but always to be affirmative and always to recognize that what we represent on behalf of animal rights and vegan living is the best that there is.

STEVE: That's Dr. Karen Davis, the website is www.upc-online.org. That's the best place to find out about the organization. Thank you all for being here, and we'll see you in the next session.