

## Veganuary – is it a game changer?

From [There's an Elephant in the Room](#) blog

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Animals as entertainment. Image by photojournalist Andrew Skowron from Delefinarium Nemo – Odessa Ukraine from a series at <https://andrewskowron.org/delefinarium-nemo-odessa-ukraine/>

*Note: For the purpose of this blog, the term plant-based is used to describe items composed entirely of plants. This is to differentiate from those unscrupulous suppliers that disingenuously use the term to describe products which contain animal derivatives but which are comprised MOSTLY of plants.*

## Veganism – it's not a diet

In the month of January, a massive capitalist food festival takes place in Britain with a breath-taking array of plant-based food items flooding the shops. They call it 'Veganuary'. Over the years this extravaganza has provoked me; not because of the plant-based food selection because let's be honest, food fascinates me as much as it does the next person, but because of the way it's marketed and promoted. It irks me that all the promotion is very suggestive of the idea that veganism is a faddy lifestyle requiring highly processed and costly specialist food items. I've been doing this blogging thing long enough to know exactly how much of a gift that is for the anti-vegan pro-animal-exploitation lobby who use this false premise to sow confusion and misinformation at every opportunity.

To get straight to the point I have always considered it to be a deeply flawed concept, a capitalist food festival that masquerades as 'vegan'. It's *not* vegan. It's a plant-based diet promotional campaign. A plant-based diet is a *part* of [veganism](#) but no way is it even close to the whole story. Particularly when 4 trillion annual victims are quietly sidelined without a mention.

As a blogger who repeatedly explains why veganism is not a diet, this annual circus feels like the biggest insult I can imagine, trivialising the ones who really matter in this whole sorry debacle of human hubris

and entitlement. And before anyone starts to contradict, to tempt potential participants, the campaign advertising lists a [celebrity](#) cookbook, plant based meal plans, access to a support group, nutrition planners, tips advice and recipes; every single one targeted at **humans**, human convenience, human health. Oh and human celebrity worship, let's not forget that. The brutal injustice of 4 trillion needless deaths every year and [uncounted others persecuted and abused](#) for our indulgence? Not so much as a mention.

A deep dive into the festival website reveals the biggest collection of media and marketing people I've ever seen in one place. Keep digging and you'll eventually find a heading labelled 'Blog' where finally – FINALLY – animals get a mention. The articles I looked at link back to what you can eat instead, which rather tells you all you need to know about the focus.

I recently even spotted one celebrity being given a headline spot for saying that this is the *third* year they've tried Veganuary and how great it is to try all these new foods. Wow. Please explain to me how a 'celebrity' who clearly has absolutely no concept of veganism (as evidenced presumably by their dietary and all other habits outwith the month of January), is an appropriate headliner to provide promotional 'information' about veganism? And this is not unique. Every year they have headliners who're not vegan. Apparently it's no impediment whatsoever.

So there we have it. This is not by any stretch a campaign to address the ethics of veganism, to challenge the brutality and violence that stem from our relentless persecution of the innocent. It's a marketing campaign with supermarkets and product brand names on board and a lot of people are making a lot of money from it. Google 'Veganuary salaries' for a start and that's just the tip of the iceberg.

### **Am I being too subtle?**

Every year at this time, I launch a series of posts reminding readers that veganism isn't a diet, as do a number of other pages whose unwavering focus on the victims of our species is the same as that of the Elephant. These posts are an oblique reference to the fact that, as a food festival, Veganuary is NOT about veganism whatever they choose to call it. However our planet is spiralling rapidly to ruin, with climate collapse, species extinction, zoonotic disease, and pollution all driven by animal agriculture while the blame is conveniently shoved onto fossil fuel. When people think about how to change their behaviour in an attempt to ameliorate the effect they have on the natural world, most of them consider taking shorter, fewer showers, recycling packaging, reducing the temperature on their central heating, travelling less, or if they can afford it, buying an electric car. What few consider are the wide ranging impacts of their needless consumer habits that persecute all other forms of life. So maybe I'm being too subtle. This year I'm resolving to talk straight.

### **So, Veganuary**

I decided it's time I sat down and tried to draw some positives from the mis-named food festival because apparently it's not going away any time soon. So how could it be improved?

Well, if the word 'vegan' were dropped and the more honest term 'plant-based diet' was substituted, it would still be a capitalist food festival but few changes would be needed. Human diet, human health, human nutrition plans – all the existing focus fits with the concept. They could obviously consider taking a financial hit by mentioning that a plant-based diet is not necessarily one that lines the pockets of the supermarkets and big brands, but surely that would be possible? Clearly 'plant-based diet' doesn't have the same ring to it but with all those marketers and media experts involved I'm sure someone could come up with something catchy.

Why would that be an improvement? Well because 4 trillion victims wouldn't be being thrown under the bus for the sake of a catchy title as is the case at the moment. Veganism is about them. Miss them out and whatever you have, it's not veganism.

But to continue to seek positives about the campaign, it has built up quite a head of steam as far as publicity is concerned. And it IS absolutely essential for us all to adopt a plant diet if life as we know it on planet Earth is to continue. So another improvement would be to add in a more honest dimension on the environmental impact of our current habits and continue to take advantage of the existing publicity machine to give participants a more holistic view.

Neither of these suggestions are ever going to happen though. Why not? No money to be made from them. Supermarkets and brand names don't want to throw their weight behind a campaign to make people into nicer, more aware, human beings. They just want to make them buy loadsa stuff to boost their profits. Again – no apologies for being blunt but that's just the truth.

### **And what about the celebrities?**

Those whose nonveganism is not seen as any kind of impediment to their appearing as poster people for 'veganism', seemingly have no scruples at all, ignoring the rights of the defenceless creatures whose relentless use they themselves refuse to relinquish. They are aided and abetted in this utter betrayal by hordes of adoring fans uttering platitudes about 'raising awareness'; while raging against any who point out that their heroes have no right to talk and lack the knowledge to do so.

No. Far from 'raising awareness' about the victims of our species, a completely different message is being proclaimed by nonvegan, 'nearly' vegan, 'part time' vegan, annual 'veganuary' participants etc to a non-vegan world only too happy for the reassurance. That message is that all you need to know about veganism is the most convenient dietary substitutes for your favourite animal foods. It's a food thing. Ethics are strictly optional.

As [Go Vegan World](#) says so succinctly;

*Without understanding how veganism is rooted in the philosophy of animal rights, attempts at behavioural change are highly likely to flounder and discussion of veganism will be forever rooted in the mundane discussion of how to replace animal use with vegan friendly alternatives. That is why we refer people who enquire about veganism to our [website](#) and our [free vegan guide](#), so that they have access to the information that is crucial to staying vegan, information that is our right to know as well as our responsibility to act on. That is not to say that people who are thinking of going vegan or have just gone vegan are not more than welcome to ask for advice on how to be vegan. But how to be vegan is far easier when we understand why we need to be vegan in the first place.*

### **So where does all this leave us?**

So where does that leave those of us who campaign for animal rights, and for veganism which is the only way that recognition of these rights can be put into practice? Well for a start, we have to be realistic and see Veganuary for the plant-based food festival that it is. We have to stop hailing it as some 'great advance for veganism'. That's naive and simply untrue.

Admittedly, if all participants shifted onto a permanent plant diet, some of the calamitous impacts that animal agriculture is having on climate collapse, species extinction, zoonotic disease, and pollution, would definitely be lessened and it could potentially buy planet Earth more time. Time is something we're running out of fast.

But instead of pointing people in the direction of the food festival, hailing it as a game changer and assuming that's going to change the outlook of nonvegan dieters, I'd say we have to work twice as hard as usual to enforce the message about how veganism is NOT a diet.

*Someone* has to focus on the victims and it's NOT going to be the supermarkets – they all sell body parts as well as plant-based foodstuffs and they have no desire to change that situation – it's not going to be the big brands and it's not going to be a catchily (but misleadingly) titled campaign that pursues its own agenda with a foodie extravaganza.

That *someone* that focuses on the victims, has to be *us*. It has to be every single one of us who understands that veganism is an ethical stance driven by respect for our fellow creatures and the desire for justice for them against a violent and entitled species that has persecuted all others to the brink of planetary collapse.

The whole world is at stake here and we all have a part to play. Remember veganism is about our victims.

*Miss them out of the centre stage and whatever you have, it's not veganism.*