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Beyond Vegetarian: One Man's Journey from Tofu to Tallow in Search of the Moral Meal [Interview]

Posted on January 31, 2016February 3, 2016 by Dustin



Photo by [Kristine Leuze](#)

I met Daniel Zetah this past summer, while interning on a small-scale vegetable farm in northern Minnesota. He arrived one Thursday in a white, well-worn Isuzu pickup, together with his fiancée, Stephanie. They brought with them two coolers full of meat (which they raised and butchered themselves), a few baskets of vegetables, a live turkey and her poults, two dogs, some camping equipment, and an old friend from their eco-village days who they had fortuitously seen hitchhiking along the side of the road. Daniel had interned on the farm years ago, and he was now returning to be married.

I learned over the course of their visit that Daniel had spent years living in Tasmania, where he had been a “[freegan](#)” (someone that scavenges for free food to reduce their consumption of resources), and full-time environmental activist, then a permaculture student, and then a natural builder. I learned Daniel had spent nine months on [The Sea Shepherd](#)—an anti-whaling ship vessel that uses direct-action tactics to confront illegal whaling ships—and played a very active role in [Occupy Wallstreet](#).

I learned, too, that after ten years of vegetarianism, Daniel had become a big-time carnivore. As I had recently given up meat in an effort to mitigate my environmental impact, this choice struck me as incongruous. We ended up having a conversation about ethical and environmental eating, which challenged, angered, intrigued, and

enlightened me. Daniel and his wife returned to their once-farm in central Minnesota, to finish packing and preparing to move to Tasmania. I called him at home to get the whole story, and record it for this article.

Would you describe yourself as a long-time farmer and environmental activist?

Not at all. I used to be a redneck. I used to race cars and motorcycles and snowmobiles... I was a motorhead. I don't want people to think I was always like this, because then they're like "oh, they were just brought up that way by parents that..." it's like no, no: I was raised by wolves.

Until I was in my early 20s I ate nothing but crap. Like, garbage, American, supermarket food. When I would go shopping, I was literally after the cheapest calories I could possibly find at the supermarket.

When did that start to change?

Well, I met a girl that I ended up getting married to and she was vegetarian, and so I started eating a vegetarian diet. Which is still completely disconnected and completely clueless as to what your eating and where it's from, it's just you're not eating meat. I ate tons of grain, lots of dairy and cheese, even eggs, but just no meat... And that's where I was at for probably a good eight years, until my early 30s.

But then I met a guy in Tasmania that basically just said "Dude, what are you doing?" and kind of told me in a very blunt manner that my actions did not match my rhetoric in a lot of areas of my life, including my dietary choices. His words were as sensitive as a sledge hammer but I couldn't refute what he was saying. It was tough... but, like...

A lot of people, when you tell them a truth that goes against their reality, they get pissed off, because their egos can't handle it, and so they want to dismiss what the person said... but I couldn't do that in this situation. I was just clueless and when this guy gave me a clue, I couldn't return to being clueless.

So at that point, I started looking at labels of everything that I was eating. It's like, 'whoa okay, so now I've got to worry about this and this and this...' and it was a rabbit hole.

The more I learned about what was actually destructive to the environment or my body, the more I had to look for on labels, and after a time I couldn't actually shop at the supermarket anymore because there was nothing I could eat there in good conscience, and then I started shopping at the food co-ops, and then I ended up as a two-year freegan – **freeganism**.



A market in Hobart, Tasmania

And I thought: 'that's my way out of guilt– my way of absolving my guilt from staying alive and eating food, is just eating food that's getting thrown out.' So I spent probably a good year and a half in Hobart, eating nothing but discarded food from restaurants and from market stall owners. I got to know all of them by name, and they would just save me whatever they had left over, and I actually had a rounds, so I never actually had to go to the dumpster, I just intercepted food destined for landfill.

What were you doing at the time?

I had quit my job working for the state government as an auditor/prosecutor for chemical spraying operations in Tasmania and had become a full-time environmental activist, because when I started going down this rabbit hole and learning more about peak oil and climate change I was like, 'oh God!' Here I was, just a couple years ago being completely clueless, and then this guy told me this stuff, and now I have the responsibility of the world on my shoulders, to tell everybody what I know, and I just thought at the time that it was literally a lack of awareness by people, and that if people like me

would just get out and talk enough that it would all be okay, but I had no idea that it wasn't a lack of information, it was just a lack of willingness to change. So that's what I was doing, was just going around and speaking to school groups, speaking at different engagements... I was going to the state government of Tasmania and doing lobbying for energy policy reform, studying energy policy really really heavily, reading everything I could about climate change and human behavior, trying to figure out a way to engage with people that would allow them to absorb what I had to tell them. We all know how that works, but yeah, that's what I did for a year and a half.

And where does the Sea Shepherd fit into this?



The Sea Shepherd Anti-Whaling Ship

I was living on my boat, when the **Sea Shepherd's** ship the Steve Irwin docked next to me. So I ended up going over there and volunteering. They invited me to come along, so I sold my boat, and ended up on that ship for about 9 or 10 months. So then I was a vegan all of the sudden, because the ship is a vegan ship. So I didn't really have much choice. And I remember seeing the disconnect there—seeing people eating these soy based meat replacers, and veganase, and all this horrible packaged shit, that had all these ingredients that were grown in industrial agriculture, but they were eating them quite happily, knowing that there wasn't any *animal* product in it. Their reasoning behind being vegan, was apparently to minimize animal suffering, but in my mind, they were actually causing more cumulative harm than they would have caused if they were eating meat.

Why?

Well... Don't get me wrong, I like folks who eat vegan diets because at least they care enough to want to do less harm, but most of their food is heavily processed, most is from unknown origin, and a large

portion of the calories vegans consume are soy based. And growing soybeans in a way that minimizes suffering is tough. Most, I would say 99.9% of soy beans grown, are grown in a monoculture, and they rely on outside inputs for fertilizer, and unless they are organic they rely on lots of toxic chemicals to be sprayed on for insecticides, fungicides, herbicides... more and more they're GMO in the seed. So it's all kinds of bad. If you're eating stuff that contains palm oil grown in once-rainforests or anything with corn or soy beans, anything that's grown in the absence of a functioning ecosystem by industrial farmers...to me, the misery is just more spread out.



Soybean harvest

I mean, I grew up with cows, and I love cows more than most people I know, but why is their right to live more than the right for a whippoorwill to live or a snake to live or a mouse to live? Why is it that their rights trump the thousands of species that die in monocropped, industrial agricultural fields every year? Why does it trump all the species that have damn near gone extinct, or have gone extinct, since industrial agriculture has plowed up millions and millions and millions of acres of prairie in this country and destroyed their habit? Why do their rights not exist?

I mean, and this is the same thing: I love whales, that's why I was on that anti-whaling ship, but why does the whale's right to exist supersede that of those other beings? Just because they're cute and they're big and they're high profile? So we only like big animals? It just didn't really compute with me.

What happened when you got off the Sea Shepherd?

After I got off the Sea Shepherd I ended up moving to a small village up in the mountains of Tasmania called Lorena, to do a **permaculture** course—my first permaculture course—and ended up getting offered a job by an awesome guy that was building straw bale houses in that valley, so I stayed there for two years. That's when I read *The*

Omnivore's Dilemma, which helped me realize the complexity of our food choices.

The day I finished that book, I decided that I needed to take more personal responsibility for the calories that were keeping me alive, and that if I ever hit an animal with my car again, I would feel like I had to eat that animal. That very same same day, I hit a humongous wallaby, so I brought it home, and with help from my neighbor, went through the process of gutting, skinning, butchering, cooking and eating it. That was the first time I'd eaten meat in over 10 years.

There is no magic bullet. There is no one way to eat that is going to be devoid of guilt or devoid of suffering. There is no way to exist in this world without taking the life of other beings. And that complex truth was missing for me, and it's still missing for a lot of people... They just go to this magical place called the supermarket, and these magical trucks come in the middle of the night, and magical ferries put all this stuff on eye level shelves, where you just go in there and give this magical money to somebody, and they give you all the things you need to survive. Well, that's all really convenient, but it's really disconnecting. And as long as you're doing that, you can believe this myth that you can eat and survive without doing any harm to anybody else. That myth was shattered when I read that book.

And that event set you down the path towards raising livestock?

Well I guess that path led to learning more and more and more, and realizing, that while there is no hard rule for what a human being should eat, or what the perfect diet is, in terms of minimizing suffering of other beings, there *is* an ideal diet for each region and each situation, and where I chose to farm, which is south-central Minnesota, well that bioregion was a tall-grass prairie/ oak savanna biome, and that oak savanna biome evolved over hundreds of thousands of years with grazing animals as an integral part in it.



Oak savanna

I can't eat grass, I can't break down cellulose, but I can eat meat. And the fact is that every time we plant some kind of annual crop, in a monocultural setting, we have to effectively destroy an intact ecosystem to do that. Annuals are only meant as a tool in nature to stabilize soil that has somehow become open to the elements— that's their job. They come up right away, after a flood or a tree falls or whatever, and they stabilize that soil so it's not going to wash or blow away, and then overtime the perennial plants will say "okay, we got this. Thanks for doing that, you did a good job, but we're back now and we're going to be an intact ecosystem of perennial plants and grazing animals."

And so I realized that I wanted to gain as many of my calories from that perennial ecosystem as possible, and in this biome, I can do that with some vegetables that we grow in a diverse garden; wild edibles like wild greens, berries, nuts, fruit; and with meat!

I mean having one animal, that's eaten nothing but grass all its life, and that grass is actually benefiting from it because that whole system evolved to have that animal in it, as part of it, putting its nutrients back into the system in the form of urine and feces, covering the soil by trampling and eating the plants, feeding the soil microorganisms, and it's all just this beautiful cycle that annuals can't match...

It came down to would I rather kill one animal that's going to feed me literally hundreds of meals, or eat annual crops that I know are just destructive to countless beings?

Even when we're unaware of all this, I think we all feel this burden, unconsciously, of just being, because we know deep down

somewhere in our core, that what we're doing and what agriculture is doing, is just bad. And so when I broke that tie, and that reliance from annual agriculture like that, I just felt more at peace. Even though I had to shoot animals directly in the head that I knew and loved and had to watch them die, I felt I was causing less death and suffering in this world than I had before. As long as I was growing, preparing and preserving that food, and getting at least 90-95% of our calories from our land, I'd felt more peace in *just being* than I have in years. Because I felt that burden lift.

Even more at peace than when you were a freegan?

When you're a freegan, you're removing yourself from all responsibility. Which is good, because... it's one step to say "no" to bad. That's what vegans do. And that has some kind of an impact on how many resources flow towards that bad system, of keeping animals in confined barns standing in their own shit, but it's not actually benefiting, or creating, what you want to see.

And what I want to see is systems that are going to mimic natural systems and be good for everything, not just the humans or the domesticated animals, but the wild species as well. I want to see food that is grown in those systems in harmony with an intact ecosystem. And if I stop eating **CAFO meat**, like I said, that's better than bad, but good, on the other side, is actually supporting those few farmers that are growing food regeneratively, and doing agriculture in a completely different way.

I've had this argument with many folks for the past few years who say without large scale industrial agriculture, people will starve. "We have to feed the world!" is their mantra. They use this story to perpetrate all kinds of horrible stuff on the earth's ecologies and beings. My argument is that if your idea for feeding a growing population is reliant on a degenerative system, one that produces less with every succeeding year... you are kidding yourself. It's a divergent equation. Only regenerative agriculture has any hope at feeding a growing population into the future, since it becomes more productive as it matures.

I've traveled enough and seen enough things grown around the world to know that even organic food, most of it, 99% of it, is grown in

monocultures. Go out to California and see the organic almond orchards that go for miles and miles with not one other species in the mix. It's just those trees, there's no biodiversity at all, all of the native animals are gone, because all of their habitat is gone.

That's not sustainable, that is not ethical, it's just bad. But because technically they're not spraying toxins...

I look at organics kinda like I look at vegetarianism. Organic food is better than bad, but it's still not good. And so if your goal is to be better than bad, by all means, just buy organic food from people you've never met from the supermarket or co-op. Better than bad! But if you want to go a step further and actually try to create a system that's going to feed people into perpetuity, and not destroy the ecosystem, you gotta do better than bad. You gotta do good.

So now you're heading back to Tasmania, and you'll be trying get your calories from an intact, local ecosystem?

I'll be eating a lot of wallaby.

Post written by [@Dustin_Michels](#). This interview was conducted August 1, 2015. Daniel and Stephanie are now kicking off their new life in Lorinna, Tasmania. You can learn more and connect with them online at [newstoryfarm.com](#). And you can check out their new project at [facebook.com/ResiliencySchool/](#).



Beyond Vegetarian: One Man's Journey from Tofu to Tallow in Search of the Moral Meal [Interview] by Dustin is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.

Tagged CAFO, diet, eating animals, environment, farming, food, health/happiness, interview, oil, permaculture, vegetarianism

Post navigation

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41 thoughts on “Beyond Vegetarian: One Man’s Journey from Tofu to Tallow in Search of the Moral Meal [Interview]”



1. **Paul Strode** January 31, 2016 8:47 pm Reply

This was an interesting read, Dustin. Thanks for posting! However, I was left wanting a more detailed reaction from you regarding Zetah's journey and current argument. How does his position align with what we know scientifically (trophic ecology, nutrition, transgenics, climate change, etc.)? How attainable is his approach for the majority of the global human population? Should the geese at Viele Lake be served for lunch at Fairview High School?



1. **Dustin** February 1, 2016 10:54 pm Reply

Hi Paul,

Thanks for the comment! I plan to post more in the future about my own thoughts—the purpose here was mostly to exhibit a viewpoint that helped shake up my thinking. In short: what attracted me to vegetarianism was essentially an argument about the inefficiency of energy exchange across trophic levels (90% loss at each trophic level, right?) Environmental-minded proponents of vegetarianism say “It takes a bunch of energy and resources to raise crops for farm animals, and then it takes a bunch of energy and resources to raise the meat... wouldn't it be more efficient just to skip the meat?” And that made sense to me. But now I realize that this only makes sense if we assume crop and animal production must be segregated. If instead we combine the two by mimicking a natural ecosystem, then the “inefficiency” of meat production is converted into value. That's the idea that's really exciting to me. This is basically permaculture we're talking about, and your question, “how attainable is permaculture farming for the majority of the population?”, is a really important one. I think it is possible, especially with more sensible agriculture policies.

I think if you look at a field of GM corn with roundup and synthetic fertilizer applied, for example, you can't help but be impressed by the productivity of conventional agriculture. And if you then look at a green pasture full of free range cattle it doesn't look as productive, so people wonder how that system could possibly feed the world. But there's so much that gets left out of those two images. For one, there's that trophic inefficiency again. If you're feeding that corn to cows *and then* people, 90% of the energy in the corn is being wasted! Suddenly all that corn isn't so impressive. And secondly, we might want to think about externalities. If the pesticides being used are causing massive honeybee die-offs, which in turn will cause crops to go unpollinated, you have to factor that in to your calculation of how “productive” this system is. And what about all the fossil fuels necessary to produce and transport that corn (and its fertilizers and pesticides?) If that contributes to climate change, that causes a drought in California or a fire in Russia, destroying crops, shouldn't that be factored in? And what about dead zones from excessive fertilizer use? (You taught me all about eutrophication!!) If all the runoff creates a dead zone in the Gulf of

Mexico, killing a bunch of fish that could have been harvested, shouldn't that be factored into the productivity equation?

I think the image of a very densely populated corn field versus a a more sparsely-populated permaculture set-up with cows, grasses, fruit and nut trees, etc., is misleading. When one considers all the waste and inefficiency of conventional agriculture, and all the externalities, it becomes clear that that corn field isn't so productive after all. So yes, maybe harvesting the Viele geese is not a bad idea...

Thanks for your interest in my thoughts and writing!



1. **scott** February 2, 2016 2:45 pm Reply

Thanks for your story.

Conventional (industrial agriculture vs rotational grazing, and omnivore vs. herbivore.

For all the propaganda surrounding the productivity of GMOs (feeding the world) and Western Ag, the wage of consequences and disruption cannot be ignored. If your food requires inputs that must be brought onto the lands in order to bring about food production on the land, it counts against the viability of this food production method. The lowest amount of input wins.

My food production litmus test these days amounts to this: if you're hungry now, how are you going to feed yourself...sans our just-in-time grocery store supply chain? Corn takes 80 to 120 days from planting to harvest. Soy about the same. Processing costs more time. Consider the contrast of raising multiple animal species which are rotationally grazed. Sun feeds the pasture grasses which feeds the animals. I first learned about this practice from Joel Salatin. Then I learned about the Savory Institute and Holistic Management Inc. Amazing resources that teach how to reduce impacts on the land and actually build soil, sequester water in-place and raise healthy animals. It's an amazingly sustainable system.

I appreciate the contrasts and nuance of the vegan vs omnivore debate which ultimately resolves to this: our diet choices are our choices. How many people, processes, time and resources does our choice take to put food on our table? Milk and eggs from a biodynamic rotationally-run farm 2 miles from home....or buying a package of tofu at the store? And how does one eat seasonally as a vegetarian?



1. **MargfromTassie** February 4, 2016 12:11 am Reply

Why Allan Savory is not a Saviour

<http://terrastendo.net/2013/03/26/livestock-and-climate-why-allan-savory-is-not-a-saviour/>



2. **Claire** February 1, 2016 12:22 pm Reply

Fascinating really. I always understood the repercussions of mono-culture of all food but didn't even bat an eyelid at veganism. It's clear I've been brainwashed, and I am not even Vegan.

It's comforting to know my family is on the way to being sustainable in TAS with yes, a small amount of monoculture, but next to a more sustainable permaculture plan.

I think for people to realise the effects of monoculture they need David Attenborough or similar to do a piece on its devastating effects. They have and always will need to have a doco. People are seldom reading now with all their time taken up with relaxing brain guzzling activities.



3. **morfar** February 1, 2016 3:40 pm Reply

Hi Dustin,

I read your article about Daniel Zetah and I liked it very much. What a man! I agree fully with his opinions, and I realize that it is easier for mormor and me to live a life closer to his views than it is for big families in a city, especially if they don't have much money. We consider ourselves privileged. Thank you for sharing this interesting and convincing man with us all.

Morfar



4. **mormor** February 1, 2016 3:46 pm Reply

Jag älskar din envishet och glöd för att hitta det som känns rätt och bra för både jorden och oss människor. Det vet du.
Massor av kramar från din mormor



5. **Suzan** February 1, 2016 4:00 pm Reply

Thanks for the story! I've met and talked with Daniel a few times since we have a mutual acquaintance, but didn't know his whole evolution. This covers it very nicely and concisely. Like others, I hope you follow up with him, and I'll be checking out his website as well. Thanks again.

6. **Beyond Vegetarianism | Damn the Matrix** February 1, 2016 11:01 pm Reply

[...] vegans/vegetarians on facebook..... this brilliant interview is for them.
Reblogged from Dustin's Views..... Posted on January 31, 2016 by Dustin Photo by Kristine [...]



7. **Beth Grant DeRoos** February 2, 2016 2:09 am Reply

The issue I have with meat, even home raised has to do with the whole issue of trust that is built between the animal and its human caregiver.

The female animal is bred, gives birth to a baby that everyone says is so cute and adorable, and then over the course of weeks, months and in the case of cattle a few years, the animal bond with the human and builds trust, all within a captive environment.

Then one day the human because of selfish wants, takes the trusting animal and kills it. Takes its life. To me there is some mental disconnect when someone builds trust and then takes that trust away.

Am not talking of someone in the wilds of Alaska, Wyoming etc who hunts wild game. At least in that situation the animal has a chance of getting away because its not in a confined environment, and often the hunters comes home empty handed after a day or more of hunting.



1. **Marie** February 2, 2016 7:26 am Reply

the main problem here is that you are anthropomorphising the animals. They aren't people. That cow doesn't "trust" you, he is simply accustomed to you. You bring him or her food or water or attention or whatever and it gets used to that action in what is essentially a training effect. You say you feel less guilty if an animal is hunted than if one is cleanly slaughtered.. why, because YOU feel it has some sort of "sporting chance"? What about the ones that get away with a bullet or an arrow in them, now they get trailed for hours or days while they slowly bleed out, panicking and tainting the meat... how is that better than a bullet to the brain or a quick swipe with a very sharp blade? I don't think either is actually wrong, but I'm just trying to point out to you that what we think will assuage our guilt as humans is not necessarily the same as being better for the animal. And neither is a "natural death" In my opinion, the kindest way the cycle of life can play out is an animal that is kept comfortable, content, ie grazing to their heart's content, with good care and shelter as needed, never going hungry or thirsty or being scared by predators, then meeting their end in an instantaneous fashion without even seeing it coming, having never known suffering. And that is doable.



1. **MargfromTassie** February 3, 2016 9:08 am Reply

"They aren't people"
And presumably Marie, people aren't animals either...
Whilst I agree with a lot of what you said re the appropriate way to raise and eat meat if we must eat it, never doubt that animals are capable of a wide range of emotions – especially the more 'intelligent' animals. How would you feel about the confining and raising of chimps and primates for food? Dogs? I guess we all have our own particular lines we will not cross.



2. **Paul Shain** February 3, 2016 3:51 pm Reply

Perfect answer Marie



1. **Chris** February 3, 2016 4:03 pm Reply

Re: The art of separation

Perfect for whom? Indeed, we live in a culture that condones the commodification of living beings.



2. **MargfromTassie** February 3, 2016 8:54 am Reply

Agree entirely Beth. Too many people in the eat-meat camp are guilty of confirmation bias. Apart from the trust issue which you point out, let's face it – there's so much suffering involved in meat-eating, especially in the whole feed lot to supermarket sector. Also in "live export" which we do from Australia. Even on pasture land, where I observe so many cattle, sheep and even horses, without adequate shade or shelter.



1. **Maria** February 3, 2016 2:32 pm Reply

Eating animals ethically, as Marie described above, is possible (possible, but it does not necessarily exist) only on a very small scale, in an environment of small, diverse family farm or homestead. As soon as it becomes commercial, ethic suffers. I moved to the land from the city to solve for myself the same problem as Daniel was facing. And I've gone through the same path of thinking as Daniel did, and came to the same conclusion – small farm as diverse regenerative ecosystem with native plants and heritage breeds of animals, who are important part of this ecosystem. This is the only sustainable way I can see. To grow sustainably and locally, to eat seasonally. And whatever the land you are walking on is providing you with naturally and sustainably is your ideal diet. I've been vegan for many years. Now I am drinking my milk and eating my meat. It is still never easy for me. But, the burden of guilt for my food and for my environmental impact is off my shoulders now. I am doing my best for myself, for my few customers, for my animals, for my land and at the end of the day, for the planet. I am not sure whether this model could feed the world. But if to think of putting all the soy and corn acres back into the hands of small farmers, probably it could. There would be no cheap junk on the grocery stores shelves, but this is something we can survive without.

This guy is 100% right. Better to eat lard and tallow and butter from pastured animals, raised ethically and sustainably on a small local farm, than to use coconut and palm oils brought here from Africa, which is losing its rainforests, which are, as we know, chimp's and orang-outang's and other species' habitat, at enormous pace, just to satisfy our needs for "ethical" fats.

Boycott animal factories, boycott imported, not seasonal food, find your small farmer, there are a lot of them out there. Visit the farm, meet the land, meet the animals,

probably volunteer there couple days a year or just bring your kids to show them how their food is growing. The greater the demand for local ethical food, the more farmers will switch from stupid routine of growing chemical corn to something much better, healthier and more satisfying. It is a long process and consumers are a driving force. Please! Do not just avoid the problem, do something!



8. **Kurt** February 2, 2016 2:28 am Reply

Hello Dustin,

Thank you for sharing your interview and your thoughts, as you mention it's fairly an eye opener. I've got to understand this information a while ago by trying to understand our inefficient way of consuming energy, curiosity, long research and doing my own permaculture got me in the track. But, let me tell you that it's the first I've seen published the whole picture together.

We should synthesize this information for a short film!

Perhaps you could recommend or share if you know some source with the "bigger picture" shown?

Thank you again,

Kurt.



1. **Dustin** February 2, 2016 2:44 am Reply

Hi Kurt,

Thank you for the comment; I'm really glad you enjoyed the post so much! One film I've seen that does an excellent job exploring conventional agriculture and presenting the permaculture solution is *Inhabit*. It's that rarest of breeds—an environmental documentary that is optimistic, and leaves you feeling energized instead of hopeless.



9. **Chris** February 2, 2016 9:58 am Reply

"The bottom line is clear: unless and until we get people to question and reject their daily and wholly unnecessary consumption of animals, we will have no success in getting them to oppose in any serious ways animal uses that they regard as

necessary or non-trivial, such as vivisection, or other unnecessary uses that they quite correctly view as arbitrarily chosen by animal advocates and no worse than the uses that they themselves support and engage in every day of their lives.”

<http://www.abolitionistapproach.com/problem-with-single-issue-campaigns-and-why-veganism-must-be-the-baseline/#.VrB8wYEO7qA>



10. **Tessa Stevenson** February 2, 2016 12:27 pm Reply

I found this interesting and encouraging. I grow vegetables with the help of compost, part of which is from the chickens I keep. They can't process grass efficiently; they need grain, which I have to buy in. Cows can process grass, but in the Q&A above it contrasted cows fed on grain with permaculture cows in grass and trees. Can vegetables be grown without the input of animal manure, or do vegetarians not realize they are supporting the unsustainable oil industry instead. Perhaps they see organic as not relying on animals? Thanks for putting this up for us all to see.



11. **Katrina Hillis** February 2, 2016 1:05 pm Reply

Great article, thanks for sharing!

The timing is perfect for me –

I'm currently reading 'the vegetarian myth' by Lierre Keith. I highly recommend this book as it explores the moral, political & nutritional aspects of eating meat & the shortcomings of agriculture. After 9yrs of being a strict vegetarian and 4yrs pescetarian... I'm finally thinking about eating meat. I've just started growing my own organic veggies & am currently working out the most nutritionally beneficial & ecologically sustainable methods of consuming meat.

If anyone can recommend any other books please let me know! I'll check out the doco 'Inhabit' you recommended.

Katrina – Alchemy Intuitive



1. **MargfromTassie** February 4, 2016 12:30 am Reply

“...am currently working out the most nutritionally beneficial and ecologically sustainable methods of consuming meat”
That’s good. Interesting that you didn’t mention ‘cruelty free’ methods.



12. **adele sands** February 2, 2016 3:17 pm Reply

There is not enough land in the US, or the world, for meat consumption to be free range for everyone. This is a fantasy for the elite few. Those monoculture corn and soy fields are to feed cattle and food animals. Were that land dedicated to feeding people, we could feed the whole world, have more natural eco systems, and a happy byproduct is ending the leading cause of pollution. Which is animal agriculture. And the leading cause of water use, rainforest destruction etc. etc. The oceans are going to be decimated in our children’s life times. Humanely raised is a joke, the vast majority of animals consumed on this planet suffer torture, and are all slaughtered the same way. Look at Mercy for animals, if you dare. And the World Peace Diet considers the energetics of eating meat. The movie Cowspiracy is a must watch.



1. **Glenn Gall** February 2, 2016 5:59 pm Reply

As a backdrop to my further comments — <https://vimeo.com/80518559>
There is a follow-up Soil Carbon Cowboys Interview —
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HDuwmnME0T0> At ~30:00 rancher Allen Williams states (paraphrased) – On well run pastures, grassfed, grassfinished, it takes 0.8 acres to finish a steer to harvest. In US there is enough available, unencumbered grassland to finish >35 million head on grass alone. 26 million are now being finished in feedlots. To mislead us, Cowspiracy used a ranch with a very low stocking rate to extrapolate how much land would be needed to supply beef needs. Most temperate pastures stock at ~10X that rate, and holistically planned ranches grow healthier grass and deeper topsoils to the point that they can stock 2-4X what they had done previously.
While I totally agree that CAFO and factory farming of all kinds is damaging and unethical, there are restorative and resilient ways to farm, and do so including livestock. Cowspiracy is loaded with misinformation. I have taken particular issue with 51% of all emissions caused by livestock. The film mentioned the 2009 report. <https://www.worldwatch.org/files/pdf/Livestock%20and%20Climate%20Change.pdf> It adds various livestock emissions to the findings of a previous report, but ignores any other non-livestock emissions of the same type. Examples — It adds more recent increased livestock emissions to the total, but fails to add all other greenhouse gas emission increases. It uses a higher global warming potential for methane emitted by livestock, but still uses the lower factor for all other emissions. It counts livestock breath, but no other previously counted respiration. That increases the fraction of the pie for livestock without increasing anything else. The livestock % is exaggerated. It

is a shameful misrepresentation. Please read the report and let me know what you think! It's only 10 pages, with four pages of pictures and no footnotes. Here is a fairly comprehensive collection of articles exposing the deceit and misleads that pervades the film. <http://sheldonfrith.com/2015/12/24/a-collection-of-rebuttals-to-cowspiracy-and-other-anti-holistic-management-propaganda/> I don't mind discussing factual information — pros and cons of meat, holistic management, grassfed, ending confinement operations, etc. The real conspiracy is in the creation of the film. Leave that out of the discussion, and let's all join in and end all forms of bad farming!



13. **Savvy** February 2, 2016 4:29 pm Reply

As I read the interview, I felt like there was a jump in his logic. He seemed to go SAD to vegetarian to (junk food) vegan, decides they're not sustainable and then turns to eating meat..? Anyone who has researched global food production, environmentalism, and conservation, as he claimed to do, would be confused by his conclusion. And while junk food veganism isn't healthy for the body, neither is meat.

Yes, monoculture isn't sustainable, but does that immediately require eating animals? Polyculture is possible, even with animal residents, without them becoming a food source.

Food forests, both temperate and tropical, produce more food per square meter than what can ever be attained in a monoculture or animal based prairie system. They're adaptable to most climates and provide shelter, medicine, and tools at the same time. Permaculture food forests are being successfully trialed on most continents and I feel a more logical step in the journey to sustainability. There are food forest in Vietnam and Cambodia that have been managed by family groups for hundreds of years.



14. **Beth Grant DeRoos** February 2, 2016 5:13 pm Reply

One does NOT need animal manure or commercial chemical fertilizers to grow food. We use green cover crops like clover, which are a natural manure when grown and then plowed into the ground before planting a crop. Such green manure being a plant also helps clean the air and doesn't produce the air pollution that animal and even chemical fertilizers create.

Quinoa is a pure protein seed food. Spinach is a protein food. There are so many ways to get ones daily need of protein sans the suffering and killing of animals. And how about we use all those grain products for feeding humans?

With a growing world population and a demand (not a need) for more meat, there is no way to raise animals for meat in a humane way to meet the demand. And to suggest that one should seek out local, small scale humane ranching sources smacks at Whole Foods elitism thinking, because pasture raised beef as an example is often two to three times more expensive than factory farmed meat, because grass raised beef takes longer to grow.

And animals take a huge amount of water for both the grains grown to feed them, which could go to feed humans, and they take a lot of water for drinking and then their urine saturates the earth which then creates polluted under ground aquifers, and even nearby streams and rivers.

Bottom line is, vegan or vegetarians who succumb to consuming meat, do so because like cocaine, they crave it.



15. **Chris** February 2, 2016 6:27 pm Reply

It's all in the attitude.

“First, agriculture is dependent on government and other forms of subsidies. Second, there is virtually nowhere that plants and trees do not grow, or cannot be grown. A vegan society can be expected to subsidise veganic farming practices which, incidentally, is likely to result in more farmers returning to the land. No-dig veganic gardening and farming may well be a viable possibility too.

The bottom line is that we can expect a vegan population to be willing to fund the changes necessary to bring about a world consistent with their values. A vegan population would be interested in the R&D required to forge change, not least because present methods of growing and harvesting crops harm and kill other animals.”

<http://www.villagemagazine.ie/index.php/2014/02/non-violence-demands-veganism-interview-with-dr-roger-yates-co-founder-and-press-officer-of-vegan-ireland-and-a-lecturer-in-the-department-of-sociology-in-ucd/>

“Put another way, Professor Gary Francione points out that the common claim that eating pasture-raised animals results in fewer animal deaths than in the harvesting of crops is “a version of the argument that if we cannot avoid unintentional death, we

might as well engage in intentional killing. Think about that. We cannot avoid accidental or unintended death in manufacturing anything, including the most innocuous and beneficial of products. So it's okay to kill humans intentionally? Surely not." And on the issue of farmers intentionally killing animals that threaten their crops, Francione argues that "If we all went vegan because we cared morally about nonhumans, that would necessarily translate into methods of crop production that would be more mindful of incidental and unintended deaths."

<http://freefromharm.org/eating-animals-addressing-our-most-common-justifications/>



16. **Nika Nemirovsky** February 2, 2016 6:40 pm Reply

This is a wonderful article. I wonder though, what is your advice for those of us living in urban areas, with no access to wild-growing nuts and seeds.. with no possibility to raise and butcher our own happy cow? I think that this is the dilemma that the "better than bad" doers of this world, that also want to live in a city. Are we urbanites a lost cause?



1. **Maria** February 3, 2016 4:24 pm Reply

Nika, my way is very similar to Daniel's. What to eat and what not to eat was always an existential problem for me. I went from being vegan to eating some poultry and fish, back and forth several time in my life and always felt that it was something wrong there. Trying to solve this problem, I moved from the city to the land, knowing nothing about it and having no previous experience whatsoever. But this was good, as I started to LEARN, to read and to think. And gradually I came to exactly the same conclusions as he did. I agree with his every word. What I would do if I am living in a city now? I will find my small local sustainable farmer or homestead, I will visit the farm and it's animals and, probably, volunteer there couple days or weekends to feel connection with the land. And I would stick to local, seasonal diet from local small farms through farmers markets or CSA programs. Remember, only you, because you a a consumer, has a power to decide where this world is going. Making your everyday grocery choices, you are either supporting destructive mono cultural chemical industrial farming, immoral ACFS, destruction of rainforests and natural habitats of a lot of species, or local, sustainable, regenerative and ethical farming practices, which a lot of small farmers and homesteaders trying to implement (not all of them, to be honest, that is why I advices you to visit the farm and to know your farmer personally). I hope it helps. And, please, remember, you not only can make a difference, but you are the strongest force!



17. **danjo** February 2, 2016 8:22 pm Reply

It's very hard to achieve any sort of consistency in this modern world. The moral high ground is pretty shaky ground.

One other lens to look at the meat/no-meat debate is that of primitive cultures. Small tribal and primitive cultures are arguably both the lowest impact and most-sustainable way of living. They certainly don't use fossil fuels and remote slave labor to maintain their lifestyles! There is no evidence of vegetarianism in peoples from cold climate ecosystems. Simply not possible to feed oneself without meat.

I was a vegetarian for over 10 years before becoming a farmworker in the northeast and taking part directly in raising and killing animals for sustenance. It's never easy but I still believe pasture raised animals are way more overall humane than tofu. Not meat from the supermarket. Not meat in the everyday American sense. But some meat yes. More wild than farmed. There used to be squirrel recipes in *The Joy of Cooking* but they took them out in editions after the 60s... I've also processed and eaten roadkill goose, deer and moose. All very good!

I've traveled a lot in the northeast and visited many farms and people working very hard to live light on the land and eat locally. I've never met a local vegan. They may exist but I've never met one.

We all pick and choose our arguments to suit our current feelings. I'm no exception!



18. **Ella Rose** February 2, 2016 10:57 pm Reply

Preferable to factory farming, but not sustainable for 7 billion humans. I've been vegetarian since 5 and vegan for 17 years. Perfect health and vitality. Take B12 (only supplement) because I work long hours and don't plan properly. Killing animals for food is definitely not necessary. I wouldn't be able to slaughter the sheep, cattle, chickens, pigs on his farm. No doubt he also eats vegetables and grains, so a great deal of land is being used for a few people to indulge their lust for animal corpses. I understand eating road kill, but raising animals that grow to trust you, and then killing them doesn't work for me. In pictures of the farm, they have several dogs. No doubt they are treated well, and not consumed. "A pig is a dog is a bear is a boy". Philip Wollen.



19. **Karen Baxter** February 3, 2016 3:46 am Reply

Dustin's View / direct quote – Their reasoning behind being vegan, was apparently to minimize animal suffering, but in my mind, they were actually causing more cumulative harm than they would have caused if they were eating meat. (this was interesting to me because for such a smart, seemingly authentic and well traveled guy he seems utterly dismissive regarding the very foundation of veganism which is exactly that ...not -> just minimize but -> not contribute in ANY way to 'animal suffering' – and then the swiping of all vegan choices into a monoculture soy etc hat box seems quite deflating – maybe his heart really isn't right with his new found wallaby diet....one can hope). Peace KB / a modern maverick



20. **Peter Robinson** February 3, 2016 4:05 am Reply

I am 80 years old and in good health. For ten years my orphaned daughters and I lived on our 115 acre farm in Camp Verde, Arizona. We raised meat and when it came time to kill a bull, my older daughter said, "Daddy, I don't want to do this." I told her that I could not do the job alone and that the income from selling the meat is what paid our mortgage, utility bills and the food that we could not grow. Both of my daughters are sensitive, loving and caring women. At one time or another, they both helped in the killing of the animals. Before each kill, I said this prayer. "Lord, I am taking some of your beauty from this earth. I promise that I will do my best in terms of being kind to others and to preserve and protect our earth." I did the kill in such a way that the animal never knew what was going to happen. They land long and happy lives and we loved each other.

This is an excellent article in terms of explaining the different aspects of our diets and life styles.

Today, my work is research to find ways to remove carbon from the atmosphere. They say that it cannot be done! My method is to grow trees, convert the trees into charcoal (which yields some net energy) and to grind some of the charcoal and incorporate it into the soil and to transport the rest of the charcoal (pure carbon) to the oceans where it will be permanently sequestered.

I am also working to find local sources of solar energy and to have a way to store this energy during the day and then to recover the energy at night and to have free water for irrigation.

In the future we will be posting information at "RanchoVerdeResearch.com"



21. **Anonymous** February 3, 2016 4:15 am Reply

Cheers from northern BC, Canada...not everything grows here, eating moose is a must...

22. **One Man's Evolutionary Search for the Moral Meal | Laura Bruno's Blog** February 3, 2016 1:34 pm Reply

[...] Beyond Vegetarianism: One Man's Journey from Tofu to Tallow in Search of the Moral Meal [...]



23. **Chris** February 3, 2016 2:59 pm Reply

"I would not want to get to know a pig very well if I intended to eat him." ~ Pat Leigh

<http://theirturn.net/2015/08/04/the-last-pig/>

<http://freefromharm.org/animal-products-and-ethics/former-meat-dairy-farmers-became-vegan-activists/>



24. **Chris** February 3, 2016 3:45 pm Reply

FYI...

<http://www.hopeferdowsian.com/why-justice-for-animals-is-the-social-movement-of-our-time/>

<http://www.hopeferdowsian.com/5-ways-to-stop-the-killing/>

<https://youtu.be/gGSCVZJbh0o>



25. **Randy Hartnell** February 4, 2016 6:55 am Reply

Thank you for the interesting interview and comments. Pescaterianism is a happy medium that addresses most if not all major vegan concerns. Wild salmon, for example, are one of the most natural and health promoting foods on earth, providing ESSENTIAL nutrients lacking in the terrestrial food supply. Wild salmon live 95% of their lives as nature intended, and are only caught just as they begin the final weeks of their life cycle. In Bristol Bay, Alaska last year fifty million sockeye salmon returned, a testament to that states successful fisheries management program. 20% of these fish passed freely to the spawning grounds to perpetuate the run, while the rest were 'harvestable surplus' and became some of the last truly wild, naturally 'organic' food on earth. Salmon and other seafood from well regulated fisheries (see MSC.org) is among the most sustainable foods from just about every conceivable perspective. Inputs of land, water, chemicals, veterinary drugs, and labor are minimal or even non existent, Impact on biodiversity is less than the best organic farm, and CO2 contribution is far less than any other meat alternative. Finally, fish has long been known as "brain food" which is certainly something we need a lot more of.
<http://youtube.com/watch?v=6W-Ss5MCRKU>



26. **Carrie Chappell** February 4, 2016 9:28 am Reply

Fantastic article i really couldn't relay my views on the topic better. We too moved to a small farm and started selling direct to those in the city. There is no options you must come to the farm to pick up your meet inforcing not only transparency in what we do but encouraging a connection to the land.

If you don't think we can feed the world using this system you need to check out Joel Salatin at Polyface farms who feeds countless families in his region all with minimal farm land or maybe Allan Savory who has proven that you can increase productive of farms 400% by using livestock as a tool for regeneration.

What about all the land that is not capable of growing crops and vegetables what happens there. Do you just let it turn to desert due to being overgrazed which in many respects is far worse the over grazing. Our grass lands needs a diverse range of animals to ensure its long term success.

Then you can go on about the research that now proves that plants have feelings and also feel pain. Thinking about that you go back to the article we've all hopefully read. Why is it ok to kill plants but not animals?

For those in the city there are places all over the world changing the way food is sourced. When you starting thinking differently you realise there is room for food all over the place. Replace none fruiting trees down your street with fruit and nuts is an easy one.

At the end of the day we are all part of a cycle. We need to accept that and be happy with our part. We can all live our lives treading as lightly as our long lost ancestors with a little bit (or maybe alot) of work in fixing what we've done to this amazing place we call Earth.



27. **Carrie Chappell** February 4, 2016 9:32 am Reply

Sorry that should have been first undergrazed and then overgrazed. Typo and i can not go back and edit.



28. **William Coté** February 4, 2016 3:57 pm Reply

Please define "bad" for me... It was used a lot by the interviewee and if we are truly talking Pirma culture, I feel it's necessary to include our entire linguistic programming into the mix of food and culture, and so on...

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