

If you want to help campaign for animal liberation, contact your local animal rights group and get involved. Distributing information, demonstrations, and vegan outreach events are just a few examples of the activities of many grass-roots animal rights groups. If you can't find one, set one up!

But can't we just ensure these industries treat animals better?

Campaigning for better conditions for the animals can help people to justify the cruelty involved, and actually lead to more suffering altogether. A small decrease in suffering for the animals can lead to a huge increase in demand, meaning more animals suffer.

We are not campaigning for a change in laws, as laws are not in the interest of the animals. Animals are seen as property in law, and that allows the 'owners' to do what they want with them, including causing them pain and killing them. We are campaigning for a change in the way we see animals. We wish for non-human animals to be seen as living, breathing, feeling individuals, rather than the property of humans.

This leaflet was produced by Bristol Animal Rights Collective (BARC)

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Do you believe animals should suffer or die unnecessarily?

There are many different ways that animals are exploited, resulting in billions of animals being tortured and killed unnecessarily. Individually, each one of us contributes to this. We can, however, do something about it. When we look at how they are exploited and the reasons, we often find there are no justifications and their suffering really is unnecessary. Here we will look at just a few of the ways they are exploited...

Vivisection:

More commonly known as animal testing, vivisection was responsible for the death of 3.5 million animals in 2010 in the U.K alone. The substances tested range from cleaning products, such as bleach, to medicines. The animals range from rodents to primates. Most people agree that it is unnecessary and cruel to test cosmetics or cleaning products, but are less certain when it comes to medicine. We seek to dispel the myth that animal testing is necessary, or even helpful, regardless of what is being tested. It is well documented that non-human animals do not have enough biological similarity to humans to give us relevant test results – non-human animals only suffer from 2% of human illnesses. There are many alternatives to animal testing which have enjoyed significantly more success, for example 'cell culture toxicology' has given us accuracy rates of 80-85%, compared to the 5-25% with animal experimentation.

These are just a few statistics to consider, and there is a near endless supply of statistics and facts to expose the claims that vivisection is necessary or helpful as the lies they are.

Clothing:

We take from animals without consent and use the end products to make clothes and furniture. The cruelty involved in these industries is well documented. Foxes and other animals are electrocuted anally, orally and vaginally and have the fur ripped from their backs whilst they are still alive for the production of fur. Cows are hung up by their back legs and have their throats slit, bleeding to death whilst they writhe around on the chain for the production of leather.

For wool, sheep are selectively bred to encourage over-production of wool, resulting in health problems such as over-heating and flystrike, which are not issues for wild sheep. Silk worms are immersed in boiling water while they are in their cocoons so that their cocoons can be used to make silk.

The cruelty of using animals for clothes does not end here, these are only brief examples. There are so many alternatives that perform the roles of all of these in our lives that there is no need for this. There are even good quality alternatives to leather shoes, made from synthetic materials.

Food:

The biggest industry of animal exploitation in the world, killing 56 billion animals every single year! The justifications we use for these are health, human-nature, and land space.

The health argument says we need meat, dairy, and other animal products to be healthy. Contrary to this argument, there is an increasingly large amount of research to link consumption of animal products to heart disease, cancer, osteoporosis and other illnesses. You can get all the nutrients you need from plant based sources, often much more efficiently and in forms that our bodies find easier to digest. It is being suggested more and more that plant-based diets are the healthiest for us.

The human-nature argument suggests that because humans have consumed animal products for thousands of years that they should continue. However, for thousands of years humans have actively discriminated based on gender, ethnicity and other arbitrary differences. This does not make discrimination acceptable, and we have the capacity to change our behaviour.

The belief that we wouldn't have the land-space to feed ourselves on plant based foods neglects the fact that animals are currently consuming a large portion of vegetables we grow, including 95% of the world's soya!

It takes 6kg of plant protein to produce 1kg of animal protein, so by eating animal products we are in actual fact using more land-space.

When all this is taken into account, the only justification we really have for eating animal-based foods is pleasure. Animals are not products; they are living, feeling individuals with an awareness of their existence and their surroundings. They experience positive and negative emotions like any of us, yet by eating them we are prioritising our pleasure over their lives.

Entertainment:

Zoos, circuses and aquariums imprison animals, depriving them of a natural environment for our entertainment. Most captive animals show signs of psychosis, including pacing and self-mutilation. Animals who are made to perform in films, at shows in zoos, or in circuses are often subjected to violence from their trainers and punishment if they fail to perform causing them great distress and pain. We cannot learn anything from studying animals in unnatural environments, or subject to unnatural stimuli.

Animals bred for racing face similar horrors. If they are not fast enough, if they are injured, or if they get too old they are put to death. This means that horses, greyhounds, and other animals bred for racing have very low life expectancies.

The list of alternatives to animal based entertainment is endless, and the educational validity of these businesses is non-existent. Therefore there is no need to exploit animals for entertainment.

How can you make a difference?

The biggest difference anyone can make in the struggle against animal exploitation is going vegan. Being vegan means eating a plant based diet, avoiding products tested on animals, and avoiding animal exploitation in our everyday life. No one gets it 100% right and even the most long-term vegans get it wrong from time to time, but as long as we do our best we can begin to make the changes that will result in a change for the animals, and in it becoming easier to avoid animal exploitation all together.