

Written for the an international humane organization  
by Dr. Michael McCoy, DVM

**Why be a Vegetarian?**

**The story behind being a vegetarian**

When I was in veterinary school one of the large animal rotations was working in a feedlot and packing plant. Cattle, sheep, hogs, chickens and turkeys are all looked at as a commodity. The misery that these animals experience from birth to death is sheer hell. It is one thing to live in a hunting gathering society where there is a true predator prey relationship and a relationship between the hunter and hunted and the land that supports them both but there is a whole new and different scenario in the industrial agricultural segment of society. There is no connection between the market forces that destroy the environment, (water pollution, desertification, soil erosion, wildlife that is trapped poisoned and shot, and the list goes on) create such misery for animals and sanitize the end product in a grocery store. Working on a kill floor is a dehumanizing job in itself.

There is nothing natural about this industry. The animals are force fed grains in feedlots, they stand in rotting manure in front of feed bunks and they are fed antibiotics and hormones to encourage weight gain. This not only translates into misery for the animal but it produces some of the unhealthiest humans on the planet. This diet leads to cardiovascular disease, liver disease, pancreatic problems, weight problems, cancer and other degenerative diseases. My old saying is the way you treat the land and other living creatures is ultimately the way you treat yourself.

**What do I like about being a vegetarian?**

Becoming a vegetarian, changes a person's awareness about animals and the land. It incorporates good character traits into the psyche including respect for life, compassion, empathy and tolerance. As the consciousness goes up in a society, human behavior changes for the better. A tighter bond between animals the land and each other can only make things better. Industrial agriculture is a violent industry and inadvertently promotes violence throughout society. Technology has taken us to a point in human evolution where we can meet all our nutritional needs through a vegetarian diet. The carrying capacity of the earth can support 2 to 2.5 billion people using a diet high in animal protein such as a typical US diet. There are nearly 8 billion people on this planet so people can draw their own conclusions.

**What are the benefits to my wife my friends my community and me?**

Vegetarianism leads to better health, more compassion, respect, empathy and tolerance, less violence and a better society in general. Vegetarianism raises the level of consciousness in society and in all members of society. A true connectedness begins to develop and with that the true development of a spiritual dimension. So much of our time

is wasted on “outer development” while our “inner needs” are never recognized let alone developed. I started meditating in 1973 and the concept of vegetarianism went along with this experience. I have had an organic vegetable garden for about the same length of time. For me there is a close relationship between the health and welfare of animals, humans, the earth, vegetarianism, meditation, organic gardening, composting and recycling.

**Is my wife a vegetarian?**

She is almost a vegetarian. We have had significant discussions about the subject.

**Do we have kids?**

No. There is a short version of a long story. Two friends and I started Project Wildlife (a wildlife rescue organization) 37 years ago. Most of the injuries and deaths of wildlife were human caused. This in addition to a rapidly growing human population prompted one of the other men working on the project and myself to question having children. As a result, we had vasectomies. The name of the Doctor was Dr. Repair and he traded services with me. I vasectomized his dog and he returned the favor!

It worked out well. Our time and energy went into the protection of animals and the land rather than raising kids. Any financial inheritance we have will be used to acquire land for habitat protection thus protecting places where other species will be able to live free from threat of development and human impact on their lives.