

Cruelty-Free Consumption in New Zealand:
**A National Report on the
Perspectives and Experiences of Vegetarians
& Other Ethical Consumers**

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This research is part of a larger Marsden project on human-animal interactions in New Zealand (*Kararehe: Animals in New Zealand Art, Literature and Everyday Culture*). We are grateful to the Royal Society of New Zealand for supporting the *Kararehe* project.

SYNOPSIS (BRIEF REPORT)

CRUELTY-FREE CONSUMPTION IN NEW ZEALAND:

A NATIONAL REPORT ON THE PERSPECTIVES & EXPERIENCES OF VEGETARIANS AND OTHER ETHICAL CONSUMERS

This survey asked volunteers who practiced 'cruelty-free' consumption about their formative experiences with animals, opinions on New Zealand's image in relation to animals and the environment, viewpoints on various products (meat, milk, eggs, leather, and possum fur) and practices involving animals (such as battery farming, hunting and fishing, horse racing, rodeos, A & P shows, and Wild Foods Festivals).

157 individuals took part: 120 women and 37 men. 98 women and 24 men were born and raised in New Zealand; 22 women and 13 men were immigrants to this country.

Key Findings

Rejecting New Zealand's 'clean, green' image

A prominent learning curve occurred for many participants from childhood/adolescence to adulthood, one that involved equating the meat which they ate with the animals that inhabited their lives in other ways. Often this realization was precipitated by some traumatic event involving animals: the slaughter of a beloved farm pet; observations of cruelty to animals; fishing or hunting experiences; animal dissection in school; or some other antecedent. This occurred earlier for some than others: some participants remembered taking part themselves in slaughter as children and young adults without much compunction, whereas others rejected this even at a young age.

Accompanying this realization was a reappraisal of New Zealand. An overwhelming number of respondents stated that the "clean, green image" that they held of New Zealand during their childhood or prior to immigrating here, had changed in negative or detrimental ways as they grew older, or lived here longer. The sense of increasing disillusionment about this country was attributed to an awareness of animal farming practices here; as well as a greater understanding of the links between animal exploitation and the New Zealand economy.

The government/industrial farming/corporate bodies were perceived as being callous with respect to concerns about animal welfare. Many participants believed these domains viewed farmed animals only as 'stock units' and were more concerned with making money than with the methods utilized in producing that money (eg with the ongoing existence of battery farming and sow crates, and with breeding sheep to give birth in the winter). Some participants believed that milk and meat advertising was "propaganda" aimed at reinforcing New Zealanders' beliefs about the necessity for animal products and hence at renewing their commitment to purchasing such products.

Continuum of ethical consumption

There were gradations of concern about animal welfare and ‘animal rights’ amongst participants. Even those who ate meat expressed concern about the cruelty involved in factory farming and vivisection, and the neglect and/or abuse that is often associated with pet-keeping. Pescetarians and meat-eaters preferred to eat organic or non-intensively farmed meat, and avoided eggs from battery farms, pig meat produced in unethical environments, and fish that had been caught via trawl fishing. From there, things became more complicated, with some vegetarians avoiding all forms of flesh, but eating eggs and dairy; others eating only free range eggs, but not dairy (largely because of farming methods involved in the production of dairy products); others eating dairy products, but avoiding eggs (mainly because of ‘what’ eggs are); and vegans attempting to avoid all animal-derived products. Few mentioned – or seemed aware of – the treatment of broiler chickens in New Zealand (ie chickens bred and farmed for meat rather than eggs).

A group of participants drew attention to another level of concern that goes beyond those animals typically consumed within Western cultures: these people extended their awareness to those creatures that are ‘invisible’ or inconsequential to the meat industry (birds, insects, worms, hedgehogs etc) and even mammals like deer, possums, wallabies and chamois that are classified as ‘exotics’ or ‘pests’ within mainstream environmentalist narratives.

The reasons for embracing vegetarianism were varied. Participants argued against meat-eating on ethical, environmental, metaphysical/spiritual, economic and health-related grounds. Ethically speaking, most participants objected to the practices and procedures involved in farming, but some also questioned the ethical justification for killing an animal in the first place, irrespective of the methods involved.

Many participants (practising GPs among them) argued that meat-eating is a health risk; they associated meat consumption with heart disease and bowel cancer and argued that the meat industry is “backed by a powerful lobby group” in New Zealand which promotes meat as humans’ primary source of protein, when there are healthier alternatives available. Over and above the detrimental effects on the health of the individual, participants also associated meat production with the unhealthy state of the planet: participants worried about the effluent and pesticide contamination of rivers, and about the tremendous historic destruction of native bush for the establishment of the farms on which New Zealand’s stock now graze.

Devoted to compassion and non-violence

The ethical consumers in this study were by and large highly conscious and critical thinkers who questioned the social, economic and cultural norms of the dominant culture. This active thinking extended into the political arena: participants questioned government policy, environmental policy and the effectiveness of animal protection policies. This constant examining took a considerable amount of energy, time and money. The most committed vegans and vegetarians went to great lengths to consume ethically; this involved reading ingredients on all products, phoning companies, making multiple shopping stops to get animal-friendly products, often travelling greater distances to get to ethical shops, and being willing to spend extra money on cruelty-free consumables.

In some ways, the participants in this study have shown that it is almost impossible to live a 100% 'cruelty-free' lifestyle in New Zealand, although this doesn't negate in their eyes the necessity of trying to achieve something as close to this as possible. These people embraced a culture of constant learning in order to become aware of the pervasive use of animals and thus minimize harm through that awareness.

An interest in animal rights was often accompanied by other ethical concerns. Many participants were actively engaged in human rights movements, sponsoring disadvantaged children, addressing environmental degradation, and the effects of capitalism on the Third World.

Unanimous opposition to factory farming

Participants expressed unanimous opposition to the intensive farming in New Zealand of animals such as chickens, turkeys, pigs, rabbits, salmon, ducks, quail, and other game-birds. This was the single issue uniting all respondents – meat-eaters to strict vegans – and therefore, in this study at least, free range constituted a 'bottom line' of ethical consumption in New Zealand.

Divided over possums

A question asking about views on possum fur prompted the clearest division in responses across participants: those opposed to the slaughter of possums (usually, but not always, vegans primarily identifying as animal rights supporters) versus those in favour of possum killing in New Zealand (usually, but not always, vegetarians and non-vegetarians identifying as greenies). A further issue for those who supported killing was whether or not possum fur should be commodified. Some were concerned that the possum market could eventually expand here to include fur produced from intensively farmed possums and/or encourage fur farming of other mammals. Responses to the possum issue reflected a broader privileging across surveys of native over introduced species.

Women against the dairy industry

Attitudes to milk largely depended on the extent of knowledge about dairy farming and milk production. Ovo-lacto and lacto-vegetarians were more likely to comment that cows' milk was healthy for humans, and to believe dairy cows were well-treated. Some admitted they were vaguely aware of ethical concerns about dairy farming but chose not to explore these too carefully. Vegans (as well as some ovo-vegetarians) expressed dismay at the exploitation of the reproductive lives of female animals by the dairy industry, namely through enforced pregnancies, prolonged lactation, and the practice of separating cows from newly born calves. Both male and female participants were opposed to the immediate culling of newly hatched male chickens (in egg farming) and bobby calves (in dairy farming).

Dilemmas for vegans

Vegan participants identified several key dilemmas when attempting to maintain strict practices of ethical consumption. Finding vegan shoes was the most cited concern, with non-leather alternatives being viewed as more expensive, as well as less comfortable (and

less practical for tramping and certain types of work). For those who lived with carnivorous nonhuman friends, the purchasing of petfood was a big “compromise” (especially when dogs and cats refused vegan petfood alternatives). Alcohol (mainly wine and beer) and medications were other items some vegans unhappily compromised on. Vegans were keenly aware of, and explicit about, these inconsistencies.

Growing acceptance of vegetarianism versus continued marginalization of vegetarians

The majority of participants expressed an opinion that vegetarianism had become more widespread and mainstream in recent years. Numerous individuals observed the increasing availability of vegetarian/vegan dining options and specialty groceries (particularly prominent within urban areas). Nevertheless, most participants also argued that vegetarians remained marginalized within New Zealand culture. These men and women were dissatisfied with limited dining opportunities and with the difficulties involved in maintaining a vegetarian diet in an overwhelmingly carnivorous culture. Several noted how time consuming it is to try and get exact information on ingredients and wished a stricter labeling of foods was enforced. Many expressed that they felt they existed on the fringes of New Zealand dominant culture (“I am a minority”; “I feel like a freak”), and numerous people cited the (sometimes good-natured, sometimes genuinely argumentative) taunts they received at the hands of their co-workers and meat-eating associates.

Immigrants to New Zealand commented that this country’s commitment to animal welfare and vegetarianism is far behind other developed countries. Several cited the superior treatment of farm animals in places such as Switzerland (where shelter is provided in cold weather). Participants from – or who had lived in – the United Kingdom were especially disappointed by New Zealand’s “backwardness” in accommodating veganism and vegetarianism. One participant stated that New Zealand was “at least 10 years behind Britain” where vegan foods and apparel are much more readily available.

Potential for ‘niche markets’ targeting ethical consumers

Participants (largely inadvertently) identified a number of consumer gaps and niche markets waiting to be tapped by entrepreneurial ‘cruelty-free’ business people. These include: cruelty-free leather (from animals who have died naturally); vegetarian/vegan takeaways; more pure vegetarian restaurants, vegan/vegetarian packaged and frozen meals; and non-leather alternatives for footwear.

REPORT IN FULL

Introduction

This survey study, which was conducted between August and December 2006, explored the perspectives and experiences of those who challenge orthodox attitudes in New Zealand to the use and consumption of animals. It was undertaken as part of a larger bicultural project on human-animal relations in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand (*Kararehe: Animals in New Zealand Art, Literature and Everyday Culture: Armstrong, Potts & Brown*).¹ For this aspect of the *Kararehe* project, information was sought about counter-cultural beliefs and practices regarding animal use and consumption in New Zealand. The opinions and experiences of those who oppose animal farming, the eating of animals, and the exploitation of animals more generally, have, to date, been under-investigated in the context of New Zealand; and their viewpoints are largely absent from analyses or discussions focusing on national identity and ‘kiwi’ culture. This report therefore aims to redress some of the deficits in knowledge regarding non-mainstream consumers in this country.

Methodology

Recruitment

Survey respondents were recruited by word of mouth, as well as through organizations such as Save Animals From Exploitation (SAFE), the NZ Vegetarian Society, The Vegan Society of NZ (VEGANZ), and Pets on the Net. These groups and organizations were considered appropriate forums to locate individuals whose views differed substantially from the majority of New Zealanders when it came to animal consumption.

Survey forms were sent via email or post to those who volunteered to take part. 80% (157) of those who requested to participate returned completed surveys by the specified deadline. This high response rate is important to note, given surveys were 14 pages long and required detailed written answers to certain questions, topics and issues. While the time and thought involved in completing surveys may have deterred some from volunteering, many participants commented that the process had been personally worthwhile and thought-provoking for them.

Survey content

Two versions of the survey were designed: both were titled: “Consumer Culture and the Use of Animals in Aotearoa New Zealand”. One version catered for those who had been born and raised in New Zealand; another (the ‘tauiwi’ version) catered for participants who had lived elsewhere before emigrating to this country.

Each survey consisted of 4 key sections:

Section 1 focused on “Growing up in New Zealand” or “Growing up outside New Zealand” (‘tauiwi’ version). Participants were asked about formative experiences with animals; and to contrast their early childhood (or first) images of New Zealand with later (or current) perceptions of this country.

¹ This project is supported by a Royal Society of New Zealand Marsden grant.

Section 2 concentrated on “The use of animals in New Zealand”, and asked about attitudes and practices related to the consumption of animals. Participants were invited to comment on a range of animal-derived products such as meat, milk, eggs, leather, and possum fur. Opinions were also sought on pet-keeping, the use of animals for entertainment (horse-racing, rodeos, Wild Foods Festivals, A & P shows), and practices such as battery farming, hunting and fishing.

Section 3 investigated “Attitudes to animals and social identity”. Participants were asked how their attitudes to animals were influenced by belief systems (ethical, political, moral, spiritual etc), nationality, ethnicity, gender, age, and occupation. They were also questioned on how their beliefs about animals affected where they lived, who they lived with, socialized with, and were (or would want to be) in relationships with. In addition, participants were asked about affiliation to social or political groups (eg environmentalist, animal rights, human rights, anti-globalization, goth, punk etc); how they felt their perspectives fitted into mainstream New Zealand culture; and what difficulties they encountered living in this country due to their alternative beliefs and modes of consumption.

At the end of the survey (section 4), participants were given the opportunity to create a new (or preferred) image of New Zealand and this country’s relationship to animals.

Analysis

Surveys were grouped according to the gender of participants; and then according to status as ‘NZ born and raised’ or ‘tauiwi’. Each individual survey was allocated a number within its gender group.

A thematic analysis (involving multiple readings of individual surveys) was conducted by the authors of this report, concentrating on the ideas, issues and concerns raised by participants in relation to the topics posed in the survey.

This report is based on that analysis, and comprises 2 key parts:

Part 1 presents an overview of participants’ details; part 2 involves a descriptive analysis of their responses (as such, participants’ own accounts – presented more or less verbatim – shape the direction and content of the second part of this report).

PART 1

DETAILS OF PARTICIPANTS

Overview

NZ Born/Tauivi

NZ born & raised = 78%

Tauivi (childhood outside NZ) = 22%

Gender

Women = 77%

Men = 23%

Age

Women:

Range = 14-85

Median = 39

Mean = 39

Men:

Range = 19-71

Median = 45

Mean = 44

Location

Living in North Island = 66%

Living in South Island = 34%

Participants

	Female	Male	
Tauivi (born and raised elsewhere):	22	13	(35)
NZ born & raised:	98	24	(122)
	<hr/>		
Total	120	37	(157)

Total participants = 157

Tauwiwi ($n = 35$)

Original home:

UK	USA	Australia	Germany	South Africa	Switzerland	Singapore	Netherlands
18	5	4	4	1	1	1	1

UK: England = 16 (1 x born in Iran); Scotland = 2

Status of animal consumption

Participants were categorized according to International Vegetarian Union definitions.

Vegetarian (www.ivu.org/faq/definitions.html)

Vegan: excludes animal flesh and other animal-derived products (including gelatine, honey etc). Also avoids non-dietary products such as leather, silk, wool, lanolin.

Ovo-lacto vegetarian: excludes animal flesh, eats eggs and dairy products.

Ovo-vegetarian: excludes animal flesh, eats eggs, no dairy.

Lacto-vegetarian: excludes animal flesh, consumes dairy products, no eggs.

Flesh-eating

Pescetarian: consumes fish; excludes red meat, poultry; may also consume dairy products (*pesco-lacto*) and/or eggs (*pesco-ovo-lacto*; *pesco-ovo*).

Meat-eater: consumes red and white meats +/- dairy products, eggs.

Vegetarian Participants

Vegans	38%
Ovo-lacto vegetarians	37%
Ovo-vegetarians	7.5%
Lacto-vegetarians	7.5%

Flesh-eating Participants

Pescetarian ²	5%
Meat-eater	5%

² Under International Vegetarian Union definitions, those who consume fish are not classified as vegetarians. However, it is important to note that those in this study who ate fish (and no other animal flesh) personally identified as vegetarians.

Vegans³

	Tauwi	NZ born and raised	
Female	11	33	(44)
Male	5	11	(16)
<hr/>			
Total vegan:	16	44	(60)

Vegetarians

	Ovo		Lacto		Ovo-lacto		
	Tauwi	NZ born	Tauwi	NZ born	Tauwi	NZ born	
Female	2	7	2	8	5	37	(61)
Male	2	1	2	0	4	11	(20)
<hr/>							
Totals:	4	8	4	8	9	48	(81)

Total ovo-vegetarian = 4 (tauwi) + 8 (NZ born) = 12
 Total lacto-vegetarian = 4 (tauwi) + 8 (NZ born) = 12
 Total ovo-lacto vegetarian = 9 (tauwi) + 48 (NZ born) = 57

Total vegetarians (excluding vegans) = 81⁴

³ A sub-category of 'strict vegan' was noted. Strict vegans = 47 [4 men & 9 women (tauwi) + 6 men & 28 women (NZ born and raised)].

Note: Non-strict vegans stated they may eat animal products when out, or if contained in some other food; or that they sometimes knowingly consumed a product like leather or wool or chocolate. However, they generally avoided all consumption (ie ingestion) of meat, chicken, fish, eggs, dairy etc.

⁴ Eight participants were raised vegetarian (6 women & 2 men). Bar one woman, these people remained lifelong vegetarians.

Pescetarians (consume fish, not red meat or chicken)

	Pesco ovo-lacto		Pesco-ovo		
	Tauiwi	NZ born	Tauiwi	NZ born	
Female	-	5	1	1	(7)
Male	-	1	-	-	(1)
<hr/>					
Totals:	0	6	1	1	(8)

Total pesco-ovo-lacto = 6 (NZ born)
 Total pesco-ovo = 1 (tauwi) + 1 (NZ born) = 2

Total pescetarians = 8

Meat-eaters (consume red and/or white meats)

	Red & white meat (+ dairy & eggs)		White meat only (+ dairy & eggs)		
	Tauiwi	NZ born	Tauiwi	NZ born	
Female	1	6	-	1	(8)
Male	-	-	-	-	(0)
<hr/>					
Totals:	1	6	0	1	(8)

Red and white meat (+ dairy and eggs) = 1 (tauwi) + 6 (NZ born) = 7
 White meat (+ dairy and eggs) = 1 (NZ born)

Total meat eaters = 8

No meat eaters in the study were men.

Summary

Vegans	Vegetarians	Pescetarians	Meat eaters	
60	81	8	8	(157)

Reasons for non-consumption of animal products

Ethical:

Women = 65%

Men = 15%

Spiritual:

Women = 17%

Men = 6%

Environmental:

Women = 8%

Men = 4%

There is some overlap as several participants cited more than one reason.

NZ locations of participants

Participants came from throughout New Zealand (Kaitaia to Invercargill). The majority now lived in urban environments, although a significant number had grown up on or around farms.

North Island

Kaitaia = 1

Waipu (rural) = 1

Auckland = 53

Waiuku (rural) = 1

Raglan = 1

Hamilton = 5

Cambridge = 1

Thames = 1

Papamoa = 1

Rotorua = 1

Napier = 1

New Plymouth = 2

Manawatu (rural) = 1

Wanganui = 1

Levin (rural) = 1

Kapiti Coast = 7

Carterton = 1

Porirua = 2

Upper Hutt = 2

Lower Hutt = 1

Wellington = 19

104 North Island participants

South Island

Marlborough Sounds (rural) = 1
Nelson = 1
Westland (semi-rural) = 2
Clarence Valley (rural) = 1
Canterbury (semi-rural) = 2
Christchurch = 35
Banks Peninsula (rural) = 1
Oamaru = 1
Dunedin = 8
Invercargill = 1

53 South Island participants

Occupations

Range (in no particular order):

Artist
Engineer
School student
University/Polytechnic student
Electronics technician
Quantity surveyor
Uni lecturer (Statistics, Psychology, Engineering, Cultural Studies, English, Social Anthropology, Indian Religion and Philosophy)
Social science researcher
Drummer
Hospital orderly
Nurse
Media and advertising
Gay rights advocacy
Mail sorter
Zoologist
General Practitioner
Paediatrician
Medical Specialist
Student veterinarian
Architect
Geographer
Self employed
Community sustainability and economic development
Journalist
Radio programme manager & producer
Teacher (primary and secondary)
Finance profession
Web designer

Graphic designer
Lawyer
Massage therapist
Social worker
Caring profession
Voluntary work
Vegetarian farmer
Dairy farmer
Natural health practitioner
Animal sanctuary owner
RSPCA inspector
Employed in local government
Health promotion
Business person
Landscape architect
Thespian
Photoshop retoucher
Animal advocacy
Fitness instructor
Historian
Photographer
Mother
TV editor
Sales rep
Customer services rep
Chef
Legal secretary
Vet nurse
Holistic animal therapist
Clinical psychologist
Environmental management
Librarian
Owner/manager vegetarian café
NGO work
Café work
Health worker
Dietician
Midwife
Biologist
Writer/author
Medical receptionist
School resource person
Health and Safety Advisor
Animal rehomer
Natural health therapist
Nurse tutor
Owner of 2nd hand bookshop
Retired

Ethnicity

Of those who identified as members of a particular ethnic group, the majority were white/European or Pakeha. No one identified as Maori or Pasifika.

Women:

White/European = 40

Pakeha = 17

Not stated or saw no influence = 59

Asian New Zealander (from Singapore) = 1

Iranian-born = 1

Gypsy = 1

Self-identified 'Cultural Hybrid' = 1

Men:

White/European = 8

Pakeha = 6

Not stated or saw no influence = 21

Conscientious objector ("I am not these labels") = 2

Sexuality

The majority of participants referred to heterosexual relationships (while not necessarily identifying as heterosexual). Three men identified as gay and four women identified as lesbian. These four women (all vegan) indicated there was a connection between being lesbian and engaging in cruelty free consumption. A smaller number of participants did not mention relationships with either men or women.

PART 2

ANALYSIS OF SURVEY RESPONSES

This part of the report involves a descriptive analysis of survey responses. It is divided into 4 sections, corresponding with the 4 main sections contained in the survey: (1) images and experiences of New Zealand relating to animals and human-animal relations; (2) the use of animals in New Zealand (which focuses on different modes of exploitation and consumption); (3) attitudes to animals and social identity; and (4) preferred images of a 'new' or 'future' New Zealand.

In general, participants' quotes appear unamended in this report (in order to provide a fuller picture). In some cases, where repetition of an idea, words or phrases occurred, portions have been cut from a quote. A deletion from quoted material is indicated by the presence of three consecutive dots (...); the presence of word(s) contained in square brackets [] indicates a longer phrase has been condensed.

The prefix 'F100' before quoted material signals this is an extract from the survey of female participant, number 100. (Similarly, 'M15' connotes material from the survey of male participant, number 15). Information about a participant's age, location, and categorization as vegan, vegetarian, pescetarian or meat-eater, appears in brackets after quoted material.

SECTION 1

IMAGES AND EXPERIENCES OF ANIMALS AND HUMAN-ANIMAL RELATIONS IN NEW ZEALAND

This section covers (i) early influences on participants' understandings of – and attitudes towards – animals; and (ii) participants' changing views about New Zealand and this country's relationship to animals (from childhood to adulthood if born and raised here; or, if immigrants, pre-arrival versus post-arrival impressions of New Zealand).

(i) Early influences: Growing up in New Zealand (and elsewhere)

Informants were asked what kinds of images, stories, and experiences about animals affected them when they were growing up in New Zealand and abroad. Seven key spheres of influence on early perceptions of human-animal relations were identified that would impact on later beliefs and practices pertaining to consumption of animals. Some early life events heralded the beginning of – or marked the turning point to - becoming vegetarian. These 7 areas include: children's books and media; experiences of farm-life and farming practices; schools experiences; relationships with companion animals (and early affection for animals); fish, lobster and chicken stories; the impact of personally harming or killing animals as children; and being raised vegetarian.

Children's books and media

Children's books, movies, TV programmes, and natural and/or wildlife documentaries impacted on understandings of, interactions with, and practices related to animals. In general, two kinds of books were noted as significant: those that portrayed animals' lives as safe, friendly and happy; and those that highlighted the less sanguine side of nature, or the realities of animal lives in science and/or farming. The former type of book – which generally featured sensationally anthropomorphic depictions of animals talking, thinking and feeling like humans, wearing human clothing, and interacting in human ways – was summed up by one woman: “[These books] gave me the impression that all animals lived wonderful, happy lives”. However, as one man put it, these kinds of animal stories “didn't resonate with the practice of eating meat”:

M29: I was read and read stories about animals on farms that cared for each other and had personalities – but then was asked to eat meat made from these same cute cuddly animals that in the books could talk. This was a conflict I couldn't resolve in my head at the time. [58, ovo-vegetarian, Kaitia]

F85: I grew up in a small NZ town and dairy farming was one of the mainstays of rural life. As a child I was not aware of the cruel farming practices (mother-baby separation, castration, mulesing, inadequate shelter, and the severe confinement caused by factory farms). I remember story books as portraying animals as wanting to “help” – ie “giving us” their milk to drink, or wool to keep us warm. [46, pescetarian (ovo-lacto), rural Canterbury]

The second kind of book made a very different impression, sometimes described as life-changing (with respect to attitudes towards animals). These books either focused on the realities of farmed (or working) animals' lives (and fates) from an anthropomorphized perspective (eg, *Charlotte's Web* and *Black Beauty*), or portrayed the bleak existences of wild or experimental animals from the perspectives of animal characters (containing less

anthropomorphic and more misanthropic narratives). Such books included *Watership Down* and the *Plague Dogs*.

F63: I was against vivisection from around 10 years when I read *The Plague Dogs* – that put me off vivisection completely and I remember doing speeches and essays about this in school around 11 or 12 years old. [36, vegan, Dunedin]

F28: I was read a book called *Quest for the Faradann* when I was 10 or so, and this book told of the plight of animals from the point of view of animals, and showed me the cruelty that dominated our culture and my life. From that moment I wanted to become a vegetarian and animal friend ... [22, vegan, Auckland]

Other books noted to be influential included *Aesop's Fables*, *Old Yeller*, *Sounder*, *Winnie the Pooh*, *Brambly Hedge*, *Little Grey Rabbit*, *Pookie*, *Toad of Toad Hall*, *Mrs Frisby and the Rats of Nimb*, *My Friend Flicka*, *The Jungle Book*, Dr Seuss' *Lorax*, and various Beatrix Potter stories. In a local context, participants recalled books with idealized stories of farm-life and farmed animals. *Reni the Red Deer*, *Footrot Flats* cartoons, and *Hairy Maclary* books were particularly popular.

Visual media mentioned included Walt Disney movies (*Bambi* and *Dumbo*), and children's television shows like *Flipper*, *Lassie*, *Gentle Ben*, *Mr Ed*, *Felix the Cat*, *Pinky and Perky*, *Skippy the Bush Kangaroo*, and *Pippi Longstocking*. Nature and wildlife documentaries, such as David Attenborough's *Our World* and *National Geographic* documentaries, also shaped participants' perceptions of nonhuman animals. One man, originally from Florida, mentioned the significance of *The Hellstrom Chronicle*, a documentary portraying "the non-stop violence" of insect life; and one woman was especially affected by an episode of the reality TV series *Survivor* during which a man killed a chicken after teasing the women contestants who had been caring for this hen. Another woman recalled the impact of watching animals slaughtered on a local farming programme when she was 4 years old: "I refused to eat meat from that moment on".

Local celebrities and iconic 'home-grown' movies and TV programmes impacting on participants' ideas about animals – and their place in Aotearoa – included rural figures such as Fred Dagg and Barry Crump, the *Cheesedale* ads, *Country Calendar*, a series about sheep-dog trials, and the film, *Footrot Flats*.

Experiences of farm-life and farming practices

51 women and 3 men taking part in this study had either grown up on farms or were closely associated with farms owned by family, friends or neighbours. Six participants had sought employment on farms when they were teenagers or young adults.

A few women stated that farm-life had facilitated an appreciation of animals:

F29: I grew up on a farm and we always had animals: horses, goats, dog, cat, guinea pigs, chickens ... I did not have negative experiences with animals besides the odd fall from a horse. These experiences have influenced the love of animals I still have today. [22, pescetarian (ovo-lacto), Auckland]

However, the majority of participants who had grown up on or around family farms described negative, disturbing, and even traumatic farm experiences as children or teenagers. Mostly, these related to pragmatics of farm life such as the slaughter of chickens and other animals for food, the separation of cows from newborn calves (on

dairy farms), the culling of animals considered to be pests, and various other farming practices (perceived as cruel or distressing by these participants):

F104: As a 4 year old, I saw adult male family members killing chooks for a roast dinner. For years afterwards had nightmares about headless chooks coming to get me. I woke the household with screams ... [58, lacto-vegetarian, rural Manawatu]

F94: I was terribly distressed by the bobby calves waiting for the truck to take them to the works for slaughter as a child. I could identify with them and appreciate their new and beautiful life and couldn't accept that they should be taken from their mothers and destroyed. Similarly, seeing the anger and distress of a cow whose calf was being taken from her was terrible to witness, and endure the guilt of afterwards. I knew it was wrong. These animals told us so and my family ignored it for reasons I found unjustifiable, unforgivable. [50, lacto-vegetarian, Oamaru]

F49: Friends of the family had a farm we would visit from time to time. One day I recall the farmer returning after clearing his possum traps. One of the dead possums was a female and had a pouch full of babies. The farmer removed the tiny pink babies, placed them on the ground in front of us and stomped on them. [39, vegan, Christchurch]

F48: As a young child I saw many farming practices that were harmful to the animals. Some examples of this include motorbikes being rammed at cows back legs to get them moving, instruments being put up their backsides to stop them kicking in the shed. I remember always being upset by these practices and it made me mad at my father for doing it ... [27, vegan, Christchurch]

Some reported that certain rural attitudes and practices had prompted them to think more about the use of animals in New Zealand:

F96: I was shocked at times by the brutality of farming. I used to help in the woolshed and was sickened if there was a rough shearer who cut the sheep. And I was frightened when one of the dogs, when we were mustering, bit the sheep and harried them. This was my whole image of New Zealand as a child ... I became convinced as a young woman that the violence endemic in New Zealand is related to the farming and meat and dairy industry, and its inherent brutality. [53, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Wellington]

F69: A major episode on a friend's farm affected me greatly to the point of deciding I wanted to be vegetarian at age 11. I came across her father and the farm hand de-hairing a dead pig in a bath of scalding water. Rolling it backwards and forwards with big chains. I was very horrified having never really seen a whole carcass before ... Forced me to think about what was really happening to the animals that ended up on our plates. [39, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Thames]

A contradictory attitude towards 'pet' animals versus 'edible' animals was commonly noted by those brought up on – or frequent visitors to – farms:

F104: When I was growing up, some farming families ate pet lambs and calves. My mother would relate how friends had killed their pet lamb, roasted it, then had trouble eating because with every mouthful they thought 'Joey'. My mother told this as a funny story. Families who killed and ate a pet certainly weren't looked down on but were admired as hard men and women. They weren't sentimental about animals. [58, lacto-vegetarian, rural Manawatu]

F67: My aunt and uncle had a dairy farm [where] we would spend our school holidays. My cousins all had pet calves which they took to 'calf day' at school. I could not understand how they could have a pet, name it, raise it by hand, take it to school to show off, and then send it to the freezing works when it got big enough ... It made me really sad and angry with them. They saw animals as just something to use. [37, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

Participants raised on farms frequently reported how the relinquishment of a 'pet' sheep, cow, pig or chicken (usually for the purpose of food) had caused great distress, marking for some the turn towards – and continued motivation for – a life refusing meat:

F68: I [viewed farm] animals as friends rather than food sources. Got to know their temperaments, personalities – saw them as unique life forms ... My parents were meat eaters – father killed pigs and sheep for the family table. Saw sheep having their throats slit, guts etc – left an impression upon me as to the brutality of killing ... I ate meat products while with my parents ... however, the seeds of vegetarianism had been planted for me. [39, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Cambridge]

F83: [There was a] difference between pets and farm animals. Family ate meat, grew and slaughtered animals for meat ... chickens, ducks, sheep... I saw tails docked off cows and lambs, dogs whipped and semi-starved, stock left out in areas without shelter from storm or sun, stock trucks go off to market. I accepted it as fait accompli and gave my pets another hug ... When at the age of 12 my pet lamb was taken to the works, I decided I would not eat my friends as soon as I was away from parental influence, ie when I left home. [45, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch]

F48: As a child I also had a pet cow which I used to visit every day after school, this cow was taken away from me when we moved off the farm which is something I never forgave my parents for and she is my motivation to always continue with vegetarianism and animal activism. [27, vegan, Christchurch]

As the above narratives indicate, a change to vegetarianism was deferred by some participants from farms until they were independent of parents. In several cases, attempts to become vegetarian prior to adulthood (and leaving the farm) resulted in coercion and/or enforced meat-eating by family members:

F104: My parents didn't know what to do about my de facto vegetarianism. They decided I must be 'highly strung' ... One of [my mother's] friends must have advised her to sit me on her knee & spoon-feed the wretched meat... [58, lacto-vegetarian, rural Manawatu]

F11: Tried to go vegetarian (although I didn't know the word then), but was made to eat minimal amounts of meat by my parents. I used to wretch and cry. [42, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch, originally from the UK]

Often noted in farm narratives was a sense of powerlessness as a young person when facing animal deaths or suffering. Some participants reported they had not known how to intervene to prevent situations they found unacceptable:

M29: My worst experience was on [the farm] when my father and his farmer friend shot and killed a horse for food for the farm dogs. It was one of the worst if not the worst experience of my life up until that time in terms of how terrible it seemed to me. One minute a living breathing big brown horse – and then in an instant a dead lifeless helpless body. I couldn't say anything – not that they told me not to but I just couldn't for some reason – I think I was too powerless as a young person to think I could reason with them. It was all so casual. [58, ovo-vegetarian, Kaitiaia]

F71: I grew up on a dairy farm in Taranaki. [I remember] hearing about a cow on our farm that was stuck – or ill or injured – sitting on an electric fence for 12 or 24 hours or more. This did worry me but I felt pretty useless. [39, vegan, Wellington]

Conversely, there were also stories demonstrating defiance and/or subversion when confronting farm practices understood to be cruel:

M28: At around the age of twelve I spent the Christmas holidays on the outskirts of Napier. I went for a long walk into the county by myself and came across a bobby calf in a crate on the kerbside. I remember being greatly upset as I knew it was to be picked up and taken to the meat works. There was a red flag sticking out of the crate which I took down. [56, vegan, Hamilton]

Sometimes when one's perspective on animals was fundamentally incompatible with the family's central attitude, this caused tension – a sense of 'not belonging' – and even anguish:

F84: My grandparents (my mother's parents) – who are/were very caring people, very ethical in most ways – had a completely utilitarian view towards animals like cows and sheep and pigs. They, and the people in that context, found it completely acceptable to go out and slit the throat of a cow so that they could eat it. I couldn't understand how this could be, and found it completely alien and impossible. [46, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

F94: My farming family were often kind and caring toward their domestic animals, showing affection to dogs, cats, dairy cows, rearing calves, chickens, ducks etc. I could not comprehend the double standard they showed – on the one hand, kindness, and on the other, cruelty. Because I loved my family and needed them to love and care for me, I remember harbouring my critical opinion of their cruelty, and keeping it as a burning shameful secret. I also secretly felt mistrust of them on a personal level in that the dark cruel side could turn on me at any time and so I needed to always be nice and sweet to them. I remember thinking that if they knew that I disagreed with them, they could just as easily cruelly spurn or injure me. [50, lacto-vegetarian, Oamaru]

School experiences

Some of the more graphic accounts of animal abuse and slaughter witnessed by participants as children were associated with their experiences of school. For example, several urban-raised adults reported having been taken by their schools around ages 7-10 on farm visits, or to freezing works, where they were then subjected to animal killings. Some resisted these experiences at the time – or later attempted to refuse meat - and were chagrined by teachers or parents. Others talked about how such incidents are now hard to remember in detail, with one woman suggesting that “dissociation” is probably a useful way of coping with the brutality of such events:

F11: At age 9 in Ashburton, I was taken on a school field trip to the local freezing works. Saw everything in graphic detail and was disgusted. Made a deep impression and connection with meat consumption, especially as we were taken afterwards to a BBQ at a local farmer's. Sausages? No thanks. [42, vegan, Christchurch, originally from the UK]

F52: Farming stories and images are the ones I remember most when I think back to being a kid ... One in particular sticks out about 7ish, the class standing in a paddock looking at the cute sheep. The farmer says “pick out your favourite”, we all point “that one the cute fluffy one”; the farmer grabs it and takes it to this weird white shed. And while we are all standing there giggling and patting the cute sheep, he slits its throat ... I remember thinking what's all that green stuff, can't remember anything after that... [30, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Wellington]

F39: On one standard 4 camp everyone was taken to see a live sheep being slaughtered. My friend and I were allowed to wait at the gate of the farm. All the kids came back excited and talking about it. I didn't understand how this was a normal and even fun experience for them. Also on that camp there were sing-along songs about a cat getting run over. My friend and I got upset when everyone was singing and the teacher told us not to be so silly. [27, pescetarian (ovo-lacto), Auckland]

F84: One other ghastly memory stands out from my teenage years. As a fund-raising thing for a school trip when I was in the 6th form we all went “chicken picking” ... This ‘task’ involved going into these big sheds filled with chickens and you were supposed to pick them up by their legs (holding them upside down) and carry them out of the shed and into a truck or some cages or something. It was so revolting... My own reaction is less important of course; what I'm thinking of about that though is the kind of intense personal / cultural dissociation that I think took place in that kind of situation for me. [46, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

Others reported being affected by animal dissections in class and other children's callous attitudes towards living beings (including peers torturing small animals and insects while at school):

F61: It took me a while to realise that not everyone felt the same way I did about animals, and it was as I got older and other kids saw this as a weakness that they could get at me through. At high school I would not participate in dissection, we had a large salt water tank in our biology classroom that had a lovely crab in it, unfortunately the building caught on fire, and the crab died, I was very upset about it, and it was used as a weapon by the other kids for a number of months before they moved on to something else. [36, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

M16: When I was 15 we had to dissect a frog for biology class. I opted out – and had a note signed from my mother. So then I was given a book and put in the little room next door to where the other students were dissecting frogs. Some of the boys leaned towards the door and made slurping noises and went “Yum yum!” I don't remember being hurt or anything ... I just knew what was happening was wrong, and I wondered why we needed to dissect animals when we knew what was inside them anyway. [28, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

During teenage years especially, being confronted with animal carcasses produced for dissection (or the threat of death to an animal for the purpose of education) prompted instances of resistance to the treatment of animals as exploitable and/or dispensable tools:

M10: When I was in 4th form science (when I was 14) we were made to dissect cows' hearts ... I refused point blank on moral grounds and decided then and there I was a vegetarian, which I announced to the teacher. I threw away my meat-filled sandwiches and have never looked back. [19, vegan, Wellington]

M19: I had a miserable time at school with bullies, and still remember them talking about torturing a sparrow they found that couldn't fly. To me this sums up the atmosphere of that school. We were also made to dissect animals – worms, snails, a sheep's eye, rats, and (incredibly) *live* frogs. One frog escaped and we all had to search the lab for it; unbeknown to us, my friend, who had more nerve than the rest of us, had found it already and kept quiet about it. When the class was over he took it to a local pond and released it. I wonder now how it is that some people can see so clearly beyond these kinds of institutional cruelties, at such a young age. I couldn't, really. [39, vegan, Christchurch]

One woman described her active rebellion in high-school against the “propaganda” situating animals as tools for human use; she defaced her economics textbooks and protested against killing in biology class:

F56: As a teenager my parents made me take economics. I was upset by the way my text book referred to animals by such words as ‘commodity’. I was told off by my teacher for going through my text books and crossing out this language for the damage to school property. I also spoke out against the killing of insects for use in biology class. I considered the nation and authority to be largely barbaric and ignorant of the rights of animals and looked disdainfully upon the agricultural basis of the NZ economy... [31, lacto-vegetarian, Auckland]

School could also be an unfriendly zone for children who were raised vegetarian:

M16: Some of my classmates would hassle me for being vegetarian. One even tried to trick me into eating meat one day when he was given some animal products that looked like veggies ... [28, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

Affection for animals, and the influence of companion animals

Not surprisingly perhaps, companion animals occupied a significant part in many participants' formative years. As mentioned already, for those raised on farms, forming an emotional attachment to a pet animal could result in loss and grief, and a sense of guilt when an animal was sent to slaughter (and sometimes eaten by the family). For urban children, pets were likely to hold a safer familial position; however their loss was also felt intensely and sometimes prompted an individual to evaluate his or her overall relationship with animals, including consumption:

M22: I grew up in a house with cats as companion animals. It was the inconsistencies between the way we treated our cats as part of the family and the way we just regarded other animals as food that first got me started on the train of thought that led to me becoming vegetarian. [43, vegan, Wellington]

Several women reported feeling intense affection for all animals from an early age, with this emotional connection profoundly shaping their ideas about animal sentience and suffering, as well as their decisions to avoid consuming products derived from animals. These participants were perplexed by inconsistent attitudes towards different animals (ie pets versus other animals):

F56: I always bonded well with animals. Once when I was four years old I got all the wild sparrows on the lawn to come in the house and they were flying around the kitchen. It seemed normal at the time but my mother recalls it as something almost supernatural. [31, lacto-vegetarian, Auckland]

F46: I adore animals. They offer unconditional love, companionship and comfort. They have a way of making me happy and putting a smile on my face. I don't know how people can have pets and love them for their companionship but then eat a piece of chicken because it doesn't offer the same kind of affection. [29, vegan, Auckland]

F103: I have always loved animals, and thought I valued them, but I did not as I ate them for many years. [56, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Raglan]

Fish, lobster and chicken stories

Male participants, in particular, commented on the impact of early fishing experiences, often in the context of father-son fishing trips. For some men, refusing to eat fish was their first move to becoming vegetarian:

M12: I vividly remember being in a boat when my uncle caught a fish and him smacking it on the head to kill it. I hated that, it seemed so wrong, and I never ate fish again. I think I was about 6. [32, vegan, Wellington]

M15: The first [key experience as a child] was going fishing with my father as a child. I got a real buzz every time a fish bit at the end of my line and when I was fighting with it to reel it in, but when my dad removed the hook from its mouth and placed it in a bucket and left it to suffocate, I felt terrible for what I had done to that fish. Sometimes instead, dad would stab the fish in the brain to end its life more quickly so that it didn't have to suffer, but still I thought how cruel a sport this really was, and how much pain and anxiety a fish must go through from the time it is hooked at the end of a fishing line to the time it suffocates and dies on board our boat. I no longer engage in fishing and I do not eat fish or fish products ... [23, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

Catching and killing fish were described as cruel and disturbing experiences, sometimes with this sense of discomfort being shared by fathers too; or, conversely, being trivialized by others:

M19: We had a boat when I was a kid, and took all our holidays on it. Occasionally we fished – but I remember my father always commented on how cruel it seemed ... [39, vegan, Christchurch]

M21: Occasionally went fishing with relatives while on holiday, but never enjoyed it. I always felt uneasy and squeamish about killing or harming the fish, which was a source of great amusement to those around me. I was a little embarrassed but I figured I'd grow up and 'get over it'. [41, vegan, Westland]

Women were more likely to cite the slaughter of lobsters or chickens as significant moments, or defining points, on the path to vegetarianism. Whereas the obvious cruelty of lobster deaths affected participants, it was more often affection for home-kept chickens that prompted early questioning about where meat came from, and the subsequent cessation of meat-eating:

F61: When I was about 8 I packed my bags and ran away from home because my father was going to let my younger brother and his mate cook up fresh water crayfish that they had caught. I got all the way to the end of the street before he came and got me and told me that they would take the crayfish back to where they found them. I believed him at the time, but many years later I found out that they had gone to the mate's place to cook them. [36, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

F56: I came into the kitchen once when I was about 6 and my mother's boyfriend was boiling lobsters alive. Their black eyes and tentacles were moving in the pot. I found this incredibly disturbing and wanted to pour cold water on them and get them out. [31, lacto-vegetarian, Auckland]

F78: The first meat I stopped eating at age 10 was chicken. Mum says she remembers this was because I linked our animal to the meat being served and thought it was cruel and sad ... It was really our chickens that provided the revelation of where my food came from, and prompted me to stop eating meat and chicken at an early-ish age. [41, vegan, Christchurch]

Impact of personally harming or killing animals as children

Both men and women recounted having caused injury or death to animals when they were children. This behaviour often resulted in feelings of guilt and regret:

F1: I remember once we were at another person's house and their child was stamping on ants, we joined in. But then felt a huge remorse as we could see the ants actually going towards the injured ones. We both felt very bad and talked the other child out of standing on them as they had feelings. [24, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland, originally from the UK]

F11: Once on my way to the horse paddock, a bird flew under my bike wheel and died. I screamed in horror at having killed it. Was slapped and told off by a passing woman. [42, vegan, Christchurch, originally from the UK]

Teenage boys' acts of cruelty tended to target birds or insects. Stories in which birds were tortured or killed by stones, slug or air guns, resulted, without fail for these participants, in a personal decision to discontinue harming animals:

M28: I was playing in a small quarry near home practicing throwing stones. A fantail landed a little distance from me and I threw a stone to see if I could hit it. I did and killed it. This upset me

deeply and I felt so wrong in what I had done. I think I cried a little and I think I buried the bird. I never threw a stone at a bird again. [56, vegan, Hamilton]

M7: When I was around 19 [I] used to go shooting pigeons with a friend. However, one day my friend took me to an old railway bridge under which lived a whole community of pigeons. We blasted tons of them, but I became quite disgusted by what we were doing, especially when my friend shot one pigeon and then continually tried to shoot its mate (who kept flying back to its dead partner). The noise of the pellets bursting into the pigeon's flesh was quite horrible too ... That was the end of my bird-blasting days. [53, vegan, Christchurch, originally from the UK]

Raised vegetarian

Eight participants (6 women and 2 men; ages ranging from 23 to 78) had been brought up as vegetarians by parents who held certain spiritual and/or ethical beliefs. For example, one 31 year old woman, originally from North America, had been raised in a family strongly influenced by the Hare Krishna movement; and a 64 year old man, whose parents were early vegetarians in New Zealand (since 1929), mentioned the influence of the Theosophical Society on his family's beliefs.

Participants who were raised vegetarian – and had never eaten meat – commented on how they felt different at school, and were sometimes treated as “outsiders” by their peers:

F2: My siblings and I were all vegetarian from birth, so I guess my main animal-related experiences revolve around encountering meat for the first time outside my home, plus the feeling of being different from the main body of children at school, all of whom in my memory were meat-eaters. Being at suburban primary schools in the mid-1980s was not a pleasant experience for vegetarian kids: school lunches, birthday parties etc all involved meat or eggs, plus occasionally, children teasing us about our vegetarian food. [31, lacto-vegetarian, Christchurch, originally from the USA]

Once adults, seven of these eight participants had chosen to continue being vegetarian.

F100: By the time I was old enough to choose my diet and way of life, there was simply no question of altering that path I'd chosen as a child. All 5 of us children chose to maintain a vegetarian diet and, as adults, live lives associated with working for the welfare of animals. [55, ovo-vegetarian, Auckland]

One 35 year old woman described herself as a life-time vegetarian bringing up 4th generation vegetarian children. A 78 year old woman who was raised vegetarian had since begun eating fish as an adult.

(ii) Changing perspectives on New Zealand

The second component of the first section of the survey dealt with participants' changing views of New Zealand (with respect to human-animal relations here) – either contrasting early ideas with later perceptions (if born and raised here); or, if newer immigrants to New Zealand (tauiwi), comparing pre-arrival conceptions with post-arrival impressions.

Three key areas of concern regarding New Zealand's relationship to animals were identified by participants. These included: the façade of a ‘clean, green New Zealand’; inhumane animal farming practices in this country; and New Zealanders' contradictory attitudes towards, and treatment of, animals.

Challenging New Zealand's 'clean, green' image

An overwhelming number of respondents stated that the image they had of this country during their childhood here, or prior to immigrating to New Zealand, was “naïve”: of a clean, green paradise. Significantly, this image changed in negative or detrimental ways as participants grew “older and wiser”, or lived here longer. The sense of increasing disillusionment about this country was attributed to an enhanced awareness of animal farming practices here (perceived as damaging to animals, humans, and the environment); as well as a greater understanding of the links between animal exploitation and the New Zealand economy. The following response, cited in full, exemplifies this position:

M21: I definitely bought into the ‘clean, green, paradise’ view of New Zealand [when young]. The sight of farm paddocks stretching off into the horizon was iconic, natural, and something to be proud of. Farmers were good, hard-working men of the land – the backbone of our country. And animals stood in fields, eating grass, because that’s what they did. They were then milked or killed because that’s what they were for. I may have had mixed feelings about it, but that was clearly my problem. After all, I was a city kid who couldn’t possibly understand the harsh reality of it all. If it wasn’t for farming, we’d be a third world country, so I should just ‘get real’ and buy into the folklore of it all.

My image of New Zealand has changed drastically. I’ve learnt more about farming practices and the harm they do to animals and to the environment... My image is now of people leeching off a wonderful natural resource. We’ve been able to hide the damage but it’s starting to show. Already it’s unsafe to swim in most of our rivers due to pollution, and the sea-life is being overfished. Because of the high economic value of farming, animal welfare laws are toothless and virtually ignored here. But we’re able to point to remaining wilderness areas to attract the tourists and make ourselves feel better. [41, vegan, Westland]

Inhumane farming practices

As well as rejecting the image of a clean, green New Zealand, many born here disputed (what was perceived to be) the ‘myth’ about farming being “the backbone of the country” and/or humane and animal-friendly:

F87: I knew farming was an ‘iconic’ part of kiwi life – “the backbone of our nation”. That it was important to our economy. I thought farm animals were happy in their paddocks – I didn’t really think about animal cruelty. I bought into the common mythology ... [Now] I have an image I find abhorrent and shameful. I’m disgusted by the lies and bullshit regarding farmers and farming. It’s like they’re an untouchable species in NZ. I can’t see farm animals now without thinking how they are exploited to varying degrees and the greed and cruelty that are all part of farming. [48, vegan, Kapiti Coast]

F101: I saw NZ as a farming country and as a child lived rurally and so sheep and cows were very much part of the scenery. I grew up knowing that NZ’s economy depended on farming and farming was a big part of my image of NZ ... I no longer view farming as a positive, worthwhile or necessary activity. [55, vegan, Waipu]

F91: I see New Zealand as a country that severely exploits animals. As a naive young person I saw animals as needing my help. Now I see animals as needing to be saved from humans. I have become aware of the real reasons for animal suffering. Eg: The sheep and their lambs aren’t suffering because of the snowy weather. They are suffering because in our exploitation of them, we force double lambing production during cold months, we don’t provide them with shelter, we shear off their protective wool, etc. Every year the news reporters speak of the uncharacteristic freezing weather that has contributed to the deaths of thousands of lambs. We are told how badly this affects the farmers’ incomes and the economy of our country. Sympathy is ladled on the farmers who could avoid this annual tragedy by providing adequate care and shelter or not artificially inducing two lambing productions in one season... [49, vegan, Auckland]

F61: Farmers in general would have us believe that they care for these animals because this is their income, yet I see animals out in paddocks with no water, no shade and no shelter belts. Year after year hundreds of thousands of lambs die in late winter or early spring snows because of inadequate shelter provided by farmers who have artificially bred animals early to get fatter lambs for Xmas. These are not the practices of people who care for their animals. I am tired of seeing the news items every year of dead lambs by the truck load, while the farmers moan their misfortune ... come on, it happens every year. Farmers in areas that are prone to snow should have to provide better shelter for these animals, to do otherwise is just negligent. [36, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

The New Zealand government and its associated agencies were viewed as ‘pawns’ of the agricultural sector, favouring economic interests over ethical or moral responsibilities, and turning a blind eye to issues of animal welfare. This concern was expressed particularly in relation to intensive (battery/factory) farming within New Zealand:

F47: I always had a very positive view of NZ ... I thought that NZ was far superior to other countries and really did believe the clean green image ... Now I believe that the image promoted in NZ about farming and animal welfare is false. Farming to me is a dirty word. I believe farmers and the farming community are based on profit, exploitation, ignorance and an unwillingness to evolve, listen or show compassion. I still believe that NZ is further ahead than many countries, but cruel farming practices are protected by a government with vested interests. [29, vegan, Auckland]

F66: I was aware of animal abuse and cruelty of farming even as a child, however I got spoon-fed the story of clean green NZ which kind of counteracted these thoughts ... I can't believe the government here stalled on basic, easy to change things like battery chicken farming, pig stalls etc. They are definitely kept under wraps by the influential farming community. [37, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

F61: That people such as the Federated Farmers' spokesperson I saw on a *60 Minutes* doco screened in September, try to find ways to justify and excuse these farming practices is just laughable. There is no excuse for animals to suffer to these extents in order to put food on our plates. Our government is too scared of upsetting farmers to step in and enforce the legislation that we already have that would outlaw this kind of farming. [36, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

F92: One single event changed [my image of NZ] forever. I drove behind an open cattle truck and saw their intense suffering. From that day I realised we didn't care about other animals, that the dollar was paramount. If animals could suffer like that then they are clearly closely related to us. I rang MAF but they did nothing. [50, vegan, Dunedin]

It was also felt that, by and large, New Zealanders were now aware of the conditions of many intensively farmed animals; therefore all consumers could make informed choices about purchasing food and other items involving animals:

F98: The mighty dollar rules all decisions – even when it amounts to cruelty. No one can pretend these conditions don't exist; that's one good thing that's changed in the last 20 years – information is out there for *all* to see. We can make choices about whether or not we ignore them. [54, vegan, Upper Hutt]

However, many participants were sceptical about ‘kiwis’ as thoughtful consumers:

F49: The factory farming of animals is in my opinion one of the cruellest developments of the 20th century. Factory farming deprives animals of every natural, instinctive and enjoyable element of their lives. The torment of their existence is only relived through death. There is no hope, no joy – only despair and misery. Factory farms are hell-holes for animals ... [For my work] I regularly talked to mainstream New Zealanders about animal cruelty – most were appalled when confronted with the facts about animal abuse in New Zealand. However, I found New Zealanders prefer to live in a type of self imposed anaesthesia rather than acknowledge their part in animal abuse ... When I was younger I didn't question the status quo or even consider that

there was anything wrong with the way we treated animals. I needed to be confronted with the reality of the situation before I could see things differently. Like your average Kiwi, I walked around in blissful ignorance. No one had ever questioned me on my lifestyle or suggested that the way animals are treated was cruel – out of sight was literally out of mind. [39, vegan, Christchurch]

M29: I think we're a very violent and aggressive country – I'm not sure if the killing and abuse of animals has anything to do with it – but suspect it does. I think now that we have a sort of mass state of denial or delusion about the relationship we have with animals. My image now is of a country that is perfecting the efficiency of farming and slaughter of animals and they are seen simply as an input to an increasingly industrial system of farming based on the exploitation of animals. [58, ovo-vegetarian, Kaitia]

F46: I do think farming is seen as a wonderful life for cows by the general public, and wish that more people could go 'behind the scenes'. [29, vegan, Auckland]

“Just a big farm really”: Tauivi perspectives on New Zealand

Some participants who had settled in New Zealand after spending part or all of their childhoods elsewhere, arrived with a knowledge of the predominance of animal farming in this country:

F13: I have always thought of NZ as a place where animals are for eating. Just a big farm really. [42, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Lower Hutt, originally from Germany]

F5: Part of me had the 'clean, green' image, but the other part of me was very aware that NZ is the meat and dairy capital! [34, vegan, Porirua, originally from the UK]

Others recalled their growing awareness, once here, of the significance of the meat and dairy industries in New Zealand. Like those born and raised in this country, tauivi participants were critical of farming practices here, and also voiced concern about a perceived failure on the part of the NZ government to improve the living conditions of farmed animals:

F3: NZ was a land of farmers – happy cows, happy sheep, happy farmers. Like old MacDonald, I guess! ... Now I HATE farming! Not only do I think it is cruel, I also think it is environmentally devastating. It's unsustainable. I think we have lots of environmental problems – a substantial contributor to that is our farming practices. [31, pescetarian (ovo), Wellington, originally from Singapore]

F14: I only had an image of 'more sheep than people' and assumed factory farming, hormones, sow crates and battery hens were an anathema to the 'pure' NZ culture as the country itself was distant to my own ... I now see New Zealand proportionally as bad as the U.S. with fewer voices speaking out against the cruelty and fewer interested in hearing about it here. [46, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Wellington, originally from the USA]

F21: I did not expect to find the attitudes towards animals so negative and directed to financial gain. It was a great disappointment to me. [75, ovo-vegetarian, Marlborough Sounds, originally from the USA]

M9: The 'farm mentality', which tends to pervade the NZ ethos is destructive of animal and nature. In my opinion, farmers do not 'understand' nature, but rather impose a regime upon it that is unnatural. [58, vegan, Christchurch, originally from Zambia]

M3: Upon living here I discovered that cattle are left to their own devices outside and that there is barely shelter for them. This is also true for sheep, deer, ostriches and other species ... I was astonished at how much killing is going on in NZ. [44, lacto-vegetarian, Christchurch, originally from Switzerland]

M37: My image of NZ was of a “clean – green” country at the forefront of enlightened thinking in many areas. I was aware a good proportion of export income was generated through animal exploitation such as dairy industry and sheep ... [Now I see NZ as] a country that has yet to awaken and realise it cannot sustain the export revenue being generated from animal exploitation – eg dairy. South Island sheep farmers appear on the news EVERY year as if they have been taken by surprise by sudden cold snaps and the consequential loss of lambs (read \$\$\$). I find it hard to believe the government continues to allow them to get away with not providing adequate shelter. NAWAC appears to be vested interests determining government policy regarding animal welfare. NZ continues to allow battery hen egg laying farms and broiler meat poultry operations that are both fundamentally cruel. Far too much pollution being generated from over intensive farming of essentially poor soils – eg runoff of fertilisers. [NZ is] behind the times and many other countries (eg EU) in regards to both animal welfare and animal rights ... I am bitterly disappointed to realise how useless the NZ Labour Party is in protecting or enhancing animal welfare ... [54, vegan, Wellington, originally from Australia]

Immigrants from the United Kingdom expressed the strongest disappointment about their actual impressions of New Zealand, and how these contrasted with their earlier preconceptions of a clean, green island:

F1: I had a view of a primitive environment with lots of greenery and outdoor farming; upon learning about factory farming/concentrated feeding operations for pigs & chickens I was appalled & felt that the clean green image of NZ was a façade ... The agricultural industry are able to form animal welfare law which is an obvious conflict of interest. Scientific research on animals for agricultural, cosmetic & health reasons has no transparency. The boards overlooking the experiments provide a false show of scrutiny as they are interconnected with the industry & once again there is a conflict of interest present. Many New Zealanders gladly shut their eyes to the true state of animal welfare in NZ. Many New Zealanders have compassion for companion animals only. They would be appalled if what happens to other animals happened to cats & dogs. [24, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland, originally from the UK]

M6: I mistakenly thought NZ was concerned about animal welfare but I think it is even less so than the UK and there are few bodies that are concerned about animals. Even the SPCA is not financially supported by the State. [70, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Kapiti, originally from the UK]

M7: Everything I read about NZ suggested it would be clean and green, like a big national park. Though NZ is famous for its farming, I still imagined most of the land would be untouched and wild. I was also attracted by the clean/green imagery generally projected about the destination. I thought it would be great to come to a country which looks after its wildlife and environment ... I somehow didn't expect the extensive factory farming practices (caged hens and pigs for example), nor the streams polluted by cow excrement. [53, vegan, Christchurch, originally from the UK]

F15: [The] clean green image that I did have has proved to be a total and absolute myth, possibly generated for tourism reasons. The fact is we have sewerage run off, and dairy farm run off into the water supply, plus the effluent from the pig farms, tonnes of it a day, spreading over the ground, and we are not the slightest bit clean and green. [53, vegan, Wellington, originally from the UK]

While most participants reiterated how animal farming continued to dominate New Zealand's national image and economy, one woman felt this was changing:

F17: Coming to NZ (aged 19) I was particularly disturbed by the sheer volume of animals consumed by agribusiness and the primitive treatment they received. This caused me to think very negatively about NZ's farmers ... My image of NZ's farmers remains unchanged but I'm pleased to see the farming sector becoming a less dominant part of the country's economy. [59, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland, originally from the UK]

Positive farming stories

While the majority of participants, both NZ-born and immigrants, were scathing of the farming sector, a handful of respondents commented positively about farming and farmers. One woman, who was a dairy farmer in the North Island, and had participated in order to express her strong opposition to animal experimentation and intensive farming, felt that those in urban environments did not understand the realities of farming and were often disrespectful towards farm animals. She reported experiencing a kind of ‘reciprocal’ arrangement with the animals on her farm: “look after the stock and they will look after you”:

F117: [As a child] farm animals were considered an integral part of the financial back-bone of New Zealand. Look after the stock and they will look after you ... Farm animals are now not considered so important to a lot of people (not myself). Often thought of as dirty, smelly nuisances. Population shift to town/cities means that many people do not have any contact with the reality of farm animals and their needs to live comfortably and safely... Occasionally town dwellers (friends/relatives) have often started a bit of an argument until you sort out the facts that: farmers look after their stock because they want to, because they like them – they wouldn’t be farming if they didn’t – and their farm animals are their bank account/livelihood – why harm that which keeps you financially afloat? [53, meat-eater, Waiuku]

A vegetarian wool farmer, originally from the UK, and now living on a farm in Banks Peninsula, felt that farmers had suffered here following the removal of subsidies (she also voiced concern about intensive farming and some dairy farming practices in New Zealand):

F18: I admire how farmers here have farmed so efficiently and how farmers care for their land, even surviving removal of subsidies etc ... I think it’s sad though how increasingly difficult it is to make a living, with all the ridiculous regulations and the interfering high-handed ignorant DOC, Forest and Bird etc. I think the hearts of the latter are in the right place, but there’s too much interference by people who have a dangerous little knowledge ... On the other hand, I think that NZ has to some extent sold out to the almighty dollar – though most farmers are not rich, many struggle to survive, and they are always at risk from adverse weather events. But I think sow crates, battery hens and the way they produce veal (or used to?) are all appalling and should be banned. And I think dairy farming is quite cruel. Some cows are kept too thin, and I hate the way they talk all the calves away from the cows, I’ve seen their despairing eyes when they come as throwouts from a dairy farm, and the way their eyes change over the first year or two when you let them keep their calves. They go from anxious, angry, haunted looking, to almost unbelieving, suspicious, to grateful, calm, contented, fulfilled, trusting. [62, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Banks Peninsula, originally from the UK]

Contradictory treatment of animals

Another issue frequently raised by immigrants to New Zealand pertained to the paradoxical treatment of animals in this country; in particular, the readily observed hierarchy valuing animals viewed as ‘part of the family’ (pets) over animals perceived as ‘food for the family’. Criticism was also voiced, by women in particular, against the popular sentiment that New Zealand is a land of “animal lovers” when blatant distinctions – in terms of value, affection and treatment – were made between different kinds of animals: pets versus pests, native versus introduced animals:

F5: I look around at how many vets there are and I think ‘Wow, people must really love their animals here’, but then I think of how big NZ is on factory farming. So it’s like they really look after their pet animals but to hell with the rest. That’s the impression I get. [34, vegan, Porirua, originally from the UK]

F21: I was shocked to learn that any introduced species was considered 'noxious' and 'vermin'. [75, ovo-vegetarian, Marlborough Sounds, originally from the USA]

F14: Cultural attitudes towards animals [in New Zealand] are economic. Not much more. Unless it is a native bird. The cull of the indigenous Kaimanawa horses would have raised outrage outside NZ. Would have tarnished its tourist appeal for many foreigners, I think. [46, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Wellington, originally from the USA]

While readily identified by immigrants to New Zealand, this phenomenon was also noted by participants born and raised here:

F49: Animals that compete with farm animals are considered public enemy no.1. The war on possums, rabbits, ferrets, stoats etc. has created a public attitude that is totally devoid of any compassion. These animals are killed in often cruel and callous ways with a sinister joy. [39, vegan, Christchurch]

F98: With cats, dogs and maybe rabbits my attitude would be similar to most New Zealanders. However my concerns are for all animals and I don't distinguish between a kitten and a calf. They all deserve to be treated with care, compassion and dignity. Therefore my attitudes don't fit well with mainstream NZ, who thinks it's ok to battery farm, have sow stalls and cart animals around the country for miles to be slaughtered in terrifying conditions. [54, vegan, Upper Hutt]

M28: We are an animal based economy but we like to be seen as caring, green, fresh-air, healthy people so we don't really like to discuss the grisly end of the business. If we did, we would be afraid as a nation that our economy and hence our lifestyle would end in tatters. This dichotomy is documented in our Animal Welfare Act which states that all animals must be able to exhibit normal natural patterns of behaviour without cruelty or suffering but then goes on for pages and pages of exemptions for overriding human interests (vivisection), human entertainment (rodeos, circuses and zoos) and economic expediencies (battery hens, broiler chickens, intensive pig farming including sow crates). [56, vegan, Hamilton]

SECTION 2

THE USE OF ANIMALS IN NEW ZEALAND

This section of the survey asked participants for their viewpoints on specific examples of animal use in Zealand, as well as their personal practices related to ethical consumption.

It was divided into two parts: (i) responses to animal-derived products (namely, meat, milk, eggs, leather, and possum fur); and (ii) opinions on practices and activities involving animals, including pet-keeping, hunting and fishing, the use of animals in shows (Wild Foods Festivals and A & P shows), sport and entertainment (horse-racing and rodeos).

(i) Animal-derived products

Overview

For the most part, the participants in this study were conscious consumers who were, to varying degrees, aware of the myriad ways in which Western culture uses animals in its everyday production and consumption practices.

Participants identified a vast number of products that either contained animal products or were associated with society's use of animals in some way. These included: meat; fish; chicken; eggs; dairy products; foods fried in animal fats; foods such as yoghurts, ice-cream or confectionary containing gelatine; baking containing eggs, dairy products and/or animal fat; foods containing animal-derived emulsifiers and stabilisers; honey; clothing made of fur, wool, silk or angora; sleeping bags, 'puffer' jackets and duvets made of feathers; shoes, bags, belts, suitcases, erotica products and wallets made of leather; wine and beer fined with animal derivatives; pet foods; brake fluid; household cleaning products; cosmetics; dyes used in clothing; musical instruments, including drums and bows for stringed instruments; household glues and glues used for industrial purposes including book production, furniture crafting and house building; wool carpet; paint; jewellery and ornaments made of ivory or bone; some alternative healthcare products (those containing fish oil); camera film; and, finally, adhesive tapes.

Additionally, participants were aware of numerous products that were tested on animals. These included household cleaning products; various cosmetics (deodorants, soaps, makeup, toothpaste, aftershave, perfume, shampoo and other hair care products); and both prescription and over-the-counter medications, including painkillers, anti-depressants, pro-sexual drugs, medicated creams, and other non-specified allopathic medicines which participants identified as having been tested on animals at one stage or other of production. Some participants boycotted all products (including petfood, nappies, razors, batteries, shampoos etc) manufactured by companies known to engage in animal testing, even if the product itself was not directly related to animal use. Such participants preferred to support local animal-friendly businesses or companies that opposed animal testing.

Participants' decision-making

All participants found themselves making a decision about where to draw their ethical line:

F51: I boycott companies [that] I know continue to test on animals. I don't eat much meat—mainly just fish and seafood. I choose free range only. If a stylish alternative is available, I choose synthetic material over leather for handbags and shoes. I would never wear fur. [30, meat-eater, Auckland]

F7: It affects everything I consume – we look at every single label to make sure no animal products (including preservatives that are made from killing animals). We haven't yet reached the stage of avoiding leather products. I only buy cosmetics from companies that have a policy of no animal experiments. [39, vegan, Upper Hutt, originally from Iran & the UK]

F18: [I] am vegetarian (no meat, fish, poultry, seafood), but not vegan, and for compassionate and spiritual reasons, not health reasons. I would never buy fur or anything with fur trim, feathers etc... I don't see much point in giving up leather (in small amounts) or cheese etc because they are just a by-product of the meat industry and even if no one bought them, it wouldn't stop the slaughter, they'd just charge more for meat ... [62, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Banks Peninsula, originally from the UK]

M5: [My attitude to animals has] almost total influence [over my consumption]. I even buy vegan glue. My only areas of possible failures are with cello- and other adhesive tapes and also whatever glues have been used in certain finished products like journals. [49, vegan, Auckland, originally from the USA]

M4: It is easy to buy cosmetics not tested on animals [but it is] unavoidable to live in our western society and not benefit from animal testing at its most basic—our health which we all benefit from and I'd hazard a guess not even the most hard-core vegan animal-rights activist is going to give it up, even if only by default. Another basic [is] clothing dyes [which are] all animal tested; there [are] not too many people walking around in unbleached and vegetable dyed cloths. [46, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch, originally from the UK]

Even when participants believed it was not possible to achieve a 100% ethical lifestyle, many felt an obligation to try to achieve something as close to that as possible. The most committed participants went to great lengths to consume ethically, reading ingredients on all products, phoning companies, making multiple shopping stops to get animal-friendly products, often travelling greater distances to get to ethical shops, and being willing to spend extra money on consumables:

F41: I have systematically gone through all my cosmetics and changed to cruelty-free products regardless of price and convenience issues. I also avoid products from any company that tests on animals, regardless of whether the particular product was tested or not. I encourage as many people as possible to think about this issue, as animal testing is, I feel, more brainless than farming animals for meat. It is simply unnecessary and I'm disgusted by the larger companies that refuse to budge on this issue, and by people who can't be bothered voting with their shopping dollars. Apathy and looking the other way is not the way to deal with this issue. I am disheartened by how difficult it can be to actually work out which products are cruelty-free. Sneaky labelling like 'this product not tested on animals' when all the ingredients are, is appalling [27, lacto-vegetarian, Dunedin].

F45: I would not knowingly purchase any products tested on animals or created involving cruelty to animals. You become an avid 'label reader' and are constantly questioning and investigating companies before buying their products, always having suspicions about 'new' products and any claims companies make about their products and/or ingredients. [29, ovo-vegetarian, Auckland]

F23: I try not to buy anything at all that has come from an animal. This means not eating any animal products, or buying anything made from animals. I also try not to buy products, the

production of which has caused animal suffering, or products produced by those who directly benefit from animal suffering. The point is to try to support and cause as little harm as possible. It isn't always easy to tell whether a product is ethical or not, whether it be because it contains animals or was produced in a sweatshop etc; but you do your best and learn as you go. [20, vegan, Wellington]

M11: I buy food as local as possible and with no animal extracted ingredient. There are places that use animal products and sometimes I have no choice to consume animal product, i.e leather seats in public spaces, animal fats in petrol and oils of which I use in many forms, but I always acknowledge dead animal parts when I know they are there. I think it is important to do so in order to bridge the gap between ignorance and truth. [24, vegan, Dunedin]

Meat

Given that the majority of participants in this study were vegetarian, it is unsurprising that the response to meat was overwhelmingly negative. Only one participant argued that meat was healthy and good to eat. In general terms, the other 156 participants used negative adjectives to describe meat: “repulsive”, “disgusting”, “smelly”, “fatty”, “unhealthy”, “cruel”, “unethical”, “putrefying”, “uncivilized”, “decomposing”, “decaying”, “murderous”, “unnecessary”, “brutal”, “abhorrent”, “barbaric” and “exploitative”. Participants argued against meat-eating on ethical, compassionate, environmental, metaphysical/spiritual, economic and health-related grounds.

Humane meat-eaters⁵

Of the 157 participants, 16 ate flesh of any description: 8 consumed red meats and/or chicken and/or fish; and 8 consumed fish but no other animal flesh (these participants tended to identify as vegetarian, but for the purposes of this report are classified as pescetarian). Almost all of these participants minimized their meat-eating in some way, most by eating only free-range and/or organic meat:

F102: If the animal had free-range and [was] then killed humanely, I would not object to eating it. [55, meat-eater, Auckland]

F51: [I] don't eat much [meat], and would rather the animals were farmed in a more humane method. I understand that we are never going to have a vegetarian culture, but the more people who understand that they have the choice to not eat meat, and still enjoy a healthy, tasty diet, the better. [30, meat-eater, Auckland]

F34: I don't eat meat any more. I've never liked red meat anyway. I am not adverse to others making up their own mind to eat it or not ... If I am in a situation (like when I was overseas living with Russians) where meat is offered, I will concede to eat either chicken or fish. [25, white-meat eater, Dunedin]

A few meat-eaters refused certain kinds of meat perceived to involve crueller modes of production:

F111: I do not eat pork in any form as I am totally against keeping sows in cages. [85, meat-eater, Auckland]

⁵ The term ‘meat-eater’ in this report refers to those who reported eating red and white meats; ‘white-meat-eater’ refers to someone who reported eating chicken but not red meats; and the term ‘pescetarian’ refers to those who reported eating fish but not chicken or red meats.

Ethical reasons for not eating meat

Ethically speaking, most participants objected to the practices and procedures involved in farming, but some also questioned the ethical justification for killing an animal in the first place, irrespective of the methods involved. Many participants argued that humans and animals were essentially the same and that animals should therefore not be killed:

F40: We too are animals. Animals are very much like us; they have two eyes, a beating heart, feelings, can feel love, pain, fear and think. They should not be abused and killed and we should not eat them. [27, vegan, Auckland]

F31: [I see] meat as part of a once living, breathing animal, rather than as a piece of food. I won't handle it and I hate the smell. [23, vegan, Auckland]

F77: [I avoid meat] due to conditions animals endure prior to ending up on the table. [I] believe there is no excuse for the cruelty inflicted on factory farmed pigs and chickens and that the treatment of cows and sheep is also unacceptable as it is unnecessary. [These animals have] short lives and miserable ends. [41, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Hamilton].

In considering the ethical reasons for not eating meat, many participants extended their concern across a broad species spectrum, refusing to see certain animals as 'meat animals' and others as 'pets'. Some also equated animal killing to human genocide:

F59: I was eating lunch and asked what kind of meat it was (it tasted different) and was told it was horse. I put down my knife and fork and said "I think I just became vegetarian"... No matter how much I thought about it, I could think of no justification for eating sheep or cows but refusing to eat horse (or cat or dog). It just didn't make sense—either I had to be willing to eat all animals or none. So I chose none. [34, vegan, Westland]

F42: Being of European descent ... I think we're taught that animals are here for our use. And we're taught the distinction between 'pets' and other cuddlies, and those we use and abuse. But no evidence is ever given as to why. [27, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Nelson]

M7: Why anyone would want to fill their stomachs at the expense of any creature's life beats me. The production of meat (and its by-products) actually does horrify me as much as any image of holocaust. I can't understand why non-human animal suffering and exploitation is any less horrific than human suffering and exploitation. [53, vegan, Christchurch, originally from the UK]

Health reasons for and against eating meat

There was sharp disagreement between participants over the health benefits of eating meat. Some felt that meat-eating was natural for humans and that in some circumstances it was necessary for health, but others strongly disagreed that it was natural for humans to eat meat:

F35: I accept that other people want to eat meat, and that it may be natural for humans to eat meat, but I think that we eat far more of it than we need to, which is unfair to other species. [25, vegan, Christchurch]

F24: I believe that the human race has evolved to be able to have a balanced diet without killing or harming animals, and so we should stop, and modify our diet. [But] I wouldn't be vegetarian when pregnant or in a child under 10. My father and step mother are doctors who have seen too many underdeveloped and malnourished babies and children on life support through a vegetarian diet. In this case, I would buy free range. [20, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch]

F37: We have no capacity to rip and tear through another animal's fur or hide without metal knives/blades. We lack the digestive system to even handle eating raw meat [as a carnivore would] and so we cook it and season it and tenderise it. [25, vegan, Auckland]

M35: The human digestive system with its long alimentary canal is totally unsuited to eating meat. Poisons can affect the body as meat deteriorates s digestion is attempting to take place. Animals which kill for food, such as tigers, lions or wolves, have a short alimentary canal to quickly process what they are eating. [64, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Porirua]

F12: The human body is not made to eat flesh and it is unhealthy to eat meat. [42, lacto-vegetarian, South Auckland, originally from Germany]

Several participants strongly disagreed with the idea that meat eating was necessary for health in certain circumstances. Rather, these participants—medical practitioners among them—suggested that meat (particular red meat) was greatly detrimental to health. One participant who was a GP considered eating red meat to be a “hazard not far removed from that of second-hand smoking”:

M24: I know what goes into that juicy piece of meat! Do the public realise the enormity of the growth promotants (antibiotics) pumped into the huge array of livestock we see in the fields?... Do the public realise or comprehend the farm “withholding period” or its underlying connotations (i.e. the period within which an animal may not be slaughtered due to... growth promotants and anti-parasitical medication still being detectable in the meat)? Do they realise that the fresh “red” look of meat on the supermarket shelves is artificial and added post mortem to give the product a fresh appearance?... [Meat eating] includes the consumption of artificial products... which are carcinogenic, well known to the government. [47, pescetarian (ovo-lacto), rural Canterbury]

F9: [I am a] medical doctor/paediatrician.... I am very well-informed about the health benefits of a vegan diet and therefore do not see any need for consuming animal products and taking part in the cruel treatment of animals. [40, vegan, Auckland, originally from Germany]

Many participants associated meat eating with conditions such as heart disease and bowel cancer; they argued that there were numerous other alternative protein sources available, but that meat was promoted in New Zealand because of its importance to national economic production:

M25: Meat is a brutal commodity, unnecessary in this day and age, because we have so many food substitutes available; [it is] backed by a powerful lobby group and the biggest one of all—tradition. [49, ovo-lacto vegetarian, New Plymouth]

F18: I think it’s awful to kill something because you want to eat it when there’s so much other food about, and even better forms of protein around (soy etc). This ridiculous inaccurate ad about ‘red meat—feel good’ makes me really mad. The doctors tell me that the toxins in red meat are likely to actually make you feel more tired and less energetic. And we all know it’s not all that good for your health—heart etc. [62, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Banks Peninsula, originally from the UK].

Environmental and economic reasons for not eating meat

Over and above the detrimental effects on the health of the individual, participants also associated meat production with the unhealthy state of the planet:

M24: Does the public have any idea of the complexity of nitrogenous compounds that are poured onto the fields daily to increase the yield (nutrient), or the massive amounts of effluent that daily contaminate the waterways of New Zealand from the dairy industry? [47, pescetarian (ovo-lacto), rural Canterbury]

F28: [We are] educated and well-informed humans [and we should see that] this product is ethically, environmentally and humanely questionable. This product is a main contributor to

world poverty, deforestation and environmental issues such as land corrosion and global warming. [22, vegan, Auckland]

Economic concerns were closely related to environmental ones: many participants argued that part of the reason meat was so damaging to the environment was that it was such an inefficient food to produce:

M35: The economic reasons for being vegetarian are compelling. For any given area of land, protein from production by farm animals (e.g. beef) can be bettered four to one by growing soy beans to produce protein. One hectare of land used for beef can produce four times the amount of protein using soy beans. With current production methods, soy can be made to taste like anything we want it to—to look like a burger or a steak, for example! Economic necessity may come before enlightenment towards animals. There are other high protein and nutrient rich plant-based foods which could easily substitute for food produced from killing animals. Large corporate and individual economic interests will resist the change, but in time it may come. We have the resources to feed the whole world. It is just economic greed and control along with national interests which prevents much enlightened change occurring. [64, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Porirua].

Moral and spiritual reasons for not eating meat

Participants drew on both Eastern and Western religious traditions to offer a variety of spiritually based reasons to avoid eating meat. They also argued that meat eating was morally wrong:

M31: [We need to understand] the interconnectedness and inter-dependence of all life on Planet Earth; [this] would lead to more considerate and compassionate and “fellow feeling” attitudes to other animals. [70, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch]

M35: The cruel and ‘inhuman’ practices involved in many aspects of the meat industry just make it a negative and unenlightened activity ... The laws of ‘cause and effect’ or karma in some traditions, encourage avoidance of that which causes pain or suffering to others. The Bible says, “Whatsoever a man shows, that also shall he reap.” This philosophy comes up in many major traditions and philosophies which are based on humanity having a spiritual element to its makeup. If I sow cruelty I will reap cruelty, so even in enlightened self interest, it would be best not to harm others, including animals. “Love for all sentient beings,” as the Dalai Lama frequently quotes. [64, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Porirua]

These spiritual and religious perspectives will be discussed in greater detail below in relation to participants’ belief systems.

Milk

Of the 157 participants, 84 consumed dairy products (in their responses to the question on ‘milk’, most participants addressed not only milk itself, but dairy products in general terms). Attitudes towards milk were varied: some felt it was permissible to drink milk because the animal was not killed in order to obtain it, while others who had knowledge of the dairy industry avoided it on the basis of what they saw to be the cruel treatment of dairy cows and their calves. Still others felt that it was inherently wrong to drink another species’ milk.

Milk consumers

Some men and women argued that dairy products were important for health (both of the individual and the economy) and that alternatives were expensive and had many additives:

F117: Drink more milk! New Zealand dairy farmers are still the major export earners. [53, meat-eater, Waiuku]

M23: I see milk as an important part of the diet. [45, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Kapiti]

M33: I consume milk partly out of need for easy access to protein (I lift weights and find I need whey and milk and eggs in order to maintain muscle development) and partly out of cost (soy milk is expensive and many have a long list of additives). [27, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

Some who consumed milk had little knowledge of the practices involved in dairy farming and milk production, while others who had some knowledge consumed dairy products with a sense of guilt:

M15: I have no problem with drinking milk and consume milk almost every day, but I have really only a vague understanding of how dairy cows are treated. [23, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

F84: I eat milk products, and think I live in a state of denial about some of the realities involved ... [46, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

F2: I eat dairy products at a minimal level, but feel bad about it. Every excuse I have for not being vegan sounds as lame as the excuses people offer for why they must eat meat. [31, lacto vegetarian, Christchurch]

To mitigate this guilt, some consumed only organic dairy products in the hope that the conditions were less cruel:

M35: I consume dairy products—cheese for example, made without rennet where possible. And it is encouraging to see many New Zealand producers offering cheeses suitable for vegetarians. I am concerned that cows should not be exploited for dairy products and trust that farming practices in milk production are appropriate to an enlightened manner of treating animals. [64, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Porirua]

M25: The vast majority [of milk] is a brutal commodity, less so than meat, although some organic sources are far more humane than from a typical dairy farm, and I am comfortable buying these. [49, ovo-lacto vegetarian, New Plymouth]

F70: I'm aware male calves get killed to keep the dairy industry going so I've compromised. I try to buy organic milk (and dairy) where possible and affordable. [39, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

F12: I am aware that milk is full of hormones, pesticides and other unwanted stuff and that the cows are exploited by having to give huge amounts of milk and that their calves suffer when the calves are taken away ... I hope that organic milk is in that respect better but to be sure I have planned to visit an organic dairy farm to see whether their procedures I would find acceptable. [42, lacto-vegetarian, South Auckland, originally from Germany]

One woman had turned to non-bovine sources of milk in order to diminish the impact on cows:

F110: When we realized that cows were mistreated by keeping them pregnant time after time to boost milk production, we changed to goat milk, which is better nutrition and easier to digest. Our grand-daughter thrived on goat milk when her mother couldn't breast-feed. [78, pescetarian (ovo-lacto), Auckland]

Health reasons against drinking milk

In contrast to the arguments in favour of dairy consumption, many participants put forward arguments that milk was detrimental to health, and was associated with allergies:

F34: I really like dairy. However, I am gradually shifting to soy as I have found less dairy in my diet reduces my allergies. [25, white-meat eater, Dunedin]

M28: [Milk is] unnecessary in our diet—in fact [it] could be the cause of many medical complaints in New Zealand such as eczema and asthma. [56, vegan, Hamilton]

F75: I often say to people I would start eating fish before I started drinking milk. I think milk is totally unnatural and unhealthy and I can't believe people feed it to their children. In a world where something like 75% of the population is lactose-intolerant, how can people continue to consume breast milk for another species? And that's separate from the issue of the life of milk cows and their offspring. [40, vegan, Auckland]

Cruelty in the dairy industry

Of all the reasons cited for avoiding milk, the perceived cruelty of the dairy industry was the most common. Participants expressed concern about the separation of calves from their mothers, the slaughter of bobby calves, and the slaughter of dairy cows themselves when they were no longer productive:

M22: I avoid drinking cows' milk because of the cruelties in the dairy industry in New Zealand. Dairy cows are separated from their calves early and this causes great distress to both mother and baby. Bobby calves are also slaughtered because boys are no use to the dairy industry. Dairy cows develop diseases such as mastitis from being milked so hard, and are totally spent after 3 years, at which time they are sent to slaughter. The dairy industry may be even more inhumane than the beef industry. [43, vegan, Wellington]

Women, in particular, expressed disgust at the exploitation of the reproductive lives of female animals by the dairy industry, namely through enforced pregnancies, prolonged lactation, and the removal of infant animals from their mothers:

F49: The dairy industry contributes to the death of approximately 1.4 million bobby calves in NZ each year. These bobby calves are removed from their mothers at around 4 days of age and sent to the slaughterhouse. This is so that breast milk produced by the mother cow can be consumed by humans. I stopped consuming milk for ethical reasons ... [39, vegan, Christchurch]

F79: It's against nature to separate mothers and their babies – there is no dairy industry without a meat industry. The two go hand in hand. [43, vegan, Christchurch]

F37: NZ is obsessed with MILK. We are born, we drink our mother's milk or formula then for the rest of our lives AFTER that period of intense growth which we get all our nutrients from our human mother's milk, we continue to drink cow's milk meant for a growing calf. Ew! It stinks, we rot it and make cheese out of it. Gross. Where even the calves STOP drinking cows' milk and eat grass. We milk 'our' cows so many times it halves their lifespans. We keep them constantly in a cycle of pregnancy and milking. We take their babies from them. I don't get it? [25, vegan, Auckland]

F46: After being exposed to a horrific night of listening to cows crying for their newborn calves, I decided that farms and dairy production [were] hell on earth for these beautiful creatures. Hence I gave up dairy pretty quick ... The cries from the cows after their calves had been taken away went on for days. I couldn't imagine anything more painful than having my baby taken away from me! [29, vegan, North Auckland]

Some participants felt that if milk was obtained without this kind of cruelty, it was acceptable to drink it:

M22: I know that it is possible to obtain milk from a cow without cruelty. Traditional Indian cultures for example share milk with the calf (which actually increases milk production), and the boy calves are not killed but are used to help with ploughing. The relationship is symbiotic rather than exploitative. For this reason, the very thought of milk does not revolt me in the same way meat does. [43, vegan, Wellington]

F120: I am a lacto-vegetarian, so I eat dairy products. For many years we had our own cow and we received our dairy products from her. She died but our commitment was that if we wanted milk etc we had to keep her calves until they died. This we have done and we still have those grown up calves. I struggle now with the knowledge that the dairy products I use come from a system that causes suffering. [50, lacto-vegetarian, Clarence Valley]

Rejecting milk from another species

A number of participants rejected milk outright, arguing that it was “weird”, “wanton” and “unnatural” for humans to consume another species’ milk:

F5: Cow’s milk is baby food for their calves. It is not designed for humans to drink. What gives them the right to deny the calf its mother’s milk, so that we can have it instead? I think it’s a weird thing to do. Most people would be disgusted at drinking another human’s milk, but not another species. Why is that? It’s amazing how people have become conditioned to think. If some company tells them they need something they believe it. I get irritated the way people panic when they run out of milk as if their kids’ lives depended upon it. They are just feeding their child pus! That’s not healthy! [34, vegan, Porirua, originally from the UK]

M8: [Milk is] not really designed for human consumption. [It] should never be given to babies. Like blood, it goes off quickly. [56, ovo-vegetarian, Napier, originally from the UK]

Eggs

The number of participants consuming eggs was similar to those consuming dairy: 87 of the 157 participants identified either as ovo-vegetarians, ovo-lacto vegetarians or as meat or fish-eaters who also consumed eggs. Vegan and lacto-vegetarians tended to view egg consumption with scepticism. Whereas lacto-vegetarians were inclined to harbour a sense of guilt in their consumption of milk, ovo-vegetarians consumed eggs without experiencing a similar sense of guilt. Almost all ovo-participants were committed to eating free-range eggs, and all deplored battery egg production.

Battery farming versus free range

All participants had some knowledge of the conditions of battery chicken farms; the avoidance of eggs produced through these institutions was one of the most frequently mentioned issues in the survey responses. Everyone from vegan to meat-eater felt that this kind of egg and chicken production was inhumane and unnecessary:

F110: I went with a friend to collect chicken manure. The hens were crowded into small cages with wire on the bottom so the eggs would drop through, and they had their beaks and some of their claws chopped off. Some of the birds had hardly any feathers left, and they were very nervous and stressed. [78, pescetarian (ovo-lacto), Auckland]

F40: Chickens in the wild will produce one egg every 20 days, very similar to a female when she has her period. The hens have been selectively bred to [produce] one egg almost every day. This is hard on their bodies and they suffer from calcium depletions amongst other illnesses and

diseases.... Most hens in NZ are sadly in cages with less space than their own bodies ... This cruelty is absolutely unacceptable and I can't believe it is allowed in society. They don't treat our worst prisoners as bad as this and yet they will put innocent birds these abhorrent conditions. [27, vegan, Auckland]

F10: Hens suffer in intensive systems and then end up being slaughtered when their production fails. All the male chicks are also slaughtered. [41, vegan, Auckland, originally from the UK]

Several participants felt that it was acceptable to consume eggs that were produced by free range hens outside of these factory-like conditions:

F75: I have developed a distaste for eggs since I became a vegan. However I have a friend who is vegan and who has free-range hens and eats their eggs because she knows they are treated well, and it's a natural product, and I can certainly not find any argument against that, apart from the fact that they are the equivalent of menstruating, but they aren't human, so I don't find that off-putting. I don't eat them myself, but that is not to say that if I ever kept hens and they laid eggs, that I wouldn't ever eat them. I just don't know. [40, vegan, Auckland]

F77: I have my own free(ish) range ex-battery hens who provide most egg needs. I will top up with free range organic eggs if required (almost never). I do not believe that hens should be battery farmed at all. My own experience demonstrates they are social, intelligent birds. I find it difficult to believe people think it is OK to have them suffering the conditions they are kept in in factory farms and that these 'farmers' are not prosecuted for extreme animal cruelty. My chooks arrived after several weeks' rehabilitation still missing significant amounts of feathers, unable to roost, with mutilated beaks. They are now happy and friendly and take amazing delight in dust bathing, scratching around for bugs and having their heads scratched. [41, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Hamilton]

Others, however, felt that even free-range eggs were inherently unethical because their production involved many of the same conditions that battery farming entailed (including the immediate slaughter of newly hatched male chicks):

F15: I have been campaigning against battery eggs for a while and whilst doing so we always advise shoppers to only buy free range eggs. What we don't tell them, is that free range egg production in fact contains a lot of the cruelties of battery eggs. If we told them that they would think we were nuts. Most of the general public have no idea that to get free range eggs the hens are from the same selectively bred 'stock' as battery hens, that a lot of free range hens are de-beaked and that like their sad battery counterparts, they are sent for slaughter at around 24 months of age when their natural lifespan would be 10 years! [53, vegan, Wellington, originally from the UK]

F14: I'm very disturbed by the cruelty that even free range farming involves with the smothering death of male chicks unable to lay eggs. [46, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Wellington, originally from the USA]

Total avoidance of eggs

Eggs were recognized as being more difficult to avoid than meat, because they were used in many ready-made products. Several participants stated that they would not eat eggs on their own, but occasionally ate them in baking and other products or when eating out:

F70: If eating out I don't avoid eggs, and chances are that the eggs in cafes/ restaurants/ catered foods come from battery farms. It just gets too much to kick up a fuss. I'd really like to see the government outlaw battery farms. [39, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

F50: Eggs really are the ultimate horror for me—consumption is barbaric and revolting. Sometimes I end up eating eggs in another product (cake) and again I feel disappointed with myself. [34, vegan, Christchurch]

F18: I don't like eggs much on their own e.g. boiled, poached, scrambled etc. [I] was brought up to eat them, but [I'm] not that keen [on them]. They're OK in reasonable amounts e.g. in quiche as long as there's plenty of veg, and used in one or two recipes. [62, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Banks Peninsula, originally from the UK]

Like the vegan and ovo-vegetarians who avoided milk, strict lacto-vegetarian and vegan participants were inclined to object to eggs in principle (on the basis of exploitation of hens' reproductive systems), regardless of the method of farming used to produce them:

F2: Eggs: Two words: Chicken. Period. [31, lacto-vegetarian, Christchurch, originally from the USA]

F56: Eggs are a chicken period and [are] not fit for human consumption. [31, lacto-vegetarian, Auckland]

F37: I guess at a stretch I could understand eating free-range eggs. [But] they are little wombs with all the perfect nutrients in them for a baby chicken to live and grow. They're amazing when I think of them in their natural use, but fried up and sloppy for breakfast creeps me out. It's like a chicken's period—menstrual cycle. [25, vegan, Auckland]

F40: When I was 8 I stopped eating eggs when I realised the yolk was like (and could have been) a baby chicken and it even had an umbilical cord attached to it. [27, vegan, Auckland]

Others argued that eggs were the property of hens, and were not automatically there for humans to take: one woman had re-homed a number of ex-battery hens who had continued to lay eggs, but she fed these back to the hens who enjoyed them: "They belong to them, after all" (F78, 41, vegan, Christchurch).

Leather

Leather was one of the most fraught areas for the participants in this study. Many vegan participants rejected leather outright, on the same grounds as meat; others emphasized a connection between leather/animal skin and human skin.

M10: I consider leather to be on a similar level to meat. The animal must be dead in order to obtain its hide, so I find it reprehensible. [19, vegan, Wellington]

M11: Leather exists because of meat, and it is a product money can be made off. Capitalism. [24, vegan, Dunedin]

F22: [Leather is] creepy. Who would want to turn dead skin into household objects? [16, vegan, Christchurch]

F65: I see leather as skin. I don't see any difference between animal skin and human skin. [36, vegan, Wellington]

One 39 year old woman likened the process of stripping skin from slaughtered animals to the collection by trappers in the 18th century of 'red-skins' from Native American scalps:

F49: Leather like meat is part of a corpse. I found [numerous] extracts on the American Indian Cultural Support website [which] epitomise to me what is wrong with leather. To me, as with meat, the species of the skinned victim is irrelevant. The practise of using skins (whether human or non-human animal) is as offensive to me as it was to the 'good Christian women' of 1755 – even more so, as changing the adjective or terminology does not change the practice or reality. [39, vegan, Christchurch]

While most participants reacted against leather furniture, clothing and car upholstery, some conceded to using leather accessories (bags, belts and wallets), and still more wore leather shoes, despite (in many cases) a staunch rejection of animal products in other areas.

The shoe dilemma

Shoes were by far the most discussed leather product, the one of the most vexatious and difficult issues for stricter participants. Some (especially strict vegan) participants avoided leather entirely, preferring to buy canvas or vinyl shoes, or to purchase their footwear from vegan sites on the internet:

F78: [Leather is] a by-product (terrible capitalist term) of the meat industry. Don't wear it, don't like the look of it, doesn't belong on humans, doesn't smell nice or feel nice ... I don't wear leather at all, although I have to say finding funky and comfy vegan shoes is very difficult. [41, vegan, Christchurch]

F59: [I] avoid leather wherever possible. It makes shopping for shoes next to impossible, but I wouldn't be happy in leather shoes anyway. [34, vegan, Westland]

Many others found this impossible for a variety of reasons: some needed to wear specialist work boots; some found it impossible to buy vegan shoes off the internet because they couldn't try them on first; some needed orthopaedic shoes; some were trampers who felt they needed leather boots for their hobby; some worked in corporate settings where they felt they needed to wear fashionable shoes; and some were just shoe lovers who felt their choices would be greatly limited by switching to non-leather:

F94: I would like to buy vegan shoes, but they're not easy to come by. I walk a lot, and have some leather shoes and boots ... Vegan footwear available on the internet does not achieve a good fit. [I] need to try before buying. [50, lacto-vegetarian, Oamaru]

Justifying leather

Many participants recognized a level of hypocrisy in their willingness to wear leather shoes, but their unwillingness to use other leather products. Some rationalized their use of leather shoes through hoping that the cows had been old and well cared for before dying, or had not been killed for their skins:

F110: If I have to buy leather shoes, I secretly hope it comes from some old cow at the end of her days. [78, pescetarian (ovo-lacto), Auckland]

F84: I do have leather shoes (and want to believe that animals aren't killed for the kind of leather I have), but I am very aware of it, and don't have many pairs of shoes, and I don't think I'd buy a leather bag again. [46, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

Other leather-wearers justified their decision to wear leather on the basis that leather is a by-product of the meat industry. Some who wore leather were also concerned about the environmental impact of producing non-leather alternatives:

F55: Leather is an excellent and versatile product. If the animal is being killed for food then I'd rather its hide was used too so that there's no waste. I'd love it if technology took us beyond leather though. [31, ovo-vegetarian, Christchurch]

F63: I avoid [leather]. But I can balance the ethical considerations and wear it if the only alternative is ethically worse. I am aware I am wearing dead skin, and feel compassion for the animal. It can be a bit of an ethical balancing act for me between environmental and animal rights ethics. I think very carefully about it. [36, vegan, Dunedin]

F64: [I am] concern[ed] about [leather] but not ... enough to avoid it. It is a by-product of the meat industry, so perhaps it is not so bad; at least it is being utilised. I favour it over synthetic alternatives for health reasons and environmental pollution reasons. [36, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch]

Participants who avoided leather employed the reverse argument to those who wore it, stating that they would *not* wear it because it is a by-product of the meat industry:

F99: Leather is a by-product of the meat industry and so I do not buy or wear it. I would [only] wear leather if an animal in the wild had died from natural causes. [54, vegan, Hamilton]

F25: Leather is unethical and unnecessary. “Most of the millions of animals slaughtered for their skin endure the horrors of factory farming before being shipped to slaughter, where many are skinned alive. Buying leather directly contributes to factory farms and slaughterhouses since skin is the most economically important by-product of the meatpacking industry. Leather is also no friend of the environment since it shares all the environmental destruction of the meat industry, in addition to the toxins used in tanning.” (cowsarecool.com). There are plenty of alternatives to leather; I don’t see a need for it. [21, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

Permissible leather

There were certain scenarios in which even some strict vegans felt that wearing leather was permissible. For example, many participants continued to wear leather items that were given to them or purchased prior to their becoming vegan:

F53: Any leather products that I already own (e.g. shoes or belts bought or given to me – usually years ago) I will wear until they fall apart, because I don’t see any sense in wasting the life that was taken to make them. However I no longer purchase any leather-containing products. [30, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

In this same vein, some participants wore second-hand leather products because they didn’t view this as contributing to the demand for leather.

A number of participants wished such a thing as ‘ethical leather’ existed:

F74: I would still like to wear leather. If it was possible to buy shoes from an animal that had been well looked after while alive and died of natural causes, I would do this. [40, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch] (see also F99, above)

Possum fur

A question asking about views on possum fur prompted the clearest division in responses across participants: those opposed to the slaughter of possums (and thereby also the commercialization of possum fur), usually (though not always) those identifying as animal rights advocates *versus* those in favour of possum killing in New Zealand, usually (but not always) those identifying primarily as environmentalists (or ‘greenies’). The sample of quotes below demonstrates this division:

Against killing possums:

F47: [Possum fur] is misrepresented as ‘green’ and ‘justified’ – the cruelty seems to become ignored as soon as there is a human benefit or ‘environmental’ reason. [29, vegan, Auckland]

F4: I find the attitudes towards possums in New Zealand really callous. It is one thing to acknowledge an ecological problem, it is quite another to demonise a species, and kill them, in some cases, with enthusiasm. I was quite shocked to see one of the government’s “Feed the Mind” adverts, where a mother driving in a car tells her children very gleefully “Let’s count squashed possums!” On coming to New Zealand, we were also asked on a couple of occasions to “please run over possums when you see them on the road”, and that, sadly, seems to be a widespread attitude still. Possums are also singled out: After all, no-one has ever asked us to drive over a cow because of the water pollution caused by dairy farming ... Wearing possum fur collars is seen as some form of environmental activism, and also somehow as an act of ‘revenge’, as if the problems were caused by possums on purpose. [33, vegan, Christchurch, originally from Germany]

F94: Possums are my vegetarian siblings and friends. They are so sweet, so intelligent, so not to blame. They are vilely and cruelly persecuted. Even if they are the ‘pest’ they are made out to be (and this needs more research) they don’t deserve the nasty treatment they get... [50, lacto-vegetarian, Oamaru]

F112: I understand the fact that possums are abundant in our NZ bush ... however I would not buy such products as I actually like possums. [48, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch]

F2: Despite possums’ problematic environmental status, I don’t support the production of possum fur products, not only because it involves the death of the animal, but also because the possum unfairly bears the brunt for the mistakes of acclimatization. [31, lacto-vegetarian, Christchurch, originally from the USA]

F40: Completely unfair and unethical. Possums are gorgeous creatures... They were brought over here for the fur trade. If NZers think they are destroying our wildlife and forests then they need to be moved to another country or a better option than killing them in leg hold traps needs to be used. I go on bush walks and drive past areas that are meant to have lots of possums living in them and there still looks like there is plenty of bush left to me. Nothing like the damage that farming brings where bush is burnt down completely for farmland. People need to stop complaining about the possum problem and look at the more serious problems for our environment like farming: deforestation, soil erosion, methane gas from farm animals, effluent etc etc [27, vegan, Auckland]

F39: It strikes me as weird that people are proud of themselves when they buy possum fur – like they are doing something great for the environment. For me, I still don’t like it because it is killing an animal. [27, pescetarian (ovo-lacto), Auckland]

F9: [Possum fur is] sad – a possum in any other place is adored. Only here in NZ is it considered a pest, and that is purely a human mistake. They should never have been brought here. [40, vegan, Auckland, originally from Germany]

F25: Fur is dead, no matter where it comes from, even if possums are pests, they still feel pain and fear. [21, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

F65: To me [possum fur] is Hannibal Lector territory, like leather, it is wearing the skin and hair of other animals – gross! I feel angry when people use the excuse that possums are a pest. [36, vegan, Wellington]

In favour of killing possums:

F34: I loathe possums in NZ, the destruction they cause on our environment is terrifying. I am all for ways to reduce their population. [25, white-meat eater, Dunedin]

M26: [Possum fur] doesn't bother me. Might even wear it. I'm no friend of the possum and support killing possums in a humane manner. [49, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch]

M8: Good use of a pest. [56, ovo-vegetarian, Napier, originally from the UK]

F117: EXCELLENT!! Everyone needs a possum fur jersey or three. [53, meat-eater, Waiuku]

F120: Generally I do not believe in animals being caught for their fur, but in the case of the possum I make an exception. [50, lacto-vegetarian, Clarence Valley]

F18: [Although] I couldn't kill a possum myself, I will set a cage trap for them (no way a gin trap, I couldn't believe they were still legal here, indeed still are) if I hear them in the garden, and then get my partner to shoot them - I won't have them eating my apples! Pure selfishness, but not just that... wouldn't mind so much if they were sweet harmless little herbivores but I get angry at the way they eat birds' eggs, so my excuse is conservation although I admit I have a selfish reason too! When I see them having been run over, I'm glad, but would never try to run over them myself, in fact will swerve or stop to avoid it. But if I accidentally hit one that suddenly ran the wrong way, I wouldn't be sorry. [62, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Banks Peninsula, originally from the UK]

While such a demarcation was clear between possum advocates and opponents of possums, many participants also discussed the possum issue in terms of a personal dilemma – an issue which made them realize and confront certain inconsistencies or contradictions in their own approaches to nonhuman animals:

F64: I am aware of conflicting perspectives within my own views. For example, not believing, ethically, in killing animals (their 'right to life'), but also believing that if animal pests aren't killed, then other animal species will be wiped out. Perhaps this is an emotional response, seeing animals as individuals (and caring and concern for each of their lives) – and a colder, pragmatic viewpoint of 'reality' – noting, however, I don't think I could personally kill anything – I even avoid killing flies and sandflies. [36, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch]

F24: This is hard, because possums are a pest, and in encouraging a fur industry, we can reduce possum numbers and save millions of other animals in danger. We introduced them so we need to find ways of limiting their damage, and a fur industry is a way of doing this. Obviously, there are humane and inhumane ways of doing this, and it would need to be enforced, although that would be hard. It is worth considering that a hunter wants an undamaged pelt, so that would limit some ways of killing (ie slitting the throat), which could be good, or bad (encouraging poisoning). I think overall, to kill some possums, for the good of a whole range of other species, I would have to agree with, although it is a sad situation. [20, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch]

M15: I believe that possum fur apparel, or apparel made from any beast that had to give up its life, is both cruel and unnecessary, particularly given the range of alternative fabrics available today (e.g. cotton, polyester). I do, however, see the need to control possums, as in their large numbers they are destroying native flora, and subsequently the habitats of our native fauna. But it is also sad to note that it has become necessary to destroy these animals in order to control a man-made problem, as it was us that introduced them to this country. [23, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

M29: Now this has got me in a dilemma. I need to think about this a little more. I don't like the killing of animals but what do we do when they are in the wrong place and causing so much destruction? In everything there is a need for pragmatism but I usually default to not killing wherever possible. I avoid rather than run over possums for example. [58, ovo-vegetarian, Kaitia]

'The possum industry'

Several participants viewed 'possum control' in New Zealand (and the associated marketing of possum fur as a commodity) as an essentially profit-driven industry or

business, and expressed doubts that its existence was primarily motivated by environmental concerns:

M18: I do not believe this very cruel enterprise [of possum culling] has anything to do with conservation, but everything to do with profit. [34, vegan, Christchurch]

F50: [Possum fur is] “feel good” fur – can wear it and pretend you are enviro-friendly. I find the notion of ‘worthy’/‘unworthy’ animals appalling. A great marketing ploy, nothing more. [34, vegan, Christchurch]

F22: Possums may be destroying our forests, but we shouldn’t glamorize it. [16, vegan, Christchurch]

M19: It shows how easily people’s ideas about animals are manipulated – even those who think fur (eg fox, seal, mink) is cruel and unacceptable think it’s ok to wear the fur of animals that have died agonizingly in a trap or from poison. It shows how powerful it is to put an animal in a value-laden category like ‘pest’. It also shows historical blindness since the possum ‘problem’ was produced by the taste for their fur here in the first place! [39, vegan, Christchurch]

F14: [Possum fur] devalues an animal New Zealanders have been *taught* to malign and hate. [46, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Wellington, originally from the USA]

While nearly all vegans challenged the possum industry for its perceived brutal and financially motivated approaches to managing the impact of possums in this country, one man, who happily wore possum fur, argued in the opposite direction: he felt that the business interests of the industry actually interfered with the effectiveness of eliminating possums:

M14: I’m ambivalent towards the industry trying to portray itself on the side of eradication, while it only really has interests in low level control. I’ve written submissions to the DOC in support of forms of possum control. Shooting and 1080 are required to save our native species from extinction... [22, vegan, Wellington]

Commodification of possum fur

A further issue, particularly for those who supported the killing of possums, was whether or not possum fur should be commodified. Some were in favour of this as they felt it would speed up eradication:

M27: I am not normally in favour of fur for obvious reasons, but the environment comes first and this just may help to control this NZ pest ... Sometimes for me killing is justified. [49, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

Others were opposed to possum fur as they felt it would *hinder* extermination:

M25: I think if we are really serious about eradicating the possum, the possum fur apparel should be discouraged. If there is a still a market for it, then this only delays complete eradication. [49, ovo-lacto vegetarian, New Plymouth]

Participants both opposed to – and in favour of – possum killing were concerned that the possum market here might eventually expand to include fur produced from intensively farmed possums, or lead to the establishment of other types of fur farming in New Zealand:

M11: This is dangerous as it normalises the concept of fur. Once the possum population is brought down, the possum fur industry may want to farm possums. [24, vegan, Dunedin]

F8: 'Soft' fur industry which can lead to the promotion of other furs such as rabbit etc does nothing to assist native forest protection because it promotes a market. [40, vegan, Christchurch, originally from the UK]

F52: [Possum fur apparel is a] tricky one, I was brought up with "they are a pest. Vermin". As long as the animal is being use ie: meat and skin. Better than poisoning everything and as long as we don't start farming them like sable and mink. [30, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Wellington]

Some participants were primarily opposed to fur per se:

M37: No human should glorify ANYTHING to do with ANY fur industry – no matter what fur. [54, vegan, Wellington, originally from Australia]

M1: Cruel, arrogant (fur's fur). [27, ovo-vegetarian, Hamilton, originally from the UK]

Responses to the possum issue also reflected a broader privileging across surveys of native over introduced species:

F70: It is good to get rid of possums form NZ bush because of the major devastation they're wreaking, including killing native birds. But I don't like the idea of glamorizing fur lest it re-ignite the notorious 'fur trade' that did so much harm in the past. [39, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

Methods of possum control

Those who were in favour of 'possum control' commonly supported shooting and sterilization methods over poisoning or trapping. Poisoning with 1080 was generally ruled out by those who supported possum extermination, for environmental reasons and because of the potential impact on non-targeted native species (this position was more likely to be held by greenies), while gin-traps were unanimously condemned as cruel and inhumane:

M13: Possums are a pest, and as long as cruel methods like 1080 are not used, I see their deaths as positive in regards to saving our natural environment. [21, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

F6: I would not buy possum fur or wear it but I think a possum-hunting industry to control numbers and protect native plants and animals is preferable to broadscale 1080 poisoning. [36, vegan, Kapiti Coast, originally from Australia]

Sterilization was viewed as the most humane method of control, but there was cynicism about the eventuality of such an intervention due to "lack of incentive": the factors assumed to be limiting the discovery and use of an effective mode of possum sterilization included cost of production, and (negative) impact on revenue garnered by the current possum culling industry:

M34: [Possum fur] is just another form of exploitation, but cleverly masquerading as a solution to an environmental problem. The real solution would be to prevent possums breeding but the possum hunters would be unemployed! [58, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland, originally from the UK]

F10: Possums should be controlled by bait to make them infertile. It would cost a huge amount, but the possums were brought to NZ to *make* money out of them. The NZ attitude to possums disgusts me. [41, vegan, Auckland, originally from the UK]

F17: An industry built on cruelty and ignorance. Exploiting the feelings of environmentalists. Pests such as the possum could be sterilized if they were really so harmful to the environment. [59, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland, originally from the UK]

F78: The fairest and most humane way to limit possum damage to forests and to native wildlife is to prevent breeding, and to let those who now exist live out their natural lives. However such an effective sterilization plan will probably not work as this would cost more money which the government would not want, it would put the 'possum industry' out of business (which, after all, NZ does not want to happen), and it would likely require some form of genetic engineering which environmentalists would oppose anyway... I believe the true reason for the 'possum panic' in NZ is economic – there is fear that our 6 billion dollars per year meat export industry will be affected. So it boils down to farming – which is the real pest in this country. [41, vegan, Christchurch]

As indicated in the excerpt directly above, the interests of the agricultural sector (especially beef and dairy farming) were also seen to play a large part in perceived propaganda surrounding the possum problem in New Zealand:

M22: I am concerned that the environmental damage is being used as an excuse to demonise possums. Possums are in fact being exterminated in places where they are no environmental threat at all because the natural environment has already been destroyed by humans. The reason they are being killed is because they spread TB to cows, in other words they threaten the meat industry. [43, vegan, Wellington]

M4: [I] lived in Oz where if you had a possum living in your roof everyone came to see it and you all tried to feel it. This was my first experience of possums – so I come here and they're this mega-menace to all humankind – read farmers – and I am conflicted! I do know the damage the bush and birds but as much as dropping 1080 bait for all to eat? I don't think so. [46, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch, originally from the UK]

M19: New Zealanders' obsession with 'pests' – eg possums – is especially hostile to certain animals and especially blind to the agricultural motivations of 'pest control'. [39, vegan, Christchurch]

Alternative perspectives

While the viewpoints above all pertain to current possum control policy in New Zealand, and therefore relate to fur extracted from poisoned, shot or trapped animals, one vegan man was in favour of using fur obtained from possums that had not been deliberately killed:

M5: [Possum fur is] speciesist exploitation. Should be outlawed except where it can be proved without doubt that the animals died of natural causes. [49, vegan, Auckland, originally from the USA]

Two other participants offered counter-methods for managing the possum dilemma in New Zealand:

F82: I think the possum needs to be removed from NZ to protect native trees. I oppose all commercial exploitation of them and would prefer to see projects to humanely capture and restore possums to Australia where they are, I understand, a protected native. [43, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Wellington]

F5: Possums were stupidly introduced to NZ by humans, the population grew out of control and caused damage. Now humans think that it's a good idea to kill these 'pests' that they created and use them for apparel to 'save the environment'... I believe nature has a way of balancing things out and if humans stop interfering with nature, then in time things will sort themselves out... [34, vegan, Porirua, originally from the UK]

Reactions to personal contact with meat and other animal products

Many vegetarians in this study mentioned how the sight, smell, or accidental ingestion of raw or cooked meat, chicken or fish (as well as cheese, eggs and leather) affected them in adverse ways. One vegetarian woman felt her reaction to meat was purely bodily:

F105: I experience a physical reaction to any meat (including meat stocks) and assume my body no longer processes it. [58, ovo-vegetarian, Kapiti Coast]

However, the majority of participants commented that aversion was experienced both physically and psychologically/emotionally.

Responses to smells

Smells were the most commonly mentioned precursors of revulsion. Odours from raw and cooked meat, chicken and fish, cheese and other dairy products, leather, butcher shops, as well as meat and seafood sections of supermarkets, evoked adverse reactions. Some attributed primarily physical ‘symptoms’ such as nausea, vomiting, “shudders”, “the shakes”, or a dry mouth, to past experiences and/or to an awareness of the animal’s suffering and death; those experiencing primarily emotional responses to smells from animal-derived products were also conscious of how their reactions were triggered by memories and by empathy for animals:

F110: I dislike intensely the smell of meat cooking, especially bacon and pork. [Our neighbours] barbecue meat near our fence every weekend. The smell is so nauseous we have to close all our windows. I think my dislike of meat goes back to my childhood ... when I used to spend school holidays on farms in South Canterbury ... The dogs were fed once a week when a sheep was killed. The smell of mutton cooking permeated the house and I hated it. I think this revulsion happened because I liked the animals and felt sorry for them. I didn’t realize at the time they were regarded as ‘stock units’. [78, pescetarian (ovo-lacto), Auckland]

F23: Sometimes the smell of meat if it’s really strong can make you feel sick, but I think it’s more of an emotional thing because it’s so frustrating to continually witness people taking part in such a brutal chain of suffering who would consider themselves ‘good people’ [20, vegan, Wellington]

F48: Not sure if this is so much bodily as emotional, but generally makes me feel really depressed and upset, frustrated and angry and at times sick. This is because so many people are switched off to the torture of animals and are not interested in knowing what happens. This is something I can not understand. [27, vegan, Christchurch]

Several reasoned that their aversion to the smell of meat stemmed from the connection of meat to the actual death of the animal; the fact that meat was an animal corpse or “dead flesh”:

M19: The smell of meat raw or else when it is cooking sometimes makes me wrinkle my nose in involuntary disgust ... this is because, since I stopped eating it, meat smells very strongly to me of death. [39, vegan, Christchurch]

F43: When friends eat meat, especially meat from a bone, it makes me feel physically sick. I want to throw up and can often physically shudder. I think the smell contributes to this because I can choose not to eat it but unless I remove myself I can’t refuse to ingest the odour. [27, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Wanganui]

One man indicated that intellectual reasons produced his response to the smell of meat:

M3: It just doesn't make sense ideologically. Smells of raw, cooked and cooking meat I find somewhat offensive. [44, lacto-vegetarian, Christchurch, originally from Switzerland]

A woman who named meat-eaters "zoophagi" commented that, if most people really thought about what their food was, they would also dislike the smell of raw or cooked meat:

F4: I think [an adverse reaction] happens because these products actually naturally stink, but that people have become either so desensitised they don't notice, or they are 're-programmed' to associate the smell with wholesomeness and good memories. I don't think anyone would like the smell of raw meat, though, if they stopped to think about it. As for cooked meat, the smell is often masked through seasonings, but it still smells like burnt flesh ... [33, vegan, Christchurch, originally from Germany]

While the stench of raw or cooked meat was the most cited cause of unpleasant reactions, participants also expressed repugnance at the smells of dairy products and leather:

F3: [As a child] I almost never ate dairy products like cheese, yoghurt and milk ... We thought it was disgusting and made people smell. [31, pescetarian (ovo), Wellington, originally from Singapore]

F65: Animal milk smells like urine to me. [36, vegan, Wellington]

F114: The smell of meat makes me feel sick. As does the smell of dairy products or someone who's just had dairy. I'm always surprised to walk past this one cheese shop in town which smells really strong. My non-vegan friends will walk past it and say 'hmmm, smells good'. To me it smells literally like vomit. [24, vegan, Dunedin, originally from Switzerland]

F84: My mother has two new leather armchairs. I don't sit in them (a point of irritation and comment by others) and I detest the smell – it has a mildly nauseating effect on me ... 'new' leather that still smells 'like leather' turns me off, so to speak. [46, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

Responses to ingesting meat (and meat substitutes)

Vegans, vegetarians and some pescetarians relayed the immediate and (usually) strong consequences for them of unintentionally biting, chewing, tasting or swallowing meat:

F84: On occasion I have accidentally taken a bite of food that has meat in it and had a violent choking response. [46, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

F22: Chewing on meat makes me gag. This is because I can visualize it as an animal and it feels like muscle (because it is). [16, vegan, Christchurch]

Some indicated their intense aversion to chewing/ingesting meat (as well as smelling and seeing meat) was associated with a kind of quasi-cannibalism: the consumption of nonhuman flesh was comparable (physically and morally) to the consumption of human flesh:

F81: I become nauseous at the sight and particularly the smell of dead bodies lying in the windows of butchers or on supermarket shelves. I envisage the same taste and chewability as if eating human flesh, this turns my stomach. [43, lacto-vegetarian, Wellington]

F40: I feel sick at the thought of eating any animal product. I don't think they are meant for us. It would be like me killing a person and serving their meat to a visitor and putting my friend's breast milk in their coffees, and saving my own egg each month and giving it to guests. People would not find this acceptable and would not eat it. [27, vegan, Auckland]

F32: The smell of cooked meat especially makes me want to retch; also seeing raw meat makes me nauseous. I think this happens because I have a reaction to seeing/smelling dead animals in the same way I would if I saw human flesh all peeled and bleeding somewhere. [23, ovo-vegetarian, Auckland]

F14: I could just as soon eat 'meat'/an animal as become a cannibal. A spiritual connection and blurring of artificial species-distinct boundaries has evolved over the 17 years as a vegetarian. [46, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Wellington, originally from the USA]

One woman reported feeling anxious at the idea of being offered food from which meat had been removed:

F62: If someone suggests selling a meal to me by "just taking the meat out" my heart rate increases – like panic... [36, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

Responses to texture

Several participants commented on how they were repulsed by the texture of meat, dairy products and/or eggs:

M4: Don't like texture – never have – thought of what it is – hence pates even worse, bloody meats, soft yolks of eggs, mushrooms are borderline for me – meaty textures – fleshy. [46, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch, originally from the UK]

The textures and tastes of non-animal-derived foods simulating meat (ie faux meat) also evoked unpleasant reactions for a few. This was largely explained in terms of how similar to real meat such substitutes are. However, one life-long vegetarian who had not experienced repulsion to actual meat found herself battling with nausea when encountering faux meat in a restaurant meal:

F2: Because I've never eaten meat, I find it difficult to actually associate the stuff I see people eating with animals. So, in relation to meat, I do not have any physical reaction. However, we sometimes eat at Chinese restaurants that prepare faux meat and I find I am unable to eat it if someone says it is like the real thing. I have experienced quite sudden feelings of nausea and aversion towards soy or gluten products as soon as they are compared to real animal products by people more experienced than myself. [31, lacto-vegetarian, Christchurch, originally from the USA]

Guilty responses

While physical reactions such as shuddering, nausea, retching, and palpitations were commonly experienced in relation to the sight, smell or ingestion of meat and other animal products, some described their primary response in terms of shame, guilt or horror:

F115: If I eat something and find out it has meat in it, guilt just floods me straight away. I can't stand the thought of it. I love animals too much to eat them. [14, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch]

M6: A sense of shame that animals have had to suffer to indulge people. [70, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Kapiti, originally from the UK]

F97: I do feel revulsion at the sight of raw meat and slaughtered animals. If I see a pig carcass being off-loaded from a truck to a butcher's shop, I am horrified ... Subconsciously, I probably know the brutality of the death of the animal, and it affects me this way. Having grown up to see pigs on my father's farm as clean, personable creatures, I empathize with them. [53, lacto-vegetarian, Auckland]

(ii) Practices and activities involving the use of animals

Participants were asked for their opinions on several activities and practices involving animals. While numerous examples could have been included, the following were selected to cover a variety of practices and modes of consumption: pet-keeping, horse-racing, rodeos, Wild Foods Festivals, A & P shows, hunting and fishing, and battery farming. Participants also commented independently on vivisection and zoos.

Pet-keeping

Most participants expressed positive sentiments about companion animals (noting perceived benefits for humans and animals), while at the same time drawing attention to the ways in which humans' 'ownership' of animals could be problematic, especially under current law which views 'pets' as 'property':

F53: I don't have any real problem with the idea of pet-keeping as long as the animals are treated fairly and have the freedom to behave and live as they need to; ie. they aren't seen as belongings, but rather as individuals with personalities and feelings as well as needs. [30, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

F112: [Having companion animals is] great as long as people respect the animal and realise that the animal is a friend and not a possession. [48, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch]

Some (mainly younger vegan) participants were fundamentally opposed to humans owning domesticated, tamed animals:

F40: [Pet-keeping] is unnatural. Kept like zoo animals. We take away their sex organs and pen them into a fenced yard and feed them revolting, boring food that is bad for them and has involved the slaughtering of many other animals ... I don't have any pets living with me and will never have pets in the future whether I lived in an apartment or not. [27, vegan, Auckland]

M11: Part of the colonising process. To *own* a pet normalises the ownership concept on a wider level. [24, vegan, Dunedin]

M34: Personally I am not in favour of keeping pets, as I don't think it is in the best interest of the animals. [58, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland, originally from the UK]

Treatment of companion animals

Along with battery farming, the concern for the humane treatment of companion animals was one of the foremost issues discussed by the participants in this study. Even those who were largely untroubled by New Zealand's farming methods were concerned with pet use and abuse:

F51: [Pet keeping is] great; it teaches people that animals have feelings and personalities, and they are more likely to have respect for animals on the whole. It's a shame more isn't done to check out that puppies especially aren't sold to only suitable homes. [30, meat-eater, Auckland]

F42: I have pets, and always have. I do think, however, that the owners ought to be licensed and not the animals so much. I also believe there should be much harsher penalties for neglect and/or abuse of animals. This question reminds me of one of my favourite quotes: "You are responsible forever for that which you have tamed". [27, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Nelson]

F53: I don't have any real problem with the idea of pet keeping as long as the animals are treated fairly and have the freedom to behave and live as they need to ... If a large dog is kept in a small space and not adequately exercised or mentally stimulated, or punished for barking, or even encouraged to be overly aggressive then that's the kind of pet keeping I would like to see banished from modern society! [30, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

F49: I believe the adoption of animals should be similar to the adoption of children. The prospective family needs to be proven capable of looking after the needs of the animal for their entire life. [39, vegan, Christchurch]

Appropriate pet species

While most accepted the keeping of domesticated cats and dogs as companion animals (as long as they were treated humanely), numerous participants spoke out against fish being kept in bowls and birds, rabbits and guinea pigs being kept in cages:

F1: Companion animals generally lead a healthy, happy life. I am now converted to de-sexing companion animals such as dogs & cats due to the amount of unwanted companion animals that need to be put down at shelters. I believe only certain people should be granted breeding rights, all animals should be de-sexed before sale. I disagree with the caging of exotic birds, I think if someone wants to have a house-bird they need to provide an aviary so that the bird has room to fly, and I also think that birds should be in twos as they are social animals. I believe that the sale and distribution of birdcages that restrict a bird from flying should be illegal as under no condition is it humane. I also think that it is cruel to keep rabbits & guinea pigs in cages. A reasonable size run complete with plenty of exercise outside the cage should be the minimum standard for keeping of these animals. [24, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland, originally from the UK]

F59: Cats and dogs have some freedom, and definitely the relationship is mutual (and they are so domesticated that it is irreversible). I hate seeing birds kept in cages or fish in tanks, though. That's not a pet relationship; that's imprisonment. [34, vegan, Westland]

As already mentioned in this report (see section 1), participants from rural backgrounds often gave accounts of farm animals that were raised as pets. Their close relationships with these animals, viewed primarily as 'stock' on the farm, often acted as a catalyst for thinking about the treatment of other animals of the same species. The convergence of 'pet' and 'farm animal' categories was often a pivotal event in participants' developing perception of animals' sentience.

Some participants argued that the concern shown by pet owners toward pet species should ideally be extended outward to encompass all animals:

F2: The animals in my life are immensely important to me. This conceptualisation of animals is, I guess, one that many pet owners would adopt in relation to their animal cohabitant. I try, however, to extend this consideration beyond the animals with whom I have immediate relationships to acknowledge the individuality of the seemingly inconsequential animals I come upon. In practical terms, this means doing things like rescuing spiders from the sink or helping hedgehogs get off the road, just basically treating them with the same dignity that I would afford my own "pet" by facilitating their right to live their lives. [31, lacto-vegetarian, Christchurch, originally from the USA]

Perceptions of the pet industry

The pet industry received a poor appraisal by participants: pet shops were seen to inspire impulse buying of animals without regard for long-term commitment, while breeding was regarded as "irresponsible" when there were so many animals in New Zealand without homes already. The practices involved in pedigree breeding also came under fire.

F77: [I am] OK with [pet keeping] as long as the animals are treated as part of the family and not as disposable commodities. [I] have worked voluntarily for the SPCA [and] think that there are a lot of people who should not have animals. A cat or dog is a 15-20 year commitment. I think that pet shops should not sell dogs as this encourages people to buy on impulse; ditto [with] kittens/cats/rabbits/guinea pigs. Ideally pets should be expensive to purchase and only purchased through a reputable breeder who proves info and ongoing support. Otherwise they should be 'recycled' cats and dogs that are already in need of a home. As 'pets' are cheap and readily available, many people do not value them. [41, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Hamilton]

F23: [B]reeding animals for the purpose of selling as pets is exploitation. It is a part of the wider ideology that sees animals not as their own agents, but merely as a piece of property with instrumental value. It always frustrates me to see people walking around with little designer dogs that they paid thousands for. The ideology that treats animals like a fashion accessory, or a plaything for children, is responsible for the more grave issues of animal abuse occurring in other arenas like food production. [20, vegan, Wellington]

F10: I don't think animals should be bred for pets. That said, I enjoy sharing my house with animals who needed homes. [41, vegan, Auckland, originally from the UK]

F108: The breeding of dogs as status symbols is cruel and unnecessary. I recently heard of a breeder who drowned puppies as the bitch had mated with the wrong breed. [66, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Kapiti Coast]

F78: My sister bred [pedigree dogs] for a while. She was instructed by the pedigree association or kennel association or whatever it's called to destroy any puppies born with 'irregularities' (ie wrong markings, ugly spots, deafness and so on) in order to 'preserve' the breed (it astounds me that vets in New Zealand would assist in killing these so-called 'substandard' pups). She has refused to participate in this practice now. [41, vegan, Christchurch]

Most participants favoured the de-sexing of animals as a way to minimize the large numbers of homeless cats and dogs being euthanased in New Zealand each year. A small number, however, saw de-sexing as a form of cruelty that denied an animal the right to produce offspring:

M15: Pet keeping I find a difficult subject to draw an opinion on. As the proud owner of my pet golden retriever, I often wonder if she could be living a better life had she been born in the wild. We live on a 1/8th acre section, so there is not an awful lot of room for her to run around and play, and she gets so excited when I walk her, but in the wild she would have all the room in the world to run and play, and the freedom to do so whenever she pleases. I also wonder if it was fair to spay her; a human would never dare take away the right of another human to bear children, but we freely take these rights of our pets. I wonder how different her life would've been in the wild if she could have given birth to a few litters of puppies. And what about taking her away from her mother at such a young age? She was only 6 months old when we bought her off the breeder. I wonder if she even remembers her mother now. [23, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

Pet-keeping dilemmas

For vegan and stricter vegetarians, the issue of pet-keeping was one of the most ethically fraught issues in the survey. Many were bothered by the practicalities of maintaining their companion animals by feeding them the remains of other slaughtered animals:

M26: It would be better if there were no carnivorous pets requiring the farming of animals for meat. [49, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch]

M19: I fall short of the ideal of not consuming anything that involves exploiting animals [in buying] food for companion animals. I have tried vegan pet food, but most of our animals are on special diets because they are rescued strays, so this doesn't work out. I feel bad every time I feed

them meat-based products because I know this is a major contribution to maintaining an exploitative industry, but it's a compromise I live with in order to care for these otherwise unwanted animals. [39, vegan, Christchurch]

F118: Companion animals my help people relate to animals but I think the 'pet industry' and associated 'pet food' industry is exploitative and cruel. [34, vegan, Dunedin]

F72: Domesticated animals are a very complex topic. Personally I could never own a cat/dog/rabbit or whatever because pet food is revolting. [40, vegan, Christchurch]

As previously mentioned, other participants were troubled by the theoretical or philosophical implications of 'ownership':

M18: Philosophically, [pet-keeping] is still basically animal abuse and domination, but practically, in a society where animal abuse is so entrenched, people can relate to animals as fellow living beings [through pet-keeping]. I think for some people pet-keeping is the best road back from learned conditioned cruelty. [34, vegan, Christchurch]

Despite this, many suggested that pet keeping was an important way to learn compassion and care for animals in contemporary Western societies, and that the relationship could be mutually beneficial to the human and animal involved:

M22: I am opposed to caged pets, but would encourage pet keeping where the animal actually has some choice in whether to stay, such as is the case with pet cats or dogs. It was my own interactions with companion animals that opened my eyes to the sentience of animals and our inconsistencies, so on the whole I would encourage respectful interactions with members of other species. [43, vegan, Wellington]

M35: Provided pets are well treated, there seem to be benefits to humans. Children can learn respect and love for animals through having pets and this is to be encouraged. [64, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Porirua]

F91: I have experienced that a symbiotically healthy relationship can exist between a human being and the animals in his/her care. I have witnessed both species enjoying and benefiting from a close, respectful and loving relationship. [49, vegan, Auckland]

Sport and entertainment

Horse-racing

A question asking for participants' views on horse-racing resulted in three main types of response: approving or positive, disapproving or critical, and uncertain or non-committed (ie, those who felt they didn't know enough about racing to comment either way).

Pro horse-racing

Proponents of horse-racing commented that running fast was an important and/or fun activity for horses, and horses would therefore enjoy taking part in races. These people also tended to view those involved in the care and training of race-horses favourably:

F34: Race horses in NZ are generally well treated; they get exercise, socialisation and up to date health care. Retired horses are usually used for breeding, so their life post-racing is usually of high quality. Horses are intelligent animals and I believe that racing does provide them with stimulation and challenges. [25, white-meat eater, Dunedin]

F104: Much depends on the owners, trainers and jockeys. I have no problem with it if horses are treated kindly. My mother owned racehorses and they were happy, much loved animals: her babies. Racehorses are competitive animals – they like to win and they're show-offs. The equine equivalent of fashion models. [58, lacto-vegetarian, rural Manawatu]

Anti horse-racing

Almost all vegan respondents disputed the idea that horses enjoyed racing in the context of organized race fixtures (and with the involvement or manipulation of humans). Some of these people also drew attention to horse-riding per se as an anthropocentric activity:

F40: [Race-horses] get whipped and are put into a highly stressful and completely unnatural situation. Just because they have a back we can sit on does not mean it was meant for people to sit on. I think they would rather live in packs in the wild and run without humans on their backs so therefore I will not attend any horse-racing event and will not ride horses either. [27, vegan, Auckland]

F35: I find it exploitative, anthropocentric, and unnecessary. I wouldn't go to a race. [25, vegan, Christchurch]

F37: [Horse-racing] just seems totally demeaning and cruel for the horses. They are massive beautiful powerful creatures and we just use them to race around one small track kicking and whipping them so we win some money for "owning" them. I don't know I just feel embarrassed for the humans doing it and enjoying it and betting on it... [25, vegan, Auckland]

M17: It is exploiting horses for human entertainment. The horse does not have a choice if it wants to run or not, it is trained to! - forced to run. [29, vegan, Christchurch]

F50: I loathe it, have extended family members in the industry and I find them appalling; horses are all about profit, breeding, training, breaking. Why can't horses just be horses? [34, vegan, Christchurch]

M19: The exploitation of animals for human pleasure and profit in this industry is disgraceful and to most people invisible. To produce highly-sensitive, emotionally-complex and sociable animals for this, and then to overwork their bodies, and then send them to the scrap-heap, is simply abhorrent. [39, vegan, Christchurch]

Some participants distinguished between the 'activity' of horses racing and the horse-racing 'industry' per se:

F20: Some horses love racing and some owners love to spend the time racing their horses. I have seen it – a family affair, mutual fun for the horse and owners, no whips allowed. The horse is a family pet [but] the horse racing "industry" is simply another form of exploitation. Once money is involved the animal's welfare is of little concern except to keep it in top condition to earn more money. The more money, the greater risk to the animal. [71, vegan, Levin, originally from Australia]

F18: The actual race seems fine, I know horses enjoy a good race (one of my horses was an ex-racehorse, used to really take off along the beach when in the company of others) but I think it's fairly appalling the way they will just slaughter anything that doesn't perform – at least, so I've heard. [62, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Banks Peninsula, originally from the UK]

M14: I oppose it, insofar as it is connected to horse killing, but have no concerns whatsoever about the racing. A friend, and a person I consider to have a high standard of ethics is an ex-jockey and he maintains that the animals that run the fastest are the ones that enjoy running the most. [22, vegan, Wellington]

Opponents of horse-racing focused on the treatment of thoroughbred and standardbred horses by the racing industry, including the exploitation of young horses, the methods used to make horses run faster (whips and spurs), the risks involved in racing, and the fates of horses once their 'earning' lives were over:

F79: Although individual horse racers love their horses and become very attached to them, I find it puzzling that they can love them so much and then expose them to the stresses and dangers of racing them. [43, vegan, Christchurch]

F41: I would guess the owners of racing horses would look after them, but I suppose as there is money involved as soon as the horses aren't any use any more then they're put down/sold off. I don't like animals coming second to human convenience. [27, lacto-vegetarian, Dunedin]

F93: I am very concerned for the horses' welfare in regard to racing too soon and for too long resulting in injuries or death. Also doping and poisoning of horses all for greed. Also when the horses have finished racing they have no homes and end up as pet food. Too many horses bred for the industry (hoping to breed the winning one!). [50, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

Opponents also criticized the horse-racing industry for its links to human social inequities: ie as a 'sport' of/for the rich.

F83: Horse-racing is horrible. For the rich only to watch horses run out of [being scared]. Why else would horses want to run so fast? [45, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch]

M10: I think it's sad that it is considered 'classy' to go watch horses being forced to run in circles by men with whips. I find cruelty for entertainment abhorrent. [19, vegan, Wellington]

Personal experiences of the horse-racing industry

Those who had personal knowledge or experience of the industry provided perspectives both in favour of, and opposed to, horse-racing. Some had witnessed cruelty to horses while working in racing stables:

F27: I believe don't judge until you try. I was training at a racing farm before I made up my mind about horse-racing so I could see it from the 'inside'. The stables where I was treated the horses quite well, although I know some stables are not as conscious of the animals' well-being. I do not agree with starting training any younger than 4 years (training usually begins at 2 years – well before the horse has grown, resulting in deformed bones and early retirement). [21, ovo-lacto vegetarian, New Plymouth]

M11: My father is involved in horse-racing ownership, so often I would go to the horse stables and watch a yearling being 'broken-in'. One specific experience was when me and my father were standing by watching a yearling shiver and shake, while the trainer wrestled with it on the ground, when finally the horse escaped *under* a fence. This I was told was necessary to "show them (the horse) who's boss", and I accepted that [at the time]. [24, vegan, Dunedin]

F78: I worked [at racing stables] every weekend for 2 years. My main reason was to be near horses and get to ride, but I soon learnt how awful the racing industry is. While the horses were fed the best food and groomed til they shone, they were basically considered commodities which needed to 'pay their way'. When owners came to visit their horses, the trainer and jockeys would be so polite and speak so kindly of their horses, but other times I observed racehorses getting punched in the face (if they had stepped on someone's foot), whipped around the face (when being broken in), yanked and punched, and scared frequently to get them to move. I was ignorant and never questioned what happened to them when they didn't win, or were no longer 'profitable'. I still feel awful about my complicity in this business during these years – I didn't feel close to any of the horses but simply used them myself as I enjoyed the experience of riding and couldn't afford a horse of my own (anthropocentric!). Horse-racing is about exploitation of animals who are trained to make a profit for wealthy owners and trainers. The welfare of the horses is dependent on their profit-making abilities, and even then, 'behind the scenes' activities in some racing stables

demonstrate how the horses are basically considered objects able to be manipulated through training, special foods, whips and spurs. Well-meaning people who comment that racehorses seem to enjoy running and racing against each other do not realize the means by which greater speed is induced. [41, vegan, Christchurch]

Rodeos

Many participants were unaware of rodeos taking place in New Zealand. A few argued that rodeos were a part of rural culture and were not harmful to the animals involved:

F117: I have been told many times that the bulls and horses used in rodeos are only used a few times per year because the rodeo organisers use the local stock, thereby limiting transport costs. I know the horses and bulls only have to buck a maximum of ten seconds—usually the rider falls off way before that. It's probably more cruel to the riders and arena clowns than to the livestock. [53, meat-eater, Waiuku]

M14: While I think there is some trauma involved, and animals are prodded and so on to cause them to buck, and I oppose the practice, I think that animal rights activists can overstate the suffering inherent. [22, vegan, Wellington]

The overwhelming majority of participants, however, strongly objected to rodeos, using a wide variety of pejorative adjectives to describe them, including “redneck”, “backward”, “obscene”, “cruel”, “inhumane”, “disrespectful”, “primitive”, “barbaric” and “exploitative”.

Male participants tended to voice particularly vehement opposition to rodeos, viewing them as callous examples of ‘rural entertainment’ in New Zealand (although a few women were as scathing about rodeos, viewing them as masculinist forms of amusement):

M19: [Rodeos] demonstrate everything that is wrong with rural culture; they try and trivialise and naturalise animal exploitation and domination to make it seem fun and funny and harmless to the animals. [39, vegan, Christchurch]

M18: Rodeos support an inherited culture of pastoral farming and provide a visible spectacle of animal abuse, reinforcing animals – especially farm animals – as objects for use and entertainment. [34, vegan, Christchurch]

M35: These are definitely a ‘lower intelligence’ form of sport – akin, in a way, to gladiator fights – and represent to me man’s inhumanity to animals for personal gratification ... Using straps to deliberately annoy or give discomfort to the horses to make them buck and become more aggressive is something which should be outlawed... Ride a wild horse – be a man! How primitive is that? As far as I can see the animals are given scant respect of consideration. [64, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Porirua]

M28: Totally opposed [to rodeos]. Nothing but suffering for the animals. Nothing to do with the cleverness of animals but all to do with how man can dominate them. [56, vegan, Hamilton]

M29: [Rodeos are] not much better than bull-fighting. And based on the whole cattle farming paradigm to which [they’re] directly linked. [58, ovo-vegetarian, Kaitaia]

F50: An excuse for country folk to get together and cheer each other on as they terrify animals. [34, vegan, Christchurch]

F70: Definitely a cruel practice, ‘machismo’ where men are violent towards animals as if to try and prove themselves. Sick. [39, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

One woman described how she had attended a rodeo in order to educate herself:

F4: [I went to] the recent Methven Rodeo, [in order] to educate myself about them ... Horses and cattle were absolutely terrified behind chutes, getting chased around with sticks, and in some cases illegally prodded with electric cattle prods. At the end of the rodeo, we documented the high rate of injuries, mainly cuts to the skin, and also a multitude of previous scars. We saw bulls being harassed and terrorised with noise and slaps and cattle prods in order to get them worked up for the bull-riding. The ribbon tie event has to be one of the most idiotic. They line up members of the audience, mainly young men and women who've spent the afternoon drinking alcohol, and set them loose on young steers. The object is to tie a ribbon round the animal's tail, and so the competitors yank the animals' tails really hard and try to wrestle them to the ground. [33, vegan, Christchurch, originally from Germany]

Shows and festivals

Wild Foods Festivals

Many participants were not aware of what Wild Foods Festivals were, or what they entailed. Those who knew that the festivals principally celebrated the consumption of unorthodox meats (insects, offal, organs etc) were inclined to view them negatively as another public forum for meat-eating, albeit in more overtly “merciless” ways:

F82: I think the concept is barbaric and I never go to them. [43, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Wellington]

F53: Honestly, these seem to me to be an excuse to eat unnecessarily killed (and often NOT-killed) animals, and are disgusting excuses to show an excess of inhumanity. [30, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

F76: I feel that they present nothing on offer for me, despite my interest and passion for food, as they revolve around inventing recipes for as yet unexploited or unknown beasts, or more perversely as yet uneaten body parts. [40, vegan, Auckland]

M25: [Wild Foods Festivals are] more Neanderthal blood sports, showing we have all the abilities to hunt and kill animals that we perhaps needed about 1000 years ago, but hardly today. [49, ovo-lacto vegetarian, New Plymouth]

F6: Revolting and a good example of the apathetic attitude of mainstream New Zealanders towards animal suffering. [36, vegan, Kapiti Coast, originally from Australia]

Some viewed Wild Foods Festivals as deliberate occasions for sensationalizing animal slaughter and consumption, involving “would-be” courageous consumers who were rewarded for demonstrating they were “up to” devouring anything that had moved (or was still alive):

F50: They disgust me but at least those consuming the animals are honest about their behaviour – ie knowing what you're eating is what these challenges are all about. I find the 'let's see who can go the furthest' notion awful – it's all a big laugh to the consumers. [34, vegan, Christchurch]

F81: Hideous displays not too dissimilar to the American TV program *Fear Factor!* [43, lacto-vegetarian, Wellington]

M35: [Wild Foods Festivals are a] primitive or distorted way of enjoying our planet and the offerings available to humankind. To be avoided if not outlawed on the grounds of unnecessary killing. Some so-called wild foods are just gross and pandering to the sensational. [64, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Porirua]

M27: [These festivals] are very bad – particularly as some involve eating live animals or cooking them when live. Why do people think they can do something to an insect or shellfish which they would not do to a cow? [49, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

While disgust was the most prominent sentiment expressed toward Wild Foods Festivals, several participants felt that the festivals at least promoted the use of the entire body of the animal (rather than only certain parts) thus minimizing wastage, and that, moreover, meat-eating was meat-eating, regardless of the body parts being consumed:

F34: I think that if you eat meat, you should at least sample the whole animal, rather than just [eating] the choicest bits and leaving the rest to waste, as our society is prone to do. [25, white-meat eater, Dunedin]

F75: People eating animals they wouldn't normally eat ... [is] a bit juvenile, but I don't really consider it any different to eating cows and sheep. [40, vegan, Auckland]

F23: Obviously, since I am against consuming animals, I do not support these things. However, in a meat-eating world I guess they are to be expected. Eating the stranger parts of animals is no worse than eating the usual parts, but the celebration of meat culture in general is, I think, very sad and very ignorant. [20, vegan, Wellington]

A few participants – notably those identifying as greenies – declared a cautious approval of Wild Foods Festivals on the basis that these forums promoted the destruction of 'pests':

M33: Depends whether the foods are pests (rats, possums etc) or other animals (ie horse). I draw a distinction with animals that damage the eco system and weren't originally natives (rats etc). I don't think they should be treated cruelly (gin traps etc) but also see them as a pest to the environment. [27, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

F70: If people are genuinely exploring 'wild' food sources in a sustainable way, this isn't such a bad thing. Especially if it includes 'removing' possums from the native bush. [39, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

While opposed to the dominant meat-focus of the festivals, some participants felt the festivals were a good opportunity for educating people about the consumption of non-animal products (vegetables, fruits etc), especially native ones:

F59: If they really wanted to celebrate wild foods, there'd be a lot more native plant dishes involved. It would be great to learn about edible wild plants, ferns, roots etc, instead of just staging a *Fear Factor* contest. [34, vegan, Westland]

F110: [Wild Food Festivals] are examples of "macho" behaviour. Festivals are great and we need more of them, but why not stick to wild plant foods? [78, pescetarian (ovo-lacto), Auckland]

F79: I wish these really were challenges and showed creative ways of using wild plant foods instead of trying to shock with eating unusual animal parts. [43, vegan, Christchurch]

M11: These challenges and festivals have potential and we could learn a lot about collective survival and sustaining our lives off the edible wild plants that grow all over New Zealand. Such events, though, categorise "wild food" as "wild animals", and so [the sooner] 4WDs and guns are no longer a part of wild food challenges and festivals, the better. [24, vegan, Dunedin]

F70: It is a good idea to have a varied diet, so if people are genuinely exploring "wild" food sources in a sustainable way, this isn't such a bad thing. [39, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

F119: I loved the way SAFE set up a [vegan] stall at one of them. [45, meat-eater, Auckland, originally from the UK]

A & P Shows

A substantial number of participants (particularly those born outside of New Zealand) were not aware of what A & P shows were; others had never attended but had some idea they involved the display of agricultural and farming practices and production (including such things as different breeds of farm animals, poultry farm cages and machinery, live lambing, egg production, shearing, dog trials, show-jumping etc). Because the majority of participants were urban dwellers, A & P shows were not a prominent aspect of their lives, although many remembered visiting the show as children. As adults, most urban dwellers were inclined to view the show sceptically, as a forum which represented the commodification of animals – and exploitative practices – as entertaining:

F10: I avoid A & P shows because they are a showcase for the animal exploitation industry. They don't show the battery cages and the slaughterhouses! [41, vegan, Auckland, originally from the UK]

F49: Ethically I am opposed to the idea of parading animals around for a day, purely for the entertainment of people. [39, vegan, Christchurch]

F76: [The A & P show is] like a freak show of human brutality and perversity. [It] commodifies animals, displays them with pride in a kind of fetishistic way, only to display the exact opposite attitude when they come to fruition and serve their purpose. [40, vegan, Auckland]

M17: These are a marketing gimmick for animal exploitation. Animals are viewed as products or parts of the machinery of farming. The commercial aspect of animals is highlighted in this context. [29, vegan, Christchurch]

F50: I hate A & P shows. Terrified animals on display, only the 'clean' side of farming brought to the city. Why not display a steer [and] then slaughter it and feed it to the crowds as sausages – might give people more insight into the pastoral side of A & P. [34, vegan, Christchurch]

A & P shows were also referred to as 'integral' to New Zealand culture (although such 'tradition' was also criticized):

M35: Where these are well run, and the animals are well treated and not exploited they appear on the face of it to be important and appropriate parts of the country's fabric. But as show pieces for the meat production industry they misrepresent the ultimate indignity to the animals of being slaughtered for human consumption. [64, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Porirua]

F55: I know it's tradition but ultimately all the fluffy lambs and chicks are going to end up on a dinner plate and it's just to upsetting to see. [31, ovo-vegetarian, Christchurch]

Rural dwellers tended to have a more charitable view toward the show and felt that the show could fulfil an educative function for city folk whose lives were largely disconnected from animals and from the places that grew their food:

F120: These are places that people can be educated about animals. I think that urban dwellers need to understand more about where their food comes from and how it gets to their plates. A & P shows are places where people can see at least the start of this process. [50, lacto-vegetarian, Clarence Valley]

Some city dwellers also supported the educative aspects of A & P shows. A few felt that farmers could benefit from the opportunity to learn about more humane modes of practice from each other. Others, less sanguine about farming, suggested these shows had the potential to raise awareness of meat-production practices:

F24: Shows like this, at best, can have an important teaching role. I think the majority of animal owners who take their pets to shows like this love and care for these animals very much, as by meeting others like themselves, can learn to care even more. There is always a small minority who tarnish this ideal, but over all I think the education, for participants and viewers, is invaluable. [20, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch]

M27: There is a lot more to these shows than animals; there are lots of other non animal-based farming types. These shows promote new ideas and these could lead to farmers swapping to less animal-based production, or finding better ways to look after their animals. [49, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

M36: As a child I loved the A & P show. I admired the power and beauty of the animals. Perhaps they can teach city people to think about where their meat comes from. [62, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch]

F110: Ok as long as animals do not suffer. Good for townspeople to see farm animals. [78, pescetarian (ovo-lacto), Auckland]

Hunting and fishing

There were mixed reactions to the popular New Zealand practices of hunting and fishing, although most participants were opposed to both. The vast majority of participants condemned the “sporting” aspect of hunting and fishing; while there was also a tendency to distinguish between hunting and fishing for ‘fun’ and doing it for ‘food’:

M31: It baffles and deeply saddens me that humans get such extreme pleasure at murdering other sentient beings for “sport” – much worse, in my view, than most farming practices, and than, eg, catching fish for food in the Pacific Islands, or even catching fish for food by a kiwi family. That is, I make a distinction between doing it for “fun” and doing it for food, let alone for survival. So when I see on TV a big-game fisherman triumphantly holding aloft a magnificent fish which they’ve wantonly tortured and killed, or a hunter holding proudly the antlers of a magnificent stag lying murdered at his feet, I nearly despair of my own species. [70, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch]

F14: Tribes in Alaska (or other places) rely on hunting and I don’t judge this when it is their only food source. If they lived elsewhere more hospitable . . . growing food would/should overtake the ‘need’ to kill to survive. [46, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Wellington, originally from the USA]

M22: I am against hunting and fishing in New Zealand as we don’t need animal protein to live a healthy life. If it is necessary in other cultures that have less fertile land for crops then I will accept it as a necessary evil. Having said this, I have fewer issues with hunting for food, even in New Zealand than I do with farming or with eating farmed animals. Hunters at least have the guts to do their own dirty work and to come to terms with what they are actually doing, rather than pretend that their burgers come from “hamburger patches”. [43, vegan, Wellington]

F70: I can see that for those who do it, there’s a feeling of satisfaction in procuring “food” this way – and it is a more “connected” way to do it than going to the supermarket. [39, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

While most participants regarded hunting and fishing with abhorrence, many also made a point of stating that they preferred these to conventional farming:

M10: I view hunting for food as slightly better than standard or factory animal farming, but I still find it reprehensible. I feel the same about fishing. Doing these things for sport, however, seems barbaric and cruel. I find cruelty for entertainment abhorrent. [19, vegan, Wellington]

F2: [Hunting and fishing are] preferable to mass slaughter, because at least the brutality is upfront and not industrialised on a mass scale. As grisly as hunting is, it somehow seems more honest than the consumption of vacuum-packed supermarket meat. [31, lacto-vegetarian, Christchurch, originally from the USA]

M19: Better to eat an animal that has lived a natural life and [has] been *quickly* killed than one raised by factory or even conventional farming. [39, vegan, Christchurch]

In contrast to those who hesitatingly privileged hunting over farming, a number of participants felt that hunting (and fishing) were completely unnecessary in contemporary New Zealand culture:

M24: [I have] no respect for hunters who portray themselves as hardy outdoor types in harmony with nature who are prepared to catch their dinner rather than being served up from a supermarket. Neither is laudable. [47, pescetarian (ovo-lacto), rural Canterbury]

M11: Today the hunter and fisher (hu)man are merely consumers, consuming weapons and thus maintaining weapons industry and war. Hunting and fishing, as long as one chooses to live in the globalised city, are unnecessary! [24, vegan, Dunedin]

Some environmentally concerned participants argued that hunting was beneficial to New Zealand's natural environment because it helped to control pest populations such as deer, wallabies, possums and so on:

M13: I see [hunting and fishing] as far more positive than the standards of animal welfare in general. [The] people who take part in these activities often have a real concern for the environment [and] they take care of the environment which brings them so much enjoyment. [21, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

Others, however, disputed the notion that hunters were concerned for – or helping – the environment; many felt instead that hunting was more an exhibition of 'macho' behaviour and masculine dominance over nature:

F5: I think it's rubbish when hunters try to defend murdering a beautiful animal by saying it's for the benefit of the environment... I also find it strange that they claim to help keep the numbers down. But they mainly kill stags. It's the does that have all the babies! But then those victims' heads aren't nearly as impressive in a posing, smiling photograph. The ones with the big antlers are much more macho and boost the ego! The pictures say "Hey, look at me. I killed a deer. Aren't I brave and clever?" Well, they did have a gun. The deer didn't! It's humans that are really destroying the environment, but we can't go round shooting everyone. [34, vegan, Porirua, originally from the UK]

While most focused on mammals as the prey of hunters (and particularly animals introduced to New Zealand such as deer and possums), a few commented specifically on the practice of fishing and the way in which the suffering and death of fish was generally trivialized. For example, one 70 year old man spoke of his disdain for family fishing trips:

M31: It saddens me deeply to see [a father's] casual indifference to the fish's suffering [and their] delight in holding their wrestling suffering victims aloft before casually knocking them on the head, or worse, tossing them in a bucket to die a gasping lingering death; and sickens me to know that they are imbuing their offspring, the next generation, with this same unfeeling attitude. [70, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch]

A 39 year old woman was critical of how fishing (and hunting) were viewed as healthy outdoor leisure activities, ways to 'get away from it all', relax, and experience or be 'part of' nature:

F70: I wish people would go to the outdoors (mountains, lakes or even scuba diving) without wanting to harm things! A friend who fishes says it's a good chance to sit and do nothing. Well, why not go and meditate by a river, then?! I used to do scuba diving but gave up because the divers I knew all wanted to "rape and pillage", grabbing crays, going spear-fishing etc. While I just wanted to experience another realm. [39, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

Interesting, a few (mainly older) participants suggested "hunting with cameras" rather than guns:

M35: The cruelty and thoughtless pain to animals seems to be lost on those taking part in hunting and fishing. Hunt with a camera as an alternative! [64, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Porirua]

F110: After spending many years as a fisherman and deerstalker, my husband took to photography and we used to go tramping with a camera [instead of a gun]. [78, pescetarian (ovo-lacto), Auckland]

Battery/factory farming

This was the single topic on which all 157 participants put aside their differences to reach a unanimous agreement: meat-eaters, strict vegans and everyone in between spoke out against the factory farming in New Zealand of animals such as chickens, turkeys, pigs, rabbits, salmon, quail, ducks, and other game-birds. The intensive farming of chickens for eggs was a prime concern. The use of sow crates in pig farming prompted even meat-eaters to avoid pork; and a couple of participants drew attention to the conditions of chickens raised for meat (broiler chickens). Many argued that intensive farming practices were unethical, inhumane, and illegal; and the New Zealand government should be intervening immediately to outlaw them. The following excerpts provide an overview of participants' united opposition to battery farming:

F38: Battery farming should indefinitely be illegal. I 100% disagree with it. It is so inhumane and shameful that we have these farms. [26, pescetarian (ovo), Auckland]

F39: Totally opposed to it. Flabbergasted that such cruelty is legal in this society. [27, pescetarian (ovo-lacto), Auckland]

F41: Battery hen farming is appalling and I can't believe Jim Anderton is pissing about on the issue when he's been told publicly that the current situation is illegal. [27, lacto-vegetarian, Dunedin]

F43: Criminal. If I had my way I'd lock the farmers in jail. [27, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Wanganui]

F8: Animals seen as soulless, senseless units of production. Dispicable. [40, vegan, Christchurch, originally from the UK]

F49: The factory farming of animals is in my opinion one of the cruellest developments of the 20th century. Factory farming deprives animals of every natural, instinctive and enjoyable element of their lives. The torment of their existence is only relived through death. There is no hope, no joy – only despair and misery. Factory farms are hell-holes for animals. [39, vegan, Christchurch]

F70: Battery farming is unethical... Chances are that eggs in cafes, restaurants, and catered foods, come from battery farms... I'd really like to see the government outlaw battery farms. [39, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

F117: Totally against this. I know that it is an economic way of farming chickens but it seems so forced and cruel, how can they ever get comfortable in those wee cages? Uncomfortable animals do not produce the best produce, any farmer will tell you that. [53, meat-eater & diary farmer, Waiuku]

F111: I will not eat eggs unless they are free range. I do not eat pork in any form as I am totally against keeping sows in cages. [85, meat-eater, Auckland]

M18: To me this is the most unnecessary, greedy evil to be perpetrated by man on animals. It is certainly the cruellest activity involving the continual suffering of the greatest number of individuals... I think it is the greatest evil humankind has yet perpetrated. [34, vegan, Christchurch]

M19: Unjustifiable, illegal, unconscionable, exorbitant life-long cruelty. [39, vegan, Christchurch]

M33: Disgusting. Battery farming is cruel and should have been banned long ago. It is sad that the industry has such influence. [27, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

M35: This is simply a barbaric method of producing food and should be outlawed as soon as possible – not when some industry-related time frame is proffered. It leaves me astounded that this form of ‘farming’ (along with some pig production methods) continues in what we claim is an enlightened country. The government needs to move much faster on this issue. [64, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Porirua]

M36: A totally unacceptable abuse that degrades those that indulge in it, and shows no respect whatever for life. [62, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch]

Very few participants commented on the factory farming of broiler chickens; that is, the chickens that are farmed for their meat in New Zealand. There seemed less awareness of the existence of these chickens and/or the conditions of their lives. One man, however, was particularly concerned about this issue:

M19: I think it's amazing that almost no-one in New Zealand realises that all the frozen chickens in the supermarket or in their KFC takeaways are actually what they call 'broiler chickens' – these terribly maimed baby birds, only 6 or 7 weeks old, that have been selectively bred to put on weight so fast they can hardly stand up, and their legs fracture, and they get heart problems and other diseases. And this is chicken – the so-called 'healthy meat!' (39, vegan, Christchurch)

Some participants argued that the general public's growing distaste for battery farming is a result of education:

M28: People in general do not like factory farming since it has been brought to the public's attention, and whereas in the past the majority would dismiss the issue out of hand, now most would agree the practice is cruel. [56, vegan, Hamilton]

The animal rights organization, Save Animals From Experimentation (SAFE), was repeatedly praised for raising public awareness about factory farming in New Zealand (through their campaigns against battery farming of hens for eggs and broiler chickens for meat, and the use of sow crates in intensive pig farming).

Further issues

Vivisection/animal experimentation

Though not directly questioned on this topic, many expressed opposition to vivisection and other modes of animal experimentation (eg the use of animals in cosmetic testing; the repeated manipulation of pigeons and rats in psychology experiments; veterinary studies involving deliberate injuries to experimental animals; and research on dogs and cats by pet-food companies):

F45: I think, as you become more aware of [these] things and more exposed to what goes on behind closed doors, your image of your country changes greatly. When I heard (not long ago) that NZ does a lot of scientific experiments on animals – funded by local universities and MAF, my image of the people and companies involved changed from one of respect for them (as I had before) to shame and horror at what they do. We are not as clean and green as we lead many people to believe. [29, ovo-vegetarian, Auckland]

F119: I would like much more awareness of what happens in animal experimentation labs and for far more transparency in this area, and for people to really ask themselves if killing animals for another household cleaner or perfume is worth it; and to wonder whether or not it may be better to spend our money on the prevention of disease [rather than] on experiments which involve terrible suffering to animals for drugs which quite often cause [unwanted and unknown long term] side effects [but] which make pharmaceutical companies vast sums of money. [45, meat-eater, Auckland, originally from the UK]

One man specifically criticized a study funded by the NZ Equine Research Foundation published in the *NZ Veterinary Journal* (2002, volume 50, pp 186-194), in which experimental horses were lamed, treated in one of several ways, and then euthanased in order to identify more efficient interventions for equine leg injuries.

For some meat-eaters, concern regarding animal experimentation was the prime reason for their participation in the study:

F110: New Zealanders are supposed to be a nation of animal lovers but we allow over 300,000 animals to be tortured in laboratories annually. The SPCA has many members but I have yet to see a researcher charged with cruelty! [85, meat-eater, Auckland]

Men and women across all age groups actively researched companies and avoided using products that had been tested on animals:

F109: I am becoming more and more aware of those firms involved in animal cruelty. [73, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Invercargill]

Several people reported how their occupations required them to be in contact with others who experimented on animals (eg, those working in the fields of psychology, zoology, biology, medicine, and veterinary practice). At times this contact resulted in direct conflict with colleagues (as well as friends). Sometimes it prompted a decision to avoid thinking about, or discussion of, another's involvement with vivisection or animal experimentation:

F84: There are and/or have been quite a few people in my life who I think are involved (at least indirectly) in animal research (relatives and old friends who are scientists etc doing biomedical research) – and this is something I've given up debating because it is too painful – so I operate in those situations in a way that brackets off any knowledge of that (and doesn't want to know anymore than any rudimentary hunches I have). [46, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

Opposition to vivisection also brought about changes in career direction. For example, one man gave up his goal to become a scientist (like his father), while a woman had rejected a career in medicine:

M18: At university, through zoology, I came to understand the cruelty and uselessness of animal experimentation. I also generally became disenchanted with scientific endeavours and barely managed to complete my BSc. [34, vegan, Christchurch]

F78: In my early 20s I wanted to be a medical doctor. But during a stage 2 physiology lecture at the med school we were advised in no uncertain terms that “anybody who objects to vivisection can leave this course right now!”, so I decided that wasn't the career for me after all. (I heard later

from other doctors that they had managed somehow to go through other med schools without dissecting or experimenting on animals – they weren't from NZ though!) [41, vegan, Christchurch]

Zoos

The presence of zoos in New Zealand created some division. A few were in favour of these institutions, viewing them as havens for endangered animals and necessary for the preservation of certain species:

F27: I am highly appalled by any entertainment which causes animals harm (either mentally or physically) therefore will not attend circuses or movies and so forth which use animals. I am impartial on zoos as I believe some are highly concerned with animal welfare and engage in animal breeding and releasing programmes; however I will not attend zoos that are solely for profit and entertainment. [21, ovo-lacto vegetarian, New Plymouth]

M27: [Zoos were] traditionally for 'display', a bit like an art gallery - the more exotic the better. NZ zoos along with most 'western' zoos have turned themselves around – I am in favour of these (8 out of 10) – they are now a lot about conservation and education. Most are helping educate the young into conservation, so this can only be good for the future of animals. The animals are well looked after and in most zoos have as good as or better life than in the wild. [49, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

Others were against the captivity of any animal and/or the removal of wild animals from their natural environments, condemning zoos (along with circuses) on this basis:

M20: On the whole, I loathe [zoos] the most of all. Captivity, often of animals very social, or very vigorous, seems the greatest crime of all. [39, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch]

SECTION 3

ATTITUDES TO ANIMALS AND SOCIAL IDENTITY

Overview

When participants were questioned about how their ideas on animals fitted into mainstream New Zealand culture, the overwhelming response was “They don’t!” Numerous participants felt they were perceived as being outside the mainstream and reported feeling isolated:

F59: I don’t fit in; I feel like an outsider. [34, vegan, Westland]

F56: I feel like a minority. [31, lacto-vegetarian, Auckland]

F87: I feel like a freak. [48, vegan, Kapiti Coast]

F68: I feel quite alone really. [39, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Cambridge].

M12: I feel almost like an outcast in every sense. [32, vegan, Wellington]

M30: I am generally treated as an alien. [62, vegan, Auckland]

F43: I’m used to being ridiculed because of my beliefs so it feels normal now. [27, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Wanganui]

Even when participants did not state their feelings in these explicit terms, the phrases they used in relation to their cultural status indicated that they felt they existed “on the fringe” of mainstream New Zealand culture: many felt they were perceived as “left of centre”, “unusual”, “anti-social”, “alternative”, “naïve”, “crazy”, “radical”, “ridiculous”, “extremist”, “wacko” and “abnormal”. Despite this, several stated that they considered themselves moderate and “middle of the road” in every other sense apart from their stance on animal welfare:

F13: People, by and large, seem to think I’m radical - and I know I’m very far from it. Just not wanting to eat meat seems to make people think I’m attempting to upset the very fabric of New Zealand. I mainly try avoiding the subject. Expressing an idea that any animal, apart from dogs and cats, might have feelings or experience pain seems way out of the average NZ thinking - and is seen as a threat to the way things are. (42, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Lower Hutt, originally from Germany).

In perceiving themselves to be different from mainstream New Zealand society, some participants suggested that New Zealanders were generally lazy, apathetic or uninterested in animal welfare, despite the fact they considered themselves ‘animal lovers’:

F23: There is still a strong meat-eating culture in New Zealand, and there is a huge industry profiting from animals which stands against you. With issues like battery farming I think most New Zealanders have realised that we do need to have some consideration for animals. Because so much money is involved in the animal industry, and because people do not like to have the morality of their habits brought into question, people can sometimes be very unaccepting, but I think it’s just people protecting their own egos and economic interests ... I have found, in a nutshell, that mainstream New Zealand doesn’t discriminate against me for my attitudes, but they have refused to open their eyes to why my attitudes exist and really consider the ethical issues and impact of their own lives. [20, vegan, Wellington]

F75: [In] the main, I think New Zealanders believe animals are a commodity. I don't think they give them any thought as sentient beings. It's the culture. Most don't see my veganism as being anything more than food related. Most people are surprised to hear how wide the reach is. [40, vegan, Auckland]

M21: I'm definitely in the minority. Farming and eating animals has become so normalized that it's difficult for many people to understand my stance. Just about everyone would agree with being healthy, compassionate and 'green', but they can't or won't make the link between these things and their eating or behaviour patterns. [41, vegan, Westland]

Several vegetarians were critical of those they felt claimed to be “vegetarian in principle”, yet continued to consume meat because this was “easier” than changing towards a more cruelty-free diet:

F91: Most [New Zealanders] do not want to know the truth and actually cover their ears in order to be able to continue with their use of [dairy products] without self-recrimination. I have found that many animal eaters share this desire to remain unaware, even though they say that they wish no harm on an animal. They will often profess to love all animals, while practising vicious prejudice against the animals they want to continue eating. [49, vegan, Auckland]⁶

Those who identified as vegetarian but ate white meats were also criticized:

F104: One thing that really does annoy is the appearance since the 70s of faux vegetarians – those white meat eaters who call themselves vegetarians ... People who stop eating red meat are on their way, but for them to claim they are vegetarians is like someone who has gone up Mount Cook saying they went up Mount Everest. It's wrong, it's dishonest, and worst of all, it hopelessly confuses the public to be told 'vegetarianism' is only a more ethical type of meat-eating. [58, lacto-vegetarian, rural Manawatu]

Some men and women argued that vegetarianism was becoming more accepted in New Zealand society. Participants who observed this were inclined to have a more optimistic view about their place in New Zealand culture, some going so far as to suggest that vegetarianism is “almost mainstream”:

F53: I'm happy to say that [vegetarianism and veganism] do seem to be getting more company in the “almost mainstream” mindset of many New Zealanders. When I was a child vegetarianism was still quite an unusual thing, and thinking of animals as having rights was truly weird among many people I met! Nowadays however vegetarianism (and veganism, to a slightly lesser extent) are on the whole accepted, and if not understood by all then at least catered for and tolerated by most [which] is a step in the right direction, as far as I'm concerned. An example of this would be the Vegetarian Food Festival held in October this year by the Vegetarian Society in Auckland ...

⁶ Interestingly, a few participants questioned whether the behaviour of those termed “vegetarians in principle” indicated that even carnivorous humans felt vegetarianism was more ‘worthy’ than meat-eating:

M4: It's interesting that not eating meat is the default moral high ground from the carnivores' point of view. Have you noticed how people – on learning you're vegetarian – start to tell you how little actual meat they consume, how they too are virtually vegetarian – why is that? [46, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch, originally from the UK]

F65: Mainstream people seem obsessed with the way I live, like when I am having a meal with omnivores they want to know how I get protein, how I'm bringing up my child, whether I like meat or not, so I always wonder if the way I think is that different from how most people think. My point is that I think people who eat meat know it's wrong to eat meat and they feel guilty and they try and justify their meat-eating by marginalizing me for not eating meat. [36, vegan, Wellington]

It hadn't been widely advertised, yet around 1,500 people from central Auckland alone came along in the 7 hours that the festival was on. Many of the visitors were vegetarian, and delighted to see so many other "veggies" in the same place. Others were interested in finding out recipe ideas, trying the food, and generally learning about vegetarianism – if not for themselves, because they had friends or relatives who were vegetarian and they wanted to be able to support them better. 10 years ago, I imagine something like this would have had the atmosphere of some sort of "fringe festival", but now it is seen as a normal, viable option for a way of life. [30, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

F116: I have noticed that people are more tolerant toward animal lovers, organics, vegetarians etc now. [50, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch]

F109: I think my attitudes are part of a minority which is growing – disapproval of cruelty to animals in any form. [73, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Invercargill]

M34: In 1972 when I decided to become vegetarian it was impossible to find a restaurant with vegetarian meals on the menu. Now it would be difficult to find one without. Attitudes towards cruelty to animals change slowly but they do change, as can be seen over the last 50 years. [58, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland, originally from the UK]

The remainder of this section of the report focuses on the relationship between social/cultural identity and attitudes towards animals. Topics covered include personal belief systems (spiritual, ethical, political etc), nationality, ethnicity, gender, age, occupation, the influence of family, friends and associates, and group affiliations.

(i) Belief systems: spiritual, ethical and political

Many participants did not align themselves with a particular belief system: some argued that they had adopted their approach toward animals of their own volition, independent of any outside religious, political or ethical system of thought.

Spirituality and religion

A large number of participants were wary of institutionalized belief systems, although many mentioned religious or spiritual influences as being a factor informing their stance toward animals; a small subset of participants identified as card-carrying members of a particular spiritual or religious organization.

Eastern religious influences

By far, the most prevalent spiritual and philosophical influences were those associated with the East. Specific Eastern spiritual belief systems were mentioned by 45 participants, with a further 14 not elaborating on the system of Eastern thought with which they were aligned. Eastern spiritual influences included: Buddhism (Theravada, Tibetan and Zen); Maharishi Mahesh Yogi; Brahma Kumari raja yoga; transcendental meditation (TM), Hare Krishna, Hinduism and the teachings of Gandhi. Buddhism was the most often cited of these, although Hinduism and its principles of reincarnation and karma (which also inform Buddhism) were often cited as well:

F70: The Buddha taught people to try to minimise harm... and this affects my whole value system. For me the Buddhist teachings mingle with concerns about social justice, environmental awareness, animal welfare and so forth. [39, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

M18: According to the teachings of the Buddha, all beings have the Buddha nature. From this beginning, and the precise exposition of shared and universal suffering of all sentient beings, it is

very easy, in fact, necessary for greater understandings of Buddhist thought to identify with life beyond the narrow confines of our individual human experience. [34, vegan, Christchurch]

F19: Tibetan Buddhism ... believes in transmigration, i.e. that humans reincarnate as animals and vice versa. This changes your attitudes to animals enormously! [62, vegan, Auckland, originally from the Netherlands]

M31: In Hinduism and Buddhism, we humans are seen as part of a great continuum of sentient beings, all of which have not only feelings but aspirations and “souls” or “selves”. By contrast, the dominant Christian view is that only humans have souls, and that all other animals are given by God for human use. In countless past lives all we current humans have most probably lived in other animals forms so in this way also the line between humans and other animals is not hard and fast. For these reasons many, if not all Hindus are vegetarian and deeply imbued with the need to practise ahimsa—non-injury—to any sentient being. [70, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch]

F33: I was raised to believe in reincarnation, which taught that everything has a soul and all people were once animals and only came into the world as people once they had learnt all they could in the form/body/mind of an animal. For this reason, eating animals is no different than eating another person: it is a creature with a soul and a purpose. [23, ovo-vegetarian, Auckland]

F12: Yoga has as its highest principle non-violence. Therefore the yoga society I belong to works on promoting vegetarianism. [42, lacto-vegetarian, South Auckland, originally from Germany]

Western religious influences

Many participants spoke out against Christianity, suggesting that biblical notions – such as animals not having souls, and humans having dominion over animals - fundamentally informed the West’s practices toward animals:

F85: I was brought up as, and am a Christian (non-practising at the moment), and I struggle with the Christian belief that ‘animals’ have no souls. [46, pescetarian (ovo-lacto), rural Canterbury]

F104: The nuns taught us animals didn’t have souls. Deeply distressed, I seriously considered baptizing all the farm animals so they would get to heaven anyway, but was scared a thunderbolt might strike me down for ‘blasphemy’. [58, lacto-vegetarian, rural Manawatu]

F15: There will never be peace on this planet while this murder and abuse of animals continues ... I do not believe in such things as Christians and other people who call themselves religious and at the same time eat animals. [53, vegan, Wellington]

F78: I condemn Judeo-Christian ideology, capitalism and masculinism for having brought about the exploitative practices humans living in Western culture now consider “common sense” and “taken for granted” in relation to non-human animals. Christianity endorses human superiority and dominion over non-animals, and capitalism provides the impetus for non-Christians—as well as Christians—to benefit from this idea of anthropocentrism. [41, vegan, Christchurch]

Although many participants drew on the biblical maxims “Thou shalt not kill” and “Do unto others”, only nine explicitly identified as Christian. Those that did often engaged in a reinterpretation of Christian teachings; for example, some believed ‘dominion’ to mean not “domination”, but “responsibility” and “protection” (‘stewardship’ in biblical terms):

F108: Being a Christian, I believe that we have dominion over animals and that entails our protection and responsibility to keep these creatures safe. [66, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Kapiti Coast]

F75: I am a Christian. Although there are vegetarian and vegan Christians (mainly American), the general attitude of the church is that God gave us animals to eat. So my belief system is actually contrary to my personal philosophy on animals. I think this is a personal issue. We were created vegetarian, to eat the herbs of the land, and that God didn’t tell us to eat animals until after the

flood. But I believe He intended us to husband animals, to care for them and treat them with respect – not to regard them as commodities with no thought to their wellbeing. God covenants with animals in the Bible as well as with humans, which proves he considers them. [40, vegan, Auckland]

Christian participants also mentioned that they felt “on the fringe” or different from the main group of animal advocates:

M22: The conflict between the anthropocentric beliefs of mainstream Christianity and my own convictions that the way we treat animals is wrong, led me to gradually separate from the church. I would still describe myself as a Christian, though not a very orthodox one. I am more comfortable with the Biblical metaphysics that humans are given stewardship over nature, and thus our treatment of animals should be one of “noblesse oblige” than I am with the view espoused by most non-Christian animal liberationists that humans are just another species of animal. [43, vegan, Wellington]

This sense of ‘not belonging’ was also relayed by one woman who, while not identifying as Christian, held her own personal conviction in a “Creator”:

F91: Somewhere along the way killing, eating and exploiting animals for the benefit of human interest has become acceptable to both mainstream and minority religious groups...even when repeatedly challenged. This has made it very difficult for me to practise my belief in a Creator within a religious affiliation that is not outdated in its other social beliefs (i.e. equality of men and women, education for all, etc). I have found that most vegans do not believe in a Creator, so I find myself a minority within a minority. [49, vegan, Auckland]

Other spiritual influences

Some participants drew on pagan, wiccan and other earth-based spiritual beliefs, Romany gypsy culture, animism, the Quaker tradition and theosophical philosophy in their discussions about animals. These various perspectives focused on harmony, non-violence, compassion towards – and equality for – all living creatures. Participants of all spiritual persuasions argued for a shared connection between humans and animals:

F20: I believe we are all cut from the same cloth [and are just] different shapes. [71, vegan, Levin, originally from Australia]

F99: I believe that we are all equal. Man is not superior. [54, vegan, Hamilton]

F16: [My belief is that we should] recognise and value all living creatures. [57, ovo-vegetarian, Kapiti, originally from the UK]

F11: I believe in the pagan idea of interconnectedness—the earth, nature, all beings [are] linked together. You abuse one and you abuse them all. [42, vegan, Christchurch, originally from the UK]

F14: I do believe all living things are one. We are no different: people, animals, nature. There is an interconnectedness and continuity of life and all that exists. [46, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Wellington, originally from the USA]

F78: Animals are my ‘spirituality’ although this term itself is less earthy than I’d like. They ground me in the world, and take me away from human-centred (and egocentric) dishonesties. [41, vegan, Christchurch]

Secular ethical beliefs

For many participants, the primary reason for being vegetarian was ethical. Animal ethics, rather than spiritual and/or religious motivations, were their main impetus for being vegetarian or vegan. For this group, beliefs about animal rights, non-violence and compassion towards others, were not subsidiary concerns of other belief systems, but formed their philosophy of life:

F28: Veganism is my belief. [22, vegan, Auckland]

F66: [I have] ethical beliefs. [The] nervous system of animals are pretty complex and probably way more sophisticated than a human baby who we wouldn't treat probably 1/1000th as badly as we treat animals. [37, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

F54: For me, my belief system is based around ethical ideals. I think it is very basic. The consumption of animals is cruel and unjust. We cause needless suffering to fellow sentient beings when we can easily survive without eating them. [31, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Papamoa]

M7: I just believe that humans are not superior in any way to animals. I am not religious in any orthodox sense. Whether there is a god or not makes no difference, in my opinion, to how we should treat each other and animals. I feel and believe that a compassionate, caring world is a better world. [53, vegan, Christchurch, originally from the UK]

Political persuasions

All the participants that mentioned the influence of politics on their beliefs identified as 'liberal' and/or left-wing. Specific political influences (and forms of activism) included animal rights, human rights, children's rights and the rights of tangata whenua, Third World/First World politics, environmentalism, the politics of anti-vivisection, feminism, socialism, anarchism, anti-violence, anti-globalization, and anti-capitalism. While many supported the Green Party in New Zealand, they also identified a lack of fit between their own views on animals and the party's environmental focus, which generally privileged ecological concerns over issues of animal welfare:

F79: I am a member of the Green Party, though it is not my ideal political party. It does provide the "best fit" for me compared with other parties. However, they are not particularly concerned about animals or the most eco-friendly ways of living which would clearly need to be animal-free. [43, vegan, Christchurch]

F84: I've often noticed with disappointment, Jeanette Fitzsimmons' readiness to talk about 'organic meat' as a good thing, etc; so even the Greens have to play the meat game. [46, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

(ii) Nationality

Many participants (NZ born and tauwiwi) felt that their nationality had no bearing on their being vegetarian or vegan. However, for a significant number of participants, being kiwi had influenced them in positive and/or negative ways.

New Zealand born and raised

At odds with their nation

F115: It's kiwi to eat meat and farm cows. [14, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch]

F75: In the main, I think NZers believe animals are a commodity. I don't think they give them any thought as sentient beings. It's the culture. [40, vegan, Auckland]

Some of those who were born and raised here felt that being a New Zealander had led to an early unquestioned acceptance of animals as commodities (kiwi culture was primarily viewed as meat-loving and farming focused); and that becoming vegetarian or vegan had required a radical break from that prior conditioning. Several spoke of this strong cultural influence as something that had to be “overcome” in order to accommodate notions of animal welfare/animal rights:

M31: Growing up as a kiwi I imbibed kiwi attitudes to animals, and it required exposure to Indian culture, and a determined son, to overcome this strong kiwi influence. [70, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch]

M11: New Zealand culture shaped my attitude toward animals in a ‘take for granted’ kind of way. We ate farm animals, and all other animals were just there. My consciousness was heavily directed toward western policies and culture, where animals are food, pets or pests according to market capitalism. Though now of course I see things differently. [24, vegan, Dunedin]

F88: I was an adult at which point I realized that most of New Zealand was about producing meat, and people who don't rate meat high on their priority list are often seen as somehow weaker and not ‘true kiwis’. [48, lacto-vegetarian, Carterton]

F42: Probably being a kiwi I tend to try to not be too ‘emotional’ about the whole animal issue. I feel like it's ‘not the done thing’ here, and we're a farming culture so it's best to try and fit in ... although I disagree with that. Change happens when people start saying no to the status quo. [27, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Nelson]

These changes in vision are conceived by the above participants (and by others) as pushing against the ingrained kiwi farming culture and the practices that stem from it such as barbecues, family roast dinners and pride in traditional kiwi values. Even in the cities, many participants noted that their anti-meat stance was seen by friends, colleagues, and even strangers as a threat which was often described as being “unpatriotic”:

F54: I had a stranger confront me at a BBQ when he saw I wasn't eating meat. He said I should be ashamed of myself for not supporting New Zealand's agricultural industry. [31, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Papamoa]

One man had also experienced this kind of reception overseas:

M35: When in the United Kingdom years ago, on finding I was a vegetarian I was asked, “Are you *allowed* to be vegetarian in New Zealand?” [64, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Porirua]

This association between eating meat and being a proud New Zealander was something many participants had encountered. This meat and farm-based national pride was regarded with abhorrence by some kiwi participants, who felt on the outskirts of New Zealand culture as a result of their scepticism toward farming:

F30: As meat is a large proportion of our national exports and GDP, eating meat almost seems an expression of our nationality and national pride, and to not eat meat is letting down the team. [23, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

F68: I feel like a deviant kiwi really. Most kiwis do not seem to take vegetarianism seriously. In some ways, it feels unpatriotic to be a veggie. [39, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Cambridge]

F78: I am ashamed to be a kiwi ... You only have to hear representatives from Federated Farmers [on *60 Minutes*] saying that pigs and hens need to be confined in sow crates and battery cages because otherwise they would cannibalize each other – for goodness sake! (OK ... instead then let us humans eat them – sounds like a plan!) ... to feel embarrassed and ashamed to be a kiwi... They don't seem to reflect on their own practices or take any responsibility for their own part in problems they now encounter with climate etc. Farmers are never accountable in this country. [41, vegan, Christchurch]

F84: I still feel immense discomfort with the place of farming and meat in New Zealand. I feel profoundly at odds with 'my culture' in that regard – never able to fully be a full 'member' because of this. It means there are a whole lot of things I feel a need to be silent about. Although being a vegetarian isn't a totally socially unacceptable category, I've often thought how impossible it would be to be a vegetarian Prime Minister, for example (thankfully I don't have those aspirations) – how 'un new zealand' almost unpatriotic it would seem. [46, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

F84 also described how this sense of 'not belonging' extended to being a vegetarian in conventional New Zealand families where meat-eating was an accepted part of 'kiwi family culture':

F84: Last year I remember talking to a [non-New Zealander] who, when he found out I was vegetarian, made some comment about how that "wasn't part of his culture". It really pissed me off, and I said "it's not part of my culture either" (thinking of all those times when I was much younger, sitting down for dinner at my grandmothers and having to refuse the food she had so lovingly prepared – risking hurting and/or embarrassing her and others and making myself look bad - now, she very happily prepares 'vegetarian' food for me, I have to add!). I think in NZ it is very counter-cultural to refuse to eat meat (as it perhaps is most places) ... [46, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

Positively 'kiwi' vegetarians: The luxuries of living in New Zealand

For some participants, a more positive picture emerged in relation to 'being kiwi' and vegetarian. Many saw their nature-based upbringings as being an antecedent to becoming vegetarian:

F62: I'm sure growing up in a country that values anti-nuclear policy, around nature a lot—beaches, native bush and so on—has had a positive influence on me [36, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

F53: My respect for nature and the outdoors, along with my desire to protect it, undoubtedly comes from being raised in a country with easy access to nature and an image of being protective towards it. [30, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

F35: I think that being kiwi has meant proximity to animals, and awareness of endangered species and ecological fragility. [25, vegan, Christchurch]

These participants, and others, established a link between vegetarianism and a love for nature which fostered their thinking about non-human sentience.

New Zealand's democratic political structure, its relative prosperity and egalitarian politics in relation to other countries were also cited as positive factors enabling kiwis to become vegetarian. Some participants argued that New Zealand's isolation from war, starvation and totalitarian political regimes meant kiwis were free to make choices that people in other parts of the world were not:

M27: Being in an educated/free society helped [me] have a similar mind – questioning, etc. allowed me to form my own ideas and beliefs (note, I had no family or friends who influenced me, my thoughts were different than theirs). [49, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

F63: Because I don't have to worry about day to day survival, war, starvation, homelessness etc I have the luxury of being able to think [about] improving the lives of those less well off than myself. [36, vegan, Dunedin]

F79: That 'fair play' principle is certainly a strong kiwi value and it is a guiding principle for me as a vegan. It's not fair to exploit animals. [43, vegan, Christchurch]

Significant events in New Zealand's recent political history were also seen to have raised awareness and helped kiwis to feel ok about thinking independently and being different:

F62: As a teenager, with events like becoming nuclear-free, the bombing of the Rainbow Warrior, Save the Whales campaign, and the Sprinbok tour in the 80s, my eyes became open to a bit more reality. [36, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

F95: Quite proud to be a citizen of an independent minded New Zealand at the moment. Great the official anti-whaling line for example. In some ways a more inclusive and tolerant society than other cultures ... it's ok to be out of the mainstream. [52, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Wellington]

And while New Zealand's investment in capitalist, consumer culture was viewed with scepticism by many participants, others noted that it *facilitated* New Zealanders' vegetarianism, not least because it provided consumers with access to a wide variety of choices—including vegetarian products:

F69: I have the privilege of fresh and abundant foods – and do not need to eat meat to survive as there are other foodstuffs available. [39, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Thames]

M21: Living in a relatively prosperous country, I have the 'luxury' of choosing the products I buy, where other nationalities might not [have this luxury]. [41, vegan, Westland]

Tauwi participants

35 participants were born outside of New Zealand; some continued to identify as nationals of their birth country, whereas others had lived in New Zealand since they were young children and thus identified primarily as kiwis. Like those born and raised in New Zealand, tauwi were inclined to see their stance on animal welfare as being at odds with animal-related practices in their countries of origin:

F3: Singaporeans love food, love meat and don't seem very animal loving to me ... I am not a typical Singaporean. [31, pescetarian (ovo), Wellington]

F7: I was born in Iran – I think I would be seen as very odd if I went there now and proclaimed I didn't eat any meat. [39, vegan, Upper Hutt]

Where they chose to answer the question on nationality, participants from England, Scotland, Germany, Australia, Switzerland, South Africa, the United States and the Netherlands shared the opinion that they were positioned outside of the norms of their countries of origin. However, those from the UK also suggested that it was easier for British people to be vegetarian than New Zealanders because vegetarianism is better established in the UK. One participant stated that New Zealand is "at least ten years behind Britain" in terms of the vegan and vegetarian products it has available. Switzerland is also mentioned as being a more "animal-friendly" country: M3 (lacto-vegetarian) and F114 (vegan) both stated that Swiss animals received more humane care

than animals in New Zealand (for example, farm animals in Switzerland are provided with shelter in the cold weather).

(iii) Ethnicity

Many participants either declined to answer the question on ethnicity or felt that their ethnicity had no bearing on their stance regarding animal use and consumption. While there were exceptions, the younger participants (those in their teens, their 20s and their early 30s) were less inclined to comment on ethnicity; perspectives on the relationship between ethnicity and animal ethics were much more likely to come from participants over 40 years of age. The vast majority of participants in this study who did state their ethnicity identified either as European/white [40 women and 8 men] or Pakeha [17 women and 6 men]. No participant identified as Maori or Pasifika.

European/Pakeha ethnicity as positive

The Pakeha/European participants were deeply divided about the benefits of their ethnic category. On the one hand, some argued that their being Pakeha/European made it more likely that they would be concerned about animal welfare, because of the European traditions of pet-keeping, nature appreciation, animal rights philosophy, and critical thought:

F89: I think that as someone of European descent, I am more inclined to be animal-conscious and not just accept animal consumption as part of my culture. [48, vegan, Rotorua]

F45: Europeans tend to be more sensitive toward animals in some cases than other cultures who see some animals as pests or lower species. [29, ovo-vegetarian, Auckland]

F97: Barbaric practices are not a religious norm for my ethnic race. I dislike some Halal meat/slaughter practices. I dislike some pig-killing practices of some Pacific Island peoples. [53, lacto-vegetarian, Auckland]

European/Pakeha ethnicity as negative

While some European/Pakeha participants felt that their ethnic status facilitated the development of their ethics toward animals, others saw it as a hindrance tied to European pastoral and religious-based perceptions of animals:

M18: As a European I think I was subjected to cultural conditioning, albeit very subtle, of the goodness of pastoral farming and thus animal use. Probably predominantly through an awareness of such farming in the Bible and through media sources and books etc. [34, vegan, Christchurch]

F78: I am a Pakeha who belongs to Aotearoa New Zealand, but not to its farming culture. [41, vegan, Christchurch]

F42: Being of European descent [we're] taught the distinction between 'pets' and other cuddlies, and those we use and abuse. But no evidence is ever given as to why. I think our culture lacks a huge amount of empathy with other living creatures. [27, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Nelson]

M31: European culture makes an abrupt distinction between humans and other animals, and is imbued with the biblical belief that other animals are for our use; both of these banefully affect ethnic Europeans' attitudes to the treatment of other animals. [70, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch]

One man embraced his British heritage (for fostering his respect for animals) while rejecting his Pakeha heritage (which he associated with the farming of animals):

M19: The British social and literary tradition of love for nature and respect for animals (for example, the Romantic movement, and the animal welfare and rights movements) has been a big influence on me. As a Pakeha, however, I am supposed to be totally indebted to farming and agricultural production but I have reacted strongly against these things. [39, vegan, Christchurch]

Pakeha, tangata whenua and animals

Those who identified as Pakeha tended to draw attention to their relationship with (or difference from) tangata whenua. Two women declared that their historical status as settlers to Aotearoa gave them an added responsibility to foster ethical connections with both the land and its human and nonhuman inhabitants:

F94: As Pakeha I am not strictly tangata whenua, but I still belong to this land and have a 'responsibility' to it. I want to impress the attitude of respect on those around me. [50, lacto-vegetarian, Oamaru]

F50: Being Pakeha for me means owning what I do, my relationships with others and these relationships in the past (Pakeha/Maori/animals)... I have made a space for myself in Aotearoa/New Zealand and I want others (people/species) to be able to do the same. I negotiated this space and continue to do so; why shouldn't other animals have a space too? [34, vegan, Christchurch]

Animal rights – a white middle-class privilege?

A number of participants argued that there was a relationship between their views on animals and their relatively 'privileged' existence in comparison with other ethnicities in other parts of the world (this also relates to responses to the question on 'nationality'):

M2: [My attitude to animals is affected by my ethnicity] only in that I have not always had to think where my next meal was coming from. My lifestyle has always been reasonably comfortable. [36, vegan, Wellington, originally from the USA]

F83: White middle-class Europeans can be a bit elitist and can afford to buy non-meat alternatives. [45, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch]

(iv) Gender

A large number of participants chose not to answer the gender question, or felt that there was no relation between their gender and their ethical stance. However, gender issues became visible throughout other sections of the surveys in connection with hunting and fishing, food preparation and the meat and dairy industries' reliance on animal reproduction.

Vegetarianism as feminized

120 women volunteered to take part in this study compared with only 37 men (despite a concerted effort on the part of the researchers to recruit more men). While recognizing that perspectives varied amongst individuals, many participants suggested that women were in general terms more likely to be concerned with issues of animal use, abuse, and welfare. Some attributed this to a 'natural' or inherent feminine or maternal capacity in women:

F61: I know there are a lot of men out there supporting animal causes and following vegetarian/vegan lifestyles for the same reasons as I do, but I think that as a female I have a natural compassion and ability for empathy that influences my attitudes towards animals. [36, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

F27: I believe females are more empathetic than males by nature (having the inbuilt “mothering” system). [21, ovo-lacto vegetarian, New Plymouth]

Other participants argued that this trend was less to do with biologically gender-specific behaviour and more an issue of the cultural norms of gender expression; that is, that it was more acceptable in New Zealand for women to voice such concerns than it was for men:

F62: Maybe being female means I have been raised in ways that are more allowable of being ‘softer’ ... without the pressure of having to be ‘macho’ or ‘manly’. [36, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

Male participants who answered the ‘gender’ question commented on how vegetarianism was constructed as ‘unmanly’ or effeminate; several were quite happy to disrupt mainstream ideas about ‘kiwi masculinity’:

M10: As a male I am expected to eat and use animal products, but I choose not to. Many see my veganism as effeminate. [19, vegan, Wellington]

M11: As a male conditioned not to show emotion, whenever I encountered animal abuse or simply an animal being dominated, I felt it would be unmasculine to express any emotion or concern for the subjected animal. [24, vegan, Dunedin]

M23: Kiwi males are expected [to display] an attitude of indifference to the welfare of animals. [45, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Kapiti, originally from the UK]

M19: I have always felt excluded from or outside of conventional kiwi blokeishness, so I think this has an impact – I have deliberately gone in directions not associated with being a ‘hard man’ or a ‘real man’. [39, vegan, Christchurch]

M22: When I first became a vegetarian I was haunted by the vision of ‘real men’ as eating steak. I understood rationally that this was nonsense but it still niggled. I am now more secure in my own masculinity and I can appreciate the manly qualities of courage, which includes the ability to stick to my principles, rather than the pseudo-male macho characteristics of bluff and bluster. [43, vegan, Wellington]

Women also commented on how vegetarian men were treated differently in New Zealand.

F46: Comments such as ... “but vegetarianism isn’t manly” (directed toward my husband) really annoy me. [29, vegan, Auckland]

F31: I think it's definitely easier to be a vegetarian being a female. My partner doesn't really let on he's a vegetarian because he works in a very male environment and often gets comments from his workmates about not eating meat. I think it's due to that deeply ingrained belief in NZers that if you don't eat meat, you're somehow less of a man. [23, vegan, Auckland]

Food preparation

A number of women wrote of their concern with providing nutritionally balanced meals for their vegetarian families. No male participants mentioned this. Some vegetarian women recounted how they found it necessary to compromise their principles by buying

and cooking meat that they themselves would not eat, but which their family members wanted:

F68: After seeing a program on TV recently (pigs crammed into tiny pens), I've been trying to avoid buying pork; however, my husband and son are unrepentant meat-eaters, so I reluctantly buy it ... I hate buying meat products for my family ... Certainly as the female, I buy the food and prepare meals so I guess I'm more aware of food than my husband. It's interesting, because both my husband & son are meat eaters, but my daughter and [I] are veggies. [39, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Cambridge]

At least one other family in the sample of participants repeats this dietary dynamic, where the females in the household are vegetarian, but the males eat meat.

Exploiting female animals' reproductive lives (and the slaughter of male infant animals)

The meat and dairy industries' reliance on animal 'childbearing' was the other area that generated a strong gendered response, particularly from women who were or had been pregnant and lactating mothers themselves:

F4: I feel strongly that veganism is a women's issue, as the whole egg and dairy industry is based on the exploitation of female reproductive systems. That said, I think men should be just as interested in this issue as women of course, and not just because surplus males are killed. I had been a vegetarian for several years when I saw a documentary on the dairy industry. It may be surprising, but I had absolutely no idea that cows need to be constantly pregnant and separated from their babies to produce so much milk. Since I was breastfeeding my baby at the time, something 'clicked' and I could empathize. [33, vegan, Christchurch, originally from Germany]

F65: As a woman I found, after years of vegetarianism, I could not justify the commodification of reproduction in the form of milk and eggs. I read an article about meat as a feminist issue when I was about 18 and it ruined me for eggs and milk and made me think about how female animals are forced to breed children to be eaten. I am sure men can feel this way too but as woman and a feminist it was too disgusting to keep eating dairy and eggs. [36, vegan, Wellington]

While several male participants were aware of the dairy industry's practice of separating mother and infant, only one reflected upon it in detail, and no man discussed it with the emotional intensity of the many women commenting on the issue:

F46: After being exposed to a horrific night of listening to cows crying out for their newborn calves ... I decided that farms and dairy production was hell on earth for these beautiful creatures ... I felt that these animals were treated as machines and the cries from the cows after their calves had been taken away went on for days. I couldn't imagine anything more painful than having my baby taken away from me. [29, vegan, Auckland]

F79: Male and female animals are equally abused, tortured, killed and eaten. However, the kind of oppression does vary according to their gender. As a woman who has breastfed my own babies, I know I have particularly felt for dairy cows and find their treatment most upsetting. To separate a mother and baby is unnatural and the cruelest thing you could do. [43, vegan, Christchurch]

Both men and women condemned the slaughter of 'surplus' male infant animals which occurs as part of this process of exploiting the reproductive lives of animals (ie, the immediate culling of newly hatched male chicks on egg farms, and the dispatch of boy calves to slaughterhouses from dairy farms).

Feminism and animal rights

Several female participants linked animal rights to women's rights, arguing that their ethical stance in relation to animals had been influenced by their concern with equity in other areas:

F95: Feminism was an important formative influence for me. [It has] much in common with racism, disablism, ageism ... [52, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Wellington]

F53: Human history tends to go in circles: only a few years ago, people with dark skin were once kept as slaves and considered merely to be property to be used at their masters' wishes, without rights, feelings or higher intelligence. So were women. I hope one day that the way animals are currently treated will be part of this history, and that they will be able to live much happier lives governed by laws that protect and benefit the animals as much as the humans who have made the rules. [30, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

Killing as a manly pursuit

Participants argued that hunting, fishing and farm slaughter were seen by New Zealand dominant culture as masculine practices:

F26: Coming from a family of hunters myself, I think a culture for hunting has developed (not only, but in particular) amongst New Zealand males, in which hunting is seen to justify and give credibility to constructed notions of 'masculinity'. [21, vegan, Christchurch]

F66: [I] can't stand the testosterone-fuelled frenzy about fishing. [37, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

With a few exceptions, those reported to have killed animals in this study were male. However, these men had commonly experienced this activity of killing as distressing. One woman told of her brother's reaction when he was made to kill a chicken he had grown fond of:

F58: Probably one of the most affecting experiences of animals during my childhood happened at my father's rural property ... My grandfather decided one day that my brother had to kill a chicken as he had befriended a black chook and called it Jimmy, so my brother was made to kill Jimmy and then eat him for dinner. He cried for days but never named another animal. [34, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch]

Another man's story demonstrated how assumptions about masculinity and hunting/killing were challenged in the context of a hunting trip with his friend:

M15: Whenever I had [the gun] in my hands it gave me a certain sense of power and manliness... A few times when I had birds lined up in my sights I would intentionally miss as I didn't want to hurt them, but I was too embarrassed to admit this to my friends. Particularly being male there is a sense of macho pride that I felt I had to protect by not telling them... [Once] I critically wounded [a small brown thrush], so I went up and shot it at close range to kill it and minimise its suffering, but after that I admitted to my friend that I did not enjoy hunting... To my surprise, he admitted exactly the same thing to me, and the whole day we had been hiding these feelings for the sake of our pride. [23, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

In contrast, female participants tended to report being spared or isolated from the "uglier realities" of rural life—slaughter, death, and even birth:

F96: As a girl, and unlike my brothers, I was not allowed to see or be involved in animal slaughtering. Although I went on the lambing round with my father in the August school holidays, I never saw a lamb being born and was not really allowed to watch. [53, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Wellington]

F88: There weren't the same pressures on me [as there were on males] to be tough and kill sheep when I worked on a sheep farm twenty-five years ago. [48, lacto-vegetarian, Carterton]

Some participants viewed with scepticism the sense of masculinity gained through killing and eating meat:

F31: I believe that a man who considers shooting and killing an animal a 'manly' act, is probably lacking in other areas. A real man doesn't need to kill animals for a sense of self-worth. [23, vegan, Auckland]

(v) Age

The participants in this study ranged from 14 to 85 years of age. 70% were in their 20s, 30s and 40s (109 of 157 participants), with a further 15% in their 50s (25 of 157 participants). The majority of participants felt that their age did not influence their position on animals. Those that did revealed marked differences in their generational perspectives:

Teenagers and early 20s

Teenage participants and those in their early 20s sometimes found that their stance on animals was not taken seriously by family and friends, some of whom regarded their ethical choices as "a stage" or as "a disorder":

F22: [An] irritating state of mind [that] some New Zealanders have is: Vegan = anorexic. [16, vegan, Christchurch]

One participant in his late teens associated his convictions on animal welfare with his "youthful idealism":

M10: I am young and idealistic. Ha! [19, vegan, Wellington]

Others looking back on their adolescence suggested that vegetarianism occurred in tandem with people's youthful exploration of themselves and their culture:

M13: I was 17 when I became vegetarian, so I guess this is a time when you begin to question things more. [21, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

F2: I remember that my awareness of my own difference as a vegetarian became somewhat mitigated at high school where I found many other young people amongst my peers who were also vegetarian and conscious of animal rights. I think many of them were experimenting with vegetarianism as part of their own adolescent redefinition of themselves (a view substantiated by the fact that some of them returned to meat-eating as adults). Looking back, it seems to me that vegetarianism and animal rights may have been one of the ways New Zealand teenagers tested the boundaries of "normal" society; certainly, the people interested in these things during my teenage years (most of whom were academic high achievers or involved in the arts in some way) were concerned with testing these boundaries and were more "leftist" of "liberal" than the sporting enthusiasts who made up the majority. [31, lacto-vegetarian, Christchurch, originally from the USA]

20s and 30s

Participants in their 20s and 30s were inclined to view their choice to be vegetarian or vegan as part of the wider social acceptance for alternative lifestyle choices in New Zealand, something they felt was absent in earlier generations of New Zealanders:

F53: Vegetarianism was definitely more accepted in my childhood than in my mother's, and groups like the SPCA, Greenpeace, World Wildlife Fund etc. have been widely known and supported by most peoples in my age group (and above), so I think that has helped to make my decisions easier. [30, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

F59: I guess I have had the opportunity to develop more open-minded opinions than someone 50 years older than me. [27, pescetarian (ovo-lacto), Auckland]

40s and upwards

A number of participants over 40 mentioned that their convictions increased with age, or that they had had more time to research, consider and think about issues of animal welfare:

F93: Now that I have matured I am less selfish and not rushing around, influenced by one's hormones. I now think about helping others and our planet. [50, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

F98: I know more about how animals are treated, now that I've been around a while. [54, vegan, Upper Hutt]

F110: As I get older, I see myself getting more involved in animal rights issues, and perhaps I'm becoming more cynical about human behaviour. [78, pescetarian (ovo-lacto), Auckland]

Some older participants suggested they were less inclined to care quite so much about the opinions of others than when they were younger:

F91: Ageing brings me more courage and knowledge to be outspoken and be able to assert and vocalise my choices. Also, at my age, I am no longer viewed as going through a teenage stage of "hippie behaviour". [49, vegan, Auckland]

Some 'baby-boomers' indicated that their ethical stance toward animals had been influenced by the political movements and counter-cultures of the 1960s and 70s:

F95: [I] grew up in the formative 60s, so [I] was right into social and political issues from about 11. [My] first demonstration was against the visit of US Vice President in 1965. [I] was politicised by *Charlotte's Web* (and a little bit of *Pippi Longstocking*) before then. [52, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Wellington]

F86: Being a tail-end baby boomer meant that I may have been mildly influenced by 'hippy' peace-and-love sentiments that were on the wane, but still discernible around the time I came of age. [47, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

(vi) Occupation

A large number of participants—those working in fields like advertising, mail sorting, and electronics—felt that their occupation had no bearing on their ethical stance towards animals. A few commented that it was not so much that their occupation influenced their beliefs about animals, but rather the opposite:

F28: Your [beliefs] would probably influence your choice of occupation rather than vice versa!
[22, vegan, Auckland]

Jobs involving animals

A number of participants had had experience working at freezing works and at chicken and pig battery farms when they were teenagers or young adults, although none were now employed in these areas.

Some gave up careers in science and veterinary medicine because these involved working with animals in ways they considered exploitative:

F61: In my late teens, when I attended university studying veterinary medicine, one lecture involved viewing a video taken at a meat works; it was only then that I started to feel uncomfortable about eating meat and the farming and slaughtering practices behind it. It was still a couple of years after that before I became a vegetarian, and I could not imagine ever eating meat again. I left university not long after seeing that video; I finally began to understand what a teacher had meant when he told me a few years earlier that “vets are not professional animal lovers”. I had wanted to become a vet with grand ideas of helping animals, but I started to realise that this was not the job for me, that the realities of it would eventually destroy my soul. [36, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

M18: Initially I wished to follow in my father’s footsteps and become a scientist. [In science] animals are most definitely objectified and used as a resource. However, it was my view of science which was affected by a developing identification with animals. Subsequently I have had difficulty finding an adequate occupation. I have mostly worked in health, but in menial work. [34, vegan, Christchurch]

Work location was also an issue for a few:

M5: I have turned down work because I knew it would mean commuting past or near the slaughterhouse or working for firms which exploit animals themselves. [49, vegan, Auckland, originally from the USA]

Several participants worked in areas in which they were directly involved with animals—running animal sanctuaries, for animal welfare agencies or animal rights organizations, as farmers, and, for one participant, as a vet.

M24: [As a trainee vet] I see the inside workings [of the animal processing industry]: piggery, de-beaking chickens, slaughterhouses etc [and] I know what goes into the piece of red meat. [47, pescetarian (ovo-lacto), rural Canterbury]

F40: I work at [an animal rights agency] so I have become extremely sensitive to animal exploitation as I am reminded of it every single day and also learn about what goes on. Because of my knowledge and exposure to abuse I do find it harder to tolerate others using, buying, eating products that contribute to animal suffering. Now I know what happens to animals I know that my occupation and life must involve working towards changing the situation for animals and educating others. [27, vegan, Auckland]

F117: I was brought up to respect and treat domestic animals as creatures with feelings, needs and dependency on humans to have a decent life ... Having a lot to do with rural New Zealand [as a dairy farmer] has completely influenced my attitude to animals. I am a lot more realistic than a lot of my friends. [53, meat-eater, Waiuku]

Urban occupations and animals

Some urban dwellers suggested that the fact that their work was disconnected from animals made it more likely that they considered and accommodated animal-welfare concerns:

M31: I can see how if I was a farmer or a freezing worker, I would have had more obstacles to overcome in becoming a vegetarian, or even [to becoming] more sensitive to animal suffering. As Mark Twain apparently said, “It is always difficult to get a man to understand something if his salary depends on him not understanding it”. [70, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch]

Many had found an opportunity in their line of work to explore or educate others about the use of animals in New Zealand. There was a relatively large contingent of university researchers (academics and post-graduates) in this study who were either directly involved in exploring human-animal relations or whose research in other areas—anthropology, geography, philosophy, ecology, zoology and psychology—had inspired them to think about animal ethics:

F70: I’m doing a doctorate in social anthropology ... As an anthropology student I do think about humankind’s relationship(s) to one another, to other animals, and to the inanimate and plant realms. [39, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

M14: I’m an honours politics student with a BA in politics and philosophy, so I’ve had the chance to examine these ideas [of human-animal relationships] in depth. [22, vegan, Wellington]

Many participants were employed in health professions. There were representatives of both conventional medicine and alternative medicine (GPs, registered nurses, caring professionals, a paediatrician, nursing tutor, dietician, massage therapist, natural health practitioner, social worker, fitness instructor, Health and Safety Advisor, medical receptionist etc). Some of these participants found opportunities to advise their patients or clients of the health benefits of vegetarianism:

F91: Working as a health therapist/masseuse does give me a captive audience and some credibility in promoting a vegan lifestyle. [49, vegan, Auckland]

M24: I constantly advocate to my patients a vegetarian diet. [47, pescetarian (ovo-lacto), rural Canterbury]

A few participants argued that their interest in animal rights led them to occupations that were also concerned with addressing what they saw to be (human) social inequities:

F30: I recently graduated from university and now work for local government. I think that the same part of me that makes me be a vegetarian also made me choose to study psychology and geography to learn about the world and want to work towards improving my community. [23, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

F31: I’m studying health promotion, which is essentially based around social justice, so I can certainly see the link between where I’m interested in working and my attitudes towards animals in terms of advocating for the voiceless or the most vulnerable in society. [23, vegan, Auckland]

(vii) Relationships with others

In general terms, participants tended to prefer relationships with those who possessed a commitment to animal politics that was similar to their own. Most were able to cite

instances of anxiety, strain, or conflict when working, socializing or living with others who subscribed to orthodox ideas about animal use and consumption.

Colleagues/co-workers

Vegan and vegetarian participants reported being hassled, teased or treated differently in their work environments. Many mentioned how work functions either failed to cater for non meat-eaters, or else the presence of 'special' vegetarian food at such occasions drew unwanted attention, comments and questions; or led to jokes and pranks at their expense:

F85: Work colleagues make light-hearted fun. [46, pescetarian (ovo-lacto), rural Canterbury]

F39: I have a lot of client meetings with morning tea/lunches etc and often there are no vegetarian options. For regular meetings I have to make a special request for veggie food and I feel like I am being difficult and making a fuss sometimes. [27, pescetarian (ovo-lacto), Auckland]

F15: At work ...they have animal stuff at any functions and at the Christmas thing, and I have to leave before they start as I cannot handle it. Once they got me vegan bagels with salad and thought they had performed a miracle. [53, vegan, Wellington]

Family

Influence of family for vegetarian participants

Eight participants' families of origin were vegetarian (some with links to organized spiritual and/or ethical groups such as the Theosophical Society and Hare Krishna movement).

One man recounted his mother's independent observations of animal suffering and how these had led to her decision to become vegetarian; thus influencing her children's perspectives too:

M16: I was raised a vegetarian. My mother told me her story from a very early age – she went to a dairy farm when she was 16 and saw things going on there that she didn't want to be a part of. [28, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

One woman felt that the maternal side of her family had greatly influenced her beliefs:

F53: My family has been vegetarian since my Grandmother's generation, so while I had the choice whether to eat meat or not at an early age (my parents separated when I was 3 and my slightly unstable father tried very hard to influence me towards a more omnivorous way of life!) the larger family influence had a big influence on my decisions. [30, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

Another woman had extended family in Singapore which was Buddhist and vegan, although her immediate family in New Zealand, with the exception of her partner, were meat-eaters.

Some participants mentioned how their immediate families, who had eaten meat, were now changing towards cruelty-free consumption:

F103: My family have mostly become vegetarian over the years and I try to socialise with those who also respect animals. I would not want to be in a relationship with someone who had such differing views from mine about animals. [56, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Raglan]

A few older participants reported their vegetarian children had inspired them to reconsider their own complicity in animal use and consumption:

F109: My attitude has been and still is influenced by my daughter at first, and now also her partner – no cruelty to animals in any way. I am living close to [them] and this would not be possible if I were not well along the road they travel. They are totally devoted to animal rights and follow a vegan way of life. I am vegetarian. [73, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Invercargill]

M31: [An] overwhelming influence [was our] middle son who became a passionate vegetarian and animal rights activist. He alerted me to the nitty-gritty of NZ treatment of animals, especially re zoos and the production of dairy products. And overnight he changed our whole family to vegetarian – never quite to vegan, as he was at the time. I felt and feel immeasurably better both physically and morally, and increasingly aware of and concerned about the way we in NZ treat other animals. [70, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch]

Family occasions involving meat

For many vegetarians, family celebrations (weddings, birthdays, Christmas etc) revolved around the preparation and consumption of meat. Some reported they were accepted as vegan or vegetarian members of an otherwise meat-eating family, and family gatherings (involving meat) were reasonably comfortable for them. Others discussed their uneasiness around the predominance of meat at family get-togethers; a few refused to attend any further family functions due to this:

M19: Some of my old friends are reasonably respectful of my vegetarianism and some don't eat meat when I'm around. But most do. So do my family, and I find this very distasteful. It is a constant tension for me at family gatherings. [39, vegan, Christchurch]

F85: My family (extended - Aunts/Uncles etc) do not invite me for family meals. (I will not eat at a table where someone is eating meat). [46, pescetarian (ovo-lacto), rural Canterbury]

Raising vegan/vegetarian children

A substantial number of men and women in this study were now raising their own children as vegans or vegetarians. All reported this as a positive experience; although several also worried about – or had encountered difficulties when – dealing with schools, teachers and other parents about their children's non-consumption of meat and/or other animal products:

F4: On the whole, not so good, as sausage sizzles and birthday parties for children are so common, and I always need to talk to other parents about vegan food before my children go and visit. [33, vegan, Christchurch, originally from Germany]

F84: Each year my daughter's school in the city has an exchange with a school in a very small rural area... I felt very anxious and worried [about] what my daughter could be exposed to in relation to disturbing treatments of animals. We then billeted a girl from this small rural farming community this year. Her parents had a 'beef' farm ... I had been worried about feeding her, and whether it would be difficult to be hospitable with the kind of food we eat. At one point (she was very curious – in a pleasant way) there was almost a 'coming out' moment in which I had to declare we were vegetarian. I was aware of feeling like this is not something I wanted 'out in the open' – interesting enough, though, my ten year old daughter was very bold and up front about this to her! [46, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

A few women criticized the organization Plunket for being uninformed about vegetarianism, as well as prejudiced against parents who were raising children as vegetarians:

F61: I have been berated for forcing my opinions on my children ... Apparently I have no right to bring them up with the values and morals that are important to me, but isn't that what every parent does, just because my views are not held by the majority of the population does not make them wrong or me a negligent parent for bring my children up with them...

Plunket are so narrow minded, every time I take one of the kids in for a well child check I get the third degree: 'What do they eat?' 'What do you mean they don't eat meat?' ... 'Did I know that 30% of NZ children are iron deficient?' Well of course but 99% of that 30% would be meat eaters. My children (both under the age of 4) have an excellent diet, they are the envy of other parents when they tuck into large plates of fruit and vegetables, pastas and rice, lentils and beans, they eat a vast array of foods, and have a much healthier and more varied diet than any other children I know... Do Plunket ever acknowledge any of that? No, they just tell me that they might be iron deficient because they haven't eaten a hunk of dead animal recently ... So many people buy into the advertising and think that you can't raise healthy vegetarian children - how will their brains develop properly without all that iron from meat? Well my son has just got 100% in his preschool assessment and is teaching himself to write ... My daughter (21 months) uses full sentences, and has done for a while, counts to ten and can recite the alphabet. These are not kids whose brains are delayed through lack of iron. Yet despite all this Plunket have still insisted that I take my son for blood tests to check his iron levels, for no other reason than we don't eat meat. [36, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

Because they experienced this kind of marginalization, many vegan and vegetarian parents actively sought to socialize with others who were also raising vegetarian children (some had set up and/or belonged to supportive 'vegetarian family groups').

Only a few participants reported they had adult sons and daughters who had been raised vegetarian (most participants with children had young or teenage children still living at home). One 58 year old woman, who had brought up all her children as vegetarians, felt that her son's decision to commence eating meat as a teenager had led to their eventual estrangement:

F104: My younger son, a vegetarian from conception, regrettably decided to become a meat-eater. Much as I love him [we] have had a parting of the ways for this very reason. Can't handle how his personality has drastically changed for the worse since he became a meat-eater. [58, lacto-vegetarian, rural Manawatu]

Friends

Shared ethics were not considered especially important in the case of friends, although many preferred their friends to be at least a little sympathetic to their views. A few vegetarians experienced a deeper connection with other vegetarian friends due to mutual beliefs, values and practices:

M35: I do not specifically mix with people who are vegetarian—I have associations with people across many areas of thought. Generally, however, they are people who are thoughtful on these subjects. [64, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Porirua]

M17: Not particularly drawn to either vegans/veges or non-veges. Although I do feel a connection with other veges and vegans due to my deeply held beliefs about animals. I also have great friends who do not share my personal philosophical beliefs, but I wouldn't exclude them from my own social network. [22, vegan, Christchurch]

F17: I cannot socialise with people who fundamentally disagree with my views on this issue. For example, I could not remain long in the same room with someone who was enthusiastic about bullfighting! [59, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland, originally from the UK]

F5: I do prefer the company of my veggie friends, as it's such a large part of my life that I want to be able to communicate to people who feel the same way. [34, vegan, Porirua, originally from the UK]

F23: I socialise with a lot of vegans, but I think this may be a coincidence more than anything. I would never *not* be friends with someone because of that ... It just makes it easier being surrounded by like-minded people. [20, vegan, Wellington]

F4: I don't feel I need to justify or explain myself to my vegan and vegetarian friends, so I feel very comfortable in an animal rights environment. Saying that, some of my friends are animal eaters. We don't focus on animal issues and talk about other things we have in common. [33, vegan, Christchurch, originally from Germany]

F67: Being vegetarian doesn't affect my choices. I am married to a meat eater; all my family (except my sister) and friends are meat eaters. After 13 years of my asking, not one of them has gone even one day without meat. [But] being against animal cruelty does. All of my friends and family [are] against animal cruelty. I don't think I form a friendship with someone who worked in the freezing works or animal research etc. [37, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

F62: My friends are on the whole people who are also vegetarian and eco-conscious although not all. But all respect my lifestyle, and if I socialize with them where food is involved, respect this. [36, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

Some vegetarians reported being excluded from social occasions (invitations to parties or meals at people's homes or at restaurants, etc) organized by meat-eating friends due to these people feeling uncomfortable with their presence at a function where meat was served, and/or not knowing what to serve them:

F9: We are not often invited out to dinner or lunch because people see our restricted food choices as a problem. [40, vegan, Auckland, originally from Germany]

Conversely, a few participants refused to attend friends' parties if they knew these events would focus on meat-eating:

F110: We have recently declined an invitation to a reunion on a farmlet of old friends [because] the main focus of this celebration is 'sheep on a spit' ... [78, pescetarian (ovo-lacto), Auckland]

Partners

Participants were much more stringent about partners needing to share their perspectives on animal welfare and consumption. 100 of the 157 participants (63%) stated that they had (or would want) a partner who was also concerned for animals in the way they were (the remaining participants did not think this was important):

M37: I could be in a relationship with any non-vegan. My belief is it is best to lead by example rather than preaching my personal views. [54, vegan, Wellington, originally from Australia]

F23: I do not think I could be in a serious long-term relationship with someone who wasn't vegan, or at least vegetarian, because it is such a big part of who I am, and because it would mean that we were not thinking on the same playing field. [20, vegan, Wellington]

F87: I can't imagine being in an intimate relationship with someone who didn't share my beliefs about animals. I can't imagine it being workable long-term as my veganism and my beliefs about animals are pretty fundamental to who I am. It's not a 'minor preference' like picking a flavour –

oh, that's ok, you like a different flavour. It's about how I see the world – greed, mythology, lies, power – the exploitation of animals is fundamental to those things. So it's very important to me. [48, vegan, Kapiti Coast]

F76: I could not really stand for my partner to continue to eat meat after becoming involved with me. If he was when I met him, I would expect that to change! [40, vegan, Auckland]

F112: I could not live [with] an animal hunter and have already turned down a couple of potential men with that in mind! [48, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch]

If partners were not also vegetarian, most vegetarian participants expressed that they should at least be understanding and receptive toward their beliefs:

M35: I am married to a wonderful and understanding woman who is not a vegetarian. She does, however, have similar ideas about the treatment of animals. [64, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Porirua]

F42: My partner is a carnivore, but as I do all the cooking, I don't cook him meat... He understands about animal welfare issues [and] has purchased free range bacon [which] I appreciated. He has watched a lot of the terrible DVDs from PETA etc, so he can understand. [27, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Nelson]

M5: I cannot live with conspicuous animal products. My wife and I came together with the understanding that she would 'veganize' her household. [49, vegan, Auckland, originally from the USA]

There were cases in which relationships faltered due to a difference in concern for animals:

F27: [My beliefs about animals] have affected my relationship with my partner greatly. I have seriously considered leaving my fiancée to work with animals (he does not share my views) and we are still struggling. [21, ovo-lacto vegetarian, New Plymouth]

M22: I married when I was 28. At the time both my wife and I were fairly strong Christians. As time went on I moved away from a fundamentalist stance, based mainly on the churches' attitude to animals. This was a factor in our estrangement. [43, vegan, Wellington]

F86: When my husband and I got together I think I underestimated the negative effect on our relationship that our failure to share what has become for me a fairly major component of my world-view would have. And at the time it was less of a big thing for me. In hindsight, and if I was choosing again, better alignment in this area would be an important relationship criterion. But at this stage it's not a deal breaker, and we try to be respectful of the legitimacy of each other's views. [47, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

One 75 year old woman reiterated how she and her late husband had once separated due to differences in opinion regarding animals; they had attempted to farm but she was distraught at what this involved for the animals and did not continue (F21, ovo-vegetarian, Marlborough Sounds, originally from the USA). Her husband subsequently became vegetarian.

One 23 year old life-long vegetarian, who had been coerced by previous boyfriends into trying meat, had made a decision to now only date vegetarians:

F33: Boyfriends in the past [who were not vegetarian] had tried to get me to try meat which I hated; it would make me angry since I had no desire to try it. I would tell them how I didn't like it and thought the idea was horrible and then they would get upset that I was trying to guilt trip them for eating meat, and it just all went down-hill from there. So now I don't even bother dating

guys who aren't vegie and I have been finding recently that I have stopped being attracted to guys who aren't vegie anyways. [23, ovo-vegetarian, Auckland]

For some men and women, it was their vegetarian partners (variously listed as boyfriends, girlfriends, husbands, wives, and partners) who had prompted them to become vegetarian or vegan.

On the other hand, a couple of women who had been vegetarian stated they began eating meat again after being influenced by meat-eating partners and finding it too difficult to remain vegetarian in their relationships:

F51: I was a strict vegetarian for about 3 years, but now am married to an omnivore and find it too difficult. [30, meat-eater, Auckland]

'Cruelty-free' sex: Rejecting meat-eaters as intimate partners

Some women felt squeamish about the idea of having intimate physical contact with a person who ate meat; sexual intimacy with meat-eaters was also opposed on more ideological grounds, viewing their bodies as composed of/from dead animals:

F3: My boyfriend is a vegetarian. I don't think I could live with a significant other who isn't... It would disgust me to see my boy tucking into a chicken. I probably couldn't kiss him! [31, pescetarian (ovo), Wellington]

F91: I could not be in an intimate relationship with anyone who was eating animals. Our worlds would just be too far apart and the likelihood of the relationship succeeding would be very low ... I couldn't think of kissing lips that allow dead animal pieces to pass between them. [49, vegan, Auckland]

F50: I believe we are what we consume so I really struggle with bodily fluids, especially sexually. [34, vegan, Christchurch]

F100: I have tried a relationship with someone who was not a vegetarian and found that although he was attractive sexually, sex alone was not enough to combat the revulsion created by the smell of dead bodies being cooked, and the associated lack of concern about the welfare of animals. For me, an intimate relationship needs to be based on shared values and moral codes as well as sexual chemistry. [55, ovo-vegetarian, Auckland]

F78: I would not want to be intimate with someone whose body is literally made up from the bodies of others who have died for their sustenance. Non-vegetarian bodies smell different to me—they are, after all, literally sustained through carcasses—the murdered flesh of others. Even though I might find someone really attractive, I wouldn't want to get close to them in a physical sense if their body was derived from meat. For me, this constitutes my very personal form of ethical sexuality. [41, vegan, Christchurch]

One man in his late 20s also mentioned his displeasure at kissing non-vegetarians:

M16: If a partner has been eating meat or fish, they would have to clean their teeth before I'd kiss them. [28, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

(viii) Difficulties of cruelty-free living in New Zealand

Time, effort and expense

Participants demonstrated that being conscious consumers required a considerable amount of energy, time and money. As mentioned, the most committed vegans and vegetarians went to great lengths to consume ethically (see page 39). Many participants

stated that they slackened their principles because they were becoming “obsessive”, or because it was taking too much time and energy to maintain, or because it was too expensive:

F67: I find it difficult to know what products contain animal by-products (like emulsifiers) and am sure I consume animal ingredients quite often hidden in other things without knowing. The different names or just a number they give things are confusing (eg artificial chicken flavour – what is is?) [37, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

Limited options in supermarkets and restaurants

While many participants noted a trend towards increased acceptance of vegetarians and vegans in New Zealand (accompanied by a wider range of cruelty-free cosmetics and foods for purchase in supermarkets and elsewhere), they still commented that a lack of choice restricted their shopping. Cafes and restaurants often failed to offer anything beyond a ‘token’ vegetarian dish, let alone vegan dish (unless established to cater specifically for vegetarians/vegans):

M4: If there are two vegetarian choices in a restaurant, I am absolutely conflicted! My whole evening is thrown into turmoil and I have to be told by [my vegetarian partner] that I’m having what she’s not so she can share mine... [46, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch, originally from the UK]

F5: I was very sorry after three months attempting to forgo all animal products (go vegan) to discover how virtually impossible it was given the supermarket foods that contain one or both [eggs or dairy] and the paucity of choice in cafes, takeaway shops and fine restaurants for vegans. I was obsessing over food and lost too much weight. [34, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Porirua, originally from the UK]

Meat-eaters in this study also wished for more ethical options when purchasing meat.

F51: It would be great if we had the option to choose to buy meat at the supermarket which is not factory farmed, even if it meant paying a bit more. [30, meat-eater, Auckland]

Aggravation from others

A number of vegans and vegetarians reported being bothered by the (negative) attention they attracted by “being different” from mainstream New Zealand; being vegetarian is always an ‘issue’ in a society where meat-eating is dominant:

F63: Occasionally I avoid certain people or places if I find that I end up being attacked about being vegan. Some people just get very defensive about eating meat and can’t handle that I’m vegan. [36, vegan, Dunedin]

Those who attended meals out with meat-eating friends and acquaintances grew frustrated at having to clarify or defend their alternative perspectives:

F59: Always being questioned (But what do you eat?) Can’t have dinner with someone without explaining all our views; the more polite people question us, then justify eating animals in some way or say they don’t eat much meat now either; the less polite people argue with us. We’re not assertive people so it can be annoying having to speak on behalf of vegans everywhere! ... People always see us as being difficult. [34, vegan, Westland]

F43: I get hassled about being vegetarian and hear things like ‘vegetables have feelings too’ or a lecture on how farming is the backbone of the country blaa blaa. [27, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Wanganui]

F67: I never talk about being vegetarian unless asked. People always ask me how I get enough protein/iron not eating meat. It seems to be a way to attack my beliefs, when most of them cannot tell me what their own iron count is. [37, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

Mental health issues: Isolation, despair and burn-out

Numerous participants mentioned feelings of isolation, helplessness, powerlessness, despair or depression in relation to legalized animal exploitation in New Zealand.

F87: I feel like a lone voice most of the time. [48, vegan, Kapiti Coast]

F79: My world view is so different from that of most people I know. I have to ignore so much and stay lawful even though I feel very upset when I see such things as sheep trucks off to the works. I should try and stop them, but instead I have to watch them go by as I know I can't. That's the most difficult part – seeing legitimised animal abuse/killing and suffering and being powerless to stop it. It's harder in NZ as such sights as sheep trucks off to the works, A & P shows, pro-farming TV shows and adverts are the norm. [43, vegan, Christchurch]

One long-time animal rights activist speculated on vegetarians' dependency on alcohol and drugs as coping (or 'not-coping') mechanisms, and the increased risk of suicide for those more conscious of animal suffering and exploitation in this country:

F91: Many vegans and animal activists suffer a gamut of strong and repeated emotional states including anger, fury, disgust, frustration, despair, isolation, burnout and depression. This is the result of being in a minority, which for the most part is openly opposed, ridiculed and rejected by government and society. The statistics around suicide rates may also be worth investigating, as there are times when I and fellow vegans have been overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of animals being murdered to satisfy the tiny tastebuds on human tongues. There are times when the joys of being alive can be overpowered by the misery of the acute awareness of billions of innocent creatures being violently bred, farmed, hunted and killed without need. There have been some in our ranks who have succumbed to suicide when their sensitive souls could not face another day of witnessing the torture and murder of animals in so many ways. [49, vegan, Auckland]

(ix) Group affiliations and memberships

While several participants stated they did not belong to or support any specific groups or organizations, most reported some form of group affiliation – either as active members or as followers/supporters of a particular group's ideas, politics and/or work (the range included animal rights, human rights, children's rights, feminist, environmentalist, anti-globalization, anti-capitalist, punk, straightedge, anarchist groups etc). A number of social support groups were also mentioned.

The New Zealand animal rights organization, Save Animals From Exploitation (SAFE), received the highest profile across surveys. Other organizations with high memberships among participants included the NZ Vegetarian Society, SPCA, Greenpeace, and the NZ Green Party (this array demonstrates the high involvement of – and political division between – animal rights activists and environmentalists in this research).

The following directory represents the various groups and organizations referred to by participants (note – some groups fit into more than one of the listed categories):

Animal rights/ advocacy/ welfare groups (in alphabetical order)

Animal Action
Animals Asia
Birdwing
CAFF (Campaign Against Factory Farming)
Humane Society of NZ
IFAW (International Fund for Animal Welfare)
NAVC (NZ National Anti-Vivisection Campaign)
NZVS (New Zealand Vegetarian Society)
PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals)
SAFE (Save Animals From Exploitation)
SHAC (Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty)
SPCA (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals)
Veganchatz
VEGANZ (Vegan Society of New Zealand)
WSPA (World Society for the Protection of Animals)

Environmental

Forest & Bird
Greenpeace
Karori Sanctuary
New Zealand Green Party (political party)
Sea Shepherd
Soil & Earth
WWF (World Wildlife Fund)

Human rights/ anti-globalization/ anti-capitalist

Adbusters
Amnesty International
Child Fund NZ
Food Not Bombs
Humane Alternative
Oxfam
Trade Aid

Spiritual

Buddhist groups (various)
Dorje Chang Institute
Hare Krishna
Krishnamurti
Theosophical Society of NZ
Yoga Society

Socialization/Support Groups

Lesbian Vegetarians Dining Group
Vegetarian Families Group

Other

Anarchist
Independent Media Center (Indymedia)
Meat Free Media
PCRM (Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine)
Straightedge

SECTION 4

NEW (AND PREFERRED) IMAGES OF NEW ZEALAND

At the conclusion of each survey, participants were given the opportunity to create their vision of a ‘new’ New Zealand – or a ‘future’ New Zealand – and its relationship to animals (that is, a picture of this country as they would like it to be). This topic generated a range of responses, from the *pessimistic* (not much would change to benefit animals because humans were the problem) to the *pragmatic* (eg, animal farming would remain, but in more humane forms – there would be no battery farming, for instance – and organic and non-GE produce would be prioritized) and the *utopian* (eg New Zealand would become a safe haven for human and nonhuman animals of all kinds).

Across the spectrum of participants, meat-eaters to vegans, battery farming was overwhelmingly outlawed in the future New Zealand.

Pessimistic perspectives

The following are examples of pessimistic responses to New Zealand’s future with respect to human-animal relations and animal practices. In general, the sense of pessimism is associated with distrust about humans’ capacity to change:

F11: Almost any improvement in terms of non-commercialism and treating animals with more respect would be good. To be truly cruelty free, everyone would have to be staunch vegans and it’s difficult to imagine how that could happen. I’m too pessimistic to believe humans are altruistic and intelligent enough to be capable of such change. Perhaps it’s just as well that we’re all going to get fried by global warming! We kind of deserve it although the animals don’t. [42, vegan, Christchurch, originally from the UK]

F78: Animal farming is outlawed [in my vision]. New Zealand becomes known for its wonderful vegetables and fruit, and for its compassionate attitude towards all living creatures. But this is daydreaming – humans are just not that kind, or that clever. [41, vegan, Christchurch]

Pragmatic responses

Pragmatic responses concentrated on more or less achievable changes to the lives of animals in New Zealand: the rejection of battery farming in favour of free range farms; the growth of an organics (and GE free) farming industry; the adoption of alternatives to animal testing and dissection in scientific and educational domains; and a move towards serious animal welfare laws and harsher penalties for those who abuse animals. The following are examples of responses categorized as pragmatic:

F41: I would love our farming industry to develop more respect for the animals – allow them to live naturally and happily. [27, lacto-vegetarian, Dunedin]

F74: I would love New Zealand to be a country that rejected factory farming in the same way we rejected nuclear ships. I think this would really enhance New Zealand’s image and would send a really strong message to people in other countries that hadn’t really thought about it. [40, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch]

M4: Eating meat is not going to stop, therefore assuming organic/green practices are more ‘humane’, NZ should go that way – the premium should outweigh the volume decline. I don’t think it’s fully understood here - the growing momentum and size of the European bio-market

led by northern Europeans - this should tie in with the fictitious 'pure' green image here more. [46, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch]

F110: No laboratory testing of animals when it can be done on computers. [78, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

F108: A country governed by compassionate – and serious-minded politicians – who legislated against cruel farming practices ... Realistically, to have animals living unstressed lives with freedom to roam, interact and live out their lives with other animals. Not to be treated only as commodities. [66, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Kapiti Coast]

F52: [New Zealand] should be organic, GE-free, with humane farming. [30, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Wellington]

Tourism and/or horticulture replacing agriculture

Pragmatists also suggested the tourism industry could be supported more by government, and that this sector might surpass the agricultural industry as New Zealand's primary source of revenue. Immigrants to New Zealand were particularly in favour of such a shift occurring. For example, when asked what new image of this country could be promoted, one woman who grew up on a sheep farm in New South Wales, replied:

F6: Something closer to the truth, that is, that our most important and economically valuable export industry is tourism, which is undermined by farming. If people were more aware of this then perhaps farming would lose some of its cultural and political importance ... [36, vegan, Kapiti Coast, originally from Australia]

A 58 year old man, who immigrated to New Zealand from the United Kingdom, commented that tourism – and the much publicized 'clean, green image' of NZ – would be aided by a change in our current laws regarding animal welfare:

M34: A society where animals enjoy full protection under the law to live in a natural environment free from the threat of harm inflicted by human beings. This would provide a benchmark for other countries to strive for and would certainly enhance NZ's 'clean and green' image. The advantages would have significant economic benefits to tourism that would eventually replace any losses in the farming sector. [58, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland, originally from the UK]

One woman even offered alternative depictions of New Zealand for use in tourism promotion:

F73: Green, friendly to animals, no animal testing or abuse. Of course the popular green images here often involve sheep in the fields ... perhaps [replace with] native bush with fat kereru, or blue seas with saved whales! A caring country to all living species. [40, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch]

Shifting New Zealand's direction in favour of horticulture was another popular suggestion:

F94: Farmland is gradually converted from predominantly grass to mixed crop organic farming. [50, lacto-vegetarian, Oamaru]

M19: NZ would be of a country that has shown the world how to move away from a cruel and environmentally-wasteful dependence on meat and dairy production, and towards an economy based on grain, vegetables and fruit production. A country that therefore had the right to lead international discussion about animal ethics and environmental ethics ... [39, vegan, Christchurch]

Utopian images

While it could be argued that *most* of the alternative images of New Zealand offered by participants were ‘idealistic’ rather than ‘realistic’, given this country’s heavy cultural association with – and economic ‘reliance’ on – agriculture, some visions were classified as more utopian than others because they were considered even less likely to manifest – or *begin* to manifest – in any foreseeable future. Such utopian perspectives included a shift to viewing animal slaughter for food as illegal, and the use of animal bodies only after natural life and death:

M3: Taking care of the animals in sickness and only use their bodies after they died naturally. [44, lacto-vegetarian, Christchurch, originally from Switzerland]

F82: Animals that are used for economic uses (wool, eggs, milk etc) are treated with care and respect and allowed to follow their natural behaviours in their natural environment. When they are too old to be useful they are retired to places where they are treated essentially as pets in their natural environment. Once they have died of natural causes or been put down for humane reasons then use may be made of them eg leather, feathers etc. Production of animals for the purpose of killing them for products would not be legal or acceptable. [43, ovo-vegetarian, Wellington]

Strategies to achieve change

Tactics to achieve change were often offered alongside proposed ‘new’ images of New Zealand. Such strategies included: teaching respect and compassion for animals – as well as knowledge about vegetarianism – through education programmes in early childhood facilities, primary and high schools; strengthening animal welfare laws in this country (and handing down harsher penalties for animal abuse); changing New Zealand tax laws in favour of horticultural produce; increasing public awareness of where food, medicines and cosmetics actually come from by showing ‘the realities’ of animals lives and deaths via graphic visuals in supermarkets, pharmacies etc; and promoting ‘vegetarian farming’.

Participants also identified potential ‘niche markets’ catering for ethical consumers in New Zealand.

Teaching/promoting compassion

Many proposed that the future New Zealand should be a country which promoted equality between human and nonhuman animals, as well as compassion for others (both human and animal). Approaches to encouraging more respect and care for animals included having routine coverage of animal issues in early childhood, primary and secondary education; more information at school about vegetarianism and cruelty-free consumption; and vegetarian cooking as an option at school:

F58: If farming is going to continue to be ‘the backbone’ of the country, then organic and animal conscious. I think there is a strong attitude that if the animal is for meat, then their life need not be considered in any sense. I’d like to see that change, at least. But I also think that NZ could become more focused and educated in terms of alternative foods to dairy and meat. Vegetarian cooking should be offered in school. [34, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch]

M31: I would like all New Zealanders to be aware that all sentient beings are our kith and kin, and that most have not only physical sensitivities but also complex social relationships and emotional feelings. I would like all NZers to extend “do unto others as you would that they do to you” to all

sentient beings, not just humans, and to think as carefully about the results of their actions on other animal individuals and communities as they do (or should!) about the results on other humans. [70, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Christchurch]

A few felt that New Zealand society could benefit from the teachings of non-western cultures, especially those affiliated with Eastern philosophies.

M18: Some people think to create a society without animal suffering is to build an impossible utopia. However the image I have in mind is based on actual realities from aspects of real societies. My image involves a society with a tolerance based upon an acceptance of animals as society members in their own right. To be left to living according to their own way. However humans should interfere to alleviate suffering. Why? Because they can! Certain aspects of both Hindu and Chinese 'historical' Buddhist societies can be used to help mould a better society. Especially with regard to food and resource use, when developing a vegan society. This is not to say I do not wish for a modern technological approach, but to allow for good guidance from our past. [34, vegan, Christchurch]

Strengthening and upholding animal welfare laws

Many participants (meat-eaters to vegans, and especially women) vehemently believed this was an essential step in improving the lives of animals in New Zealand; current animal welfare law was viewed as weak and biased (favouring the economic interests of agriculture and science over animal welfare). Participants also perceived the New Zealand government to be deliberately colluding with the farming sector, choosing not to address obvious limitations and loopholes in animal welfare law. This complicity was seen to tarnish New Zealand's reputation: the comment was often made that a society could be judged by the way it treated its most vulnerable, including animals. A few also remarked on the inappropriateness of the Minister of Agriculture also fronting the portfolio on animal welfare:

F41: I would like our animal welfare laws to be strengthened and upheld, and I would like to see more education in schools about respect for animals. [27, lacto-vegetarian, Dunedin]

F77: The penalties for animal neglect and cruelty should be maximally imposed on those who do not care for their pets appropriately (and need to be increased). Penalties which are currently harsher for theft than for animal cruelty send out the wrong messages and should be revised. [41, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Hamilton]

F95: I would like to see a strong animal rights document c/f the NZ Disability Strategy or the Human Rights Act – some sort of treaty between animals and humans. But unlikely in the near future with such a dominant farming lobby. [52, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Wellington]

F93: A country that is known to put animal welfare first and money benefits second... SPCA would be government funded and have greater legal powers. A country that leads the way in developing Animal Law – the first country to give animals full legal rights, same as human beings. A country that knows very well, that we as a society are judged how we are going by how we treat the animals, the old and the young. [50, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

F119: My view is that NZ is about 10 years behind England in terms of [animal welfare]. In particular the animal welfare law here is weak in comparison and seems to offer little protection to animals. The courts do not seem to take animal cruelty by individuals very seriously as they now do in the UK. Also, if I have understood correctly, even though the NZ Animal Welfare Code stipulates that animals should be able to display natural behaviour, animals (such as sows) are still subject to practices (such as being kept in sow stalls) which appear to contravene this act. [45, meat-eater, Auckland, originally from the UK]

F89: New Zealand needs to be exposed to the truth about animal issues, including our politicians who perpetuate the situation and turn a blind eye to cruel animal husbandry such as battery hen and sow crate practices. The Minister of Agriculture should NOT be the person deciding on

animal welfare issues. There needs to be a separate focus on animal welfare that operates independently of this structure because it is so inherently BIASED. [48, vegan, Rotorua]

F41: I think battery hen farming is appalling and I can't believe that Jim Anderton is pissing about on the issue when he's been told publicly that the current situation is illegal. [27, lacto-vegetarian, Dunedin]

F53: I would also like to see MUCH harsher legislation brought in to deal with people who abuse animals – and not only legislation to allow such penalties to be given, but the actual handing down of harsher penalties also! I would like NZ to be seen as a world leader in the way it treats animals – as Gandhi said “The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated”... [30, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

Tax changes

Changes to current tax legislation were suggested as a means to assist in the diminution of animal farming in New Zealand. Such changes included increasing taxes on animal products and reducing or eliminating taxes on fruit and vegetables:

M34: I still believe in the ‘user pays’ principle, and all products using animals should be heavily taxed to encourage reduced consumption. The funds raised should then be used to improve standards for farmed animals. [58, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland, originally from the UK]

M12: Remove all tax on vegetables/fruit/legumes etc and educate people how these are all that is needed to live a healthy life. [32, vegan, Wellington]

Reality checks: Exposing animal suffering

A popular strategy recommended by participants was the employment of visually explicit material to inform (or remind) people about the ‘brute realities’ of meat, milk, eggs, and other animal-derived products; something similar to anti-smoking campaigns and the graphic images now appearing on cigarette packets:

F3: The clean, green (cruelty free) image that we have is absolute bullshit [so] maybe the image of NZ I would create would be a more brutally honest one. More images of slaughterhouses, battery farming, animal abuse – so maybe people would be shaken up. [31, pescetarian (ovo), Wellington, originally from Singapore]

F60: I would like New Zealand's image to actually reflect realistically how the animals are treated. Maybe have photos of how the animals are treated attached to the food that is being purchased! [35, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Auckland]

M11: A small running video by every meat section of supermarkets showing literally the cow, sheep and whatever form of animal is being sold as meat, giving birth to their children. [24, vegan, Dunedin]

M12: I have always had the idea that if every piece of advertising and promotion for meat/dairy/animal tested products etc was followed by a piece of equal length whereby the way that product was manufactured/farmed/achieved and the cost was shown in actual footage, the average person may change their consumer habits. The key to change is allowing people to make an informed decision. And the only way people can make an informed decision, is to have ALL the information available to them. As most people are intrinsically lazy (this is not necessarily a bad thing) I believe that the most important information should be given to them without bias i.e. Supplied as a component of their education/advertising alongside the propaganda of the pharmaceutical/meat industry giants. [32, vegan, Wellington]

F94: Abattoirs should have glass walls and be accessible to all to see what goes on inside. [This would encourage] killing methods to be respectful and less cruel. [50, lacto-vegetarian, Oamaru]

F42: If there were one cage with battery hens at every supermarket, no one would buy those eggs. [27, ovo-vegetarian, Nelson]

F7: Every chicken and egg-eater should be forced to visit a battery farm and see what suffering they are directly inflicting as an individual. [39, vegan, Upper Hutt, originally from Iran & the UK]

Vegetarian farming

While the concept may seem far-fetched of animals being consumed only after they die of natural causes (mentioned above as a ‘utopian’ perspective), there were in fact two women in this study who categorized themselves as ‘vegetarian animal farmers’. Both had farmed in Canterbury and both were inspired by spiritual and ethical teachings (those of the Hare Krishna movement and Theosophical Society respectively). These participants provided unorthodox stories of sheep farming in the context of this country; and demonstrated that more humane modes of animal farming are possible and indeed already exist here:

F120: For many years I was part of a partnership that fostered a culture of minimal exploitation of animals. My partner and I were devotees of Krsna. We decided to move to the country and wool farm, because of our spiritual ideals we knew that we would not be able to farm in a conventional way. Thus a partnership was created between us and our sheep. We cared for them and never sold them and they provided us with wool that we could sell. We instituted a practice of organic farming as much as was possible. We kept our sheep their whole lives. We had a hospital paddock where sheep that were sick or injured were nursed until well. We always understocked our land so that there was always enough food, we ensured that they had shade and shelter in all their paddocks. We never considered our animals a commodity, just to be used without consideration. At times we had to make decisions that were hard for us but in the best interests of the sheep. We were always aware that it was our duty to look after these animals, that they were dependent on us... We also considered the land and all the other living entities that had made their home here as our responsibility and we ensured that they were also cared for. This way of farming gave us a simple life style, it did not make us a lot of money. For us making money was not the goal. It can be done if the desire is there to change. [50, lacto-vegetarian, Clarence Valley]

F18: Even though we’re still semi-farming, we’ve never sent lambs to the works (or sheep of any age) – we specifically chose Merino sheep and Angora goats so we wouldn’t have to kill anything, and cows to allow them to raise calves to then sell for people to raise on for a year or two, though we didn’t feel very good about that – we only got cows because were advised they were needed for rotational grazing, worm cycles etc. When our old bull died we just kept the remaining heifers, they just get older and fatter... Personally I think we have a duty of care towards animals – I look on them as ‘younger brothers’ and don’t believe it’s ok to kill them for food just because we fancy the taste. It’s good to see movement towards things like having concern that farm animals have access to shade as well as just food and water, general trends away from battery-hen eggs and suchlike, and increasing concern as to whether various activities are cruel to animals – e.g. rodeos ... But going via lifestyle-blocking to real farming has taught me a lot about the different animal species’ characteristics, behaviour etc. Now I feel horses, cows, goats, sheep all have distinctly different ‘personalities’, attitudes etc, as a species. [62, ovo-lacto vegetarian, Banks Peninsula, originally from the UK]

Niche markets

Participants (largely inadvertently) identified a number of consumer gaps and niche markets waiting to be tapped by entrepreneurial animal-rights-attuned business people. These include: cruelty-free leather (from animals who have died naturally); vegetarian/vegan takeaways; more pure vegetarian restaurants, vegan/vegetarian packaged and frozen meals; vegetarian wool, and non-leather alternatives for footwear.