

Vegeterianism – Non-Injury, Non-Violence, Compassion to Animals

How to debate a Vegetarian Diet with a Meat-Eater

While their numbers are rapidly growing, vegetarians are still a minority, and it is not unusual to be confronted with a meat-eater who not only protects his won right to eat flesh, but argues aggressively that vegetarians should join him in his carnivorous diet. Carnivores may regard nonmeat-eaters as a strange lot who munch on "rabbit food," and whose diet doesn't have the substance to make them strong, productive human beings. The following presentations is designed to turn the tables on such discussions by showing the devastating effects of meat-eating both on individuals and on our planet. It is based on a richly informative poster entitled, "How to win an argument with a meat-eater," published by EARTHSAVE, an organization based in Felton, California, giving facts from Pulitzer Prize nominee John Robbins' book *Diet for a New America*.

1. THE HUNGER-ARGUMENT AGAINST MEAT-EATING

Much of the world's massive hunger problems could be solved by the reduction or elimination of meat-eating. The reasons: 1) live-stock pasture needs cut drastically into land which could otherwise be used to grow food; 2) vast quantities of food which could feed humans is fed to livestock raised to produce meat.

* One hundred million people could be adequately fed using the land freed if Americans reduced their intake of meat by a mere 10%

* Eighty percent of the corn and 95% of the oats grown in the U.S. is eaten by livestock. The percentage of protein wasted by cycling grain through livestock is calculated by experts as 90%

* One acre of land can produce 40,000 pounds of potatoes, or 250 pounds of beef. Fifty-six percent of all U.S. farmland is devoted to beef production, and to produce each pound of beef requires, 16 pounds of edible grain and soybeans, which could be used to feed the hungry.

2. THE ENVIRONMENTAL ARGUMENT AGAINST MEAT-EATING

Many of the world's massive environmental problems could be solved by the reduction or elimination of meat-eating, including global warming, loss of topsoil, loss of rainforests and species extinction.

* Trees, and especially the old-growth forests, are essential to the survival of the planet. Their destruction is a major cause of global warming and top soil loss. Both of these effects lead to diminished food production. Meat-eating is the number one driving force for the destruction of these forests. Two hundred and sixty million acres of U.S. forestland has been cleared for cropland to produce the meat-centered diet. Fifty-five square feet of tropical rainforest is consumed to produce every quarter-pound of rainforest beef. An alarming 75% of all U.S. topsoil has been lost to date. Eighty-five percent of this loss is directly related to livestock raising.

* Another devastating result of deforestation is the loss of plant and animal species. Each year, 1,000 species are eliminated due to destruction of tropical rainforests for meat grazing and other uses. The rate is growing yearly.

* To keep up with U.S. consumption, 300 million pounds of meat are imported annually from Central and South America. This economic incentive impels these nations to cut down the forests

to make more pastureland. In effect these countries are being drained of their resources to put meat on the table of Americans while 75% of all Central American children under the age of five are undernourished.

3. THE CANCER/CHOLESTEROL ARGUMENT AGAINST MEAT-EATING

Those who eat flesh are far more likely to contract cancer than those following a vegetarian diet.

* The risk of contracting breast cancer is 3.8 times greater for women who eat meat daily compared to less than once in a week.

* The risk of fatal ovarian cancer is three times greater for women who eat eggs 3 or more times a week as compared with less than once a week.

Meat-eaters ingest excessive amounts of cholesterol, making them dangerously susceptible to heart attacks.

* It is strange, but true that U.S. physicians are, as a rule, ill-educated in the single most important factor of health, namely diet and nutrition. Of the 125 medical schools in the U.S., only 30 require their students to take a course in nutrition. The average nutrition training received by the average U.S. physician during four years in school is only 2.5 hours. Thus doctors in the U.S. are ill-equipped to advise their patients in minimizing foods, such as meat, that contain excessive amounts of cholesterol and are known causes of heart attack.

4. THE NATURAL RESOURCES ARGUMENT AGAINST MEAT-EATING

The world's natural resources are being rapidly depleted as a result of meat-eating.

* More than half of all water used for all purposes in the U.S. is consumed in live-stock in production of the average cow is sufficient to float a destroyer (a large naval ship). While 25 gallons of water are needed to produce pound of wheat, 5,000 gallons are needed to produce a pound of California beef.

* Thirty-three percent of all raw materials (base products of farming, forestry and mining, including fossil fuels) consumed by the U.S. are devoted to the production of livestock, as compared with 2% to produce a complete vegetarian diet.

5. THE ANTIBIOTIC ARGUMENT AGAINST MEAT-EATING

Large amounts of antibiotics are being fed to livestock to control staphylococci (commonly called "staph infections"), which are becoming immune to these drugs at an alarming rate.

* The animals that are being raised for meat in the United States are diseased. The livestock industry attempts to control this disease by feeding the animals antibiotics. Huge quantities of drugs go for this purpose. (Of all antibiotics used in the U.S., 55% are fed to livestock.) But this is only partially effective because the bacteria that cause disease are becoming immune to the antibiotics. The response of the European Economic Community to the routine feeding of antibiotics to U.S. livestock was to ban the importation of U.S. meat.

6. THE PESTICIDE ARGUMENT AGAINST MEAT-EATING

Unknown to most meat-eaters, U.S. produced meat contains dangerously high quantities of deadly pesticides.

* That these chemicals are indeed ingested by the meat-eater is proven by the following facts: 1) ninety-nine percent of U.S. mother's milk contains significant levels of DDT; 2) in stark contrast, only 8% of U.S. vegetarian mother's milk containing significant levels of DDT.

7. THE ETHICAL ARGUMENT AGAINST MEAT-EATING

Many of those who have adopted a vegetarian diet have done so because of the ethical argument, either from reading about or personally experiencing what goes on daily at any one of the thousands of slaughterhouses in the U.S. and other countries, where animals suffer the cruel process of forced confinement, manipulation and violent death. Their pain and terror is beyond calculation.

* In the U.S. alone, 660,000 animals are killed for meat every hour in ghastly slaughterhouses. The average American consumes in a lifetime approximately 11 cattle, 3 lambs and sheep, 23 hogs, 45 turkeys, 1,100 chickens and 862 pounds of fish!

THE NEW FOUR FOOD GROUPS

In 1991 the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM) submitted a proposal to change the official "four food groups" which have been promoted by nutritionist in the U.S. for the past 35 years. Their proposal reflects the fact that the long-held belief in meat as an essential dietary element is being displaced with new findings on the harmful effects of a meat-centered diet. The PCRM explains, "The Four Food groups have been part of U.S. government recommendations since 1956, but promote dietary habits which are largely responsible for the epidemics of heart disease, cancer, stroke and other serious illnesses in this country...The old four groups were meat, dairy, grains and fruits/vegetables. The 'New Four Food Groups' are grains, legumes vegetables and fruits. Meat and dairy will lose their food group status [by this proposal]."

How did the U.S. end up with such a poor choice of food groups 35 years ago? Inadequate nutritional research, for one thing. But more insidiously, since food guides were first established in 1916, there has been an economically motivated tendency to give animal products a preferred designation. Says a PCRM report: "This element of food guides has persisted until the present time due in part to the intensive lobbying efforts of the food industry, and despite evidence of the adverse health effects of such foods." The situation is similar to the tobacco industry's continued denial of the known harmful effects of smoking. The PCRM continues: "The fact is, it is very easy to have a well-balanced diet with vegetarian foods. Vegetarian foods provide plenty of protein. Careful combining of foods is not necessary. Any normal variety of plant foods provides more than enough protein for the body's needs. Although there is somewhat less protein in a vegetarian diet than a meat-eater's diet, this is actually an advantage. Excess protein [from a meat diet] has been linked to kidney stones, osteoporosis, and possibly heart disease and some cancers."

IS YOUR MD A MEAT-EATER?

Most likely he or she is. And you probably think that it's not relevant to the medical care you receive. Not so. Quite innocently, any physician who eats meat and is schooled that meat is necessary will diagnose sickness and prescribe treatments significantly differently from a vegetarian doctor. Thus, it is wise to choose a vegetarian as the family doctor.

Links:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/gadadhara-pandit-dasa/a-hindus-call-to-vegetarianism_b_989423.html

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/27/weekinreview/27bittman.html>