

Ethical Veganism in RE: Teachers' Guide



Human Inhabitancy

Raakhi, Ria, Sumayyah and Sophie (all age 12)

NATRE Spirited Arts competition entry, 2016

The artists say that the painting represents 'the effect human inhabitancy is having on the earth compared to the way God intended the earth to be kept.... A bird is flying over the earth, showing us that all animals are equal and free to do what they want and what is natural.'

What is veganism and why teach about it in RE?

The Vegan Society's definition of veganism is widely accepted and will be the definition used here:

'Veganism is a way of living which seeks to exclude, as far as possible and practicable, all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose'

(The Vegan Society)

From this definition we can see that at the front and centre of ethical veganism is the principle of avoiding harm to animals, whenever this is possible. Many ethical vegans are also motivated by concerns for the environment, for human health and social justice.

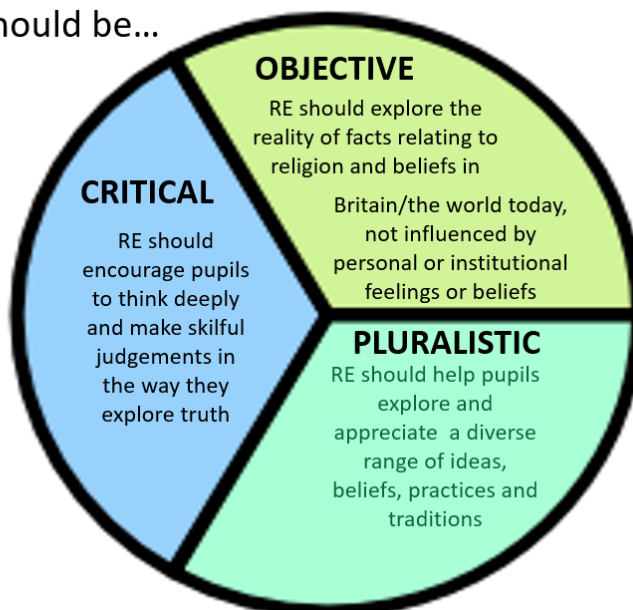
Ethical veganism is part of a wide-ranging discourse around the future of planet earth, human health, social justice for human beings as well as the moral status of non-human animals. Whether or not they choose to be vegan, learners are very likely to encounter people who are, and they will almost certainly come across information (and often misinformation) about veganism. Good RE should enable pupils to acquire accurate, balanced knowledge, and a well-informed understanding to facilitate critical analysis and evaluation of this worldview.

Objective, critical and pluralistic RE

As with the teaching of all religious and non-religious worldviews, these units do not seek to promote any worldview or way of living as correct, nor do they seek to alter the views or behaviours of the children/young people who engage with them. By contrast, the units are intended to give learners a clear and accurate understanding of ethical veganism as a recognised philosophical conviction and way of life that is increasingly a feature of our communities in the UK and worldwide.

Like everyone else, teachers will have their own views on many of the key questions and debates in these units. Teaching these units effectively relies on teachers fulfilling their professional duty to teach RE in a way that is objective, critical and pluralistic. A teacher's position on issues relating to animal-human relations and, of course, the degree to which they are sympathetic or critical of ethical veganism is not irrelevant, and teachers should consider carefully, before embarking on teaching RE with these units, how they will ensure balanced representation of differing and opposing views and avoid the privileging of their own views.

RE should be...



Exploring ethical veganism in RE

Although discussions of veganism often revolve around what people eat and drink (or what they don't), ethical veganism is not a diet. It is, in fact, a practice-based ethical belief system, recognised and protected in European and UK law, and one which affects many areas of a person's daily life.

Vegans do not eat any animal-derived foods; as well as meat and fish, this also includes dairy products, eggs, and honey. As people often eat socially, food choices are usually the most visible sign that someone is vegan. In addition, though, as indicated by the definition above, vegans also do not wear things made from animals (e.g., leather, wool, silk or fur) nor use products such as make-up, toiletries or household cleaners that contain animal-derived ingredients, or that were tested on animals. Furthermore, vegans avoid using animals as a means to an end in many other ways. For instance, they will not participate in sports or attractions that use animals for entertainment.

Veganism is a term that is often misused or misunderstood. However, the meaning of the word vegan, coined in 1944 by Donald Watson, founder of The Vegan Society, has largely remained unchanged over the years. The pioneers of the vegan movement did not limit their cause to the ethical treatment of animals alone; rather, they envisioned veganism as a philosophy with far-reaching moral implications, one that would benefit the planet, human health, and all sentient beings.

As a practice-based belief system, ethical veganism is a way of living which impacts upon many aspects of a person's life, far beyond their diet. Sometimes people use the word vegan imprecisely to refer to people who simply don't eat meat or any other animal-derived food, even though they might still wear wool, fur or leather, and use toiletries or household products that contain animal-derived ingredients, or which are tested on animals, or even, perhaps, participate in activities that use animals for entertainment, and so on. Calling someone vegan based solely on their dietary choices is common but not strictly correct. It is more accurate to say that such people follow a 'plant-based diet'. Their motivations are often different to those of ethical vegans, typically centering around personal health and wellbeing or the environment, but they are not fully committed to the practice-based ethics of eliminating harm to animals in all the choices they are able to make. Of course, all worldviews invite differing interpretations, and there will be different levels of adherence, so there is lively debate and diversity of opinions within the vegan community, just as in any other belief system, religious or not.

Veganism is a religious as well as a non-religious worldview

Ethical veganism does not depend upon religious belief or doctrine, and for this reason it may be considered a non-religious worldview. Unlike some other non-religious worldviews, veganism is a philosophy and way of life which has not emerged as a direct reaction to (or against) religion. Therefore, it is often compatible with religious belief and practice, and can sit within or alongside a person's adherence to their religion. To illustrate this point, a non-religious person might choose to be vegan based on conclusions drawn entirely from observations of the material world, e.g., observing that using animals for food, clothing and in experiments causes them to suffer and die prematurely and concluding that this is avoidable and, therefore, unethical. A religious person who is vegan might also reason in this exact same way, without any reference to their religious beliefs or teachings. They can be a follower of a religion, whilst simultaneously holding this secular worldview, which is unconnected to their religious affiliation. But another vegan who is religious may, conversely, see their vegan ethics as inextricably bound up with tenets of their faith, perhaps a life inspired by God and/or a duty to God. These vegans have religious motivations. Many religious people who are vegan see their commitment to veganism as an expression of their faith and spirituality and a way of honouring the teachings of their religion and honouring their god. When this is the case, veganism becomes a religious worldview. This is tricky for us as teachers of RE – it's not neat and tidy, but this is how this worldview functions in the real world and this is how pupils should understand it. And isn't this a positive thing? Veganism, it could be argued, is a worldview that demonstrates to pupils how belief in a common cause, based upon compassion for all living beings, can transcend boundaries of organised religion and unite people of all different walks of life, all different faiths, ages, genders, and political allegiances.

Not a religion, but in some ways similar

Veganism is not a religion, it is a philosophy and way of life that has evolved outside of religious frameworks (although sometimes influenced by them), yet some aspects of veganism are analogous with religion. For instance, key thinkers, leaders and texts have influenced the development of vegan thought and action, and like religion, veganism influences the world beyond its adherents. Some vegans can be evangelical, seeking to encourage others to become vegan. Some vegans may fast to raise awareness and increase empathy for animals on long journeys to the slaughterhouses ('Animals First on the Second' is a good example of this, where some vegans fast on the 2nd of each month, putting animals first in their thoughts and in their social media posts). These are just some ways in which veganism can be understood as a serious, cogent, and genuinely held worldview applying to important aspects of human experience and behaviour – just as religions are.

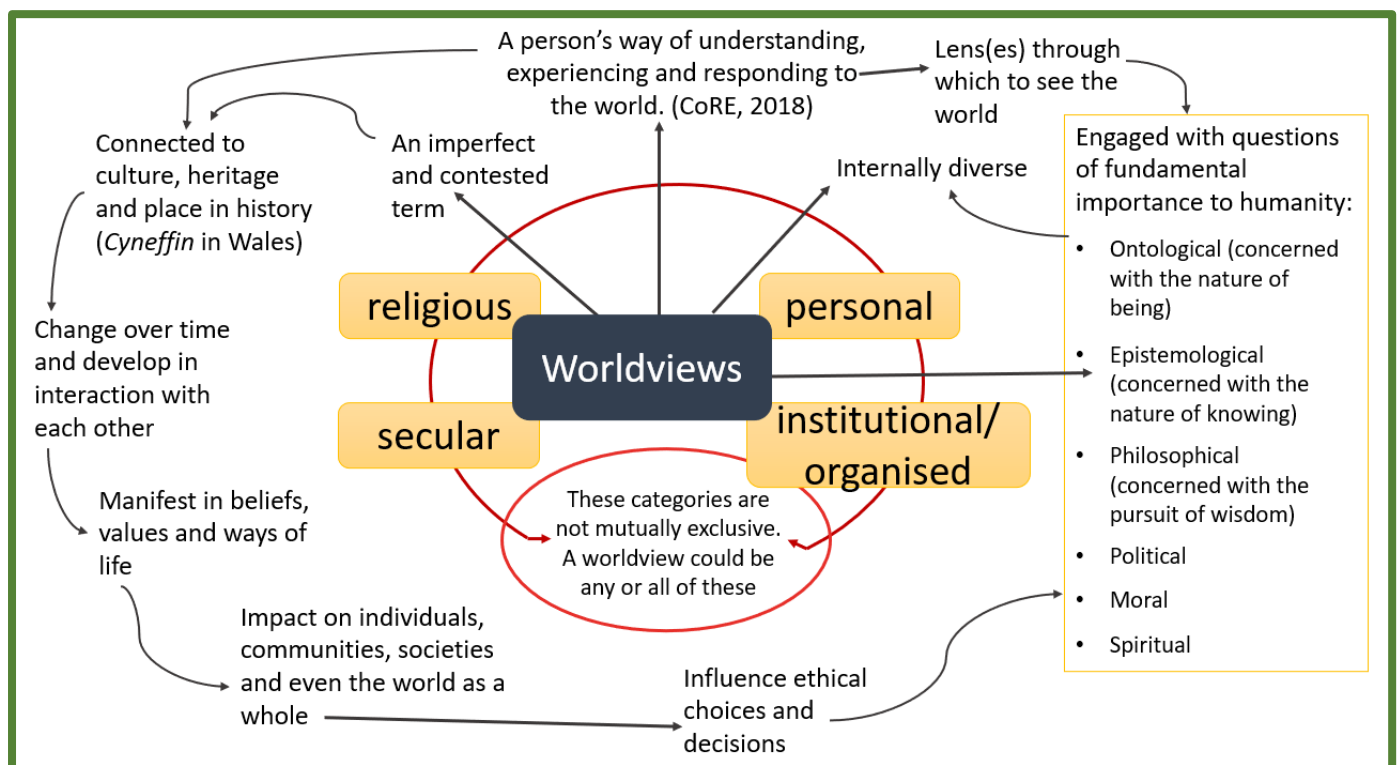
Like many religions, veganism is a profound philosophy of life which influences the thought, interaction and behaviour not only of its adherents, but of individuals, communities and societies in the wider world as well.

Reasons to teach about ethical veganism in RE?

1. RE is shifting towards a worldviews paradigm and veganism fits

Worldviews, being hard to define or categorise, make it tricky and often contentious to decide which worldviews deserve teaching time in RE. The diagram below is intended to help your understanding of the term 'worldviews'. Indeed, ethical veganism meets all of these criteria. We also recommend this short video produced by Theos Think Tank, which explains the idea of a worldview accurately and succinctly:

[Nobody Stands Nowhere - Theos Think Tank - Understanding faith. Enriching society.](#)



2. Engaging pupils with great RE

Just like all religions and worldviews studied in RE, veganism is a fascinating, rich and complex area of study and it is likely that students will have lively discussions and debates, think critically and ask plenty of questions. Children often have a keen interest in the animal world, and engage with enthusiasm when discussing and debating issues relating to the moral status of animals (e.g. What value should we place on animals' lives in relation to human lives? Do animals have rights?) and how animals should or should not be treated.

Whereas Western mindsets often distinguish sharply between humans and non-human animals, many non-Western religious traditions and philosophies do not. For instance, the Sanatana Dharma (Hinduism) sees all life as one and draws a duty of harmlessness towards all creatures from this perspective. This is the principle of ahimsa which is important in many Eastern traditions, including Buddhism and Jainism as well. Children can understand this idea from a very young age.

3. Promoting awareness of a fast-growing worldview and encouraging cohesion

RE is about understanding and valuing the diversity of views and perspectives in our communities. Veganism, along with different versions of plant-based living with varying levels of commitment, is becoming ever more visible in our everyday lives, and so these phenomena need to be properly considered and understood by learners. Veganism is unavoidable! Supermarkets are continually increasing their stock and range of vegan foods, toiletries and household goods. Billboards and buses show ads encouraging us to 'go vegan', and high streets are frequented by vegan campaigners, trying to engage the public in discussion and sometimes with hard-hitting messages and footage of intensive farm conditions or slaughterhouses. Of course, all of this is ubiquitous on social media. Veganism is more visible than ever, and its presence in daily life gives rise to children asking important and serious moral questions. There is also a lot of antagonism and misunderstanding on all sides of the debates around veganism. RE has an important place in ensuring that worldviews are properly understood, and that pupils are able to think critically and caringly about a range of perspectives and begin to formulate their own informed opinions.

Without a doubt, veganism is on the rise in many places around the world. According to figures produced by the Vegan Society, the number of vegans in Great Britain quadrupled between 2014 and 2019. In 2019 there were over 600,000 vegans in Britain, representing 1.16% of the population. This might not sound like a lot of people, but when we consider that in RE we quite rightly study religions and worldviews that number far fewer people than this, there is a good case for including veganism as a worldview worthy of study in the RE curriculum. Of course, it's not as straightforward as this. Many vegans will have a religious affiliation as well, or may identify as vegan without fitting a strict definition of veganism, but similar issues are also at play when we use numbers to justify our choices around whom to include in our teaching of religions.

Factors such as the availability of information online, activism and protests, vegan celebrities, as well as blockbuster documentaries such as *Seaspiracy* have raised public awareness and consciousness of the implications of human uses of animals. As well as the obvious animal welfare/rights issues, growing numbers of people are now becoming aware of how human uses of animals can impact human rights, health and wellbeing and, of course, the environmental implications of the animal agriculture industry have been brought to the forefront by climate change activists, most notably Greta Thunberg, as well as by scientists. With the growing demand for and therefore availability of vegan food and other products, coupled with the success of campaigns such as 'Veganuary', interest in and engagement with veganism is growing rapidly, and it can be reasonably conjectured that more and more people will adopt a vegan way of life as time goes on.

10 Statistics on Vegans and Vegetarians

- A record half a million Brits signed up to Veganuary in 2021
- Deliveroo's vegan orders spiked by 163% in 2020
- 7.2 million British adults currently follow a meat-free diet (men outnumber women in this)
- The number of vegans in the UK is estimated to have increased by 445,428 people (40%) over the past 12 months
- Vegans and vegetarians look set to make up a quarter of the British population by 2025 based on current trends
- In 2020, *The Grocer* reported 62% of adults in the UK had purchased plant milk
- 10% of British children aged eight to 16 are vegan or vegetarian
- The number of vegan residents in UK care homes almost trebled in the five years to 2019
- Sainsbury's sales of its vegan cheeses surpassed the company's predictions by 300%
- The global vegan meat market is expected to be worth \$8.3 billion by 2025 (that's more than £6 billion).

(Source: [The Vegan Society](#) and [Finder](#))

Summary of the units

Here is an overview of the six Veganism in RE units. They have been written with progress and development of learners' knowledge and understanding in mind, whilst also being flexible enough to be taught as discrete units. Each unit provides teachers with guidance in planning and delivering between 3 and 5 hours of RE. If time is short, be selective – choose the content and activities that will work best for learners and teach it in sufficient depth, rather than attempting to skirt over a lot of content. The units are designed to enrich currently taught themes/religions/worldviews and fit well with themes relating to the environment, identity and, of course, the study of animals in religion. Think carefully about where opportunities exist to slot content and activities from these units into existing schemes of learning and, if necessary, adapt them to suit different age groups or to focus on a different religion than that featured in a particular unit. The units are designed to slot easily into existing RE schemes of learning, to be used flexibly and creatively by teachers. Of course, they can also be used as the basis for brand new schemes of learning, or as part of stand-alone RE enrichment days.

Golden threads

The units enable learners to explore an array of issues and themes. We have identified these 'golden threads' which run through the learning. Of course, depending on how you teach them, and perhaps how you adapt them, your golden threads may differ from these.

1. Moral status of animals

How do humans treat, use and interact with animals and are these ways of relating to non-human animals ethical/in line with religious principles, beliefs, teachings? Do animals have rights? Do religions elevate or diminish the moral status of animals?

2. Speciesism

Should we differentiate between different species of animals, giving more regard to some than to others, and if so, why?

3. Anthropocentrism/human exceptionalism

Are human beings superior to animals? What are the implications of such a view? This golden thread can encompass often hidden worldviews such as carnism (the unquestioning assumption that eating animals is normal, natural and necessary) as well as religious concepts such as dominion and humans being uniquely created in the image of God. Should we focus more on what we share in common with the rest of the animal kingdom, and how we too are part of it?

4. Veganism as a worldview (religious or non-religious)

This golden thread can relate to issues of identity: what does it mean to be a vegan? Veganism can be considered as both a non-religious worldview and a worldview that can intertwine with deeply held spiritual and religious convictions, giving children and young people a chance to appreciate the tapestry of worldviews within which veganism is often interwoven.

5. Environment and nature

The golden thread involves exploration of themes such as environmental responsibility, stewardship/dominion, which are frequently part of RE curricula.

6. Social justice – humans

This golden thread involves exploration of aspects of the vegan worldview that relate to social justice for human beings. This could include food security, matters around individual and collective human health and wellbeing, and exploitation of people in animal-based industries.

 Unit 1 (Ages 5–7) What can we learn from religious stories about how humans should treat other animals? Christians, Jewish people, Muslims					
Moral status of animals					
 Unit 2 Ages 7–9 What can we learn from dharmic religions about kindness to animals? Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs					
Moral status of animals	Speciesism	Anthropocentrism/ Human exceptionalism			
 Unit 3 Ages 10–12 Should the Golden Rule include animals? This unit introduces ethical veganism as a worldview without a focus on specific world religions					
Moral status of animals	Speciesism	Anthropocentrism/ Human exceptionalism	Veganism as a worldview	Environment and nature	
 Unit 4 Ages 12–14 Who are vegans? Various religious and non-religious worldviews					
Moral status of animals	Speciesism	Anthropocentrism/ Human exceptionalism	Veganism as a worldview	Environment and nature	Social justice – humans
 Unit 5 Ages 14–16 Is veganism a religious duty? Main focus on Christians, Jewish people and a Hindu case study					
Moral status of animals	Speciesism	Anthropocentrism/ Human exceptionalism	Veganism as a worldview	Environment and nature	Social justice – humans
 Unit 6 Ages 16–18 Sentience Various religious and non-religious worldviews					
Moral status of animals	Speciesism	Anthropocentrism/ Human exceptionalism	Veganism as a worldview	Environment and nature	Social justice – humans

When should teachers introduce ethical veganism to children?

The answer to this question is not easy, nor definitive. Much depends on the teacher and their context. It is also worth noting that these resources are for RE, and RE lessons are not the only place in the curriculum where children and young people can learn about veganism. Careful consideration has been given to the over-arching design of these RE materials. As already mentioned, RE needs to be critical, objective and pluralistic, enabling children and young people to learn about the multi-religious and multi-secular world in which we all live, and providing them with accurate, scholarly and age-appropriate content.

Ethical veganism is a worldview finding expression in many forms, and which is becoming increasingly visible in society. Even the youngest pupils may have seen aisles stocked with 'vegan' foods in their local supermarket, watched adverts on TV promoting plant-based alternatives to meat, eggs and dairy, or seen vegan campaigners on city centre streets, and some pupils may be curious about what 'vegan' means. It is crucial that teachers recognise that there is a tricky balance to be struck: ethical veganism presents a radical challenge to the norms of most pupils' home lives, but there may also be, in their classes, individuals who are themselves vegan (or may wish to be), or they may come from families or households where veganism is part of everyday life (as well as children who are simply curious about what veganism means). It is, of course, important for all children to see themselves and their interests reflected in the curriculum, to respect diversity and difference, and, of course, children and young people are entitled to accurate and precise teaching that corrects misinformation.

Conscious of these concerns, these RE units begin with a unit aimed at 5- to 7-year-olds. There is not a unit here for EYFS. The focus up until upper Key Stage 2 is on stories and teaching from religious traditions which encourage kindness and compassion towards animals. Ethical veganism as a worldview is introduced specifically as part of Unit 3 on the Golden Rule, (10- to 12-year-olds). By this stage, most pupils will have the critical faculties to subject ideas they are presented with to rational analysis or scrutiny – they will be encouraged, through these units, to think critically and creatively about ethical veganism in RE lessons.

These resources are not intended to alter pupils' views, and nor should teachers seek to do so. Teachers must exercise their own professional judgement, taking into consideration the individual and collective educational needs of the pupils they teach, on whether and when it is appropriate to introduce ethical veganism as a worldview/philosophical conviction/way of living. This guide and the activities found within the units can help to support, inform and provide practical and adaptable ideas to help teachers with these decisions.

As already stated, inclusivity is important – children should see themselves reflected in the curriculum. Should teachers feel it necessary and appropriate to teach younger pupils about ethical veganism specifically, great care should be taken regarding the approaches used. Teachers of EYFS children, for instance, may want to discuss, in an open and friendly way, that some people choose not to eat/wear/use things that come from animals due to their beliefs and values in, perhaps making simple links to foods that are traditional at certain times of year in different cultures or parts of the world. Such discussions are not necessarily part of an RE Curriculum. For example, in the interests of inclusivity for vegan pupils or those with vegans in their families/households, teachers may wish to introduce a character, e.g., 'John the vegan' who wants to help the planet. He might do this by not eating meat and drinking oat milk instead of cows' milk. A prop such as a carton of oat milk, might encourage discussion around how milk is not always from cows. The issues raised may be dealt with factually and on a very basic level – these are perhaps more in line with geography or science than RE.

How do the units contribute to learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?

Opportunities for spiritual development come from:

- Engaging with profound questions about how religious and non-religious people understand the value of human and non-human animals and their relationships with each other, the natural world and, where applicable with God or a Supreme Being
- Reflecting on and developing their own views in relation to diverse philosophical ideas from different religious and secular sources and enabling pupils to think critically about these and to express their own views

Opportunities for moral development come from:

- Exploring and valuing a diversity of views and values on issues relating to veganism as a religious or non-religious worldview
- Asking and answering moral questions: can adopting a vegan way of living help humanity reduce its contribution to suffering in the world? Do we have moral duties towards non-human animals, and if so, what are these duties? Do the ways in which humans use animals in today's world – especially for food - make sense, morally?
- Reflecting and formulating ideas around duties, rights, responsibilities and our place and status in the world in relation to non-human animals and the environment

Opportunities for social development come from:

- Appreciating what is meant by ethical veganism and developing an awareness of the presence of veganism in our communities
- Considering diverse religious and non-religious beliefs and understanding why some people – religious and non-religious choose to lead a vegan life whilst others do not
- Articulating their own ideas and those of others on a range of contemporary issues and debates around veganism

Opportunities for cultural development come from:

- Exploring the relationship between religious and cultural motivations for adopting a vegan lifestyle
- Thinking about veganism as a cultural identity/phenomenon
- Acquiring an understanding of veganism which promotes respect and combats prejudice and discrimination and enables pupils to explore individuals and communities with diverse, and even conflicting worldviews can coexist and even cooperate with one another in pursuit of common goods
- Promoting inter-cultural understanding whereby pupils are encouraged to reflect upon their own cultural pre-dispositions

Religious organisations concerned with animal welfare/veganism

There are animal welfare/vegan organisations in many major world religions. Not all of them promote a fully vegan way of life, but all offer insights into religious beliefs and teachings about animals from within a particular religious tradition.

Religion(s)/ worldview(s)	Organisation
Interfaith	Animal Interfaith Alliance ‘Faiths working together for animals’ is this not-for-profit organisation’s motto. Its mission is ‘to create a united voice for animals from all the major faiths to bring about a world where they are treated with respect and compassion’. The alliance is made up of member organisations from all the major faiths, who speak out, together, on issues relating to the moral treatment of animals, The AIA is a good example of an organisation that promotes social harmony among diverse world faiths by bringing together people of all religions and none around issues for which they all share a common concern. They also publish a magazine twice a year, entitled <i>Animal Spirit</i>.
	Interfaith Vegan Coalition A coalition helping activists and spiritual leaders bring vegan values to spiritual, ethical and religious communities.
	https://theguibordcenter.org/initiatives/animals-and-creation/ The Guidbord Center is a USA-based interfaith educational organisation. It partners with faith communities and individuals through a range of programs, public lectures, and events with the aim of revealing the compassion and transformative power central to many religious and spiritual traditions and to counter distorted views and misconceptions. The Guidbord Center is not solely concerned with issues relating to animals, but ‘Animals and Creation’ is one of its central current initiatives. The website includes a range of valuable clips, <i>How Different Faiths See Animals</i>, where members of religious and spiritual traditions articulate views around the treatment of animals: https://theguibordcenter.org/initiatives/animals-and-creation/faiths-animals-relationship/ The Guidbord Center also produced the short film, <i>Anima</i>: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xCDhPRPQM_uQ The trailer for this film can be viewed here: ANIMA: Animals. Faith. Compassion. - The Guidbord Center
Buddhist	Vegan Buddhist Articles on how veganism relates to Buddhist ethics and a discussion group
	Dharma Voices for Animals (DVA) A non-profit organisation committed to practising the teachings of the Buddha (the Dharma) and to speaking out when the actions of those in Dharma communities lead to animal suffering. DVA recognises the challenges of living in a modern society and aims to promote choices to reduce animal suffering.
Christian	The Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals (ASWA) An Anglican (Church of England) organisation ‘called to make Christians and others aware of the need to care for the whole of creation. In particular, we are concerned with the abuse of animals.’ ASWA tackles issues such as intensive farming and experimentation, and animal issues agenda. ASWA states ‘We believe that God has given us a responsibility towards sentient beings with whom we share God’s world. The Bible teaches us that God has given us ‘dominion’ not ‘domination’ over other animals (Genesis 1:26). These are theological issues and should be on the churches’ agendas. This means ‘loving care’ not ‘ruthless exploitation’.

	All Creatures USA-based organisation dedicated to cruelty-free, vegan lifestyle according to Judeo-Christian ethics. This organisation holds that ‘unconditional love and compassion is the foundation of our peaceful means of accomplishing this goal for all of God's creatures, whether human or otherwise.’ Its website hosts a directory of vegan and vegan-friendly churches.
	Catholic Concern for Animals (CCA) CCA is inspired by The Catechism of the Catholic Church (n. 2416): “Animals are God’s creatures. By their mere existence they bless Him and give Him glory. Thus men owe them kindness.” CCA helps all people of faith, and Catholics in particular, to realise this vocation. It publishes a magazine, called <i>The Ark</i>. It researches church teaching and tradition and it advocates for animals in various ways. It organises a spiritual retreat for people of all faiths who share a concern for the welfare of animals.
	CreatureKind CreatureKind encourages Christians to recognise faith-based reasons for caring about the wellbeing of fellow animal creatures used for food, and to take practical action in response.
	Quaker Concern for Animals UK (QCA) One of the oldest religious animal welfare organisations, founded in 1891, which seeks to remedy animal suffering ‘by directing light and love into the dark corners, not only for the sake of suffering animals and the people who work with them, but also for the integrity of Quakers themselves.’ QCA believes that the Quaker ‘Peace Testimony’ should apply to all living beings, not just humans, and they work with people of all faiths and none who share their concern for animals, worldwide.
Hindu	https://www.sadhuvaswaniuk.com/ Based in London, The Sadhu Vaswani Centre’s mission is to ‘to bear witness to the truth that there is but One life flowing in all – men, birds, animals, things, animate and inanimate.’ The Centre encourages people to move away from consuming meat and promotes meatless days. It is a member of the Animals Interfaith Alliance.
	Home - Climate Healers Not strictly Hindu, but Climate Healers was founded by Dr Sailesh Rao, a practitioner of Sanatana Dharma (Hinduism). Climate Healers is a campaign, led by Dr Rao, to create a vegan world by 2026 to heal the planet. The campaign is based on spiritual and well as scientific principles – Dr Rao is, by profession, an eminent electrical systems engineer. There are many links to articles, documentaries, freely available clips of talks, etc, on this website.
Jewish	Shamayim Jewish Animal Advocacy Shamayim means ‘in the name of heaven’. It is connected with the idea of acting without ego or an ulterior motive. This USA-based non-profit organisation has the motto ‘Jewish ethics. Heavenly ideals. Earthly compassion’. It runs campaigns and projects to educate the Jewish community about animal advocacy and veganism.
	Jewish Veg This organisation was founded to inspire and assist Jewish people to embrace plant-based diets as an expression of Jewish values.
Muslim	The Vegan Muslim Initiative The organisation is founded on the principle that Muslims can contribute to the preservation of the planet by adopting a vegan way of life. The aim of the organisation is to educate and encourage people ‘to take the compassionate road; towards a better future for all’.
Sikh	There are no specific Sikh animal rights/welfare organisations. Many Sikhs are vegetarian and some are vegan. Compassion and care for animals is an important facet of Sikh belief and practice.

Vegan organisations not affiliated to religion

[The Vegan Society](#)

[Viva! - The Vegan Charity](#)

[Animal Aid](#) – this organisation can provide free speakers for schools

Glossary

TIP: The Glossary could be cut into a card-sort to test learners' knowledge and understanding of key concepts. Feel free to be selective and remove words and definitions according to your teaching.

Key word	Definition
anthropocentrism	The worldview which claims that humans are categorically different from and superior to all other animals. It is often claimed on religious grounds, particularly in Abrahamic traditions where humans are the product of special creation by God. Secular arguments have also been used to support this concept. See also <i>human exceptionalism</i>
carnism	A term coined by the psychologist Melanie Joy to describe a worldview that supports the use and consumption of animal products, particularly meat. It is usually unconsciously held and has become a dominant belief system in most societies, where, Joy argues, it is supported by a variety of defence mechanisms and assumptions that mostly go unchallenged.
dairy products	A product made from the milk of a mammal. Milk, cheese, cream, butter are examples of dairy products. Usually these products come from cows, but they can also come from other mammals, such as goats or sheep.
exploitation	Making use of someone or something in a way that is unfair. Taking advantage of someone or something for your own benefit. Vegans would argue that humans exploit animals when they use them to produce food, clothing and other products, or for other purposes such as entertainment.
human exceptionalism	The worldview which claims that humans are categorically different from and superior to all other animals. It is often claimed on religious grounds, particularly in Abrahamic traditions where humans are the product of special creation by God. Secular arguments have also been used to support this concept. See also <i>anthropocentrism</i>
pescatarian	A person who avoids eating meat such as chicken, beef or pork, but who does eat fish and other sea food. They may also eat other foods which come from animals, but which are not meat, such as dairy products or eggs.
plant-based	The diet of someone who eats only plant-derived food, but who may still use animal-derived products for clothing, cosmetics, household products or entertainment, etc, sometimes referred to as a 'dietary vegan'. Lots of people might be plant-based for the health benefits and for improving sporting performance, but they are not an ethical vegan unless they avoid other forms of animal exploitation as well.
practice-based belief system	A set of ideas and values that directly impacts how a person must go about their day-to-day life. Veganism is a practice-based ethical belief system as it is the belief that people should not choose goods or activities that harm or exploit animals. It would not make sense if a person then bought or did things that caused harm to animals.

sentience/ sentient	Having the capacity for feeling, e.g. to experience positive and negative feelings such as pleasure, joy, pain and distress that matter to the individual.
sentiocentrism	Sentiocentric worldviews put sentience – a being’s capacity for feeling – at the centre of moral considerations. Sentiocentric worldviews tend to question the assumption of the separateness and/or superiority of humans over non-human animals.
Sentientism	Sentientism is a newly emerging non-religious worldview, identifying people whose worldview is based on sentiocentric principles. Proponents of Sentientism are known as Sentientists and are committed to using evidence and reason to grant moral consideration to all sentient beings. Whereas sentiocentric worldviews may intertwine with religious belief and practice, Sentientism’s commitment to evidence and reason means that, like secular Humanism, it rejects supernatural beliefs. Granting moral consideration to all sentient beings (sentients) means Sentientists view harming or killing sentient beings as morally wrong. Sentient beings today include humans and non-human animals. Many Sentientists recognise that in the future sentient beings could potentially include artificial intelligences and/or aliens should we create or encounter them. Humans and non-human animals are at the centre of Sentientist concerns in the present time with some people who identify as Sentientist seeing consideration of artificial and/or alien sentients as a distraction.
speciesism	A term coined in the 1960s by Dr Richard Ryder and later popularised by the atheist philosopher, Peter Singer. It refers to the practice of treating members of one species as morally more important than another. It is a form of discrimination. Speciesism occurs when humans claim that they are superior to other animals. It also occurs when humans differentiate their treatment of non-human animals based on their species, e.g. caring for dogs and cats, but using pigs and cows for food.
vegan	Someone who actively avoids any sort of animal cruelty or exploitation, wherever possible. For instance, vegans do not eat any food that comes from an animal. As well as meat and fish, this also includes dairy products like milk and cheese and eggs. Vegans believe that it is wrong to use animals not only for food, but also for clothing, entertainment, or in the production or testing of make-up, toiletries or household products. Wherever possible, a vegan will choose options that do not involve using animals.
veganism	Veganism, sometimes known as ethical veganism, is a worldview recognised as a philosophical belief in European and UK law. Veganism can be a religious or non-religious worldview. It is the belief that people should live their lives in a way which consciously avoids causing harm to animals or exploiting them in any way. Veganism is not just a diet; it is a philosophical belief system that affects many aspects of a person’s day-to-day life. This is why it is often called a practice-based belief system.
vegetarian	A person who does not eat meat or fish, but who will eat foods that come from animals such as dairy products or eggs. Sometimes vegetarians are called lacto-ovo vegetarians. ‘Lacto’ refers to dairy products and ‘ovo’ refers to eggs. NOTE: In some parts of the world, particularly in India, eggs are not considered vegetarian, but are thought of as meat. People who eat no meat or fish or eggs are called lacto-vegetarian. This applies to many Sikhs and Hindus.

Further reading and viewing

Religion and Worldviews

[Trevor Cooling, Bob Bowie and Farid Panjwani, F, *Theos Report: What are worldviews and why should schools teach them?*, 2020](#)

[Worldviews in Religious Education launch - YouTube](#)

Marl Chater, *Reforming RE: Power and knowledge in a worldviews curriculum*, 2020, John Catt

Animal Ethics

David L. Clough, *On Animals: Vol. 1 Systematic Theology*, 2005, Bloomsbury Press

Barbara Gardner, *The Compassionate Animal*, 2012, CreateSpace

Melanie Joy, *Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs, and Wear Cows: An Introduction to Carnism: The Belief System That Enables Us to Eat Some Animals and Not Others*, 2011, Red Wheel Weiser

Andrew and Claire Linzey, *Ethical Vegetarianism and Veganism*, 2018, Routledge

Richard Oppenlander, *Comfortably Unaware*, 2012, Beaufort Books

Jonathan Safran Foer, *Eating Animals*, 2009, Little, Brown and Company

Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 1975, Harper Collins

University of Exeter

[Beyond Stewardship: Humans and \(other\) animals: animal ethics and vegetarianism](#)

University of Aberdeen

[Christian Ethics of Farmed Animal Welfare | The School of Divinity, History, Philosophy & Art History | The University of Aberdeen \(abdn.ac.uk\)](#)

Oxford University

[Centre for Animal Ethics](#)

Ted Talks

[Melanie Joy, Toward Rational, Authentic Food Choices](#), Harvard-educated psychologist talks about the belief system in which people eat some animals but not others

[Genesis Butler, speech by 10-year-old vegan activist](#)

[What does it take to save the world | Patrik Baboumian | TEDxDresden - YouTube](#), record-breaking vegan strong man and vegan activist talks about his journey to ethical veganism and what this worldview means to him and for the planet

Films

[A PRAYER FOR COMPASSION | A FILM BY THOMAS WADE JACKSON](#)

A documentary about the growing concern for animals within several major world religions. Available to watch on Amazon Prime

[The Invisible Vegan |](#)

A documentary about veganism within African American communities

[Rabbinic Statement | Jewish Veg](#)

Jewish leaders talk about veganism as 'the new kashrut for the 21st century

Free Online Subject Knowledge Resources

BUDDHIST TEACHINGS, ANIMALS AND THE BUDDHA

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S0MWAAykFuc>

SIKH TEACHINGS ABOUT ANIMALS

<https://animal-interfaith-alliance.com/sikh-teachings-about-animals-by-charanjit-ajit-singh/>

JUDAISM PROFESSOR RICHARD SCHWARTZ

<https://www.jewishveg.org/schwartz/>

BAHA'I

<https://bahaiquotes.com/subject/animals>

ISLAM: HADITH

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5332932/#:~:text=One%20Hadith%20quotes%20Prophet%20Muhammad,cruelty%20to%20a%20human%20being.%E2%80%9D>

VARIETY OF SOURCES

<http://www.khaleafa.com/khaleafacom/islam-and-animal-rights>

<https://crescentwealth.com.au/ethical-investing/how-islam-views-animal-welfare-and-animal-cruelty/>

PETA SUMMARY OF RELIGIONS ON ANIMALS: <https://www.peta.org.uk/misc/all-about-animals-the-issues-ages-16-18-animals-and-religion/>

ANIMAL RIGHTS LIBRARY ONLINE: <http://www.animal-rights-library.com/>