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# It's World Vegan Day...so where are the vegans?



Corey Wrenn

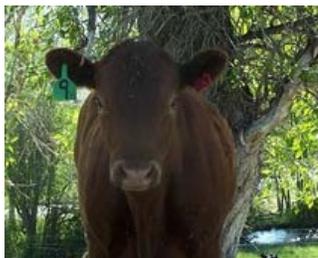
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Animal Rights and "Vegan" Organizations denounce veganism and stifle vegan growth Photo credit: Corey Wrenn

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In a [2009 article by Elizabeth DeCoux](#), she argues that while the modern non-human animal rights movement has been in existence for several decades, there has been no significant increase in vegan numbers. While she blames this stagnation on recruitment strategies (she argues that we need to increase our use of moral shocks, or "blood and guts" advocacy), I argue that the stagnation in vegan growth has more to do with the cultural meanings fostered by major organizations. It's the unfortunate case that groups ignore or minimize the importance of veganism or even attack it outright.

We look to our large non-human animal rights organizations as the major players in claims making, framing, and meaning construction. When groups like PETA and HSUS shy away from veganism and instead promote vegetarianism or ask us to "go veg," this can only have disastrous implications for vegan outreach. We need to be clear that veganism is the only option if we want to respect the personhood of non-human animals. By avoiding veganism or promoting alternate "veg" diets, these organizations excuse and support diets that continue to kill and exploit. It's speciesist, it's confusing, and [it's not been shown to increase vegan numbers](#).

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What's worse, some organizations, namely Vegan Outreach, actively denounce veganism as unobtainable and unrealistic (See related links listed below). When a major organization is called "Vegan" Outreach and consistently promotes non-vegan diets while attacking veganism and committed vegans, we have a real problem.

If PETA and other large organizations would adopt a firm pro-vegan position promoting veganism as the necessary choice for respecting non-humans, this could create a significant increase in the vegan population. If groups representing veganism would recognize the necessity of veganism instead of bashing it, this could also create a significant increase. These groups might shy away from veganism in an attempt to reach a larger constituency, hoping not to scare off potential members, but it's implausible to expect anyone to want to become vegan when the very organizations in charge of creating a vegan world give up on that possibility and dilute their goals. Whether we like it or not, these major organizations have a great deal of clout in creating meaning and in framing the problems and solutions in the non-human animal rights movement. If they dismiss veganism, so will the public.

If we recognize that non-human animals are persons worthy of equal consideration, we must recognize that veganism is fundamental in respecting their personhood. If we want to see a vegan world, we must promote veganism and nothing short of that. That said, I hope everyone has a wonderful World Vegan Day and hopefully there will be more of us to celebrate this time next year.

Elizabeth L. DeCoux (2009). "Speaking for the Modern Prometheus: The Legal and Ideological Significance of Animal Suffering to the Abolition Movement." *Animal Law* 16(9): 9-64.

**Suggested by the author:**

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Corey Wrenn is a doctoral candidate in sociology currently researching the vegan movement. She is an abolitionist vegan and is adviser to a student animal rights organization.

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