

Does Vegetarianism Really Save Animals?

A vegetarian spares the lives of a certain number of animals each time he or she chooses to forgo meat for vegetables, fruits, grains and nuts. These animals, of course, are not necessarily ones who continue to live because a vegetarian chooses not to eat them. The way a vegetarian saves animals is by reducing the demand for meat and causing fewer animals to be born into a harsh life owned by the meat industry, where cruelty abounds and mercy is scant. Exactly how many animals does a vegetarian save each year? Given the scale and complexity of animal agriculture today, this number is impossibly difficult to determine accurately. But, it is possible to estimate a conservative range.

First things first. To determine the number of animals saved by a vegetarian, we need at least two numbers: the total number of animals killed for food consumed in the US in a given year and the size of the US population during that year. But, estimating the number saved is not merely a matter of dividing the total number killed by the size of the population. Suppose there are only two people in the US: one regular carnivore who eats 100 animals each year and one vegetarian who eats no animals. A reasonable conclusion is that a vegetarian saves 100 animals per year. But, if we merely divide the number killed by the population size, we will unreasonably conclude that a vegetarian saves only $100/2 = 50$ animals per year. According to a study of current and former vegetarians and vegans conducted by the Humane Research Council, about 1.94% of the US population is vegetarian or vegan. Based on this study, I will use v as 0.0194. (Because of rounding, the results of additions and multiplications reported may not be exact.) In the following, almost all of the data for the number of animals killed is for the year 2013. Using data from the U.S. Census Bureau, I will use the resident population of the United States on July 1, 2013 (mid-year) as 314,886,749.

Yet even a vegan diet causes a certain number of deaths and some amount of suffering. Mice, moles and other small animals die in the cultivation of grains on modern farms. They get run over by agricultural equipment such as tractors or they die as a consequence of the disruption of their land. Many small animals also die from poisoning by pesticides.

But, the animals we eat do not just exist in isolation waiting for us to eat them. They eat grains too. In fact, almost all the animals we eat are ones kept caged by us inside desolate barns and kept fed by us on grains we grow just for them. We grow soy, corn, wheat, barley and other grains on vast tracts of land—all of which also cause large numbers of deaths. Meat consumption remains an inherently inefficient process in which we grow far more crops to feed to the animals we eat than we would need if we ate the crops directly ourselves.

Adapted from www.countinganimals.com

Ex. 1 Find the words or expressions in the text which mean the following:

- 1) to save a life: _____
- 2) the business of producing meat: _____
- 3) to appear in large numbers: _____
- 4) to appear in small numbers: _____
- 5) a final amount: _____
- 6) simply: _____
- 7) up-to-date: _____
- 8) ex: _____
- 9) giving the impression of unhappiness and emptiness: _____
- 10) plants that you collect at the end of a farming season: _____
- 11) to provide food to sb: _____
- 12) information: _____

Ex. 2 Match the expressions from the two columns into logical collocations:

1.	to reduce	conclusion
2.	animal	a conservative range
3.	to estimate	of sth
4.	a reasonable	tracts of land
5.	vegan	equipment
6.	cultivation	the demand for sth
7.	agricultural	diet
8.	poisoning	inefficient process
9.	vast	by pesticides
10.	an inherently	agriculture

Ex. 3 Provide English equivalents of these expressions:

1) zrezygnować z czegoś na rzecz czegoś	7) następujący
2) spowodować coś	8) ziarna / zboża
3) precyzyjnie coś ustalić	9) zaburzenie czegoś
4) oszacować coś	10) istnieć w odosobnieniu
5) mięsożerca	11) podzielić coś przez coś
6) zaokrąglanie	12) wyciągnąć nieracjonalne wnioski

Grammar corner...

In the text you saw a phrase: suppose there are only two people in the US. It's an introduction of a theoretical idea. In other words, what if there were only two people in the US. You know it's the SECOND conditional, i.e. talking about hypothetical situations. But you can introduce a couple of variations by getting rid of the word IF. Here's how you do this: suppose/supposing (sth happened, e.g. suppose you got the job, would you ...), given (sth happened, e.g. given you got the job), granted (sth happened, e.g. granted she came, would you invite her in?), assume/assuming (sth happened, e.g. assume you could fly, where would you first go?).

Ex. 4 Write hypothetical statements about how your life would change, given, granted, supposing, assuming sth happened.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

GLOSSARY	
to spare a life	oszczędzić życie
the meat industry	przetwórstwo mięsne
to abound	występować w dużych ilościach
to be scant	występować w małych ilościach
a total number of sth	całkowita liczba
merely	ledwie
current	obecny
former	uprzedni
desolate	opuszczony
crops	plony
to feed sb	karmić kogoś
data	dane
to reduce the demand for sth	zmniejszyć popyt na coś
animal agriculture	hodowla zwierząt
a reasonable conclusion	rozsądny wniosek
vegan diet	dieta wegańska
cultivation of sth	uprawa czegoś
agricultural equipment	sprzęt rolniczy
poisoning by pesticides	zatrucie pestycydami
vast tracts of land	szerokie połacie ziemi
an inherently inefficient process	z definicji nieefektywny proces
to forego sth for sth	zrezygnować z czegoś na rzecz czegoś
to cause sth to happen	spowodować coś
to accurately determine sth	precyzyjnie coś ustalić
to estimate sth	oszacować coś
a carnivore	mięsożerca
rounding	zaokrąglanie
following	następujący

grains	ziarna / zboża
disruption of sth	zaburzenie czegoś
to exist in isolation	istnieć w odosobnieniu
to divide sth by sth	podzielić coś przez coś
to conclude unreasonably	wyciągnąć nieracjonalne wnioski
to estimate a conservative range	oszacować zachowawczo

ANSWER KEY:

Ex. 1

- 1) to spare a life
- 2) the meat industry
- 3) to abound
- 4) to be scant
- 5) a total number of sth
- 6) merely
- 7) current
- 8) former
- 9) desolate
- 10)crops
- 11)to feed sb
- 12)data

Ex. 2

- 1) to reduce the demand for sth
- 2) animal agriculture
- 3) to estimate a conservative range
- 4) a reasonable conclusion
- 5) vegan diet
- 6) cultivation of sth
- 7) agricultural equipment
- 8) poisoning by pesticides
- 9) vast tracts of land
- 10)an inherently inefficient process

Ex. 3

- 1) to forego sth for sth
- 2) to cause sth to happen
- 3) to accurately determine sth
- 4) to estimate sth
- 5) a carnivore
- 6) rounding
- 7) following
- 8) grains
- 9) disruption of sth
- 10) to exist in isolation
- 11) to divide sth by sth
- 12) to conclude unreasonably

Ex. 4 - Example answers

- 1) Assuming I could be a vampire, I wouldn't have to sleep.
- 2) Granted I didn't have to sleep, I would have much more free time.
- 3) Given I had much more free time, I would be a happier person
- 4) ...
- 5) ...
- 6) ...
- 7) ...
- 8) ...