

May 8, 2008  
David J. Parker  
Vegetarians of Alberta Association.

Dear Vue,

As much as I regard the writings of Connie Howard as honest, accurate and timely, I must disagree with her on the issue of vegetarianism not being for everyone. Sorry Connie, but it really is best for all.

What she misconstrues is that the vast majority of people on this continent have an abysmal diet and when many of them turn to a meatless diet in an effort to improve their health, they drop the meat and keep the rest of the bad stuff. Unfortunately for many, the only thing in their diet that was providing some essential nutrients is the animal part, or secretion there of.

Another very important myth that needs to be dispelled is that getting protein is a problem and that adequate amounts can be easily sourced from the rest of the stuff on your plate. Even if the rest of the stuff is only fries, a pickle, lettuce, tomato and ketchup you will survive much better – even the white bun has protein. There has never been a case of protein deficiency unless the victim was simply living off, say, chocolate cake exclusively (Apparently this was the habit of the late, movie mogul, eccentric and billionaire, Howard Hughes, who died of kidney failure).

There is a difference of degree in the types of protein available and animal protein is bad, but plant protein is good. Evidence is showing up every day to back this up and the strongest case comes from the best selling book, the China Study, by T. Colin Campbell of Cornell University. Campbell, in the early years of his studies, injected rats with a very effective known carcinogen called aflatoxin. He then fed the rats either animal protein or plant protein and waited to see whether each group would develop cancers at equivalent rates. The result was that the carnivorous rats got cancers at a much higher rate than the veggie ones.

Why do we have such large and growing, numbers of cancer sufferers? In countries where people smoke, suffer traffic fumes, and face many other environmental toxins but don't eat a lot of meat, guess what, very low cancer rates. As soon as they migrate to this continent and start eating like we do, guess what, they start developing cancers. Most of the third world suffer these environmental conditions and some first world peoples such as the Japanese smoke like chimneys but their cancer rates are a fraction of ours.

Recent evidence seems to be suggesting that animal protein makes for a more acidic environment in the body. Ideally the body should be slightly alkaline, around pH of about 7.5. Cancer cells love an acidic environment and free radicals go wild. Evidence is now indicating that on an animal based diet the immune system cannot penetrate and destroy the cancer cells that we all harbour naturally.

We all have cancer cells but a healthy body is more than capable of seeing them off. However, when one's diet consists of industrial meat and dairy, all day long and seven days a week, thus stimulating the growth of these cancer cells, all bets are off.

Ignoring the protein issue for a minute, what about all the other bad stuff in animals, especially industrially raised ones that currently make up about 99% of the meat and dairy stream. Animal produce has saturated fat in large quantities. Saturated fat causes arteries to clog up resulting in atherosclerosis, strokes and impotence – Connie knows this and should be ashamed of suggesting it's OK for some to eat animals. Even if we ate range fed, organic animals the protein problem would still be there – especially if we continued to eat it in the same quantities.

It is proving difficult for society to accept that veganism is truly for everyone. We deceive ourselves into believing that we evolved as carnivores. Sure, we are omnivorous and probably opportunistically ate the odd dead bird or whatever, but the vast history of our evolutionary past was one of plants, roots, shoots, berries and a constant state of semi-starvation. North American Indians got a very occasional feast of buffalo, but the operative word is “occasional”. Most of the meat was preserved as pemmican or the like and eaten sparingly, supplemented with all the plant life. Animals are not easy to catch, especially if you don't have a 4x4 SUV and a high powered rifle.

We share our genes with apes and chimpanzees and should examine their diets if we want to really know what is good for us. Orang-utans are complete vegans and the vast majority of other primates are near vegan omnivores. They consume only the milk of their own species that is designed for them by evolution and don't go sucking on the teats of other animals long after gestation is over – like we do.

For me all these health issues are more than enough to convince me of the merits of veganism. For those who need a little more persuasion, consider the environmental impacts of meat eating or the humanitarian issues of billions of animals being slaughtered every single day so that we can be fat and die early.

However, that is another letter of equal or longer size. Suffice to say that if you want to live long and prosper, eat stuff that doesn't have a face or a mother. For starters though, check out our web site [www.VofA.ca](http://www.VofA.ca) .