

The Peaceable Table



A Vegetarian Journal for Quakers and Other People of Faith

The Peaceable Table is intended for the mutual support, education, and inspiration of people of faith in the practice of love for our fellow animals and observance of a Peace-full diet

Editor's Corner Guest Essay: *But What About Local "Humane" Farms?*

By Judith McCoy Carman

In the film *Cowspiracy* the evidence became clear that so-called "humane" farms, as opposed to factory farms, will not and cannot help prevent further environmental destruction. Some of the farmers who were interviewed in the film agreed. If all animals were raised in such a way that they are not painfully confined, and if people continued to consume animal products at the current rate, there simply is not enough land on the planet to pasture the billions of animals and grow their feed. And when we consider the rate at which the human population is growing, the situation is dire indeed for both people and all animals, both wild and domestic.

In response to the threat of animal agriculture, whether factory or "free-range", our Sierra Club has published the following statement in the Sierra Club Agriculture and Food Policy (<http://www.sierraclub.org/policy/agriculture>): "Personal dietary choices that minimize or eliminate meat and animal products should be encouraged due to their many benefits, including reducing greenhouse gas impacts, water pollution and inhumane treatment of animals." Of course, we know that those are just a few of the dreadful effects of animal agriculture. To that short list, we can add desertification, rainforest destruction, assassination of rainforest protectors, air pollution, oceanic dead zones, wildlife habitat destruction, indigenous peoples' home and land destruction, species extinction, and human hunger and starvation, to name just a few.

Many socially and ecologically conscious people now opt for "free-range," "humane," labels, not realizing that, not only are most of the labels false, but also that if the animals really are raised with some amount of room to turn around, the earth is not big enough to pasture that many animals. Nevertheless, I wanted to be able to see some of these "free-range" farms with my own eyes. So I took part in the 2015 Kaw Valley Farm Tour in October of this year.

Iwig Dairy

The first stop was the Iwig Dairy in Tecumseh [Kansas]. They sell milk, butter, and ice cream

made from their herd of 65 milk cows. Obviously conscientious, the Iwigs sell their milk in recyclable, BPA- free glass bottles. In spite of the vast research linking dairy products to obesity, early onset of puberty, osteoporosis, etc., they claim their products are healthy, and they seem to love what they do.

They very kindly answered my questions. I learned, for example, that their cows are impregnated every 12 to 15 months in order to keep milk production high. The first time they are impregnated by a bull, but after that they are raped and artificially inseminated. If that sounds inflammatory, the dairy industry itself, refers to the process as being on a “rape rack.” These cows cannot live only on pasture, they explained. If they did, they would only produce enough milk for their babies. So their normal way of eating is out of a trough full of grain, side by side, in a long row. Only then can they produce the enormous and unnatural amounts of milk that is demanded of them. So the term “free range” or “pasture raised” dairy loses its glamour when we understand that most of the dairy cows’ lives are spent at a trough full of grain or confined to a milking machine.

Of course, they must take the babies from the mothers immediately or at most within one day. When asked if that doesn’t cause the mothers and babies to grieve, the answer was “Well, not all cows are good mothers.” The implication, of course, is that the “good mothers” do grieve. And the babies do cry for their mothers. The Iwigs sell their male calves to be raised for slaughter. The female calves have the same fate as their mothers. Dehorning takes place without pain killers. The Iwigs said that dehorning when the cows are young isn’t as bad as it is when they are older, but there were a group of older youngsters who still had not been dehorned. Even though the Iwig’s cows have names and they say they love them, once a cow stops being as productive as necessary or gets sick, she is sent to slaughter. They admitted that they do get attached to the cows and hate to move them to slaughter, “but it’s a business.”

So we have to ask ourselves if there is anything humane about such a dairy, and if this method is not humane, then imagine the suffering on factory dairies. But what about the sustainability of an operation that actually allows the cows to spend at least some time on pastures? When asked the answer was the same as that of the dairy man in *Cowspiracy*. There is no way the amount of milk products currently being bought can be produced sustainably if all cows and all other “food” animals are given free range. The odds against it increase as well with each birth of a new human. As we veer toward 8 billion people and counting, clearly we have to question everything about what we eat.

Vesecky Family Farm

I also visited the Vesecky Family Farm in Baldwin City, Kansas, where they claim to raise poultry on pastures. While families enjoyed hay rides around the farm, I visited with a gentleman in charge of the turkeys. These birds were kept in a small fenced enclosure. They had a place to roost partially out of the weather. There was no “pasture,” just dirt, in the enclosure, of course, since there were so many birds there. However, they were able to get out of the enclosure through various turkey-made holes. Sometimes they had to be helped to re-enter, and sometimes they found their own way back. He does not breed turkeys but receives the baby turkeys in the mail from a commercial breeder. He admitted that they don’t all survive since they are tossed about, exposed to extreme temperatures and have no water, food, or comfort from a mother. When asked if it was hard on him to see the turkeys trucked away to slaughter, he smiled and said rather cheerily that it wasn’t hard. Instead that was the

best day of all, because that was when he got paid.

Clearly no one gives hay rides at factory turkey farms, so there is the illusion of “humaneness” at this and similar farms. But with just a few questions, we uncover the cruelty that occurs even on farms such as these. While it is sometimes regretted by some of the farmers, it is a necessary part of their business model, which requires animals to be manipulated, separated from their babies, and ultimately die, in order for the business to live.

Amy’s Meats

My next stop was Amy’s Meats just north of Lawrence, Kansas. Their vision is to “produce everything we eat and share the abundance with you.” Amy is an engaging and enthusiastic young woman who appears to love her business. She has created a feeling of an old fashioned farm where children can come for camp activities and people can reconnect to their food. The chickens, pigs, and cows are indeed on small pastures and not confined in cages as they would be on factory farms, but Amy agreed that the world population could not eat animals raised in this way, because of the simple fact that there is not enough land to do it. So while we might find it easier on our consciences to eat the secretions and meat of animals who have had some room to roam, as activists we must face the fact that this can only be available to a select few people who have the money and time to buy these products. When asked how her animals are slaughtered, Amy said that her family kills them with the help of the children. I asked her if it upset the children who may have grown attached to an animal, and she replied that it does not, because she has explained to them that they have to do it. When I pressed her on why they have to do it, knowing now, as we do, that people do not require meat to be healthy, she stated that she likes the taste and does not want to give up that pleasure.

Reflections

In her December article for One Green Planet (onegreenplanet.org), “Why choosing plant-based is the most powerful action to fight climate change,” Malorie Macklin quotes Nil Sacharias, Editor-in-Chief of *One Green Planet*: “The real war against climate change is being fought on our plates, multiple times a day with every food choice we make...” He goes on to say that “one of the biggest challenges facing our planet, and our species is that we are knowingly eating ourselves into extinction, and doing very little about it.”

As author and activist JoAnn Farb has said, “All social justice movements work to overcome these same objections: It’s normal. It’s natural. It’s necessary.” It is indeed normal and natural for people to go into a grocery store and pick out a few neatly cellophane-wrapped packages of meat. It feels right. It’s what our parents did. It seems necessary. But when we look behind the scenes at how that package got there—the terrible cost to the earth, the animals, the hungry, and to human health, it suddenly seems no more normal than slavery was, even though that was considered normal and necessary at the time.

As we evolve in consciousness, we begin to realize what an enormous impact our species has on this precious planet and all the other species on it. As activists, we are all acutely, even painfully aware that we must act quickly to lighten our heavy footprint. Solar panel sales are up; we see Priuses everywhere, and we’re starting to see more electric cars on the road. In fact, we just bought a plug-in electric Chevy Volt, and we love it. We are all taking shorter

showers, recycling, using our own bags at stores, and celebrating stores that ban plastic bags. But there is that nagging feeling that those things just aren't enough.

So I always like to end with the supremely good news that there is something absolutely huge that each of us can do—something that will immediately save water, reduce pollution, feed the hungry, and stop [most] violence to animals, people and the earth; something far more impactful than solar panels and electric cars; something that takes no extra time or money. Readers of *The Peaceable Table* know what it is: eating as though the earth matters is a dedication to a plant-based diet. Eliminating animal products from our diets, whether those animals lived in pastures or in cages, is, I believe, the most powerful thing we can do to heal the earth. If we can question everything we think and do and, in so doing, come into alignment with our highest values of compassion and care for all the living, we will be able to turn this ship around and bring balance and harmony back to our precious earth.

--from the Kansas City Sierra Club periodical Planet Kansas, Winter 2015-2016. Used with Permission of Author

© 2015, Judy Carman. Ms. Carman is author of *Peace to All Beings: Veggie Soup for the Chicken's Soul* and co-author of *The Missing Peace: The Hidden Power of our Kinship with Animals*. She is also the 2014 winner of the Henry Spira Grassroots Animal Activist award; and owner of a truck and a car powered by used veggie oil and an electric car and house powered by solar. Her primary websites are circleofcompassion.org and peacetoallbeings.com.

A Glimpse of the Peaceable Kingdom

NewsNotes

Inky Escapes!

An octopus named Inky managed to escape from his aquarium tank, scuttle across the floor, and squeeze himself into a drain emptying into the ocean. It seems Inky knew a lot more than most people are willing to give an octopus credit for. See [Prison Break](#)

The Chickens' Month

United Poultry Concerns reminds us that May 4 is Respect for Chickens Day, and the whole month is Respect for Chickens Month. See [UPC](#) for ideas for helping out the cause.

--Contributed by UPC

Christians do well to remember that Jesus, speaking as a prophet, compared God to a chicken longing to enclose all her chicks safely under her wings (Matt. 23:37, Luke 13:34). See also "Under Her Wings: The Pollomorphic God," by Carol J. Adams in [PT 77](#) .

Slaughterhell Bites the Dust

A Floriday slaughterhell has closed its doors for a combination of reasons, one being the decided reduction in demand for meat in the last several years. See [Out of Business](#) .

--Contributed by Angie Cordeiro

Unset Gems



By Bill Watterson. Permission to reproduce sought.

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The Peaceable Table is a project of Quaker Animal Kinship, a non-profit, also known as the Animal Kinship Committee of Orange Grove Friends Meeting, Pasadena, California. It is intended to resume the witness of that excellent vehicle of the Friends Vegetarian Society of North America, *The Friendly Vegetarian*, which appeared quarterly between 1982 and 1995. Following its example, and sometimes borrowing from its treasures, we publish articles for toe-in-the-water vegetarians as well as long-term ones.

The journal is intended to be interactive; contributions, including illustrations, are invited for the next issue. Deadline for the June issue will be June 27. Send to graciafay@gmail.com or 14 Krotona Hill, Ojai, CA 93023. We operate primarily online in order to conserve trees and labor, but hard copy is available for interested persons who are not online. The latter are asked, if their funds permit, to donate \$12 (USD) per year. Other donations to offset the cost of the domain name and server are welcome.

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