

# CVVUK NEWSLETTER

## Welcome to the Christian Vegetarians and Vegans UK newsletter, Spring 2025



**Website:** <http://www.christian-vegetariansvegans.org.uk/>

We hope you enjoy this newsletter. As always we would be pleased to receive any of the following from our supporters for future newsletters:

- interesting (short) articles;
- news of any local activities you have been involved in to promote the values of CVVUK;
- information about events that might interest other CVVUK supporters; and
- miscellaneous items such as book reviews, recipes and information about useful resources

If you have anything that you would like to contribute to the next newsletter please e-mail it to us at [sampsons@dsl.pipex.com](mailto:sampsons@dsl.pipex.com) by the end of June 2025.

**Miriam and Philip Sampson**

*Disclaimer: The information in this newsletter comes from a variety of sources and reasonable care has been taken to convey it accurately. Please note that opinions or statements may not reflect the views held by all members of CVAUK, and we accept no responsibility for any errors which may have occurred. Content is produced for information only and is not advice.*

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## Can a vegan diet delay ageing?

A groundbreaking study involving identical twins has found that following a healthy vegan diet for even a short time can offer anti-ageing effects, significantly reducing your biological age. The findings, published in BMC Medicine and highlighted in Netflix's documentary *You Are What You Eat: A Twin Experiment*, indicate that just eight weeks on a plant-based diet could offer substantial anti-ageing benefits. The study tested the effects of a 'vegan' diet versus an omnivorous diet on biological age by involving 21 pairs of identical twins. One twin in each pair followed a plant-based diet, while the other followed an omnivorous diet.



Researchers from Stanford Prevention Research Center and epigenetic testing and research lab, TruDiagnostic, measured epigenetic, or biological, age using DNA methylation levels, which are chemical changes in DNA that affect how genes are expressed without altering the DNA itself. It found that the 'vegan' diet led to a significant slowing of epigenetic ageing in participants, indicating that a [plant-based diet](#) could offer anti-ageing effects. The results also revealed that the 'vegan' group experienced notable reductions in biological age of systems related to [heart health](#), hormonal, liver, inflammatory, and metabolic functions.

21 pairs of identical twins were recruited for the study to ensure that genetic factors and variations in age and sex were controlled. One twin in each pair adopted a [healthy plant-based diet](#) while the other continued with an omnivorous diet, which also focused on 'healthy' foods. Remarkably, within eight weeks the study found significant beneficial changes in participants following the vegan diet, suggesting that diet can rapidly influence biological ageing processes.

Speaking to *Medical News Today*, lead study author Varun Dwaraka, PhD, emphasised that the "results were surprising, even among interventions using epigenetic tests". He noted that other epigenetic studies typically see noticeable changes happen after three to six months.

The study highlights several health benefits associated with a plant-based diet, which is generally rich in [fibre](#), antioxidants, and plant foods known to support [gut health](#), reduce inflammation, and promote healthy metabolic processes.

Some key advantages observed in the study include:

- Lower intake of [saturated fat](#) and processed foods: Participants on the 'vegan' diet had reduced caloric intake and consumed healthier fats.
- Higher nutrient density: The 'vegan' diet led to increased intake of fibre, antioxidants, phytochemicals, and essential nutrients, resulting in a more balanced and nutrient-rich diet.
- Better fatty acid balance: The 'vegan' diet improved the omega-3 to omega-6 ratio, supporting overall health and reducing inflammation.
- Effective weight management: The 'vegan' participants lost an average of 2 kilograms more than those on the omnivorous diet, contributing to better weight management and overall health.

These dietary patterns were linked to positive changes in DNA methylation, suggesting that a plant-based diet may slow down or even reverse ageing processes. Speaking to *Medical News Today*, Raghav Sehgal, a PhD candidate at Yale University, noted that multiple plant-based and meat-free diets tend to improve scores related to inflammation, metabolic, and musculoskeletal ageing. "In other words, these diets may be specifically targeting inflammatory and metabolic ageing pathways via epigenetics in the body and slowing them down," he concluded.

Summarised from a report in "*Vegan Food and Living*". The researchers' own report can be found here: <https://bmcmmedicine.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12916-024-03513-w>

Another recent research report found that regularly eating processed red meat, including bacon and hot dogs, significantly increased the risk of dementia. Details can be found here: <https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/processed-red-meat-tied-increased-dementia-risk-2025a100013j?form=fpf>

Yet more evidence that a vegan diet can be beneficial for health, especially as we get older.

## RSPCA Assurance Scheme for Farms

The RSPCA was founded in 1824 and, from the beginning, has been involved in the welfare of farmed animals.

It has been a key player in bringing about improved legislation, including:

- ending barren battery cages for hens
- banning sow stalls for pigs and veal crates for calves
- introducing CCTV cameras in all slaughterhouses
- ending live exports of animals for fattening and slaughter



There are ongoing campaigns to end the use of cages in farming, to ban the import of foie gras and to urge retailers to sign up to the Better Chicken Commitment (which requires an end to fast growing chickens who can have difficulty in standing up).

They have a food strategy to persuade people to significantly reduce their consumption of animal products, meat, fish, eggs and dairy. Their slogan is 'eat less, eat better' - that is to eat with higher welfare standards for the farmed animals.

Every year there are more than 1.2 billion animals in the UK farming sector and the overwhelming majority receive low welfare care. In 1994 the RSPCA launched Freedom Foods (later RSPCA Assured) as the first accreditation scheme targeting the welfare of farm animals and enabling the consumer to make more humane choices when buying animal products.

Of course the best way not to cause suffering to farm animals is to follow a vegan diet. But for most of us it has been a journey and we want to promote every step that reduces cruelty to our fellow creatures. We can encourage family and friends who consume animal products to buy those that cause less suffering and we can hope and pray that by alerting them to the horrors of factory farming they may take further steps towards a more compassionate way of life.

There has been controversy about the validity of the RSPCA Assured Scheme. In June 2024 animal rights activists raised concerns of malpractice on members' farms. The RSPCA immediately began its own investigation and instigated a second independent review by the respected firm, Crowe LLP. It transpired that some of the footage was of non-member farms. Nevertheless the RSPCA was greatly distressed and concerned about breaches of standards and as a result of the investigation three members were withdrawn and nine sanctioned. The Crowe report noted areas for improvement and these will be fully implemented.

In December 2024 *Animal Rising* made allegations of abuse at three slaughterhouses and one salmon harvesting station. The footage was deeply upsetting and the RSPCA launched an urgent investigation. One of the slaughterhouses has been permanently excluded from the scheme for serious welfare failings. Two have been re-instated but need to operate under rigorous sanctions.

It would be wonderful if the misery of farm animals was a thing of our primitive past. Sadly, we have much work to do to persuade people to adopt a plant-based diet and we need to do this with love, not belligerence, which is not helpful. We can be thankful to the animal activists who make huge efforts to highlight the pitiable conditions of creatures on factory farms. Even though there have been shortcomings in the RSPCA Assurance Scheme it seems better that we have a leading

charity that monitors the welfare of farmed animals than we leave their fate to farmer-businessmen who see livestock as merchandise and units of profit. Every step to reduce cruelty to God's creatures must be a step in the right direction.

## Food Labelling

Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) is campaigning for clear food labelling so that the consumer can easily understand in what farming system an animal has been reared. Labels may say 'farm fresh' or 'all natural' and show cheerful pictures of farm animals in pastoral scenes yet this can belie the grim facts that the food has been produced from animals in cruel and unnatural intensive farming.

**Eggs:** The notable exception is hens' shell eggs (not liquid egg or egg as an ingredient) where the egg boxes must honestly inform of 'eggs from caged hens,' 'barn eggs' or 'free range.' Since mandatory egg labelling was introduced across Europe in 2004 the market for cage-free eggs has increased from 32% to 80% today. Once informed, most consumers want to buy higher welfare eggs.

The Animal Welfare Act 2006 covers general animal welfare standards for all vertebrates, but without further legislation and enforcement the effect of this is very limited. In the UK there are also species-specific minimal welfare standards for laying hens, meat chickens, pigs and calves which has improved matters. And it is sobering that there is no such species-specific legislation to protect turkeys, ducks, dairy cows, beef cattle and sheep.

**Assurance Schemes:** There are assurance schemes which provide higher welfare standards but they are entirely voluntary. Following is a brief summary of schemes - you can read the criteria in full on the CIWF website.

- **Soil Association:** This is a standard of organic farming which requires many improved welfare practices. Soil Association products are recommended by CIWF.
- **RSPCA Assured:** This has been discussed above, and is an assurance scheme dedicated to the welfare of animals.
- **Red Tractor:** This certifies that the food was produced in the UK and conforms to national standards of food safety, hygiene and the environment. There are some welfare benefits for animals but Red Tractor still permit practices that CIWF is campaigning to end.
- **The Lion Mark:** This confirms the product is from the UK. It still permits some minimal welfare standards as well as including barn and free-range systems for hens.

The Red Tractor and Lion Mark may be used in combination with free range production of meat and eggs.

**Country of Origin:** This is found on labels of some food products. CIWF believe that the information should include not only the country of fattening and the country of slaughter but also where the animal was born to show the distance of animal transport.

**Proposed labelling system:** CIWF have developed a 6-tier infographic for all animals in the farming system which can be readily grasped by the shopper. The six categories from lowest to highest are:

- Intensive Indoors
- Improved Indoors
- Partially Outdoors
- Free Range
- Organic
- Pasture Fed



(Image from CiWF)

CIWF think this is a minimum which all food products should carry but can be amplified e.g. by certification from RSPCA Assured which provides further information about the animal's quality of life. You can view it here:

<https://www.ciwf.org.uk/our-campaigns/honest-labelling/our-solution/>

**Take Action:** CIWF have presented their proposed labelling scheme to Defra and urge the public to write to the Secretary of State to implement it. You can support the campaign online at

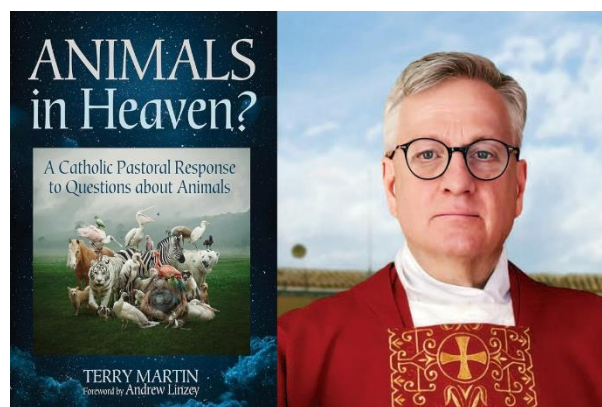
<https://www.ciwf.org.uk/our-campaigns/honest-labelling/>

Handwritten letters are considered especially effective so if you feel able to do this it would be a helpful contribution towards improving the lives of farm animals. We are able to provide you with suggested content material and contact details from CIWF on request.

## Do animals go to heaven? New book by a CVVUK supporter

CVVUK supporter, Fr Terry Martin, has recently had a new book published: **“Animals in Heaven? A Catholic pastoral response to questions about animals”**.

Fr. Terry Martin is parish priest of the Catholic Parish of Worthing & Lancing, West Sussex. He became an advocate and a voice for animals following his own experiences of suffering and voicelessness. This is his first published book.



Fr Terry has said that he wrote the book because he has had a growing desire to do more for the animals, feeling that his witness could be stronger and louder, and that he could advocate for the animals in a cheerful but (hopefully) challenging way. The book asks all people of good will to reflect on why animals are here and how we respond to them, as well as considering the place of animals in the whole beautiful complexity of creation.

He describes his book as a pastoral response, aimed at the ordinary person in the pew, rather than a theological exploration, and to that end it features anecdotes (anonymized) from his own ministry as a priest. He has said that his veganism is present in the book because that is one of the practical ways that he tries to live out his faith on a day-to-day basis, believing that the



compassionate, forgiving, healing Christ would not bless the commodification and industrialisation of animals that we have today.

An interview with Fr. Terry about the book can be found here: <https://sarx.org.uk/articles/books-and-literature/animals-in-heaven-terry-martin/>

The book can be purchased here: [Animals in Heaven?: A Catholic Pastoral Response to Questions about Animals: Amazon.co.uk: Martin, Terry, Linzey, Andrew: 9798385226757: Books](#)

## Recipe: Asparagus and lemon spaghetti, with peas

It won't be long before fresh spring vegetables are available in the shops, and fresh asparagus is a lovely spring treat.

This healthy, vegan pasta dish, taken from the BBC Good Food website, is ready in under 20 minutes. It's low calorie and provides 3 of your 5-a-day along with fibre, vitamin C and iron.

### Ingredients:

- 150g wholemeal spaghetti
- 160g asparagus, ends trimmed and cut into lengths
- 2 tbsp rapeseed oil
- 2 leeks (220g), cut into lengths, then thin strips
- 1 red chilli deseeded and finely chopped
- 1 garlic clove finely grated
- 160g frozen peas
- 1 lemon zested and juiced, plus wedges to serve



(Image from BBC Good Food)

### Method:

#### Step 1

Boil the spaghetti for 12 mins until al dente, adding the asparagus for the last 3 mins. Meanwhile, heat the oil in a large non-stick frying pan, add the leeks and chilli and cook for 5 mins. Stir in the garlic, peas and lemon zest and juice and cook for a few mins more.

#### Step 2

Drain and add the pasta to the pan with  $\frac{1}{4}$  mug of the pasta water and toss everything together until well mixed. Spoon into shallow bowls and serve with lemon wedges for squeezing over, if you like.

Recipe by Sara Buenfeld, from BBC Good Food, here:

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/asparagus-lemon-spaghetti-peas>

## And finally.....

### What is Lent and what has it to do with animals?

In 2022, our Chair, Rev John Ryder wrote a reflection on Lent for the SARX website, considering the meaning of Lent and why it is a particularly opportune time for Christians to explore animal issues. We thought this would be a good time to share it with our own supporters.

John writes:

*As a child I was taken to the Ash Wednesday service every year and was encouraged to give up ice-cream for Lent. It still took me quite a while to work out that the name for this ecclesiastical season is taken from the Germanic name for the season of the year during which Lent falls: Spring. (Growing up in the Southern Hemisphere where it was Autumn could possibly help explain this tardiness.)*



(Image taken from SARX website)

*But the tie between Lent and Spring is not co-incidence: it is important. A lot of the symbolism during Lent and Easter is based on the season of the year, symbols often taken from the pagan celebrations of the time and given a new Christian meaning. Easter Eggs are the most obvious example.*

*You may well know this. Perhaps less well known is the ancient tradition that the first day of Creation (a Sunday) was the Spring Equinox. Following the account in Genesis chapter 1, plants were created on the 3rd day, fish and birds on the 5th, land animals and man on the 6th day (Friday). The same tradition held that the re-creation of man in the Womb of Mary (The Annunciation) and the Redemption of Man on the Cross (Good Friday) fell on the same day. These coincidences indicate why it is appropriate to look at The Creation during the Season of Spring or of Lent, and to look at our relationship with 'the rest' of created order.*

*Lent is also a time when we traditionally examine ourselves to be aware of our sins, and to repent of them. And human-driven climate change is just one example where the human race has sinned against God by dishonouring His Creation.*

*But to get back to that wonderful account of Creation in Genesis Chapter 1. The fact that some think it to be historically and scientifically implausible is not actually relevant: if an historically and scientifically accurate account had been written we wouldn't understand it now, let alone the original readers of about 4,000 years ago. What matters is the religious, theological and moral implications of this account, which are huge. And I believe divinely inspired; but more of that later.*

*Firstly we see that God's creation was good, and anyone can see that it isn't now. We know that this is largely humankind's fault, and we desperately need to repent and change our ways.*

*Secondly an important reason why Creation is no longer good is that we are not following the diet prescribed for us in Genesis 1:29 : "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food."*

*By disobeying and eating meat we not only cause suffering to our fellow creatures; scientists are telling us that the greatest thing any individual can do to slow, and hopefully stop human-driven climate change is to give up the consumption of meat and dairy.*

*We also cannot feed our ever-increasing population on an animal-based diet – it is hugely wasteful of resources. It is also not as healthy. And affordable meat production is the main driver of antibiotic resistance.*

*And then there is disease and pandemics. Most if not all pandemics come from our consumption of animals. And history tells us that if we get a bacterial pandemic which is resistant to antibiotics the death rate will be about 30-60%. (With Covid it is about 1%.)*

*I said I would get back to Divine Inspiration. None of these facts were known, or even guessed at when Genesis was written. But we now know what harm not following the diet of Genesis 1 has done and continues to do to humanity and to our planet.*

*And thirdly and most importantly, three verses earlier in Genesis (1:26) we are told: “Then God said: Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”*

*Many have used this as an excuse to abuse the rest of creation, especially their fellow animals, as they see fit. Actually it has the opposite meaning, and this to the Christian should be obvious. There are many Gospel passages that could be quoted but two stand out:*

John 13:13-15: “You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.”

Luke 22:25-27: “And he said to them: The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For which is the greater, one who sits at table, or one who serves? Is it not the one who sits at table? But I am among you as one who serves.”

*In the exercising of our lordship over the rest of Creation we must not do as the “kings of the Gentiles” do, rather we need to follow our Lord’s example of humble, loving service.*

*In this Springtime season of Lent, there is plenty of reason, both scripturally and pragmatically to penitentially examine our and our community’s relationship with our fellow animals and the rest of the created order; and with the hope of Easter lying ahead, to see what we need to change in ourselves, and what we need to try to change in our Church and in the world around us.*

The Rev John Ryder is a retired vicar, formerly of All Saints, Godshell, Isle of Wight and spokesperson for [Christian Vegetarians and Vegans UK](https://www.christianvegetariansandvegans.org.uk/)

You can find the original piece, together with several other helpful reflections on Lent and animals, on the SARX website here: <https://sarx.org.uk/?s=Lent>