



# The True Cost of Christmas

People say that Christmas is a time of peace and goodwill. Friends, family and loved ones gather to enjoy food, drink and gifts, but what about the animals?



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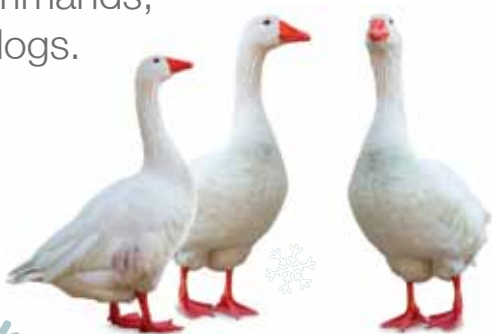


# why care about animals?

Animals feel pain, hunger, thirst, heat, cold, fear and anger. They are curious, affectionate, playful and outgoing. Their capacity to experience emotions remains whether they are kept as pets or farmed for meat.

Turkeys 'talk' to each other. They have well-developed vocabularies, with twenty distinct vocalisations, and also recognise one another by their voices and head characteristics.

Also, when piglets live with humans they quickly learn their own names and follow simple voice commands, just like dogs.





**This  
Christmas  
around  
10 million  
turkeys will be  
slaughtered  
in the UK**

## turkeys

Around 17 million turkeys are slaughtered in the UK each year, about 10 million of them just for Christmas. 90% are kept in windowless sheds with as many as 25,000 other birds and many young turkeys die before they can learn to reach food and water points.

Wild turkeys naturally live for around 10 years. Farmed turkeys are normally slaughtered between 9 and 24 weeks old. These young birds are dragged through electrically charged water which is supposed to render them unconscious before their necks are cut. At Christmas, 'Seasonal Slaughterhouses' are also used and many turkeys will be killed by having their necks dislocated, even though studies show that this does not usually kill them instantly.



**Around 15  
million geese  
and ducks  
were killed in  
the UK in 2011  
for their meat,  
fat and  
feathers**

## geese

Who was it that decided we all needed to make roast potatoes with goose fat? A few celebrity chefs make a fuss about it and all of a sudden people are bringing yet another dead animal to the table, instead of making wonderfully tasty roasties with vegetable oils.

Around 15 million geese and ducks were killed in the UK in 2011 for their meat, fat and feathers and many geese suffer additional pain and distress because they are killed in facilities designed to handle much smaller birds.



**Nearly  
10 million  
pigs were  
slaughtered  
in the UK  
in 2011**

## pigs

Nearly 10 million pigs were slaughtered in the UK in 2011 and over 70% were closely confined indoors for their entire lives.

Sows (female pigs) produce around 40 to 70 piglets before they become exhausted and are slaughtered (aged three to five years) for sausages, pork pies and other low-quality products.

Piglets living in overcrowded, poorly lit pens with no bedding can become bored and aggressive (can you blame them?). The farmer's solution is to clip their teeth and dock their tails and there's no legal requirement to use a vet if it is done in the first few days after birth.



**Statistics  
show that  
vegetarians  
are less likely  
than meat  
eaters to suffer  
from certain  
health  
problems**

## not just the animals

People buy more, eat more and create more waste at Christmas. What we choose to eat is one of the biggest factors in the personal impact we have on the environment and a vegetarian diet uses less land, water and energy than one based on meat.

Statistics show that vegetarians are less likely than meat eaters to suffer from diabetes, heart disease and some other medical conditions. Vegetarians are less likely to be obese, their blood pressure is lower on average and they also tend to have a lower body mass index (BMI).





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# going veggie

Being vegetarian isn't just good for the animals, the environment and your own health and wellbeing, it's also a fantastic opportunity to try delicious new foods, even at Christmas.


Making the switch to a meat-free diet is a lot easier than you might think and the Vegetarian Society is here to help. Our Going Veggie booklet shows you step by step how to make a smooth transition to vegetarianism, featuring friendly and accessible information on nutrition, doing the 'big shop' as a vegetarian and much, much more.

We also have a whole database of festive meat-free dishes at [www.veggiechristmas.org](http://www.veggiechristmas.org)

If this leaflet has changed the way you think, help us show more people the true cost of Christmas to animals by joining the Vegetarian Society or making a donation at [www.vegsoc.org](http://www.vegsoc.org)

You can also order or download a range of resources including our full Going Veggie series and more veggie recipes than you could ever possibly need.

[www.vegsoc.org](http://www.vegsoc.org)  
0161 925 2000



Find out more about the  
issues raised in this leaflet at  
[www.costofchristmas.org](http://www.costofchristmas.org)



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**Get involved:**

-  **0161 925 2000**
-  **[thevegetariansociety](https://www.facebook.com/thevegetariansociety)**
-  **[@vegsoc](https://twitter.com/vegsoc)**

References for the information in this booklet are  
available at [www.vegsoc.org/references](http://www.vegsoc.org/references)

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