

***The Vegetarian Choice***

Edited by Craig Donnellan (1994). Independence: Cambridge. 40pp. Paperback. Obtainable from the publishers, PO Box 295, Cambridge CB1 3XP, UK (ISBN 1 872995 40 3) Price £5.95.

The *Vegetarian Choice* is a 40 page booklet which aims to offer up-to-date information for and against vegetarianism. It has been written for GCSE and A Level students (14 to 18 years of age), and those wishing to learn more about this topic. Amongst the issues discussed are: farming and slaughtering methods, animal welfare, animal rights, sustainability of farming practices, human dietary requirements and eating habits of different sections of the community. The information comes from a wide variety of previously published sources and includes: government reports and statistics, newspaper reports and features, magazine articles and surveys, literature and propaganda from lobby groups and charitable organizations.

Whilst this booklet may at first glance appear to provide the reader with a balance of arguments it is considerably weighted towards vegetarianism. Only a quarter of the pages are devoted to pro-meat eating, and this information is provided solely by the Meat and Livestock Commission. Where are the opinions of the National Farmers Union? the National Federation of Meat Traders? the British Poultry Meat Federation? – to mention but a few.

To add to this slant, both positions are entrenched – there is no middle ground. This in itself gives another distortion of the issue. It would have been useful to have included greater reference to the research into farm animal welfare, the move towards less intensive systems, and the efforts to increase consumer choice by improved labelling. For example, a section on the RSPCA's Freedom Food initiative would have helped to provide more depth. Attention is drawn to the foods avoided by a variety of religious groups, but it avoids the important issue of religious slaughter.

The reader is expected to critically evaluate the information presented, decide whether it is fact or opinion and consider whether the writer is biased or unbiased. Considering there are very complex issues involved (not all of which are even presented) this is somewhat of an over ambitious challenge, particularly for school children. Guidance from a teacher properly informed of all the arguments would be essential.

Whilst *The Vegetarian Choice* does provide a lot of interesting information, it should only be used as part of a wider investigation.

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***Laboratory Animal Management: Dogs***

National Research Council (1994). National Academy Press: Washington DC. 138pp. Paperback. Obtainable from the publishers, 36 Lonsdale Road, Summertown, Oxford OX2 7EW, UK (ISBN 0 309 04 744 7). Price £20.95.

This paperback covers most aspects of the scientific management of the laboratory dog very comprehensively against a background of current United States regulations, to which frequent and interpretive reference is made.

The introduction briefly explains the US legislation, and an appendix listing subjects within the text, with cross-references to the corresponding sections in the US Animal Welfare