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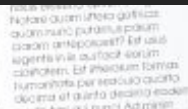
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Accumam et latio teler dignem  
aut dicitur piteerit. Conset-  
cum actum meum est munde  
quam stero gortico quum nunc.



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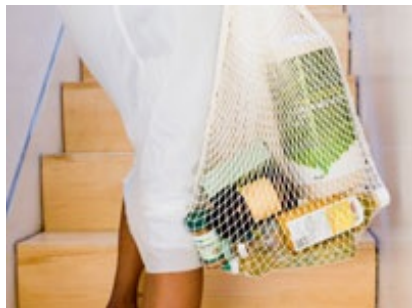
Main

## Domestic and farm animals

### 7 Ways to Help Animals Beyond Earth Day

04/19/2010

#### Use reusable shopping bags instead of plastic



I bet you've seen those reusable grocery bags, and thought, hmm, should I buy one? From plain and simple ones to super-stylish bags, you have many options available. Some stores, including Target and Whole Foods, give discounts for bringing your own bag. But the best part? You're helping to save the earth. Too many marine turtles, seals, sea lions, and other wildlife get entangled in or swallow plastic bags, which causes choking, drowning, and unnecessary, tragic deaths. Plastic is so ubiquitous it has created massive [garbage patch](#) gyres in the oceans. Even if you *think* yours will end up

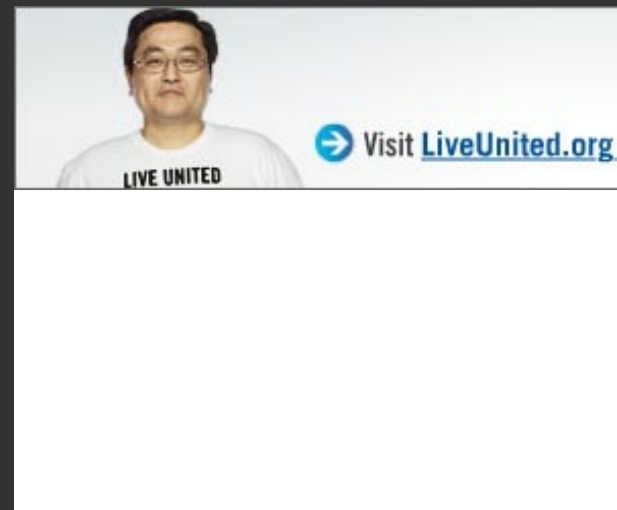
### About the Author

Wendee Holtcamp has covered news about conservation, wildlife and adventure travel for nearly 15 years.

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getting recycled, sometimes they fly out of the garbage (or recycling) trucks, float in the air, into the waterways, and out to the oceans. My advice? Just buy one (or two or three), already. It will cost you a couple bucks, and it may take a few times to remember them from your car to the grocery store – but this simple step feels really good. Before long, you'll start cringing when you see other folks using so many plastic bags!

### Adopt a pet from a shelter



If you crave a new addition to your family, and you have the resources to care for the animal now and well into the future, consider adopting a dog, cat, or other animal from a local shelter. According to the [Humane Society of the United States](#) (HSUS), half of the 6-8 million cats and dogs entering shelters every year get adopted, and the rest end up euthanized. Help turn the tide the other way, so more get adopted into loving homes. And make sure fewer enter shelters in the first place: take care of your pets, and get them spayed or neutered! Check out HSUS' [Top 5 Reasons to Adopt](#).

### 'Adopt' wildlife online

Wildlife lovers around the world can help to save their favorite species by adopting one online. By paying a small fee, you directly support the animals, their care, and conservation of their habitat. Some groups send you a plush toy, or a certificate, or information about the animal. You can adopt a cute [red panda](#) through Red Panda Network, a [whale or dolphin](#) with Whale or Dolphin Conservation Society, a [wolf](#) (and several other species) through Defenders of Wildlife or you can [Friend a Gorilla](#) in Uganda. You can adopt and follow the movements of a radio-tagged [sea turtle](#). Or if you're a Steve Irwin fan (Crikey! Who isn't?) you can adopt one of the [Australia Zoo's](#) crocs, koalas, Tasmanian devils or other critters. And Jane Goodall has a fantastic [chimp guardian sponsorship](#) program.

### Think about water



Fresh, clean water comes right out of your faucet, free and clear, right? Not so fast. Freshwater is a precious resource. A full 98% of our blue planet's water is locked up in the oceans. Of the remaining 2% of fresh water, 1.6% is locked up in glaciers or polar ice caps (although in our

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Oceans. Of the remaining 2% of fresh water, 1.5% is locked up in glaciers or polar ice caps (although in our warming world, these are rapidly melting into the sea). That remaining percentage of freshwater – just 0.036 percent in rivers, lakes and creeks – is precious. We require it to drink, to water crops, and for livestock. But native wildlife also need fresh water to survive and thrive. This includes land animals, most of which must drink, as well as riverine and aquatic animals. When it comes to keeping local rivers and creeks healthy (and the fish, frogs, crayfish and so on that live there), [think twice](#) about putting chemical pesticides and fertilizers on your lawn. Try natural options. Pull weeds, for example, or create a native plant xeriscape that requires less water or herbicide in the first place. Also, by using less water, it saves you money, and helps keep water flowing in the creeks and rivers, which ultimately run into estuaries at the edge of the sea – important breeding grounds for many commercially and recreationally important fish, shrimp, [oysters](#), and other species.

### Reduce your carbon footprint

Stepping lightly on the earth makes a difference in more ways than one. By turning off lights when not in use, recycling everything you can, replacing incandescent light bulbs with fluorescents, use reusable shopping bags (see above) and other simple steps to reduce your energy use, you not only save yourself money on your electric bill, you help curb global warming. The planet's warming temperature is melting glaciers in the [Himalayas](#), threatening rare wildlife such as the red panda, Himalayan black bear, and snow leopard. Warming ocean temperatures cause the bleaching of once pristine coral reefs, and cause



the oceans to acidify, threatening to turn the entire marine ecosystem topsy-turvy. And although stemming the massive impact of a warming world is going to require international cooperation and national policy action, every little bit helps.

### Stop littering!

Even conservation-minded folks occasionally toss orange or banana peels out their car window, not realizing that even biodegradable food attracts animals to the roadside, which leads to...roadkill (not to mention being a safety hazard. Think of all the car accidents or incidents from hitting the animals, or swerving to avoid them). And if you think throwing cigarette butts out your window is harmless, think again. Those butts are one of the most common and ubiquitous pieces of trash in the environment now – trillions of them end up as litter every year. The core is made of cellulose acetate, which can take up to ten years to decompose. Think that's not so bad? They also contain tar and all the toxins in the tobacco that the filter is there to keep from going into lungs. And where does it end up? In our waterways, which ultimately poisons the well, so to speak.

### Go Vegetarian, even for one day a week

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As I've blogged about [before](#), the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reports that 18% of global warming gas emissions come from meat production. Tropical rainforest gets cleared in the Amazon to make room for cattle, and rainforests are notoriously challenging to replant or restore. Livestock also consumes five times as much grain as people do, which replaces natural habitat with monoculture cropland. And the conditions of factory farms have drawn much attention lately. As actress Natalie Portman wrote after reading [Eating Animals](#), "Factory farming of animals will be one of the things we look back on as a relic of a less-evolved age." Sir Paul McCartney challenges everyone to try at least one day a week without meat, Meat-free Monday, it's called across the pond, and over here we have [Meatless Monday](#). It can help improve your health too!

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## Eating Animals

11/26/2009

Maybe Thanksgiving isn't the best day to have a post on *Eating Animals*, or on eating animals, but then again maybe it *is* the best day. Jonathan Safran Foer, an acclaimed novelist, took on the topic in a book that promises to be as spellbinding as the [New York Times Magazine](#) feature spun from the book. It drew me in, captivated me with his humor and his insightfully told stories. It was nothing like what I expected. Since I started this blog I have become increasingly aware of food issues as they relate to animals - after all, fish, cows, chicken, and pigs - the main animals we eat at

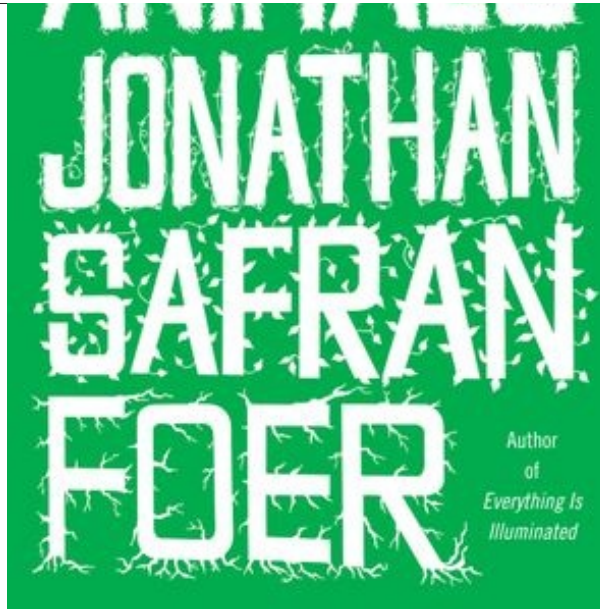


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least in North America - are animals (as Foer's vegetarian babysitter told him, "you do know that chicken is *chicken*?"). Most people, even those who love animals, eat animals.

Foer was an on-again off-again vegetarian, as was the woman who would become his wife. But after their first son was born, everything changed. "Everything is possible again," his friend wrote to him. And he started thinking about just what kinds of things was he about to feed to his child. It became more than an intellectual endeavor, but a passion to find out the truth behind one of the biggest industries around. He visited factory farms, family farms, and talked to people on all sides. And throughout the book he tells funny stories, including how his Jewish grandmother had survived WWII scavenging in Eastern Europe, and what food represented to her: "The story of her relationship to food holds all of the other stories that could be told about her. Food, for her, is not food. It is terror, dignity, gratitude, vengeance, joy, humiliation, religion, history and, of course, love. It was as if the fruits she always offered us were picked from the destroyed branches of our family tree."



And what does he find? Foer says eating animals is making us sick. He shows how chickens and other poultry – including turkeys – in traditional factory farms live in horrendous, inhumane and disgusting conditions, cramped in windowless prisons, walking around in their own feces. They get injected with antibiotics daily, which affects our own health and immunity. Remember the old adage, you are what you eat. Foer brings attention to the fact that most "24-hour flus" are not actually influenza, but one of the 76 million cases of food-borne illness the [Centers for Disease Control](#) and Prevention has estimated happen in America each year.

"Your friend didn't "catch a bug" so much as eat a bug. And in all likelihood, that bug was created by factory farming," he writes in a [CNN Op-Ed](#). "If the way we raise animals for food isn't the most important problem in the world right now, it's arguably the No. 1 cause of global warming: The United Nations reports the livestock business generates more greenhouse gas emissions than all forms of transportation combined." I brought awareness to this in my previous post [Meatless Mondays](#).

I count myself among one of the people who, like Foer before he wrote this book, is an on-again off-again vegetarian, trying to make conscientious consumer choices. Though I actually have not eaten as much meat as your average American for years, I do still eat it and don't always buy ethically grown meat. I struggle with the fact that the meat is cheap and I have a family to raise. But when I read statements from a respected nutritionist and doctor such as, "If you truly understood the nightmarish brutality of what happens inside these windowless animal jails and abattoirs that dot the American ruralscape, you simply would not eat this meat," which is what Andrew Weil wrote in [The Moral Ferocity of Eating Animals](#) –it makes me think seriously about how to proceed. Foer's book turned actress [Natalie Portman](#) from a vegetarian to a vegan activist, and as she writes in her [Huffington Post](#) piece, "Factory farming of animals will be one of the things we look back on as a relic of a less-evolved age." Have you read this book, or Foer's [NYT Magazine piece](#)? What do you think?

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## Try a Heritage Turkey this Thanksgiving!

11/20/2009

For Thanksgiving this year, have you considered something other than a traditionally farm-raised turkey? Most families eat the standard “large white” or “broadbreasted white” turkey; 48 million get consumed every Thanksgiving, 99% of which are traditional factory-farmed birds. Those turkeys get raised just to be eaten. That means they can’t even run, fly, or mate - takes pretty much all the fun out of being alive doesn’t it? They are engineered to grow plump quick, and often pumped with antibiotics and hormones. Christine Heinrichs, author of [How to Raise Poultry](#) and publicity director for the Society for the Preservation of Poultry Antiquities, also has a great post about the various labels you might encounter on her blog post, [Thanksgiving turkey](#).



*The Thanksgiving flock at Springfield Farms in Maryland includes heritage varieties as well as traditional broadbreasted whites/*

*Credit Springfield Farms*

*Huffington Post* recently featured several farms that raise [heritage turkeys](#) - a great option if you want to support small farms, organic, local and/or ethically raised animals. Hope this provides some 'food for thought' if you want to explore other options for your Thanksgiving meal! Most of them require you to pick up the turkey from the ranch, so if you don't live in these areas, try searching for heritage turkeys in your region.

Three generations of three families run Maryland's 67-acre [Springfield Farms](#), which sustainably raises four types of turkeys including heritage varieties as well as traditional white turkeys. They're free range during the grass growing season, and do not get fed or injected with anything synthetic like hormones or antibiotics.

In California, the [Slow Food USA Russian River Heritage Turkey Project](#) has turkeys you can order online for pickup near Santa Rosa. Slow Food USA partnered with the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy (ALBC) in 2001 to encourage local farmers to start raising heritage varieties that were perilously near extinction. The project has had great success. When they began their project, ALBC estimated only 1,200 breeding heritage turkeys of eight varieties lived in the U.S. and by 2004 that number increased to 4,000.

In Tampa, Kansas, the [Good Shepherd Poultry Ranch](#) raises heritage turkeys and their website says, "Birds are grown on outdoor range using vegetarian feed with the highest animal welfare standards." Texas has the Rehoboth Ranch, near Dallas, that grows heritage turkeys that raises tuerkeys on organically managed pastures "untainted by pesticides, herbicides, or artificial fertilizers," and their animals are never given hormones or steroids, and fed organic grains. Narragansett and Red Bourbon heritage turkeys can be purchased online from Kirschbaum Family Farm through [Local Harvest](#), or you can pick up turkeys from the farm in Kewaskum, Wisconsin.

*Huffington Post* highlights another company, [Mary's Free Range Turkeys](#) highlighted in a Discovery Channel [How Stuff Works video](#) . They take seven months to raise these birds. No doubt the conditions here are far better than those in traditional factory farms, but also different than conditions on small farms where birds that can truly roam to their heart's delight. Small farms can't produce as many turkeys, though, so it's a tradeoff.

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## **New Orleans chocolate shop helps animals**

11/16/2009

Tariq Hanna, the Executive pastry chef at [Sucré](#), the decadently delicious chocolate boutique in New Orleans has a soft spot for animals. He and his pet French bulldog, Bon Bon – the doggie mascot for the sweet shop – have decided this holiday season to donate part of their proceeds to help animals in need.

“In 2005, after Hurricane Katrina, the [LA/SPCA](#) [Louisiana Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals] located in New Orleans was devastated,” says Sucré owner Joel Dondis. “Thanks to Bon Bon, the Sucré Spokesdog, this holiday season, in the spirit of giving, Sucré has paired up with the LA/SPCA and a portion of every dollar spent online at Sucré will go directly to benefit the LA/SPCA. Bon Bon wants to help save her friends at the LA/SPCA and we want to do our part!”



*Bon Bon the spokesdog for Sucré in New Orleans*

The LA/SPCA certainly could use the help. “The impact of Katrina was huge for our operations,” says Katherine LeBlanc from the LA/SPCA. “We lost our shelter, which had housed the LA/SPCA for over 20 years. We set up shop in a temporary shelter while we raised funds to build a brand new shelter from the ground up.” They’ve now been in the news shelter for two years and finally getting back to their former capacity.

“Our intake numbers are reaching pre-Katrina levels rapidly and larger intake translates into higher euthanasia numbers,” says LeBlanc. To prevent that and help get strays off the street, they plan to open a high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter clinic in January, and have teamed up with the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) to spread the message about how the relatively simple effort of spaying or neutering a pet can prevent much unnecessary suffering. “We are slowly but surely gaining momentum in this post-Katrina environment.”

LeBlanc says Sucré has been involved with other fundraising efforts for them, as well. “They participated in our Annual Fundraising Gala, Howling Success, as a spotlighted restaurant with their caramel apple napoleon with herb cream. And now, Bon Bon, their Executive Pastry Chef’s dog is giving his friends at the LA/SPCA a chance to find their forever homes.

There’s nothing like having a bad day, then coming home to the delivery of a box of chocolates. Like manna from heaven, Sucré sent me a box of their holiday sugar and spice truffle collection and they were utterly divine. My daughter and I, both chocaholics, scarfed them up in one afternoon. The [sugar & spice collection](#) had three types – dark chocolate egg nog, milk chocolate ginger, and white chocolate peppermint. All I can say is, wow! I love unique spices in chocolate, and they also have collections with earl gray, absinthe, passion fruit, chai, chicory, along with more traditional flavors. There’s a pretty [funny video](#) of Hanna and his Frenchie on vimeo you can watch here. I don’t think I’d let my dog share my ice cream cone, but... would you?



[Sucre and LA/SPCA](#) from [Sucre - Founder - Joel Dondis](#) on [Vimeo](#).

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## Can poultry poop save the planet?

10/27/2009

I've already mentioned my fascination with poop stories, given the previous [penguin poop](#) and [dung beetle poo ball](#) stories I've talked about. Here's another: apparently charred chicken poop can help in the battle against global warming.

Take some corn husks, a bit of mulch from already dead trees or shrubs—maybe even invasive species - and another possible ingredient - fowl manure, and bake them up. What do you get? Biochar, a charcoal made from "biomass" pyrolyzed under low



oxygen conditions, which actually sequesters (locks up) carbon, storing it in the soil for hundreds to thousands of years. Biochar is dark black like regular charcoal, and it can be burned for fuel like regular charcoal, but science has shown it makes a great soil amendment, enhancing its productivity. The original inspiration for biochar is the *Terra preta de Indio*, or dark earth, made by indigenous people in the Amazon rainforest starting from infertile soils and turning them into rich earth.



*Can chickens - or chicken poop - save the planet? (This chicken was running around in Nepal)*  
Copyright (c) 2007 Wendee Holtcapm

"Biochar can be made from biological material that's just sitting around in piles, basically rotting away, and also from crop residues and manures," says Julie Major, Agriculture Extension Director of the [International Biochar Initiative](#) (IBI). "If you do the math, by using such materials to make biochar we could improve soils and make a real difference for climate change."

The first [North American Biochar Conference](#) was held in August at the University of Colorado, with the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture [Tom Vilsack](#) and Dr. [Susan Solomon](#), Senior Scientist, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) as keynote speakers. [Tim Flannery](#), scientist and author of *The Weather Makers*, said the [International Biochar Initiative](#) "may represent the single most important initiative for humanity's environmental journey."

[Josh Frye](#), a chicken farmer in West Virginia who owns [Frye Poultry Farm](#), is one of the first people to make a business out of biochar so far, turning chicken poop from his chickens into biochar using a pyrolysis machine that creates three to four tons per day. That generates enough energy to heat his henhouses and then he sells the extra for \$600 per ton (with delivery costs, he earns around \$480 per ton). It's a first and early "[proof of concept](#)" that biochar can be a sustainable business venture rather than just a scientific idea.

"A lot of folks besides farmers find chicken poop repulsive," says Frye. "This process converts the litter into a sterile, dry, carbon rich, stable product which is nutrient rich, eco-friendly and less repulsive. Some of the char I have produced has had kind of a sweet smell and taste which, I have learned from some folks with IBI, is one way to quickly 'field test the char'." (As an aside, taste it? I've heard the the term eat dirt but that is pretty silly!)

In late September, Nevada Senator Harry Reid co-sponsored the [WECHAR Act of 2009](#) (Water Efficiency via Carbon Harvesting and Restoration) that creates a loan guarantee for research and development for biochar technology, and authorizes research grants for biochar initiatives - full text [here](#). But the most interesting component, in my opinion, is the landscape restoration programs authorized by the bill. Invasive species like water-hungry tamarisk (salt cedar) and pinion-juniper will be removed where they are a nuisance in order to provide the necessary biological components of biochar. Combined with the up and coming business potential for biochar, and its potential to help the planet, it definitely seems like something worth keeping an eye on!

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## Hydraulic fracturing or "fracking" may kill animals

10/16/2009

Hydraulic fracturing, or "[fracking](#)" as it's often called, is a process used to drill for natural gas. Because natural gas occurs in bubbles within tight spaces such as shale bedrock, natural gas companies inject water filled with chemicals far and deep into the rock, fracturing it, which allows them to gather up the natural gas.

After many years of secrecy and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) denial that fracking posed any threat to people, wildlife, and water, in late August the EPA released a report suggesting well water in Wyoming contaminated with methane, lead, copper, and hydrocarbons [could indeed be from hydraulic fracturing](#). Wyoming's not alone. Drilling occurs in 31 states, including [Texas](#), [New Mexico](#), Louisiana, [Pennsylvania](#), and [Colorado](#), and besides the lack of federal regulations, 21 of these have no state regulations.



*A hydraulic fracturing drill rig in Wyoming  
Credit [Abrahm Lustgarten/ProPublica](#)*

Reports of dead and tumored cattle, deer, chipmunks, and other wildlife near fracturing sites have surfaced in various locales - not to mention links to human health problems. On September 16th, 8,000 gallons of frack fluid leaked into Stevens Creek near [Dimock](#), Pennsylvania, causing minnows, salamanders and tadpoles to swim erratically and die. Cabot Oil & Gas was responsible for three frac gel spills within a few weeks time, and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is investigating. Yet some environmental groups don't think DEP is doing enough.

Even more tragic, on the border between West Virginia and Pennsylvania, much of the entire 38-miles of [Dunkard Creek](#) ecosystem has [died](#) in a very short time in mid-September - and officials suspect fracking fluid is to blame. The dead and dying include over 10,000 fish, plus salamanders, frogs, crayfish, aquatic insects and freshwater mussels, including two candidates for being listed as endangered species – the salamander mussel and the snuffbox mussel. Biologists observing the site have called it the worst environmental disaster of their lifetime. At first, authorities blamed coal mining waste, but testing found chemicals in the water known to be used by fracking in the nearby Marcellus Shale gas well drilling operations. It's now being treated as a crime scene, since someone may have illegally dumped fracking fluid rather than treating the chemicals.

Outrage against the secrecy over just what chemicals these companies engaged in fracking are pumping into groundwater has started bubbling over. In [Split Estate](#), a documentary airing to tomorrow night, October 17th, on [Planet Green](#) about the conflict between surface landowners and the companies extracting oil and gas –

including the secretive history of hydraulic fracking – EPA whistleblower Weston Wilson says, “We cannot know what the industry injects in our land. It is exempt from being reported.”

Wilson blew the whistle on the original EPA study, completed during the Bush administration, which claimed fracking caused little or no harm to drinking water because the chemicals are diluted in billions of gallons of water. Oil and gas companies doing hydraulic fracturing have been exempt from complying with the Safe Drinking Water Act since 2005, and also from reporting any chemicals that may end up in surface runoff which is normally covered by the Clean Water Act. As Weston, said natural gas companies need not even disclose what chemicals they use - so citizens have no idea what may seep into their drinking water. While other industries have to list chemicals they used, Dick Cheney got an exemption for fracking. During the early days of Cheney’s Vice Presidency, this former Halliburton CEO successfully pressured then-EPA-head Christine Todd Whitman to exempt fracking. In addition, companies can protect the chemical lists used as trade secrets. Suffice it to say fracking fluid contains many of them.

In his report to Congress, Weston wrote, “EPA's conclusions are unsupportable... EPA decisions were supported by a Peer Review Panel; however five of the seven members of this panel appear to have conflicts-of-interest and may benefit from EPA's decision not to conduct further investigation or impose regulatory conditions.”

A new bill - [the FRAC Act](#) - is making its way through Congress (S1215 and HR 2766) to close the 'Halliburton loophole' in the Safe Drinking Water Act, which allows companies to inject chemicals unchecked into groundwater supplies. On top of the chemical contaminants, billions of gallons of water gets pumped into the ground for this process. That’s a lot of water when the precious liquid is being fought for, sold, preserved and conserved in drought-weary, water-starved regions in the U.S. I found the "Reporter's Notebook" video by ProPublica's [Abraham Lustgarten](#), which I embedded below, to be very well-done and informative (and I've linked to several of his stories above).

Don't forget to check out [Split Estate](#) on Planet Green!

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## Animals key to Canadian eco-friendly winery

10/13/2009

It's the animals that make [Featherstone Estate Winery](#) stand apart. Other wineries may call themselves eco-friendly, but in addition to being pesticide-free since 1999, Featherstone uses several animals to create a holistic approach to viticulture at their 23-acre Ontario, Canada estate: sheep, beneficial insects, and a Harris Hawk.

A tried-and-true strategy in New Zealand - using spring lambs to munch low-growing leaves from grapevines to improve the harvest, without the need of expensive machines - has made its way to North America - specifically to the eco-friendly and 100% pesticide-free Featherstone Estate Winery in Ontario, Canada, co-owned by David Johnson and his wife Louise Engel. *The Environment Report* did an [interesting piece](#) on using lambs as landscapers, and I loved the idea. I always love hearing about we can employ animals in ways that reduce our use of harmful chemicals, like my earlier story "[Flying Mouse-traps](#)" about barn owls and kestrels reducing the need for rodenticide in Israel.



*Using sheep to improve the grape harvest is just one innovative use of animals at the eco-friendly Featherstone Winery /Credit Louise Engels*

The story goes that, in 2007, Johnson and Engels spent several weeks in New Zealand and became intrigued by their use of sheep in the vineyards. They already had a pesticide-free vineyard, but liked the idea of having sheep tend the grapevines to improve the harvest. Apparently the lambs like the tender young grape leaves that grow at the bottom of the vines, but don't like the unripe tart grapes. The sheep spend around six to eight weeks in the vineyard, but when the grapes start to ripen, that's when they move the sheep out, selling them to restaurants that pair the lamb with their wines. The sheep also help fertilize the plants with their poo. It's a holistic approach that appealed to Johnson and Engel.

They also use a variety of beneficial insects on their winery including lacewings, indigenous ladybugs, and soldier beetles. The ladybugs, also known as ladybird beetles, eat sap-sucking aphids and mites that would otherwise harm their crop.

One of the most fascinating uses of animals on the winery involves [falconry](#). Engel uses a trained Harris hawk to hunt nuisance birds, such as starlings and robins, that otherwise damage their vines and eat the fruit. She became a licensed falconer in 2005 and acquired a Harris Hawk named Amadeus that she uses just at Featherstone Estate. It's not for the faint-hearted or non-committed. "Anyone considering this should be prepared for a substantial, long-term time commitment - on par with owning and training a horse," Engel writes on their website. "In captivity, a Harris' hawk has a life span of 15-20 years."

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## Meatless Mondays

09/21/2009

Here are some fast facts you may not know about meat consumption. United Nation's [Food and Agriculture Organization](#) (FAO) estimates that 18% of greenhouse gas emissions come from meat production. A large proportion of that comes from destruction of Amazon rainforest as they clear for cattle grazing (and soybean production). Some comes from the methane produced by cows (yes, guys, that means cow farts and burps), which is 23 times more potent as a greenhouse gas than CO2 which we hear more about. And livestock consumes five times as much grain as people do, which takes up space and emits its own share of greenhouse gases. Eating beef or pork also contributes more greenhouse gases than eating chicken.



*Founder of [The Red White and Green](#) Jennifer Grayson visits a farmer's market, one way she supports Meatless Monday/  
Copyright (c) 2009 Jennifer Grayson*

Now there's something simple you can do to help curb global warming - don't eat meat on Monday!

"The Meatless Monday Campaign first started as a way to reduce saturated fat intake by 15%, in accordance with the [Healthy People 2010](#) recommendations," explains Ralph Loglisci, Project Director for the Johns Hopkins [Bloomberg School of Public Health](#) Healthy Monday Project, which includes [Meatless Monday](#). "The Meatless Monday campaign also recognizes that food animal production, particularly industrially produced food animals, is resource intensive. The amount of fossil fuel, water, feed, and antibiotics used to raise industrially produced animals is significant. Anyone who reduces his or her meat intake one day a week and replaces it with a healthy vegetarian alternative will do a lot more than simply reduce their carbon foot print."

Americans eat, on average, twice as much protein as the rest of the world, which also happens to be more than the USDA recommends. America grows and kills 10 billion animals every year. By reducing meat portions we can save money, improve health, and help the environment! Mark Bittman did a great piece on the [meat machine](#) for the *New York Times* ... he even coined a term – less-meatarianism.

According to Loglisci, "there is more than enough evidence that shows reducing meat consumption nationwide would lead to dramatic improvements in environmental degradation, widespread public and personal health risks, animal welfare and environmental and social justice issues." He wrote a very informative [Center for a Livable Future](#) blog post, [How Much Does U.S. Livestock Contribute to Greenhouse Gas Emissions](#), about the scientific research on how agriculture and meat production contributes to greenhouse gas emissions, debunking some claims floating around that are not so accurate.

[Michael Pollan](#), national best-selling author of *The Omnivores Dilemma* and *The Botany of Desire* said on the Oprah show, “Even one meatless day a week — a meatless Monday, which is what we do in my household — if everybody in America did that, that would be the equivalent of taking 20 million mid-size sedans off the road.”

Across the pond, Sir Paul McCartney started a similar movement called [Meat Free Mondays](#). On their website McCartney sings a song urging you to give up meat just one day each week to help curb carbon emissions and slow global warming. Plenty of people are joining the movement, including Sheryl Crow, Sir Richard Branson, Woody Harrelson, Yoko Ono, Chris Martin, Moby, and [many others](#).

Ever since I learned about [the chicks being ground alive](#) at egg farms, I have become even more keenly aware of the role my food choices has on the environment, and how little I am aware of what goes on in my food's production. Though I already try to eat low on the food chain and try to eat organic, I'm not an exclusive vegetarian. Now, I am now going to take this opportunity to definitively join onto Meatless Monday as a way to help out the planet a little more. Lucky for me, and you if you join me, there are many recipes out there by others who have gone this route, including [Nutrition Expert Mitzi Dulan](#), and [Jennifer Grayson](#), Founding Editor of The [Red White and Green](#) and Huffington Post's Eco-Etiquette blogger.

And for those people who are already vegans and vegetarians but still want to help, here's another option - [Heat Free Mondays](#). No you don't have to go without a heater, but the idea is to not cook to contribute even more to saving greenhouse gases!

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## Egg industry grinds millions of baby chicks alive

09/07/2009







*A "sexer" working at Hy-Line in Iowa separates out male from female chicks, tossing males down the chute to be macerated or ground up alive/  
Copyright (c) 2009 Mercy for Animals*

Sometimes you see something that makes your jaw drop and stuns you into silence, which is quickly followed by outrage. When I watched this Youtube video, I had that experience. Everyone who eats eggs should know about this and watch [this video](#) (also below). It's not bloody or gory, but shows a bunch of very adorable fuzzy chicks dropping into a machine that the narrator explains grinds them up alive. Warning: It is probably hard for most people to watch this and not cringe.

Here's the scoop. Someone from the Chicago-based nonprofit [Mercy for Animals](#) went undercover to work for [Hy-Line's](#) Iowa egg factory for two weeks and secretly recorded video. The most ghoulish scene involves baby chicks moving down a conveyor belt, where workers separate out the males and toss them into a chute where they are ground up alive in a meat grinder or macerator. The video itself only shows one meaty chick at the opposite end of the grinder, but the narrator says he saw bloody pulp coming from it. The industry euphemistically calls it "instantaneous euthanasia" and get this - this is not unusual. It's apparently legal and widely used in the egg production industry. Even with cage-free eggs.

Apparently, this happens to an estimated 200 million male chicks per year, industry-wide, with Hy-Line alone producing 33.4 million chicks per year according to their website. After the Associated Press got hold of the video, Hy-Line confirmed that "instantaneous euthanasia" of male chicks is industry standard, and said it's "supported by the animal veterinary and scientific community" including the [American Veterinary Medical Association](#) (their guidelines on euthanasia [here](#)).

Hy-Line confirmed the video shows violations of its own animal rights policy, though the grinding is legal and they say, the most "instantaneous" way of killing the chicks. (Certainly it is not the most humane). The ground-up baby chicks apparently go into dog food or fertilizer. The male chicks serve no purpose to egg companies - alive - because they don't lay eggs, and don't grow fast enough to be sold for meat.

I'm confounded at how the public could not have known about this. Mercy for Animals' Executive Director, Nathan Runkle, questioned in a news conference in Des Moines: would it be acceptable if it were puppies or kitties?

On Mercy for Animals website they list [statements from four experts](#) about the practice. Dr. Karen Davis, the founder and president of [United Poultry Concerns](#), says, "Given that the nervous system of a chicken originates during the 21st hour of incubation, and that a chick has a fully developed nervous system at the time of hatching, it is reasonable to conclude, as a fact of neurophysiology, that the chicks are suffering extreme pain as they are being cut up by macerator blades."

Female chicks don't escape pain and suffering. They go to the debeaking machine, which burns off the beak with a laser to prevent hens from pecking one another. In a normal life, the chicks would be sheltered and comforted by their mother's wings for the first part of their life. The video shows the chicks hanging by their beak from the machine as they squirm and flail about.

It certainly makes a person think twice about eggs. I pay \$1 or more per carton extra for cage-free eggs but according to the San Francisco Chronicle's Tails of the City blog, the [Humane Society of the United States](#) said even companies selling cage-free eggs engage in "instantaneous euthanasia." In grocery stores, only eggs "[certified Humane](#)" come from companies that don't kill baby chicks or debeak, though they can still [trim beaks](#) to prevent cannibalism. One can also find local individuals who raise and sell eggs, though the practice is unregulated. Mercy for Animals promotes veganism.

After all this egg talk, curiosity got the better of me and I researched cage-free egg production conditions overall. Turn out, a journalist from the [Arizona Republic](#) compared a regular egg farm to one that sells cage-free eggs, and found the cage-free conditions worse. The chickens ran around in their own feces, and the chickens pecked one another and had lost feathers around their neck as they fought to establish pecking order. This was just two specific farms, but I may have to research and write more about this in the future.

Mercy for Animals sent letters to 50 of the nation's largest grocery chains asking them to put the following label on eggs: "Warning: Male chicks are ground-up alive by the egg industry." Somehow I don't think that will happen voluntarily, but regardless, it seems to me that all consumers should know about this standard industry practice.

We got dolphin-safe tuna several years back because of public pressure and boycotts, and I believe that if people care about this, they can also demand the industry engage in humane egg production.

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## Cow urine soda

08/31/2009

Quirky stories always intrigue me. From a Western point of view, we might think that some of the things non-Westerners eat and drink and otherwise ingest are a bit, um, odd. Take shark fin soup, giant water bugs, scorpions, candied *Cordyceps* (for you [Planet Earth](#) fans, those are the fungi that take over ants and other insects and then emerge from their brains), and of course tiger penises – thought to bring virility. Well this one may take the prize: [cow urine soda](#).

Turns out, some people drink cow urine already. Hindus revere cows and some even drink cow urine in religious festivals. Actually, while trekking through eastern Nepal in search of the red panda, one of my trek mates was a man who [drank his own pee](#) for its supposedly nutritional value - every day. I kid you not. But I digress.



*Cow meat might taste good, but cow pee?*  
Copyright (c) 2005 [Wendee Holtcamp](#)

The Cow Protection Department of the [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh](#) (RSS), aka National Volunteer Corps, is in the final stages of developing the cow urine soda, known as gau jal. Some consider RSS as a hardline group due to their desire to transform India's secular society to one in which a Hindu supremacy exists. India has banned RSS in India three separate times, once after Ghandi's assassination, and most recently after a 1992 mob riot at Babri Masjid mosque; however, the organization was acquitted each time and they vehemently deny militancy.

RSS has developed the new soft drink to counteract what they believe to be corrupting influences of foreign corporations, in this case Pepsi and Coca-Cola, on Hindu culture. They will mix the cow urine with flavors such as gooseberry and aloe vera along with some ayurvedic herbs. RSS spokesman Om Prakash says that cow urine is known to treat up to 80 different incurable diseases, including diabetes.

Treat and cure are quite different, though, and whether cow urine truly has any medicinal properties is anyone's guess. They talk about even exporting it. I for one am very interested in following this product and whether it will be the "next big thing" – you never know.

What's the weirdest animal product you have eaten?

ADDENDUM: I just learned that urine from female cows contains taurine. This is interesting because that is the same non-essential amino acid you find in energy drinks like Red Bull, Monster, Rock Star, etc., though that version gets produced synthetically. Maybe the RSS is onto something after all...

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