

# „Humane“ Slaughtering

It is morally irresponsible to try to legitimate meat consumption through the possibility of „humane“ slaughtering, apart from the fact this would never be possible on a large scale anyway. There are too many meat-eaters who cling to the fairy-tale of humane slaughtering, so as not to have to give up their dietary habits. They usually argue that „theoretically it would be possible to slaughter in a duly considerate way; it is not my fault that this is not done, so I can permit myself to eat meat from animals killed in a „normal“ way, without having to have a bad conscience“. This is the reason for this flyer in trying to broadly shed light upon this matter.

You might try to work for a week in one of the larger slaughterhouses and attempt to put into practice the ideas of „humane“ slaughtering. Either you are going to realize soon that in this kind of work any compassion with the animals to be killed (i.e. develop a sympathetic understanding of their panic and mortal terror) is impossible if one has to continue doing this job, or you are going to break down from sheer psychic stress. By demanding that the slaughterers should have more compassion for the animals at their mercy, it is exactly the impossible thing that is asked for. Could you look daily upon slaughterhouse activity at your elbow? I presume you could not. Why? Because you are capable of being sympathetic to these beings „condemned“ to death, able to feel their mortal terror (except of course if you have already lost all compassion). So it is your feelings that prevent you from working in a slaughterhouse; at the same time, these feelings – which make it impossible for you to work there – are summoned from the slaughterers! This claim is totally impossible for them to fulfil, out of sheer need of self-protection of the workers.

The summons of „humane“ slaughtering is usually put up by people who do not agree with nowadays' ways of slaughtering, but can

not see any alternative to that. Yet the real alternative would be very simple: drastically reduce the number of killings, or abolish slaughtering altogether. A drastic reduction would permit to deal individually with every animal that still would have to be killed, and to try at least to alleviate it's death less for it. The reason why this alternative is rejected right from the start is all too obvious: it would ask us all to modify our lives. We would all at least have to change our dietary habits and could not wait with folded arms until somebody comes and provides for a more humane way of slaughtering. Anybody having real compassion for the tormented animals in a slaughterhouse has only one possibility to be of any help in a *personal* and *tangible* way: stop eating meat. It is demand that defines production, also in the case of meat.

Here one could object that animals are not only killed for their meat; yet all the other animal products are by-products or waste of the slaughtering process, and thus economically less important (alone in Switzerland, 600'000 tons of meat are consumed every year). Relinquishing meat consumption would therefore produce an immediate decrease in the number of killings. Nevertheless, the other animal products should briefly be dealt with here:

- Humanity is not dependent on animal bodies as a source of natural produce: meat, eggs, milk and milk products are not necessary for human nutrition and very probably responsible for a large number of civilization diseases.<sup>1</sup> Lambswool can easily be replaced by cotton (and besides, for getting the wool, no killing would be necessary).
- Right now, leather is the most problematic material for any vegetarian. For the time being, too many skins come to hand through the meat production (many are e.g. made into gelatine, supplanting more valuable raw-materials as binding or jellying agents). So renouncing to leather would only rise the

price of meat, but not have much of an effect upon the number of killings. There is a reason to the fact that in our space age still no shoes exist that are made of vegetal matter: such developments are economically unattractive „thanks to“ the huge number of animal skins becoming available from slaughterhouses!<sup>2</sup>

- Furs are an unnecessary luxury.

To sum it up, our criticism does not aim at the slaughterers (who in most cases can not afford to be choosy about their job), but at

the belief that slaughtering can be „humanized“.

We vegetarians believe that we ought to show our fellow men a different type of relationship between humans and animals, where killing our fellow beings for mere pleasures of the palate is out of place (independently of whether the animal was killed in a „humane“ way or not). Even if this aim is not attainable in one single leap, we should keep the aim in view, then the intermediary stages come by themselves.



Schweizerische Vereinigung für Vegetarismus (SVV), CH-9315 Neukirch-Egnach  
For more information about vegetarianism please contact our office:  
SVV, Bahnhofstrasse 52, CH-9315 Neukirch-Egnach,  
Tel.: +041 (0)71 477 33 77, Fax: (0)71 477 33 78  
[www.vegetarismus.ch](http://www.vegetarismus.ch) – [www.euroveg.eu](http://www.euroveg.eu)



<sup>1</sup> For this point, see the SVV flyer Nr. 18: Covering the protein needs.

<sup>2</sup> For this point, see the SVV flyer Nr. 11: Leather.