

Argumentative Essay Prompt A6: VEGETARIANISM

Be sure to annotate before filling out your Planning Web.

ESSAY PROMPT: In a multi-paragraph, well-organized essay, take a stance on the following issue: Should people become vegetarians?

Remember to support your claim with relevant textual evidence and be sure to include a counter-argument to make your argument more effective.

Source - ProCon.Org

Background:

In 2012 the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimated that Americans ate an average of 52.3 pounds of beef, 57.4 pounds of chicken, and 43.5 pounds of pork, per person. Vegetarians, about 5% of the US population, do not eat meat (including poultry and seafood). The USDA includes meat as part of a balanced diet, but it also states that a vegetarian diet can meet "the recommended dietary allowances for nutrients."

Many proponents of vegetarianism say that eating meat harms health, wastes resources, causes deforestation, and creates pollution. They often argue that killing animals for food is cruel and unethical since non-animal food sources are plentiful.

Many opponents of a vegetarian diet say that meat consumption is healthful and humane, and that producing vegetables causes many of the same environmental problems as producing meat. They also argue that humans have been eating and enjoying meat for 2.3 million years.

Some Interesting Facts:

- Environmental damage caused by grazing livestock has been a factor in the listing of 171 species under the Endangered Species Act.
- Two in three vegetarians are vitamin B12 deficient, compared to one in 20 meat eaters, according to a peer-reviewed July 2003 study in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition.
- According to the American Dietetic Association a vegetarian diet can meet protein requirements and provide all the essential amino-acids (the building blocks of protein) a person needs for optimal health.
- Archaeological evidence shows that eating meat has been an essential part of human evolution for 2.3 million years.
- The average American gets 67% of his or her dietary protein from animal sources, compared with a world-wide average of 34%.
- A 2012 Gallup poll found that approximately 5% of Americans (15,695,702 people) considered themselves to be vegetarian, and 2% (6,278,281 people) considered themselves to be vegan.

PRO (FOR UNIFORMS)	CON (AGAINST UNIFORMS)
<p>It is cruel and unethical to kill animals for food when vegetarian options are available. Animals are sentient beings that have emotions and social connections. Scientific studies show that cattle, pigs, chickens, and all warm-blooded animals can experience stress, pain, and fear. In the United States about 35 million cows, 115 million pigs, and 9 billion birds are killed for food each year. [96] These animals should not have to die to satisfy an unnecessary dietary preference.</p>	<p>Eating meat is not cruel or unethical; it is a natural part of the cycle of life. Vegetarians mistakenly elevate the value of animal life over plant life. Research shows that plants respond electrochemically to threats and may feel fear, so vegetarians are also causing harm every time they kill and eat a plant. Every organism on earth dies or is killed, at some point, so others organisms can live. There is nothing wrong with this cycle; it is how nature works.</p>

<p>Human anatomy has evolved to support a primarily vegetarian diet. Humans do not have the large mouth or long, pointed teeth of carnivores. Human teeth are short and flat for chewing fibrous food. Carnivores have short intestines (3-6 times body length) while human intestines are long (10-11 times body length) to allow slower digestion of plant foods. The liver of a carnivore can detoxify the excess vitamin A absorbed from a meat-based diet. The human liver cannot detoxify excess vitamin A.</p>	<p>Eating meat has been an essential part of human evolution for 2.3 million years. The inclusion of meat in the ancestral diet provided a dense form of nutrients and protein that, when combined with high-calorie low-nutrient carbohydrates such as roots, allowed us to develop our large brains and intelligence. [Evidence shows our taste buds evolved to crave meat's savory flavor.</p>
<p>A vegetarian diet delivers complete nutrition and can provide health benefits. According to the American Dietetic Association, a vegetarian diet can meet protein requirements, provide all the essential amino-acids (the building blocks of protein), and improve health. It can also provide all the necessary vitamins, fats, and minerals, and can improve one's health. According to the USDA and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, meat is not an essential part of a healthy diet.</p> <p>A vegetarian diet can help alleviate world hunger. Over 10 pounds of plant protein are used to produce one pound of beef protein. If these grains were fed to humans instead of animals, more food would be available for the 925 million people in chronic hunger worldwide. Research from Cornell University found that the grain used to feed US livestock alone could feed 800 million people.</p>	<p>Meat is the most convenient protein source available. In one serving, meat provides all the essential amino acids (the building blocks of protein), as well as essential nutrients such as iron, zinc, and B vitamins. Most plant foods do not provide adequate levels of all the essential amino acids in a single serving.</p> <p>Eating meat provides healthy saturated fats, which enhance the function of the immune and nervous systems. Saturated fats contain the fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E and K, and the cholesterol from saturated animal fat is needed for the proper function of serotonin receptors in the brain. According to a Feb. 7, 2014 study by researchers at the Institute of Social Medicine and Epidemiology, vegetarians "suffer significantly more often from anxiety disorder and/or depression." Low cholesterol levels have been linked to depression. Saturated fats are also essential for building and maintaining cell health, and help the body absorb calcium.</p>
<p>A vegetarian diet reduces the chances of developing kidney stones and gallstones. Diets high in animal protein cause the body to excrete calcium, oxalate, and uric acid—the main components of kidney stones and gallstones. A diet high in animal protein is responsible for the high rates (15% of men and 7% of women) of kidney stones in the United States, according to a peer-reviewed Nov. 15, 1999 study.</p>	<p>Meat is the best source of vitamin B12, a vitamin necessary to nervous and digestive system health. Although it is also found in eggs and dairy, a peer-reviewed July 2003 study showed two in three vegetarians were vitamin B12 deficient compared to one in 20 meat eaters.</p>
<p>A vegetarian diet provides a more healthful form of iron than a meat-based diet. Studies have linked heme iron found in red meat with an increased risk of colon and rectal cancer. Vegetarian sources of iron like leafy greens and beans contain non-heme iron.</p>	<p>Eating meat provides a better source of iron than a vegetarian diet. The body absorbs 15% to 35% of the heme iron in meat, but only absorbs 2% to 20% of the non-heme iron found in vegetarian sources like leafy greens and beans.</p>
<p>A vegetarian diet helps build healthy bones because vegetarians absorb more calcium than meat eaters. Meat has high renal acid levels which the body must neutralize by leaching calcium from the bones, which is then passed into urine and lost. There are many sources of healthy vegetarian calcium including tofu, dark leafy greens like kale, spinach, and collard greens, as well as fortified cereals.</p>	<p>A meat-centered diet can help with weight loss. It takes fewer calories to get protein from lean meat than it does from vegetarian options. One serving of lean beef (3 oz.) contains as much protein as one serving of beans (1½ cups) or a veggie burger. However, the lean beef has half the calories of beans (180 vs. 374), and 50%-75% fewer calories than the veggie burger.</p>

A vegetarian diet lowers the risk of heart disease.

According to a peer-reviewed 1999 study of 76,000 people, vegetarians had 24% lower mortality from heart disease than meat eaters. A vegetarian diet also helps lower blood pressure, prevent hypertension, and thus reduce the risk of stroke.

Eating meat increases the risk of getting type 2 diabetes.

A peer-reviewed 2004 study from Harvard researchers found that eating meat increases the risk of getting type 2 diabetes in women, [9] and a 2002 study found that eating processed meat increases the risk in men. A vegetarian diet rich in whole grains, legumes, nuts, and soy proteins helps to improve glycemic control in people who already have diabetes.

A vegetarian diet promotes a healthy weight.

According to a peer-reviewed 2003 Oxford University study of 37,875 healthy men and women aged 20-97, 5.4% of meat eaters were obese compared to 3% of vegetarians. Meat eaters had an average Body Mass Index (BMI) 8.3% higher than vegetarians. Another 2006 meta-study that compiled data from 87 studies also found that vegetarian diets are associated with reduced body weight.

Studies show that vegetarians are up to 40% less likely to develop cancer than meat eaters.

According to a peer-reviewed 1994 study by Harvard researchers, consuming beef, pork, or lamb five or more times a week significantly increases the risk of colon cancer. The World Cancer Research Fund found that eating processed meats such as bacon or sausage increases this risk even further. A 2014 study found that diets high in animal protein were associated with a 4-fold increase in cancer death risk compared to high protein diets based on plant-derived protein sources.

Raising animals for food contributes to air and water pollution.

Manure produces toxic hydrogen sulfide and ammonia which pollute the air and leach poisonous nitrates into nearby waters. The USDA estimates that livestock produces 500 million tons of manure annually—three times what humans produce. Runoff laden with manure is a major cause of "dead zones" in 173,000 miles of US waterways, including the 7,700-square-mile dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico. People living near CAFOs often have respiratory problems from hydrogen sulfide and ammonia air pollution. A peer-reviewed 2006 study of Iowa students near a CAFO found 19.7% had asthma - nearly three times the state average of 6.7%.

Raising beef is often the most efficient way to produce food for humans.

About 85% of US grazing land is not suitable for raising crops humans can eat. Today 98% of the original American prairie lands, along with their native plants and animals, are gone. [60] Most of that land is now covered in corn and wheat fields. Natural prairie grasslands can coexist with sustainable herds of cattle or bison, but they cannot coexist with monocrop agriculture.

Vegetarian diets are not necessarily better for the environment.

About 90% of US cropland suffers from top soil loss at 13 times the sustainable rate. 92% of US soybeans (a vegetarian staple protein) are planted with genetically modified soy, immune to herbicides. This immunity allows soy farmers to douse their fields with large quantities of weed-killing herbicides which are toxic to other plants and fish. Some scientists worry that increased herbicide use could create "super weeds."

US meat consumption does not significantly contribute to global deforestation, or loss of US forest land.

In 2001 about 95% [18] of animal products consumed in the United States were produced in the United States. Despite the US consumption of about 27 billion pounds of beef per year, the percentage of forested US land has remained steady at around 33% since 1907.

Processed vegetarian protein options such as tofu can cause more greenhouse gas pollution than farming meat.

A 2010 report from the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) found that the production of soy-based proteins such as tofu could contribute more to greenhouse gas emissions than eating locally produced meat. According to a peer-reviewed 2009 study, giving up all animal products would only give a 7% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, not enough to be worth the dietary sacrifice.

The right to eat what we want, including meat, is a fundamental liberty that we must defend.

Animal-rights and health groups are attempting to control personal behavior, and many would like to see meat consumption severely restricted—if not outlawed—through the use of lawsuits, heavy taxation, and government regulations. What people eat should be a protected personal choice.

It is not necessary to become vegetarian to lower our environmental footprint.

Some vegetarians eat an unhealthy diet, drive SUVs, and consume eggs and dairy products produced at factory farms (CAFOs). Some meat eaters use solar panels, ride a bike, grow their own vegetables, and eat free-range organic meat. All of a person's actions make a difference—not just a single act such as eating meat. For example, biking instead of driving for 5 miles can neutralize the greenhouse gas emissions from eating one quarter-pound hamburger patty.