



Veganuary: Why it's not for cats

This January many of us have been considering our lifestyle choices and making New Year's Resolutions to improve our health and diet. One of the most publicised and talked about trends, is veganism, with many people signing up to 'Veganuary'.

As human beings we make choices about eating meat based on a variety of reasons, and although care needs to be taken when changing to a vegan or vegetarian diet, this can be done very successfully without health problems.

Unfortunately, the same is simply not true for cats. Cats have developed and evolved as 'strict carnivores'. This means that they have developed a unique metabolism that, put simply, requires a supply of a number of nutrients only found in a meat/animal-based diet. Without these nutrients cats develop a variety of diseases and will die.

Several nutrients (including certain vitamins, amino acids and fatty acids) are required by a cat in its diet that can only be found in animal-based diets. This is simply the result of the development of cats as a predator species – they are not able to adapt to or survive on a plant-based diet.

While in theory it is possible to supplement a vegetable-based diet with various chemically-derived and synthetic nutrients that would otherwise only be found in meat diets to meet the needs of a cat, in practice this is very difficult to achieve and is potentially dangerous as it can readily lead to disease and death of the cat if not done properly.

International Cat Care believes that we need to recognise and respect that cats have developed as a species that depends on a meat-based diet – this is both the natural diet for cats and the one that meets their unique needs. Cats look and behave as they do because they have evolved to be hunters and eat a meat-based diet. Owning a cat means this should be recognised, and one of the best ways to meet a cat's nutritional needs is to feed a good quality commercial meat-based complete diet, designed to meet all their needs.

People who have a strong ethical or moral objection to feeding meat to their pets should consider whether they would be better owning an alternative pet that can be fed a natural meat-free diet (such as a rabbit) rather than impose an unnatural and potentially highly dangerous diet on a cat.

So save 'Veganuary' as a lifestyle choice for yourself and be confident that by feeding your cat a meat-based diet, you are making the right choice.

For further information on feeding your cat, see our website:

<https://icatcare.org/advice/general-care/keeping-your-cat-healthy/feeding-your-cat-or-kitten>