

Vegan Prisoners Support Group

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Welcome to the second edition of our news sheet which provides prison staff with up-to-date information on catering for vegans within the prison service.

Note: Back issues of our news sheets can be found on our website www.vpsg.info

Contents:

- Definition of a vegan
- Quote from Alan Tuckwood
- 12 prisons participate in burger mix trial
- Answers to questions received from prisons
- Reports from ex-prisoners
- Prison Shop update

DEFINITION OF A VEGAN

VEGANISM may be defined as a way of living which seeks to exclude, as far as possible and practical, all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose.

In dietary terms it refers to the practice of dispensing with **all** animal produce - including meat, fish, poultry, eggs, animal milks, honey, and their derivatives.

Abhorrence of the cruel practices inherent in an agricultural system based on the abuse of animals is probably the single most common reason for the adoption of veganism, but many people are drawn to it for health, ecological, resource, spiritual and other reasons.

The wearing of such items as leather, suede etc would not be acceptable.

“Prisoner Catering Services provide meals for all prisoners, regardless of ethnic or cultural background. The ethos of the provision is one of informed choice. I remain committed to provide a quality, adequate and acceptable service.” A. Tuckwood [August 2003]

Results of Initial Trial of Burgermix

The initial trial involved 12 prisons each testing a 10 kilo bag.

Description: Versatile ambient burger suitable for vegans and vegetarians – 10 kilo bags – makes approximately 400 individual burgers. Cost: approximately 11p per burger.

The returned completed questionnaires stated that the product was tasty and easy to use. The mixture was found suitable not only as burgers, but also for savoury pie fillings, shepherds pies etc.

Conclusion:

Catering Response: The product was found to be very versatile, with little or no wastage, and as the product has a long shelf life and is in the price range of other burgers suitable for vegans, it was felt it could be a popular addition to the prison kitchen. They also stated that if the item was available through the National Contract they would purchase it on a regular basis.

Customer Reaction: The comments from the customers were very favourable. They found the mix very tasty and definitely preferred it to other TVP's as it didn't have the usual after taste often associated with such products.

As the first part of the trial was a success we are extending our trial to all prisons wishing to receive a free trial pack which will make 40-50 burgers.

To receive your free trial pack - just call

Tel: 020 8363 5729

NEW TRIAL! The same company also produce a sosage mix also suitable for vegans and vegetarians and any prison wishing to participate in trials of this product please also call the number on the left.

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

If you have any query about any vegan product, either call us or write to us at the above address. We will print a selection in every quarterly news sheet.

The following are some questions which have dealt with in the past few weeks.

Question: How do I provide Essential Fatty Acids in the vegan diet?

Answer: Essential Fatty Acids can be provided by using nuts such as walnuts and almonds. Recommended allowance 1-2 oz/daily. [DBC list mixed nuts which can be used for nut roasts or issued with salads or cereals]. Avocados are another good source but due to the restrictions of the prison budget probably their cost prohibits their use.

Question: Are the Breakfast Packs suitable for vegans?

Answer: Five of the six types of cereals included in the pack are suitable for vegans.

The Crisp Rice is not suitable, but the following are:

- Frosted Flakes,
- Cocoa Rice
- Cornflakes
- Branflakes
- Wheat biscuits

The sugar, preserves, tea bags and margarine (Bebo) are vegan suitable, but the powdered milk is not.

Research completed on additional breakfast cereals:

Weetabix Cornflakes and Weetabix Frosted Cornflakes in the 10kg packs are vegan
Chef William Muesli, 12½ kilo is also suitable for vegans.

Question: Is E471 suitable for vegans?

Answer: Not all, but most E471 found in food is vegan.

E471 can come from either an animal or non-animal source. Unfortunately it is necessary to check the source of E471 for each product. If it is labelled 'mono and di-glycerides of fatty acids' then it will be suitable for vegans.

Note: VPSG is able to conduct research on any product to ascertain whether it is suitable for vegans. If you would like our help just contact us. All our services are free of charge.

Question: Is the E471 in Daisy Fresh bread vegan?

Answer: We can confirm that the E471 in Daisy Fresh bread (by British Bakeries), is vegan, making the product suitable for vegans.

Question: What are the sources of E160c, E262, E330 and E621? Are they suitable for vegans?

Answer:

- E160c: paprika
- E262: acid distilled from wood
- E330: citrus juice fermentation of molasses
- E621: monosodium glutamate

All the above E numbers are vegan.

Question: How can I provide B12 to vegans? Does a certain amount need to be provided each day?

Answer: The only reliable vegan sources of B12 are foods fortified with added B12, i.e some soya milks, margarine, soya mince, breakfast cereals and fortified yeast extracts.

The daily intake should be at least three micrograms of B12 a day. If B12 is not supplied daily, then a larger quantity will need to be provided, as B12 can only be absorbed in small amounts.

Note: Re: B12 Absorption

It should be noted that Calcium is essential in the assimilation of B12. The average adult needs 700mg/day (**3.5 litres weekly**). Provamel soya milk contains 140mg/100grams (information obtained from the Vegan Society). In turn Calcium itself requires a source of Magnesium. Easiest sources of Magnesium bananas, prunes and almonds.

Importance of B12 in the Vegan Diet

B12 is used in the healthy working of the nervous system and to form blood in the bone marrow. B12 deficiency can cause anaemia and nervous system damage. In adults typical deficiency symptoms include loss of energy, tingling, numbness, reduced sensitivity to pain or pressure, blurred vision, unsteady gait, sore tongue, poor memory, confusion, hallucinations and personality changes.

Question: Is there a gelatine suitable for vegans?

No - "[Gelatin/Gelatine](#) is a gelling agent derived from animal ligaments, skins, tendons, bones etc."

However, there are several vegan alternatives to gelatine, such as [Agar Agar](#), [Carrageen](#) and [Gelozone](#).

Additional Info

DBC can supply fortified soya milk and other soya desserts on request. The only margarines we can confirm suitable for vegans are Astra, Dawn, Marquee All Veg [but not Marquee Soft] and Bebo. DBC's Gravy Mix is vegan, but not their Pizza Mix. Marquee Soft Margarine is not suitable for vegans.

Comment from VPSG's Nutritional Advisor

The prison diet appears to have a shortfall in the area of essential fatty acids and iodine, both important in the vegan diet. Essential Fatty Acids can be easily provided by issuing almonds and walnuts daily. However, although iodine can be found in small amounts in fresh green leafy vegetables it is unlikely they could contain more than a small portion of the required amount. The VPSG therefore, supports the Vegan Society's recommendation that an iodine supplement be available to all vegans at the dose of 3 tablets/weekly. **See page 4 Prison Shops**

Prison Issue toiletries suitable for issue to vegans:

Shampoo: Hotel Complimentaries 'The Collection'; **Toothpaste:** Jordans Personal Care – Freshmint;

Deodorant: Chilwoods Pampered Blue Ice. **NOTE: No suitable bar soap is available at the moment.**

Reports by ex-Prisoners

Sonia Hayward on HMP Cookham Wood

I arrived at Cookham Wood, March 03 until August 03, after spending four days in Holloway.

Food

During the first week at Cookham Wood I had a meeting with Wayne Hodges, the Catering Manager. It was an informal chat about my diet during which he provided a brochure from Goodness Foods and asked me to make a basic list of things I would like him to consider for inclusion in my vegan pack and anything I would like as an occasional treat.

There was a three week menu cycle in place with a vegan option every day. In addition there was also access to rice, potatoes and veg and unlimited bread. We were issued fruit every day which was often an apple or orange, but sometimes a banana, strawberries or a wedge of melon. I was often given dairy free yogurts and from time to time I had vegan ice-cream or a chocolate fudge pudding, and Provamel chocolate or vanilla pudding when similar items were provided to the other prisoners. Soya milk was available upon request. I was assured that his staff would never pass off any item as vegan when it wasn't.

All the staff wore disposable gloves to serve food and each dish had its own serving spoon, so there was no chance of cross contamination and the kitchens looked clean. Most of the food is cooked in adjacent HMP Rochester, by trained chefs and the in-mates that worked in the kitchen were training for their NVQ.

Once a week I received a vegan pack, which varied, but usually included nuts, dried fruit, marmite, trail mix, bombay mix, and sometimes egg free mayonnaise. On the whole I found the food to be very good, with some of the

meals excellent. During my stay an NHS nutritionist was involved in a project there to ensure the food was healthy and they recommended more fruit and veg in line with the healthier eating programme they were promoting. The staff bent over backwards to be helpful and I cannot fault their efforts.

Toiletries

The Governor gave me permission to order toiletries/moisturiser etc via mail order, if they came directly from the supplier. I would phone VPSG to place my order, who in turn rang Honesty and the parcel arrived through reception via the normal method. I could also order nuts, seeds, supplements, moisturiser, toiletries etc through the prison shop using their Special Order Scheme.

Education

There were up to five education lessons a week. This included core subjects, such as IT, maths, English, dressmaking, social and business skills and Spanish. Beauty therapy (products not animal tested, but not sure if vegan), art and silk painting (you could have the option of synthetic silk). Also bite size taster courses, (various subjects) of six lessons for short term prisoners.

To the best of my knowledge nothing would exclude vegans.

Visits

My visitors were able to purchase crisps, sesame snaps and cashew nuts, and a selection of soft drinks in the visiting room. For my vegan visitors I was allowed to bring down soya milk from my cell for their tea or coffee.

Kitchen

Each wing had its own kitchen for inmates to use by enhanced prisoners who had completed a health and hygiene course. There were three cupboards: one for all diets, one for Muslims, and one for vegetarians. I personally felt the dining hall provided enough food not to need to cook extra.

Conclusion

On the whole I found Cookham Wood very accommodating to my vegan needs. I felt the kitchen staff made an excellent effort and felt I was given equal opportunities almost identical to other inmates. Although it would have been nice to receive a vegan Easter egg at Easter as did the non-vegan prisoners! This prison has a Healthy Heartbeat Award for food. They are used to catering for all different requirements for allergy and religious reasons.

Heather Nicholson on HMP Highpoint

Even though I only spent four and a half months in prison at HMP Highpoint I found that Stuart Head was very willing to try to accommodate my vegan diet. He was in frequent liaison with the VPSG in order to ensure they were providing my vegan needs and as a result became involved in assisting in the compilation of the Catering Information Pack now in place in all prisons.

I have been a strict vegan for most of my life on principle. This isn't a fad or a phase it is something I, and other vegans, take very seriously. This obviously doesn't change just because my freedom is taken away.

Equal opportunities should ensure that everything other prisoners are entitled to, should be either provided by the prison or available to buy from the canteen.

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The Home Office Guidelines issued in 1996 state: "A Vegan diet is based on fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, beans, pulses and cereals", but although every effort was made to provide me with a nutritional vegan diet I felt that more raw vegetables with the addition of seeds might be a consideration.

Prison Shop

Fortunately the prison shop had the **Special Order Scheme** in place so I was able to order my specialist requirements through this source. Other prisoners can buy hair extensions, etc and tobacco in prison, most of which are clearly not necessary for your health and are either luxury items or a drug. I wasn't asking for such luxuries, **just the vegan basics to remain in good health.**

The VPSG sent their reception pack of toiletries and washing powder as soon

as we arrived. The prison were quite slow in giving it to us, until I pointed out that although we had received a lecture from them on the importance of hygiene and the dangers of contagious diseases, they were withholding our bar soap so we hadn't been able to wash properly for a week, as there wasn't a **prison issue vegan soap**. Suddenly we had our reception pack within hours!

Conclusion

Stuart Head, the Catering Manager, was very helpful and we had many meetings with him and other kitchen staff about our diet. He prepared a separate vegan canteen list which provided us with toiletries, soya desserts, nuts, seeds, chocolate, muesli and other vegan essentials, **especially my lip balm and moisturiser** which I desperately

needed as the prison dried out my skin and lips badly.

I felt I was reasonably lucky at HMP Highpoint as I have heard horrendous stories about other prisons and I hear that some vegan prisoners are still having problems at the moment in obtaining vegan products from their prison shop, **especially ones run by Aramark** and also with their vegan diet. It is not acceptable to be forced to live for years on poor quality, over cooked stodge and lack of equal opportunities via the prison shop.

Hopefully one day soon all prisons will follow the guidelines for providing all vegan prisoners with a more than adequate diet and ensure that we are not discriminated against because of our vegan lifestyle.

Heather Nicholson
12th March 2003. Released April 2002

Tony Humphries on HMP Rochester

Footwear

I arrived at Rochester Prison in October 2000 and remained there until March 2002. On arrival there were a few teething problems with regard non-leather footwear and diet. However the staff, which I eventually found to include one vegan were extremely understanding and helpful allowing personal footwear to be sent in and open access to the kitchen staff in order to agree a suitable diet.

Clothing

Because the prison is a B cat prison, no footwear of any type was allowed in without x-ray. However a governor's application, supported by wing staff who checked my Vegan status with VPSG, allowed non-leather footwear to be handed in or sent direct from vegetarian shoes. Non leather work gloves were also handed in.

Diet

On my second week at Rochester, having had the usual errors at the hot plate, I was able to meet the kitchen manager Wayne Hodges who was keen to help arrange a suitable diet that was 100% vegan. Both he and his staff were actually interested in the subject and photo copied many recipes from the books I had with me. It was arranged that I receive the recommended 3.5 litres weekly of fortified Soya milk a week. If on some occasions there was only un-fortified soya milk available, then additional dried fruit, prunes and dates were sent across to ensure I have sufficient calcium in my diet.

Every evening I received a fresh salad, usually with the addition of mixed nuts or hummus, mushroom pate [made in-house] Scheese, falafel or one of their other in-house dishes, such as their garlic/mushroom risotto which was excellent. I also had access to the rice/potatoes etc at the hotplate. Lunch was usually a roll with a vegan filling of a variety of fillings which included hummus, pate or Scheese or other

sandwich fillings bought in from Goodness Foods.

Breakfast was muesli picked up on a weekly basis. Every 3 months a whole food order was put in allowing a stock of vegan items such as biscuits/sandwich fillings/soya mayo and "cheatin" products. If a seasonal occurrence was nearing then the order would include sweets and chocolate so that the vegans received a similar treat to that which the other prisoners received.

Soya yoghurts were made available at the weekends, and when a cooked breakfast was made for others (Xmas/Easter) rashers etc were provided for vegans. Extra fruit was made available if no vegan sweet was on hand.

Eventually a faultless 3 week menu cycle was introduced including many kitchen cooked products such as soya bolognaise, garlic/mushroom, rice/soya chilli, curry/salads/fritters and vegan suet puddings. The kitchens were always open and it was always evident that different oils were used for non-meat cooking.

Toiletries

Toiletries at Rochester consisted only of the standard prison type. However once a month I was given permission to order through the canteen via the Special Order Scheme using A.C.Ward who collected from an outside shop. This allowed me to buy anything from shaving products to tins of braised soya and **pumpkin and sesame seeds and any supplements such as kelp tablets for my iodine requirements.**

Overall: Of all the prisons that I visited during my sentence, Rochester provided an environment as equal to other prisoners as I believe you could possibly get. The halal/kosher and vegetarian diets were also well supported from reception.

Inevitably some mistakes were made, such as the margarine changing without notice. But this was a genuine mistake and promptly rectified.

Anthony Humphries
Sentence 7 years, released July 2003

PRISON SHOPS

Supplements:

The importance of Iodine

The average adult requires 140mg/day in order to obtain sufficient iodine. The most reliable way to obtain this mineral is through an iodine supplement which, we recommend should be ordered through Prison Shops as requested.

Info on iodine obtained from The Vegan Society

Prison Shops under the Aramark Contract

VPSG have continued to outline the importance of making provisions for vegans in Prison Shops under the Aramark Contract to ensure equal opportunities.

The Prison Shops team are sourcing a list of vegan alternatives for addition to their Core Product List.

VPSG continues to recommend the Special Order Scheme, in place at Prison Shops under independent management, for specialist items. Our recommendations are under consideration.

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- More reports from ex-prisoners
- Results of new research
- Update on bar soap
- Update on prison shops