
LETTER WRITING MANUAL



Promoting understanding and respect for vegetarian lifestyles

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WELCOME to The Vegetarian Society's new letter writing manual.

I am a big believer in the power of a well-written, carefully targeted letter. The right words, read by the right people, have the power to change the world. So I hope that this collection of ideas, advice and examples will help to make some changes for the better and help promote understanding and respect for vegetarian lifestyles.

Please read and use this guide, which is dedicated to the memory of Norah May Morricks – a keen and successful letter-writer who was a member of The Vegetarian Society for 72 years until her death in 2003.

Happy writing,



Tina Fox
Chief Executive

HOW A LETTER WRITING CAMPAIGN CAN BE USEFUL

Writing letters is a simple yet very effective activity for an individual as well as for Vegetarian Society local groups and information centres. You can make a real difference in your own community with a consistent letter-writing campaign (and these days, we include emails in this). You can hold letter writing workshops as group events, or you can encourage your members, (and friends and family) to write individually from home. In the latter case, it may be a good idea to assign a particular category of letter or email to each person so they can make it their project. It's also a way for individuals to contribute to our work, even if circumstances prevent them from joining in with a local group's activities.

■ Letters to the editor

Write to your local press:

- To take advantage of a local debate that has cropped up in an earlier issue of the paper
- To present the vegetarian viewpoint to a news item
- To highlight national campaigns such as National Vegetarian Week
- For straightforward publicity for your group, tell them about a local event you are arranging

Write to specialist magazines/papers to:

- Ask them to cover more vegetarian-related subjects
- Ask them to include some vegetarian options in their recipe section
- Inform them about a national event like National Vegetarian Week and ask them to feature it

■ Letters to local caterers

- To encourage them to try more vegetarian choices on the menu
- To correct any misapprehensions they may have about what is vegetarian
- To say thank you when they have made a good effort to cater for vegetarians

■ Letters to local shops, supermarkets

- To encourage them to stock more vegetarian products (it's probably best to name one or two specific products per letter that they could try stocking, rather than just generally asking for "more veggie stuff")
- To encourage them to change any incorrect labelling
- To say "thank you" for looking after vegetarians very well

■ Letters to local schools

- To spread the word to young minds
- To develop regular contact with schools
- To keep vegetarianism on the agenda
- To inform schools of the resources offered by The Vegetarian Society – e.g. school project book, school catering guide
- To highlight the benefits of outside speakers i.e. fresh approach, stimulation, special skills.

Please remember: It is the brief of The Vegetarian Society to educate people about vegetarianism rather than to attack the meat industry. We find a non-confrontational approach is much more acceptable to audiences of all kinds. We prefer to concentrate on the positive aspects of vegetarianism, such as demonstrating how tasty, nutritious and easy to prepare vegetarian food can be. You can, of course, state your own opinions when writing as an individual, but if you are offering the Society's address as a contact point for further information, you should stick to the above policy.

WRITING TO THE PRESS

Virtually all newspapers and magazines have a page for readers' letters, which is often very popular. Getting a letter published can be an effective way of obtaining free publicity that is open to everyone, so do have a go.

Do a bit of research before writing your letter. Some publications have their own guidelines and impose their own limitations on the letters they publish, so check the intended publication first. Read the Letters Page, make a note of their guidelines, if any, and study the sort of letters that do get published.

Make sure it is obvious the letter is intended for publication. Anything that's ambiguous on this point may just be ignored. It is up to you to take responsibility for the clarity of your communication. Address it quite clearly to the Letters Page, or the person who edits the Letters Page if that is stated, and type across the top "For publication please". Be polite. No matter how outraged you may feel about a previously published letter, something in the news or something that's happened locally, it's not the fault of the editors/sub-editors/office staff, who also have feelings.

Presentation is important, even for a short, informal letter. Editors are busy people and see a lot of material during the course of a working day. Clean, well presented material is far more likely to catch the eye so:

- Use a clean sheet of new paper, A4 if possible, not the back of an old gas bill or advertising flier even if it is 'recycling'
- Type if at all possible
- Use one side of the paper only, use wide line spacing with a good margin at the sides, top and bottom. This helps the editors by allowing space to make notes or corrections as they read
- Make sure your printer isn't running out of toner or your typewriter ribbon isn't faded
- Don't use capital letters to give emphasis
- If it is not possible to type, write very legibly making especially sure that proper names, place names etc are clearly legible
- Don't use abbreviations or acronyms. Something that may seem very obvious to you could be a total mystery to the reader
- Be brief and to the point. It is much better to make one point clearly than to try and cram in as many arguments as possible at the risk of confusing and boring your audience

If you are responding to a previously published letter or news item, do it promptly, old news will not be interesting.

If the letter is more than just a comment on some issue in the news, eg. you are asking for volunteers or drawing attention to an event, state what you want in a direct, straightforward way. It may help you to get in all the vital details if you "think Ws"!

- WHO (is involved, who is organising it)
- WHAT (it's all about, what's happening)
- WHERE (it will take place)
- WHEN (date, time)
- WHY (the reason behind it all)

Remember also that if a letter is too long, the editor will either not use it at all, thus wasting your time and effort, or pass it over to a sub-editor to shorten it. If this happens, the chances that your message will get distorted are very high. It's better to practice getting your point over clearly and succinctly in a few lines.

Look for a local angle if possible, editors of local papers are much more interested in what's happening in their own area than in national events and news.

If writing for a group, always give a contact name and address, phone number, website or email address or you will lose the value of your publicity. Some papers have a policy of not publishing readers' addresses so make it very clear that you don't mind this address being published. Include a phone number if possible because if the editor is short of space, an address may be omitted but there's a better chance a phone number will be left in.

If you are writing as an individual and don't want your home address made public, ask your local group if you can give their contact details, or, give The Vegetarian Society's details as a contact for general information about vegetarianism.

Always check your letter before you send it. Look for spelling and grammar mistakes, sentences that don't quite sound right, ambiguous meanings, anything inaccurate or unclear. It's a good idea to read it aloud, even if just to yourself, as mistakes often show up more clearly when spoken aloud.

■ Writing by email

These days, many publications will accept letters sent by email. This can save money on postage but you can run the risk of your letter not arriving or being mistaken for "junk" mail. A lot of the above guidelines will apply to emails as well as snail mail letters.

Check that you have the correct email address – there may be a special address for letters intended for publication, if so, be sure to use it.

Don't skimp on the courtesies. Email is so quick and convenient, many people forget that it can be easy to appear unintentionally rude. It only takes a few extra seconds to open with: Dear Editor and to close with: best wishes.

Remember not to use capitals for emphasis in emails, it's considered to be the equivalent of shouting at someone.

It's still important to check spelling, grammar and accuracy of your information. A letter sent by email may possibly be "pasted" directly onto the Letters Page.

Again, don't forget to add contact details.

■ Sample letters to the press

Morchester Messenger

For publication please

Dear Editor

We have just started up a new social group for vegetarians in Morchester. Our next meeting will be a pot-luck supper at the Function Room, Limetree Hotel, Sandon Road, Morchester at 7.30pm, Tuesday 6 June. We will be watching a video about vegetarian cookery before the supper and there will be a display of recipe books, and recipe sheets to take away. Anyone who is interested in the vegetarian lifestyle is very welcome to attend, please bring a vegetarian dish to share. More information is available from the address below.

Yours sincerely

John Brown

16 Fir Street
Morchester
Tel: 1234 5698

The Letters Editor

Fashion Starz Mag

Dear Editor

I am writing to you to express my disappointment at your irresponsible reporting of the Atkins diet. Your piece entitled "*Eat steak and cheese and get that celeb bod in weeks!*" ignored the government's own health guidelines, not to mention the received wisdom of hundreds of years of medical research.

Eating a meat-heavy diet doesn't even make you feel better about your figure either; the Compassion in World Farming Trust's April 2004 national opinion poll showed that people who eat meat every day were more likely to consider themselves overweight or obese than those who ate meat once a week or less. The Food Standards Agency's advice to everyone is to eat a healthy balanced diet, which should include carbohydrates.

There is no need to have any meat in your diet, and eating a plant based diet can be a naturally low fat alternative that helps ensure you get your recommended five portions of fruit and veg a day. I refuse to believe your implication that eating fatty meat products is actually healthy, especially if it is at the expense of food groups we actually need, such as fruit, vegetables and carbohydrates.

The Vegetarian Society produces a guide to healthy eating. For a free copy, phone the Society on 0161 925 2000.

Yours sincerely

Rebecca Moore

Bankside Echo

For publication please

Dear Editor

Your readers may like to know that National Vegetarian Week will be taking place from 24-30 May this year. As part of the celebrations, Bankside Vegetarians will be holding a special vegetarian evening in St Peter's Church Hall on the Wednesday evening from 7.30pm, price £3. We will be having a cookery demonstration by Pamela Shaw, who will be showing us all how to make quick meals for summer evenings, followed by a buffet supper. There will be lots of leaflets and recipes available. Anyone interested in vegetarianism is very welcome to attend. If you can't come to the event but would like a National Vegetarian Week leaflet or further information about our group, please contact the address below.

Yours sincerely

Paul Roberts

20 North Terrace
Bankside
email: paul@everymail.com

The Letters Editor

Northwood News

Dear Editor

Our group, Northwood Vegetarian Society, recently embarked on a project to publish a guide to local eateries where a decent vegetarian meal could be obtained. We were very disappointed to find that, with the honorable exception of Purcell's Pantry in the High Street, almost the only vegetarian dishes available were vegetable lasagne, omelette or baked potatoes with cheese!

We would be delighted to discover that our initial survey was incomplete! If local chefs are producing something more exciting for vegetarians, would they please send us their menus in order to qualify for a free entry in our guide?

Perhaps our local eateries do not realise that at least 4% of the population of this country is vegetarian and many more are trying to reduce their meat consumption. Even more relevant, when a group of people planning a meal out together includes a vegetarian, then their choice of restaurant is usually determined by the vegetarian's needs. It makes sense to incorporate some interesting dishes in your vegetarian menu. Give us a call, we can let you have a copy of The Vegetarian Society's caterers' booklet if you need some suggestions.

Moiria Long

Northwood Vegetarian Society, 01492 333737

→ TIP: we publish all our press releases on our website at www.vegsoc.org/press
They can be a good source of information you can copy and use in your letters, especially if you are writing about national events.

COMMUNICATING WITH OTHERS

How to complain and praise effectively

Much of this section applies to manufacturers and retailers, as well as to restaurants, catering services, and those institutions which regularly provide food for people such as hospitals and schools.

■ Why complain?

To let them know that their product or service is not meeting the requirements of vegetarians adequately: It's a process of education, not a forum for relieving your feelings. The anger you feel following an unpleasant experience may provide a useful spur to action, but if you let it take over, you may lose a very useful opportunity to correct a misapprehension about the needs of vegetarians and establish a good relationship between a caterer, manufacturer or retailer and yourself (and the vegetarian population in general). Think of yourselves as ambassadors when embarking on a letter writing exercise.

To offer positive suggestions on how to improve things: They may be honestly trying hard to cater for vegetarians, but be in need of advice, recipes, help with sourcing ingredients and so on.

■ How to complain

If you are writing as a result of a disappointing experience, do so promptly, but do not complain while you are still feeling angry.

Find the right person to direct your letter to. For example, if a restaurant or café – the owner, if a retailer – customer services manager. If you are dealing with a large company (for example, a food producer), you can usually get a customer services telephone number on the packet. Either that, or you can go to the company's website. Usually there will be a 'site map' or a section called 'contact us' where you can find out who to write to or email.

State the facts clearly but briefly. It may be helpful to include a brief definition of the term "vegetarian" so the owner can understand why you feel disappointed. It's never safe to assume that other people's definition of "vegetarian" is the same as the Society's.

Always remember that people respond better to praise than they do to criticism. If you have embarked on a campaign, for example, to improve the provision of vegetarian foods in local shops or the choice of vegetarian dishes in local restaurants, don't send out a load of angry or indignant, complaining letters! You need to win the managers round, get them on your side and convince them that better veggie provision will be good for their business. You'll be able to do this more effectively if your letters are polite and friendly.

The "Sandwich" formula is a good one for this kind of letter – two layers of bread with a filling and a dash of relish in the middle.

Praise or compliments are the "bread", you can make these two layers lavish if you wish! The object is to get the proprietor on your side and feeling sympathetic towards vegetarians in general.

The complaint is the "filling" – keep it short and factual, explain precisely why it causes a problem.

The "relish" is a positive suggestion about what they can do to improve things, again keep it short and simple. Don't confuse the issue at this stage by including too many points, it's probably best to concentrate on making just one or two things better at a time

So, a typical “sandwich formula” letter might go like this:

Dear Sir,

My friends and I enjoyed a meal in your restaurant on Wednesday evening last week. We were very pleased to see a range of vegetarian options on your menu and your waiters were very helpful, explaining which dishes on the specials board were meat-free.

However, we did notice that all the vegetarian choices contained cheese. As one of my friends is a vegan, he found there was nothing for him to eat except the vegetable side dishes. Also, even lacto-vegetarians like a change now and then and appreciate an alternative to a main course based on cheese.

May I suggest that you look through the enclosed catering leaflet from The Vegetarian Society? It gives several suggestions for main course meals based on nuts or pulses.

You can get further information from their website: www.vegsoc.org/caterers

The service in your restaurant is excellent and it is such a pleasant venue for an special meal, I’m sure you would find that extending your vegetarian menu would attract a greater number of vegetarian customers. In fact, I would recommend it wholeheartedly to the Midshire Vegetarian Group as an excellent choice for their regular “Dining Out” nights.

Yours sincerely

Joe Bloggs

Remember to say thank you!

People are often very quick to complain about mistakes. Letters saying “Well done” are much rarer and they can make a correspondingly greater impact. Positive reinforcement is an excellent educational strategy. If you encounter a caterer or retailer who has done something right for vegetarians, let them know by letter or email. Again, keep the message short and to the point, don’t confuse the issue by bringing in too many things. Let the person in charge know exactly what it is that has earned your appreciation. For example:

Dear Mr Baker

I was in your shop recently and I was very pleased to see you have introduced a selection of soya sausages, burgers, pates and other meat-replacements in your chiller cabinet, all in a compartment clearly marked “suitable for vegetarians”. I’m just writing to say thank you very much. This makes shopping so much easier, I’m sure the other members of our group will also be very pleased when I announce this at our next meeting. I will have no hesitation in recommending your shop to them all.

Yours truly,

Jane Smith

Secretary, Westshire Vegetarians

It’s probably best not to spoil this type of letter by slipping in a underhand complaint, not even a gentle one! Let the praise do its work unhindered. But a local group might well be in a good position to offer small rewards and incentives – in the form of a review in your local newsletter, a mention on your website, a listing in your local vegetarian directory, a regular place in your group’s dining club programme, so don’t forget to mention them.

■ A word about the Trading Standards Office

In most circumstances our aim is to encourage good relationships between caterers and manufacturers and the vegetarian community, so we would always advocate trying a polite letter first (and second and, maybe, even a third time) to correct a problem such as a product or dish being labelled “suitable for vegetarians” when it clearly is not. It may be an honest mistake. But if a problem persists in spite of repeated, friendly, polite attempts on your part to get it put right, then remember the Trading Standards Office can often help. You need to make your complaint to the TSO that serves the area where the problem occurs. (See www.tradingstandards.gov.uk or phone 0870 872 9000 to find your local office address.) If you have evidence, such as incorrectly labelled packaging, keep it to show the TSO. In Scotland, the Environmental Health Office fulfills this role.

Also worth a letter or two...

Many restaurants and cafes may already be featuring a number of perfectly acceptable vegetarian meals on their menu, but may not be clearly distinguishing them as veggie. Write and remind them that better descriptions would be good for trade. Most vegetarians don't want to appear to be “making a fuss”, when dining out. They may try a different restaurant if they don't see clearly marked vegetarian choices at first glance.

Lots of mail order catalogues for causes you'd like to support don't mark which products are suitably veggie. Even if the products in a mail-order catalogue or internet shopping site are marked as 'suitable for vegetarians', you may want to ask for a firmer guarantee of vegetarian suitability – such as the use of The Vegetarian Society's seedling symbol. Here is a sample letter to a big food producer:

FAO: Customer Services Manager, Green's Luxury Foods Ltd

I have recently purchased the Balti Sauce from your new range of Indian sauces. My family and I found it very tasty. I noticed that the product was labelled as 'suitable for vegetarians', but I'm afraid to say that I did have to stand in the supermarket reading the ingredients list very closely, for my own piece of mind.

There is currently no legal definition of the term 'vegetarian'. This means that companies less scrupulous than yours may misuse this term by not ensuring that their production process and every single ingredient is, in fact, vegetarian. The Vegetarian Society's seedling symbol was established in 1969 and now nearly 3,000 products carry the 'Approved by The Vegetarian Society' seedling logo. This is our only guarantee as vegetarians that a product line is free from all meat or bone stock, gelatine, animal rennet and that any eggs used are free-range.

The Vegetarian Society's approval process is strict, and covers the entire production process but vegetarians (and their families), as well as those observing Halal and Kosher diets, have used it as a symbol of trust for years.

Please remember that many people do their shopping in a hurry and if they don't have time to read the label throughly, they may decide not to buy that product. The Seedling Symbol provides an instantly recognisable guarantee that a product is completely vegetarian. If Green's Luxury Foods wishes to capture the vegetarian, meat-reducing, and religiously observant consumer markets that are constantly seeking innovative new meal solutions like your Balti sauce, then I urge you to enlist the approval and marketing support of The Vegetarian Society by phoning them on 0161 925 2000 or looking at www.vegsoc.org

With best wishes,

Bob Smith

Just as food manufacturers can apply to use The Vegetarian Society's Seedling Symbol, caterers, guesthouses, restaurants etc can apply for membership of the Food & Drink Guild, so if you have excellent caterers in your area, do write and suggest it to them. Here's a sample letter:

The Proprietor
The Croft, Scotshire

Dear Anne,

I am writing to express my thanks for the excellent food and service I received during my stay at your guesthouse. It is so refreshing to be able to go on holiday and not have to worry about sourcing food for myself and my family! Because we didn't have to drive round the county each evening trying to find a suitable vegetarian restaurant, we were able to relax in the daytime, safe in the knowledge that a tasty completely vegetarian meal awaited us each evening.

I would be happy to recommend your establishment to my friends and I hope that vegetarians (and their families) are all aware of The Croft. Have you ever thought about joining The Vegetarian Society's Food & Drink Guild? I am confident that your animal-free standards would meet the Society's strict criteria, and in return the Society would help you market your guesthouse to their thousands of members throughout the UK, and encourage you to take part in major events such as National Vegetarian Week.

You can contact the Society on 0161 925 2000 or see their website at

www.vegsoc.org/theguild

Thank you again for your hospitality, I hope to return next year.

Best wishes

Sunita Shah

Also, remember to reward companies that use the seedling symbol and that make foods you like. Tell them that their use of the symbol not only displays their commitment to their vegetarian customers, it also makes your shopping so much quicker and easier. Oh yes, and the product tastes good!

■ Dialogue with schools

Even if your group doesn't have a school speaker, it is worth trying to cultivate a good relationship with your local school. Do this thoughtfully. Write first, and if you are invited to visit a school, for example, to show samples of leaflets and posters, go straight to the teacher who sent the invitation. Don't try to approach pupils directly.

Vegetarianism appears in the national curriculum under "Food Technology" so the Head of Food Technology is an obvious person to try writing to. However, it could also fit into any of the following subject areas:

- Design – food packaging, design of information leaflets, recipe cards, menus etc
- Philosophy – ethical issues
- PSE – general understanding of citizenship, personal beliefs
- Sociology – pressure groups
- RE – the vegetarian movement in Britain was started by the Bible Christian church; different religions attitudes to food and animals, ethics and morality
- History – social movements etc

- Geography – land use, pollution, environmental issues
- Don't forget in-school health promotions and school cookery clubs
- Also, don't forget the caterers – you could offer to give a talk/demo to the school caterers – or simply remind them that The Vegetarian Society has a helpful recipe and information booklet that is especially designed for school caterers – to make their lives easier!

If you **do** have someone in your group who is on our speakers' register, write to suggest a talk.

Here are a few guidelines:

- Clearly state what you want to say at your presentation. Do not step outside these parameters once you have been allowed in
- If you have given talks before, state where and when you did these, preferably with references
- If you wish to cook and will incur expenses, find out if the school will pay for these before you do your talk. Don't assume that they will pay
- State any training courses you may have been on, particularly here at The Vegetarian Society
- Stress the relevance of any experiences you may have had in your professional life
- Always reassure the school that you are not out to convert children to become vegetarian, but rather to educate them should they wish to do so
- Reassure the school that you are not going to show any images likely to cause offence, (our video "Vegetarian Nutrition" is suitable for showing in schools) rather that the purpose of the visit is to get students to learn more about vegetarian food
- Try and arrange a visit to the school to meet the Head. On your visit, take examples of resources we produce

If you **don't** have a speaker in your group, it can still be worth writing to schools:

- to show samples of Vegetarian Society educational materials – including the 'Project Book for Schools' – a free teaching resource for GCSE food technology students that is designed around their syllabus
- To offer to show our video "Vegetarian Nutrition" (available from our video library)
- To offer to staff an information stall about vegetarianism and healthy eating if the school is putting on a health fair
- To suggest the school does something to celebrate National Vegetarian Week

■ Other places to write to

Objectionable advertisements

- If you see an advert that is objectionable or misleading in some way, complain to the Advertising Standards Authority, Brook House, 2-16 Torrington Place, London, WC1E 7HN
- Look around the ASA's website: www.asa.org.uk It has an online form for you to submit complaints and it also lists by company all the complaints that have been submitted in the past, so you can get an idea of what sort of complaints are made. Even if the complaint is not upheld by the ASA, it will still be on record and the company you are complaining about will still be investigated to make sure the claims they make are true
- The ASA does not regulate TV or radio advertising. If you have a complaint about a television or radio ad please contact Ofcom on 0845 456 3000
- If you've seen the ad in print, give full details of name & address of publication, date, page number etc and send a copy of the ad. If it was on TV, radio or cinema, again give full details of date, time, channel etc
- Don't expect quick results from this but it is worth doing if only to help bolster the weight of public opinion against such things

Libraries

- Ask them to stock more veggie books. You need to be specific for this one. Find a book that you think will be of interest locally, note the title, author and ISBN number and ask if they can obtain it. If your library does have lots of vegetarian books, then why not write to the library asking if they would like to make a display of them for National Vegetarian Week?

The Council/ local Health Promotion

Well, why not? – especially to promote something like National Vegetarian Week.

Here's an example of a letter to the local Primary Care Trust (PCT) food officer. You can find your local PCT with this link:

<http://www.nhs.uk/root/localnhsservices/orgs/trust>

Re: National Vegetarian Week. Monday 24th – Sunday 30th May 2004

Dear

My name is Casey Steel and I live in Bridgeford. I have recently volunteered to set up as an Information Centre in Countyshire for The Vegetarian Society of the United Kingdom. The idea is to offer support and information to like minded locals and visitors, with the hope of eventually setting up a group for social events, outing etc.

I wonder if you are aware of The Vegetarian Society's "National Vegetarian Week" and if you are planning any activities such as information displays and cookery demonstrations in the area? It could be a great opportunity to promote healthy eating and the government-endorsed '5-a-day' message with the range of fab fresh veg grown here in Countyshire.

This is an extract from The Vegetarian Society website – www.vegsoc.org

"National Vegetarian Week aims to let everyone know how easy and tasty a veggie diet can be. Anyone and everyone is welcome to get involved. From individual members of the public through to supermarkets, health food stores, bookstores, schools, food producers, restaurants, fitness centres and caterers."

There is a wealth of information on The Vegetarian Society website, as well as free health leaflets, recipe books and healthy eating posters that the staff can send to you. If I can be of any help or support on a local level, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best wishes

Casey Steel,

Countyshire Vegetarian Information Centre
01172 8453

Similar letters can be written to the local authority to suggest vegetarian activities/information/ menus in schools, at Farmers' Markets, local council canteens and so on. Most local authorities have websites and typing a keyword like "catering" into the search box should bring up a list of possible departments to contact.

USEFUL POINTS YOU CAN MAKE IN YOUR LETTERS

One or two of these bullet points can enhance your message, but don't make the mistake of including too many – especially baffling readers with statistics.

■ To caterers:

- That many things can be made vegetarian very easily by just changing a few ingredients
- That the vegetarian market is growing
- That a vegetarian in a party of diners often influences the choice of venue for the whole group
- That a vegetarian dish is acceptable to many ethnic/religious groups and so simplifies your catering choices

■ To manufacturers:

- That many products can be made vegetarian very easily by just changing a few ingredients – the removal or substitution of a tiny element of the recipe could open their product up to a whole new market
- That the vegetarian market is growing, as is the market for meat-reducers. Market researchers Mintel found that the meat-free food market grew from being worth an estimated £333 million in 1996 to £548 million in 2001
- That one vegetarian in a household will influence dining choices of a whole family – even if the other householders eat meat, all the products they communally use, from margarine, to cheese, to pasta sauce, will need to be vegetarian
- That a vegetarian dish is acceptable to many ethnic and religious groups, thus creating more prospective customers

■ To editors:

- That vegetarian diets have been practised for thousands of years by people all over the world, from mystic groups in Egypt around 3,200 BC, through the philosophers of ancient Greece to the Asian Buddhist and Hindu ideologies
- That The Vegetarian Society of the UK is over 150 years old
- In the UK alone, almost 800 million animals are slaughtered for food each year – that's about 15 animals per person per year
- In 1945 it is estimated that there were about 100,000 vegetarians in the UK. Nowadays, about 5% of the population is vegetarian – that's roughly 3 million. An RSPCA survey in 2000 found that 80% of adults wanted to see better welfare conditions for Britain's farm animals

You can always give The Vegetarian Society's contact details for follow-up information:

The Vegetarian Society

Parkdale

Dunham Road

Altrincham

Cheshire

WA14 4QG

Tel: 0161 925 2000

Email: info@vegsoc.org

Website: www.vegsoc.org

Compiled by Bronwen Humphreys and Scott Clouder April 2004

