

FAQs

What about our supporters, donors, volunteers, and staff?

Having a veg-only menu policy sends the message to your supporters that you take the welfare of all animals seriously. Your supporters come to your events to support your work, not because you feed them meat for one meal. You may hear from a vocal minority about their unhappiness with the policy change, which may happen with any change you implement in your organization. Nevertheless, we have heard from organizations that have adopted veg policies that, if anything, they have seen increased support from those who are grateful that they have taken animals off the menu. Creating a new veg-only policy is an opportunity to grow your supporter and donor base and demonstrate your humane leadership to all.

We aren't animal rights/vegan advocates so why should we have a policy like this?

Animal rescue and adoption agencies are driven by their mission to help animals, and the public expects a shelter to help animals at every opportunity. The food at your events is an opportunity to reduce or eliminate animal suffering. You may choose to advertise the new policy, or whether the food at your events is vegan/vegetarian, or not mention it at all. Many organizations with veg-only policies just serve yummy, veg food without comment. It is also important to remember that many people identify farmed animals as companions, such as rabbits, chickens, pot-bellied pigs, goats, and other species. If any of these animals came into your shelter, you would certainly provide them with the same level of care you would the more typical companion dogs and cats. As a rescue organization, where do you draw the line between those you love and those on the dinner plate at events?

We don't want to dictate individual's food choices or tell them what to eat so why should we have a veg-only policy? Or, why should we create a veg-only policy if we are not vegetarian/vegan in our own lives?

It's important to emphasize that this is an organizational, mission-based policy. It is not a policy that dictates what individual people need to do/eat on their own time or with their own money. This is about animal welfare organizations taking a new step to reduce the suffering of farmed animals by not serving them at events. Farmed animals suffer tremendously when farmed and slaughtered, it only makes sense that the gold standard of animal welfare organizational processes includes not using donated money to purchase food that supports that suffering. Animal rescues, shelters, and other organizations in the humane field have a responsibility to operate as humanely as possible. Consider this analogy: A human rights organization may choose to adopt an organizational policy that items purchased for events must always be sweatshop-free, given the human suffering endured in sweatshops. Staff, volunteers, supporters, and the public would very much understand this policy from an organizational standpoint, and that it does not dictate what individuals choose to do in their personal lives.

We feed our animals meat so wouldn't having a veg-only menu policy be inconsistent?

Food for Thought is *not* about changing the menu policy of the rescued dogs and cats (or other animals) at your shelter (or for that matter, the personal diets of those working at the shelter), but rather about changing organizational policy to align fundraising menus (for people) with a rescue's mission of saving animals. While it's well documented that humans can thrive on a vegan diet, and therefore can choose a more compassionate way of eating, more study is needed in the area of dog and cat diets. Most dogs, as omnivores, seem to do quite well on a plant-based diet, but cats, as obligate carnivores, are a different story. Sometimes, instead of waiting for things to be perfect, we need to start somewhere, and Food for Thought encourages those in the sheltering community to do just that.

Isn't serving meat with a vegetarian option good enough and the most inclusive?

A vegan or vegetarian event makes all supporters feel welcome. Many of your supporters are undoubtedly already vegetarian or vegan, and while someone who is not vegetarian or vegan can still attend and eat vegetarian foods, a vegetarian or vegan person cannot eat animal-based dishes. Offering exclusively veg foods makes your event inviting for all, and is the most inclusive of animals in your sphere of compassion.

What if we have fundraisers sponsored by third parties?

Having these types of third-party fundraisers wouldn't preclude your organization from creating a policy for shelter-sponsored events. However, this may change how you want to word your policy. For example, you may clearly state that any events "solely sponsored" by your organization are vegetarian, or you may choose to use wording like "When XYZ's Animal Rescue Society is involved with third party organizations in fundraising events, we will recommend that vegan/vegetarian food is served, but realize we do not have complete control over the food served by the third party organizations." The important thing is that your policy is clear that when you have control over the food, you choose to make it 100% veg-only.

How is it possible to have a policy like this in our rural community where vegetarian foods are hard to find?

There are a lot of options to make sure the veg-only food you serve at your event is delicious and satisfying! One option is requesting product donations from the numerous vegan and vegetarian companies happy to get their products into the hands of new customers. (A list of companies is provided here: <http://www.foodforthoughtcampaign.org/product-donations.html>). You can also talk with a local restaurant to identify what dishes they can make for your event. These restaurants *want* your business, (or if they are donating food to help your cause, they *want* to help your cause!) so with a few alterations, if any at all, they should be able to provide delicious veg-only meals for a catered event. And keep in mind that many chain restaurants found in most towns already have veg-only items on their menus. (Check out this huge list: <http://www.onegreenplanet.org/vegan-food/vegan-options-at-popular-fast-food-chains/>). Finally, don't forget that for events such as potlucks where people bring their own dishes, there are many websites with easy to make, affordable vegan dishes of familiar foods. You name it -- it can be made vegan: tacos, lasagna, potato salad, pizza, macaroni and cheese, stir fry, sloppy joes, casseroles, and baked goods galore!

What is the best way to approach my organization's leadership about creating a new policy?

First, do your research. We suggest gathering resources from our website and becoming familiar with the content so that you can easily answer any questions or concerns your leadership may have. You can also print out resources from our website to provide readable information. People can be averse to change, especially when it comes to a topic that some find "controversial," so remember that it is best to pitch the topic from an angle that shows how the policy change will benefit your organization. Most importantly, reach out to the Food for Thought team! We have had many successful conversations with individuals at organizations and can guide you with the most suitable resources and tactics. We love to help!

If my organization doesn't want to create a full, board-approved veg-only policy now, what other smaller steps can I ask them to take?

If your leadership is unsure about adopting a veg-only policy, you can ask if they would consider doing a trial run or smaller increments. This can include piloting veg-only food at events without having a formal policy, having one veg-only event, increasing the veg-options at an event, or considering what kinds of events aren't meat heavy. For example, instead of a burger and hotdog picnic, a pork BBQ, or a pig roast, try things like taco bars, ice cream socials, or spaghetti dinners). For a more formal dinner, consider making the veg dish the default and offering a meat option only by special request.

Have more questions? Email us: foodforthought@animalplace.org