

Vegan Prisoners Support Group

NEWS - September 2009

15 YEARS OF CAMPAIGNING FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR VEGAN PRISONERS

APRIL 1994: VPSG HIGHLIGHTS CONCERNS TO PRISON SERVICE

Shortly after VPSG was established in 1994, a Report was presented to the Prison Service highlighting concerns that there was a lack of provisions in place for vegan prisoners.

The Report outlined, in order to ensure 'equal opportunities' for this minority group, access to similar items freely available to other prisoners and detailed information on their dietary requirements was required.

VPSG identified that vegan prisoners were also disadvantaged in prison shops. Vegan mainstays such as nuts, seeds, and suitable protein items as well as hygiene/body care products needed to be available.

Research showed there were over 114 protein items, 118 confectionery/biscuit items confectionery items and 120 body care/beauty products, but not one of them suitable for vegans.

MARCH 1995: RESEARCH/STUDY COMMENCED

The VPSG began collating information from vegan prisoners to ensure the recommendations presented to the Prison Service were accurate. The research showed there continued to be a shortage of information on the vegan diet and a lack of vegan products in prison shops.

JUNE 1996: GUIDELINES FOR VEGAN PRISONERS

After two years of campaigning finally GUIDELINES FOR THE CARE OF VEGANS were installed in every prison!

APRIL 2002

A report was presented to the Director of the Prison Service highlighting areas where vegans remained disadvantaged – assurances were that vegans would be provided with equal opportunities in all areas of their care by end August 2002. The Head of Catering, Alan Tuckwood, was the first to take VPSG's recommendations on board and the PSO5000* was revised.
*Prison Service Order

FEBRUARY 2003

Alan Tuckwood assisted with the compilation of VPSG's first CATERING INFORMATION PACK [CIP] which was distributed to every prison. The CIP contained Nutritional Guidelines and other useful information for use in prison kitchens on this specialist diet.

MAY 2004

P/O Stuart Head was presented with the Butler Trust Award for his input into improving catering for vegans, including his ideas for producing the Prison News Sheet and the Catering Information Pack.

DECEMBER 2004

The issue of personal hygiene was finally addressed and Mr. Gary Pyne, Central Purchasing Unit/Prison HQ sourced basic prison issue toiletries suitable for vegans.

AUGUST 2009: TWO MAIL ORDER CATALOGUES NOW FINALLY APPROVED BY THE PRISON SERVICE

VPSG have been highlighting their concerns that vegans remain disadvantaged in Prison Shops since 1994. In August 2008 NOMS* awarded a new national contract for the provision of retail services in public prisons in England and Wales. The service included a new standard product list that extended the range of products available for order by minority groups, including vegan prisoners, to provide daily essentials such as shampoo, chocolate and a variety of snack items.

In August 2009 this was further enhanced by the mobilisation of a new mail order service offering access to two new companies supplying a range of health supplements including nuts and seeds and toiletries that are suitable for all prisoners, including vegans.

However, this doesn't mean it's all plain sailing from now on as it is still a local prison decision whether to include standard products on local order forms, or to add these companies to their local listing. The VPSG team still have their work cut out contacting individual prisons to outline the importance of vegan prisoners having access to both these mail order catalogues to ensure that they can order their body care, hygiene requirements and also make healthy purchases of nuts, seeds, dried fruits, herbal tea bags and supplements.

In the meantime, VPSG are continuing to work with NOMS* and the retail provider to secure further improvements to the selection of products and cost of delivery. Efforts also need to be concentrated on vegan prisoners' access to suitable footwear.

*National Offender Management Service

GUIDELINES INSTALLED IN ALL PRISONS IN 1996

PRISON SERVICE GUIDELINES ON THE CARE OF VEGANS

BASIC BELIEFS

1.1 Veganism is not a religion but a philosophy whereby the use of an animal for food, clothing or any other purpose is regarded as wholly unacceptable.

1.2 The majority of Vegans reject entirely, anything which has its origins in the exploitation, suffering or death of any creature. An individual may lead a Vegan lifestyle for one particular reason or for a combination of reasons, and this may result in some Vegans being stricter than others in what they deem as acceptable and unacceptable. Vegan beliefs are followed by individuals within various faiths, to varying degrees, and by individuals of no faith.

1.3 Most Vegans will not involve themselves directly, or indirectly, in anything whereby their lifestyle and beliefs are compromised or violated, either for themselves or for others. Throughout their lives, Vegans will seek to sever all links with, and dependencies upon, the use or abuse of animals.

DIET

2.1 A Vegan diet is based on fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, beans, pulses and cereals. The diet omits all animal products including meat, poultry, fish, sea creatures, invertebrates, eggs, animal milks, honey and royal jelly. Vegans should not be required to handle such foodstuffs.

Food/drink containing or made with any of the above or their derivatives should not be served.

The Vegan Society can provide helpful information on a range of issues including how nutrients are obtained from a Vegan diet.

2.2 Human nutrient requirements, with the exception of B12 can be met by a diet composed entirely of plant foods, but to do so it must be carefully planned using a wide selection of

foods.

Fortified Yeast extract is a good source of some of the B-vitamins, including vitamin B12 as is fortified Soya milk.

PURCHASE OF SUPPLEMENTS AND REMEDIES

3.1 Herbal remedies, dietary, or food supplements of a vegetable or synthetic origin such as Iodine (Kelp tablets) may be requested through the prison shop.

DRESS

4.1 Clothing and footwear must be from non-animal (eg plant or synthetic) sources. The wearing of all animal fibres, skins and materials including wool, silk, leather and suede will not be accepted by Vegan prisoners.

TOILETRIES

5.1 Toiletries containing any animal derived ingredients and toiletries where either the product or its ingredients have been tested on animals are totally unacceptable and are not permitted.

Therefore, whenever toiletries suitable for Vegans are required, establishments should make arrangements for such items to be stocked in the prison canteen or ordered in as necessary.

5.2 Vegans should not be expected to use inappropriate toiletries.

5.3 Vegans should not be asked to handle or use substances that have involved animal testing on the product or its ingredients.

WORK

6.1 Most Vegan prisoners will not wish to be involved in any way in the care of animals on prison farms. Vegans usually choose not to engage in any sport, hobby, or trade that directly or indirectly, causes stress, distress, suffering, or death to any creature.

6.2 Vegans should not be expected to work in butchery or handle anything of animal origin or content.

NOVEMBER 2004

VPSG were invited to take a stand at the Prison Service National Catering Workshop. The interest by Catering Managers was overwhelming.

APRIL 2006

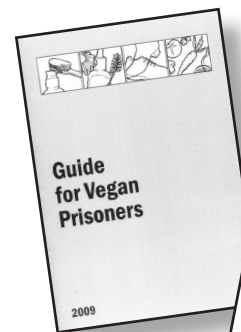
The Vegan Prisoners Support Group and Vegan Society were again invited by Alan Tuckwood to the National Catering Conference for prisons in the public sector at Heathrow with Catering Managers eager to chat with our team.

It was a busy day and attracted even more interest than our stall at the previous Conference in 2004.

GUIDE FOR VEGAN PRISONERS

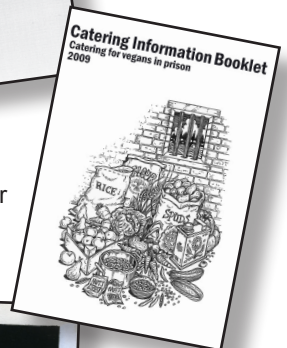
The information included in VPSG's new 'Guide for Vegan Prisoners' provides prisoners with the relevant rules/regulations useful in prison.

Our handy 'Catering Information Booklet' and 'Cooking Behind Bars' will shortly join the information provided to prison kitchens and which will also be issued to vegan prisoners upon request.



Issued to all prisoners
June 2009

Updated
September
2009



Planned for
issue October
2009



MAY 2003

VPSG issued the first Prison News Sheet – available for viewing on www.vpsg.info - news sheets should keep Catering Managers up-to-date with the latest nutritional information on veganism. The Frequently Asked Questions section proved popular. This section invited questions from Catering Managers on those specialist issues on which they needed clarification.

DECEMBER 2005: VPSG/VEGAN SOCIETY PRESENT FIRST AWARDS

It was decided to jointly present awards to the top prisons who were ensuring the vegan diet was not only nutritionally sound, but interesting and varied.

Participation in the scheme created a lot of interest from Catering Managers. Yearly awards were planned.

EXTRACTS FROM OUR CATERING INFORMATION PACK IN PLACE IN ALL PRISONS

NUTRITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR A VEGAN DIET

Food Group	Daily amount ¹	What It Provides	Suggestions
Vegetables	2+, 100g [4 oz]	vitamins, minerals, protein, fibre	broccoli, kale, spring greens, cabbage, spinach, carrots, peppers, tomatoes, pumpkin
Fruit	3+, large pieces ²	vitamins, minerals, fibre, vitamin C to help absorb iron	include some citrus fruit
Nuts	1-2, 25g [1 oz]	protein, oils, minerals, fibre	almonds, walnuts, cashews, hazelnuts, peanuts, nut butters
Oils	as required for cooking	energy, oils	unhydrogenated rapeseed oil
Wholegrains and root vegetables	2+, 100g [4oz]	energy, protein, vitamins, fibre	pasta, oats, bread, rice, corn, millet, buckwheat, barley, bulgur wheat, potatoes, sweet potatoes, yam, parsnips
Pulses	1+, 100g [4 oz]	energy, protein, minerals, fibre	peas, lentils, chickpeas, baked beans, kidney beans, soya products

As a general guide food from the above groups should be eaten every day to provide a solid foundation for a vegan diet. Increased servings may be needed according to energy requirements. Any margarine used should be non-hydrogenated. Rapeseed oil is preferred to sunflower, safflower, soy or sesame oil as it provides a better balance of types of fat, including omega-3 fats.

Key Nutrient	Daily amount ¹	Suggestions
Calcium	700 - 1200 mg	An adequate intake of calcium can be assured by 3½ litres per week of fortified soya milk [containing at least 120mg/100ml] or an equivalent amount of other calcium rich foods: tofu prepared with calcium sulphate (see label for calcium content); green leafy vegetables, such as kale or spring greens (about 150 mg per 100g), or a vegan calcium supplement. Note that calcium from spinach is poorly absorbed.
Vitamin B ¹²	3 micrograms+	Fortified foods or supplements. E.g., 25g per week of a yeast extract fortified with 50 mcg of B12 per 100g or 600ml per day of soya milk fortified with 0.5 micrograms B12 per 100ml or a daily B12 tablet containing at least 3 micrograms B12.
Iodine	150 to 500 micrograms	Iodine is important for good metabolism and thyroid function. Ideal intakes for adults lie between 150 and 500 micrograms a day. While this can be achieved by careful use of seaweed it may be more convenient and reliable to use a supplement

Stephen Walsh PhD., Chair of the Vegan Society and Spokesperson on Diet and Health.
Updated March 2006

¹ Daily amounts are given as number of servings followed by serving size, for cooked foods serving sizes are given as cooked weights.

² Each piece of fruit should be around 100g, e.g. one orange, banana or apple. For smaller fruits a serving should be sufficient pieces to make up 100g, e.g. 2 nectarine oranges or about thirty grapes.

IMPORTANCE OF NUTS/ SEEDS IN THE VEGAN DIET

Nuts and seeds offer an abundance of nutritional benefits and are an important part of a healthy vegan diet when combined with grains and vegetables. They are a good source of vitamins, minerals, protein, essential fatty acids and fibre.

The daily requirement is 1-2 servings. A recommended serving would be 1oz (30g). Walnuts supply copper and manganese and are full of linolenic acid, which can be converted to omega-3 fatty acids in the body. Providing just 6 walnut halves a day will provide daily requirements of omega 3.

ALMONDS

High in riboflavin, copper, magnesium and vitamin E. They also contain zinc and are a rich source of calcium.

HAZELNUTS

Good source of B vitamins, calcium, magnesium, potassium and vit E.

CASHEWS

Can be used raw or toasted and are a good source of copper and magnesium.

BRAZILS

Good source of selenium; one per day will fulfil the daily requirement of selenium.

PEANUTS

Although peanuts are not a nut but a legume, they are a good protein source and also contain vit E, folate, fibre, protein, copper, phosphorous and magnesium. Peanut butter is a nutritious and versatile form.

PUMPKIN SEEDS

Can be used in salad and stir-fry and are an excellent source of iron and zinc.

SUNFLOWER SEEDS

Can be used in salad, stir-fry, burgers and nut roast. They are the richest seed source of vitamin E and an excellent source of copper and magnesium.

SESAME SEEDS

Can be used in sweet and savoury dishes and are nice in stir-fry. They are a good source of zinc, magnesium and calcium. Tahini or sesame butter is a useful form.

FLAXSEEDS (LINSEEDS)

This highly nutritious seed is best known for the high levels of omega 3 that it contains. Also a good source of magnesium, phosphorus and copper.

FRUIT AND VEGETABLES 5-A-DAY

Two to three pieces of fruit can form part of the 5-a-day, but if only two are provided then the other three portions should be provided by vegetables. This includes vegetables which have been incorporated into dishes, as well as side portions.

Three heaped tablespoons of chickpeas, kidney beans or lentils can also be counted as no more than one portion per day. Potatoes do not count since they are a starchy food.

THE CATERING INFORMATION PACK

THE CATERING INFORMATION PACK contains comprehensive information on what the vegan diet comprises of to be healthy, such as basic dietary guidelines, nutritional charts etc. The pack also provides answers to those most Frequently Asked Questions "how is B12 provided in the vegan diet" "how much calcium is required daily" "is membership of the Vegan Society needed before vegan supplements are issued". The information included recommends nothing more – nothing less than other prisoners are provided with in their prison diet.

IMPORTANCE OF YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT

VPSG would like to thank all those supporters who have funded our work over the years. Without each and every one of you we would not have been able to campaign for the rights of vegan prisoners. We hope you will help us to finish the job by your continued support.



Being part of the VPSG-team requires a multi-faceted approach to the various tasks one encounters with the care of prisoners.

On a personal level I analyse the diet sheets which prisoners forward to us and make the necessary recommendations if there is cause for concern, or if the diet is not adequate for vegan prisoners. This may entail a phone call to the kitchen manager at any given prison or advising a prisoner to arrange a meeting with kitchen staff. Although prisons have been provided with guidelines in respect of dietary needs, appropriate toiletries, clothing and footwear for ethical vegans, mistakes do occur and this is where VPSG steps in to rectify the situation. As a Caseworker I also often assist with the provision of suitable healthcare products and clothing. Whenever the need arises, the family of the relevant prisoner will be informed if particular issues need to be addressed and kept up to date with any progress made. Last but not least, I endeavour to visit various prisoners whenever I can, apart from the obvious benefits this social interaction may bring, it gives me an opportunity to discuss prisoner's personal concerns face to face and hopefully lighten their burden somewhat! Hella



It is now 15 years since Jo-Ann decided to campaign for equal opportunities for vegan prisoners; and joining the VPSG was the best decision I have ever taken.

I design newsletters and leaflets for supporters, prisoners and prisons. I designed the newsletter you are reading now; I'm currently working on a 'Catering Information Booklet'; 'Vegan Cooking Behind Bars' and a news-sheet for Governors, Catering Managers and Prison Shops. It is very rewarding and my main challenge is to make

On Saturday 4th July I cycled 10 times (approx 15 miles) around Brockwell Park in South London, to raise funds for VPSG. The bike I had borrowed from a friend wasn't in the best condition, but at least it was stuck on a high gear which proved useful as the park has a steep hill. Neither was the saddle something to be desired, but in the face of adversity, I managed to complete the course in just over two hours and only dismounted once. When I finished I laid down on the grass which was very welcome.

Thanks to everyone who sponsored me and for supporting the VPSG's invaluable work on behalf of vegan prisoners. Robin Lane.



the information visually attractive to persuade people to read it.

You know that in human history changes have not been achieved from one day to another, and all attempts to 'change the system' take a lot of effort. Our main objective is to reform the Prison System and to help prisoners in their ethical principles. Your financial support ensures we remain in existence to make sure prisoners are provided with a nutritional vegan diet and lifestyle. Lidia



On looking back over the past 15 years, I have been wondering if all the hard work and long hours to facilitate the current changes now in place in prisons

was worth it or not? To be frank if I had known that the wheels of change would take so long, I am not too sure if I would have ventured down this same path, BUT one thing I am certain about is that FINALLY equal opportunities are so close VPSG definitely needs to continue to finish the job I started in 1994!

I remember when I first began researching the care of vegans in prison, I found out the vegan diet was not as nutritionally sound as it should be and it was usually soya burgers with everything! My biggest surprise was to discover there wasn't even access to vegan soap and toothpaste. I wondered how prisoners were expected to perform their daily hygiene? I then thought, what a mammoth task I was facing.

Before the installation of the Guidelines vegan prisoners were even severely reprimanded if they refused to wear non-vegan shoes. Fortunately, nowadays there is a huge difference to

how vegans are treated thanks to the hard work of the VPSG team.

VPSG Caseworkers now help prisoners with day to day problems, especially when they first arrive within the prison system or move to a new prison.

Some of the tasks Caseworkers often need to tackle, is explaining to a prison why a vegan is unable to work as a cleaner, as general cleaning products are currently not vegan. Or outlining the many jobs they are able to accept without compromising their vegan beliefs. Our assistance is often sought when a vegan prisoner is offered a job in the kitchen or gardens, but requires steel capped boots to comply with health and safety rules.

The work at the VPSG is varied to say the least and all the VPSG team have to be flexible and have a good working knowledge of prison rules/regulations and be able to multi-task, so I would like to take this opportunity of thanking my team for that flexibility and all their hard work.

Jo-Ann

URGENT APPEAL FOR PRISONERS' ANIMALS

We mustn't forget prisoners' animals who are also affected when they suddenly lose their guardian. It is important for prisoners to know that their animals are looked after while they are serving their sentences. So let's all try to help out on this one by contributing to a Special Prisoner Appeal to help with those vet and foster care bills that need paying. This would be one less thing for them to worry about. All cheques should be made payable as usual to VPSG, but write SPA on the back of the cheque.