Evolving Our Language to Build Respect for Our Fellow Animals

By Jeremy Hess, last updated 18 December 2023

Anti-speciesist / Animal-centric / Abolitionist / Objective

This document is designed to support animal advocates to sharpen one of the greatest tools we have – our language. The ideas here are based on these fundamental principles:

- Anti-speciesism: language that builds respect for our fellow animals
- (Other) Animal-centric: focusing on our fellow animals
- Abolition: focusing on use rather than treatment (rights vs. 'welfare')
- Objectivity: language that limits the number of potential interpretations

We're all different people and have to find the language that works for us. It's important we're fluid and dynamic with our language, always being mindful of the audience and the context. The idea is not to follow these ideas strictly, but to consider which ideas resonate with us so we can use them to strengthen our language.

The most important thing is that we're advocating for our fellow animals. So it's not about whether we're saying 'the right thing,' but more so that we're getting out there in the first place – whether it be on the street, online, an art canvas, or simply in our day-to-day lives. Wherever our passion may take us.

For those who would like to explore these ideas further with others, it's highly recommended you join the Unlearning Speciesist Language group on Facebook:

www.facebook.com/groups/UnlearningSpeciesistLanguage/

Note: It's recommended you set the group notifications to 'All posts.'

General overview of the importance of language: https://youtu.be/kp_JgJyNYOk

Now let's explore the powerful and wonderful world of language together ☺

-Jeremy

Inter actions

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QUICK LANGUAGE CHECKS	
Tip	**Detailed description**
Flip it to test it	A great way to test if language is speciesist, is to see if you would say the same thing when referring to a human. If it seems euphemistic or disrespectful then, it's probably speciesist. A more specific version of this is to think of a minoritized human group, or someone who you care deeply about.
Replace the subjective with objective	If we use language that is ambiguous, it's likely to have a wide range of interpretations. Objective language limits the risk of our message being unclear. A common example is referring to ending 'animal suffering' versus 'ending all animal use.'
Replace euphemisms	Be as descriptive as possible. Language is often used to distance us from the victim. For instance 'someone's body' versus 'meat.'
Word order matters	'Racehorse' suggests a horse's purpose is to be raced. Flipping the order to 'horses who are forced to race' prevents this. Similarly, it's best to put our fellow animals first when possible, so they don't get lost in a list.
Word pairing	If we're unsure if a specific word captures what we're saying it can be paired with another. For instance 'eat' to focus on the dietary aspect of animal use and 'use' to establish the scope. (i.e. 'eat or use other animals') This can also be helpful when we're introducing anti-speciesist alternatives that may be unclear and pairing them with more commonly understood word. For instance, "so called 'leather,' or someone's skin."

GENERAL CONCEPTS	
Tip	**Detailed description**
Replace human-centric with (other) animal-centric	Human supremacy and speciesism are entangled. By re-centering other animals, we bring the focus to them. An example is ‘animal-free food’ versus ‘vegan food.’ As this makes it about not eating (or using) other animals, versus ‘what a vegan can eat.’
Individuals first, species second	It is best to focus on their individuality first, their species second. (When possible) For example, ‘someone’s body’ or ‘her body’ is stronger than ‘a pig’s body’ or ‘pig flesh’ given most do not consider our fellow animals as individuals. Also simply highlighting the species of an individual isn’t necessarily going to challenge a speciesist audience and may unintentionally reinforce speciesism, as highlighting their species may distance the audience from the individuality of the victim in our deeply speciesist society. Someone’s species should only be mentioned when the context requires it.
Clarify the unclear	The interpretation is more important than our intent. It doesn't matter what we're trying to say if the listener doesn't understand us or thinks something different. To help limit misinterpretations we can ask others what they think specific aspects of our language means to them, or highlight language they’ve used and invite them to explain why they chose specific language.
Center them	If we talk about our fellow animals it should be centering them, not casually using them as some type of metaphor.

	For instance, focusing solely on their physical abilities runs the risk of de-personifying them. (‘Fast as a fox,’ ‘swims like a fish’) We should strive to lift them up, such as by focusing on their positive personality traits unique individuality.
Reclaim the negative	Our fellow animals are often used as an insult. Rather than avoiding these expressions altogether, we can make them positive. For instance we can say, ‘gentle as a cow,’ or ‘brave as a chicken.’
Individuals vs. objects	Given our deeply speciesist society, it’s important we don’t inadvertently refer to our fellow animals as objects, especially when they’re listed together. For instance ‘the hurricane killed a dog named Buddy and destroyed a house’ clarifies the dog individual is not an object, where ‘the hurricane destroyed a house and a dog’ does not.
Language chains	Just because you have found a replacement for speciesist language doesn’t mean it’s the best option. Keep exploring alternatives. (See replacements for ‘pet’ for an example of a language chain.
Resist qualified language	It’s tempting as we’re unlearning our speciesism to express hesitation about what we’re claiming through our language. (Such as saying 'it appeared as if they were happy' rather than saying 'they were so happy') Even though we may be unsure, it’s best not to express doubt through our language as this is likely to reinforce speciesism.
Err on the side of caution	While interpretations may not be speciesist to animal advocates or even most people, given the dominant speciesist culture it’s best to err on the side of caution and be mindful of all potential interpretations, swerving language that may potentially reinforce speciesism.

REFERRING TO OUR FELLOW ANIMALS		
Suggestion	**Used to replace…**	**Notes / Rationale**
They, she/he	It	Emphasizes that they are all unique individuals with a valid claim to basic moral rights that are violated when we use them. Also consider ‘who’ vs. ‘that/what/which’
Someone	Something	
Other living beings	Living things	
Individuals, our fellow animals, fellow individuals/ persons, other animals, victims, invizibilized victims	Animals	Highlights that we’re all animals/individuals with a valid claim to basic moral rights that are violated if we’re used. To be used when referring to all animals except humans to help dismantle human superiority. While simply saying ‘animals’ is tempting, this could also be considered to be speciesist as it implies that humans are not animals. I’ve found focusing on the above options and leaving ‘animals’ out of it to be the preferred approach. Other alternatives to consider: ● Persons / people ● Beings ● Earthlings ● Non-human animals ● Other animal persons ● Animals other than human animals ● Rest of the animal kingdom ● Our psychological kin ● Animal cousins
Survivors, refugees, residents, ambassadors	Sanctuary animals	These terms highlight the individuality and moral agency of other animals who live at sanctuaries. We should also be careful not to suggest that animal sanctuaries are desirable,

		as these individuals should not be bred in the first place. The terms in the above row can work too, in addition to their names.
Humans, Human animals (Sometimes)	People	Highlights that we're all animals. This may cause confusion, so probably best to limit to those who appear open / mindful about animal use. To challenge the false 'human animal' binary, when mentioning these groups at the same time it's important not to imply that humans aren't animals (by just saying 'animal' and that our fellow animals are not people. (by referring to only humans as 'people,' such as in 'people and animals.')
Individuals (who are aware), other animals who experience life	Sentient life	People who haven't thought about animal use, may not use the term 'sentient' much. Probably best to keep it simple.
Other/fellow animals/ individuals who are killed through 'testing,' invade their bodies	Test animals, vivisection	Puts the focus on the animals. 'Test animals' could imply that they are animals whose purpose is to be tested on. 'Testing' is also a euphemism, as humans are 'tested' however this has an entirely different thing, which may be confused when discussing our fellow animals. Can also add 'non-consensual.'

		Also ‘vivisection’ could be a bit foreign to those who are new to animal issues and while not ‘wrong’, I think can be improved.
Free-living individual	Wild animal, beast, predator, pest	Highlights that just because someone lives in nature doesn’t mean they have less moral value. Free-living beings also works.
Individuals who are bred, used, and murdered	Farm animals, farmed animals	These terms could imply animals are meant to be farmed. While farmed animals is better, it’s not ideal for the same reason. Also the language ‘farm’ or ‘farmed’ is speciesist, as this is a euphemism used to mask an inconvenient truth. (Using the flip it to test it approach we wouldn’t say humans were ‘farmed’ if the situation was reversed.)
Awareness, reasoning	Instinct	Our fellow animals demonstrating awareness is often reduced to instinct. The reality is all animals (including human apes) are influenced by both instinct and awareness/reasoning.
Unheard, silenced (Animal interpreter)	Voiceless	Anyone who has heard an animal cry out for instance when excited or distressed can attest that they do have a voice, we’re just not listening. Can also be disempowering to when if we give them the chance we can see they’re trying to tell us something. Similarly, consider saying ‘standing in solidarity with other animals’ rather than

		saying ‘we’re the voice for animals,’ which could also feed into the savior complex.
Direct: Survivors (of speciesism) Neutral: Fellow animal family member, Furry / feathery friend, or simply friend, buddy, family member	Pet, companion animal, animal companion	We should challenge humans living with fellow animals as being desirable whenever possible, depending on the audience / context. If we suggest this relationship is positive, it may reinforce the idea of individuals being bred for companionship to a speciesist audience. Also emphasizes that other animals are here with us rather than for us. Below is a detailed breakdown of this ‘language chain’: • Pet: Suggests they’re a possession or purpose is to entertain us. • Companion animal: Suggests their purpose is to be a companion. • Animal companion: Suggests humans aren’t animals, could reinforce human superiority. • Dog friend: Focuses their identity on their species rather than them as an individual. • Friend who is a dog: While improved, focuses on their species, rather than their individuality. • Furry / feathery friend: Subtlety says they’re not human if the context requires this, while focusing on the individual. • Survivors / refugees of speciesism: Challenges the normalcy of fellow animals living with humans who really shouldn’t have been bred in the first place.
Dog whom I care for / guardian	My dog / I’m their owner	

REFERRING TO NON-VEGANS		
Suggestion	**Used to replace…**	**Notes / Rationale**
Plant farmer vs. someone who uses other animals (Or similar)	Farmer	Helps to distinguish between plant farmers and those who use other animals. To refer to animal use as ‘farming’ or ‘agriculture’ is also speciesist, as if we were to do the same things to humans we wouldn’t call it this. Similar with ‘business’ or ‘industry.’ Scare quotes can be added in cases where an alternative may not be clear. ‘Fharmer’ is a possible written alternative, or slowly sounding out ‘fah-harmer’ when spoken.
Human ‘intelligence’	Human intelligence	Highlights the fact that humans are not the only ones who demonstrate intelligence, and that there are many types of intelligence… such as emotional intelligence which many humans lack when it comes to our fellow animals. *It’s worth noting cognitive abilities should not be used as a requirement for consideration into the moral community, as this is an arbitrary characteristic and reinforces ableism.

Non-vegan Vegan-curious Those who aren't vegan Human apes Hairless apes	Carnist, meat eater, animal eater, corpse eater, corpse muncher	Terms like carnist are counterproductive as it may shame others or empower them to support animal use. It also suggests humans are carnivores and puts the focus on eating other animals, rather than veganism and the other ways other animals' rights are violated.
	Omnivore	Omnivore implies that we can eat/use animals, when it's not ethical to do so. This also implies living vegan changes our biology. Vegans are still omnivores.
	Human	On 'hairless apes,' while there's obviously times when we need to specify 'humans,' by occasionally highlighting the fact that we're actually hairless apes this will highlight how we're animals too and may help to dismantle human superiority. (While being mindful speciesists may interpret this as an insult)

DESCRIBING ANIMAL USE		
Brings the focus of the conversations to where it should be, animal rights. For instance we can ask: 'Do you think when we use other animals we violate their rights?'		
Suggestion	**Used to replace…**	**Notes / Rationale**
Rights violations, animal use, breeding/use/ displacement/ killing/ murder *'Manipulated to have children' longer alternative to 'breeding'	Animal abuse, cruelty, suffering, welfare	Subjective terms will leave the discussion open for people to talk about conditions or 'humane' farming, rather than ending use.
	Treatment / mistreatment, harmed, mutilated, tortured, exploited	Discussing conditions will likely lead to a discussion about improving conditions, or least the person thinking this is our aim. This is counterproductive if our goal is to end animal use. Animal use is not to be used in isolation. It's purpose is only to establish the scope. Other language such as killing and rights violations should be used with it to underscore the severity of the matter. 'Exploitation' may imply that we're campaigning to end 'unfair treatment' rather than the more objective alternative, 'animal use.' It could also imply other animals are 'a resource.' 'Displacement' speaks to the destruction of other animals home where they are not considered property / explicitly bred, used, or killed.

Cows are unjustly impregnated / sexual assaulted to produce milk, their bodies are invaded	Cows have to be pregnant to produce milk	Cows can produce milk without being pregnant. While this is rare and animal users can't rely on this to be consistent / profitable and tend to forcibly impregnate them. By framing the conversation slightly differently we close this potential response.
Regulated murder / killing	Wildlife management, conservation, population control	Especially useful when talking about 'crop deaths' and other ways free-living beings are killed.
[Murdering / killing] someone	Hunting, fishing, overhunting, overfishing,	The murder of just one individual is still a rights violation. There are several species specific language variations to be avoided, such as 'whaling,' 'cubbing,' and 'hare coursing.'
(Cow) individuals	Livestock, cattle	Highlights their individuality, rather than 'inventory' to be 'sold.' (As 'deadstock')
Slave auction	Livestock market	If we were 'selling' humans to be used this is what we would call it.
Inter-species sexual assault	Bestiality	Another option is 'sexual assault of other animals.'
Animal labor prison, human only circus	Circus	This helps to differentiate between circuses who use other animals and those who do not.
Individuals being forced to perform /	Rodeo	'Rodeo' is a euphemism that focus on the 'entertainment' for humans, rather than the animal victims.

fight to their death		
Dogs / horses who are forced to race	Dog / horse track / races	Emphasizes that they are someone being used to do something, versus someone who's purpose isn't to be used.
Rights violations, animal use (Continued)	Factory farmed, intensively farmed	May imply there's an ethical way to use other animals if it's not done intensively. Also refer to note about 'farming' above.
	Standard practice	May imply there's an alternative practice that would be acceptable.
	Industry	This puts the focus on factory farming and leaves the door open for them to discuss small farm / backyard discussions.
	Eating animals	This is a vegetarian message. If we want to talk about 'food,' we can say 'eat or use.'
Completely unnecessary, needless, totally unacceptable	(Subjective alternatives, see beginning of this section)	I find ~20% of people think we need the nutrients from eating or using animals to survive. When referring to animal use, it's useful to incorporate this, such as by saying 'why would we support the violation of other animals' rights, when it's completely unnecessary?' 'Needless' can be considered depending on the situation as well, such as 'needless killing,' however this is probably the weaker alternative, and may be interpreted as we're suggesting some animal use is 'needed.'

Plant conversion ratio	Feed conversion ratio	Emphasizes plants are food / we wouldn't call what humans eat 'feed.'
Kidnap	Steal	'Kidnap' is more likely to suggest someone is involved, 'steal' may imply we're talking about 'something' or 'property.'
Food	Feed	Consistent with language used for humans.
Murder, rape, slavery (abolition), the animal holocaust, (Caveat)	Using language strongly associated with human injustices can be a powerful way to encourage others to see our fellow animals through an (other) animal-centric lens, who are equal to humans at a basic moral level. (Specifically the right to be respected and to not be bred, used, or killed) From a non-speciesist perspective, it may be helpful to use this language if we're prepared to have a discussion about how the speciesism in our language influences the way we view our fellow animals. It's also important we provide context, that we're not suggesting any two injustices are the same, and that our goal is to lift our fellow animals 'up,' not 'pull' certain humans 'down.' (to the 'level of animals') One way we can bring this language in to limit the potentially derailing/harmful PTSD/STSD effect is to ask, 'if we were doing this to humans, what would we call it?' This may arrive at the same language more productively. Using this language without being mindful of the potential derailing effect may make our jobs harder, especially for brief encounters or one-way	

communication via social media. (Content warnings can help depending on context)

<u>Related alternatives</u>

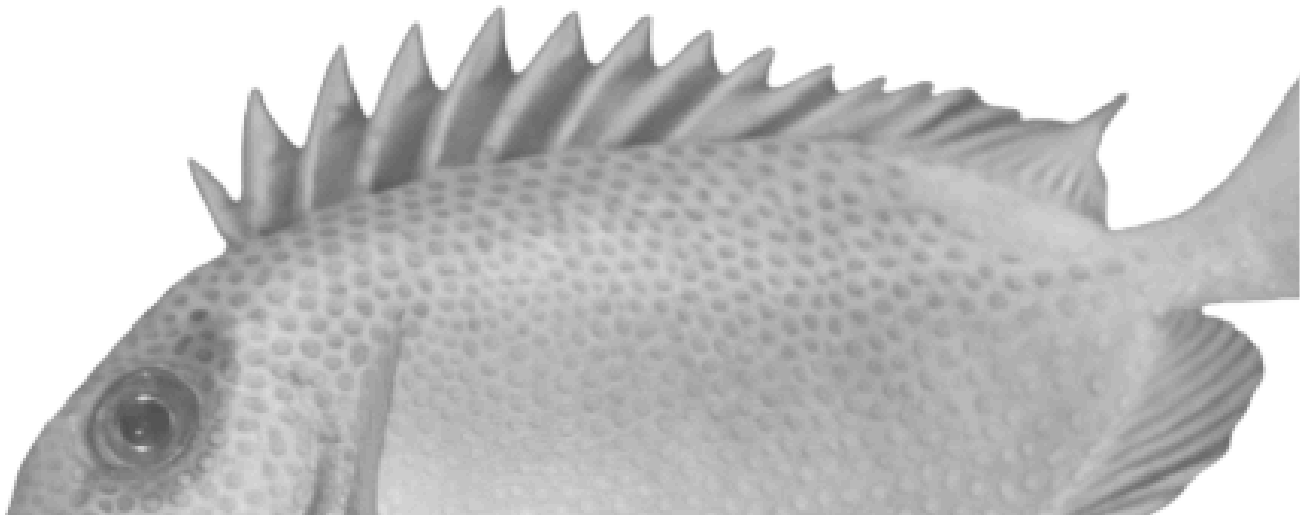
• General: ‘rights violations’
• Murder: ‘unjustly killed’
• Rape: ‘forcibly impregnated,’ ‘invade their body’ or ‘coerced to have children’ if speaking with a ‘farmer’ who may claim the cows they’re using ‘reproduce naturally.’
• Slavery: ‘animal slavery/enslavement’ vs. just ‘slavery’
• Holocaust: ‘The animal holocaust,’ ‘a holocaust’ (vs. ‘The Holocaust’ - capital ‘H’), ‘holocaust of our fellow animals,’ ‘mass killing,’ ‘speciesist massacre’

REFERRING TO THEIR BODIES (AND WHAT COMES FROM THEIR USE)		
Suggestion	**Used to replace…**	**Notes / Rationale**
Someone's body or what comes from them Invizibilized victim a <insert species>'s body (only when necessary)	Meat, beef, pork, etc.	Intended to break down the disconnect between the what (Or who) we're buying and the individual victim. 'Flesh' can also be used instead of 'body.' Focus on the individual first. Refer to notes in the General Concepts section at the beginning of this document for the rationale behind referring to someone's individuality first, and their species only when the context requires it. (In short, it's more important to highlight the fact that they are a 'someone' rather than 'a cow.')
	Animal product	Helps dismantle the idea that other animals' purpose is to be a product. 'Animal product' also does not clearly include all animal use, such as when other animals are used for entertainment victims of 'testing,' etc.

Someone's milk, [A cow's milk]	Milk, cow's milk, milk from a cow	Intended to bring the focus to the animal and the individual this comes from. In our deeply speciesist society, simply saying someone's species is necessarily going to get them thinking about the individual. Saying 'her…' or 'someone's…' may help to overcome this. Also emphasizes that the purpose for cows and chickens is not to produce milks and eggs for us. Some of these alternatives may work too, but the 'A <Blank> from a <Blank>' is considered to be optimal. Also consider for 'milk' 'calf food,' 'processed calf food' (For cheese) and 'baby food.'
Someone's frozen milk [A cow's frozen milk]	Ice cream	
Someone's hardened milk [A cow's hardened milk]	Cheese	
Someone's eggs [A chicken's eggs]	Eggs, chicken's eggs	
Someone's wing [A chicken's wing]	Chicken wings	
Someone's ribs [A pig's ribs]	Ribs	
Someone's skin [a cow's] skin]	Leather, skin from a…	When referring to a specific species, 'a cow's skin' is preferable to 'skin from a cow' as it put's the focus on them instead of their skin and highlights that it's their skin, not ours.

Someone's hair [sheeps' / dog's hair]	Wool, fur from a…	
Animal-free food Speciesism-free Animal respectful food	Fake / imitation meat / milk Vegan [meat/milk]	'Animal-free' <insert food item> instead of 'vegan' or 'plant-based' also centers other animals versus us. Specifically: • Human-centric: 'I'm a vegan who eats vegan food' • (Other) Animal-centric: 'I'm an animal advocate who opposes animal use') 'Fake, etc' implies animal-free food isn't real. Plus this ignores the history of the term 'meat' and that it hasn't always been used to describe animal flesh. We still eat 'meat' as vegans, just not from other animals. Conversely, it's also good to avoid referring to the animal version as 'normal.' When discussing food it's often helpful to refer it as 'the dietary aspect of respecting our fellow animals through veganism' to avoid non-vegans thinking veganism is a diet.
Animal-free solutions [vegan solutions]	Vegan options, plant-based options	This is a new addition which hasn't been tested, but the idea is to dismantle that it should be a 'choice' to support animal use. Also (other) animal-centric through 'non-animal.'

Do you think our fellow animals should be respected?	Do you value taste over life?	We aren't giving up 'taste' when respect others rights through veganism, we're just open to evolving it.
Traffic accident victim	Roadkill	Highlights the victim of driving through their home, rather than referring to them as the individual stripping 'kill.'
Hair	Wool, fur	
Nails	Claws	Generally if a term only exists to differentiate something between humans and other animals that otherwise seems quite similar, it's probably best to use the alternative used for human animals. This is a judgment call we should be fluid with and may vary depending on the context / audience. (For living animals)
Hands, feet	Hoofs, paws	
Arms	Wings	



REFERRING TO VEGANS AND VEGANISM		
Suggestion	**Used to replace…**	**Notes / Rationale**
Respecting our fellow animals through veganism, [Vegan, veganism]	Plant-based, vegetarian, pescatarian, veggie, veg, etc	Research suggests setting a clear end goal of veganism inspires the most change. If a person says they are one of these alternatives, we can still praise the positive steps they've taken and then build the conversation towards veganism. 'Plant-based' can also be a useful way to separate those who are more motivated by the health or the environment, versus AR.
Doing what's right / just	Diet, lifestyle	Animal rights is about justice, not something that we start and stop as it suits us like a diet. Just like being anti-racist isn't a 'lifestyle.'
Dietary aspects of veganism Animal-free diet	Vegan diet, eating vegan Plant-based diet	To focus on the dietary aspects of veganism, 'animal-free diet' may help dismantle the perception that 'veganism is only a diet' that may be implied when these words are tethered together. It's probably best to reserve 'vegan' when referring to people who align with the philosophy of veganism. 'Plant-based diet' is also subjective and human-centric.
Spared	Saved	We're not saving animals by going vegan. We're hopefully preventing their breeding. Sanctuaries are an exception.

Live vegan	Go vegan, be vegan, choose vegan	The idea here is to avoid suggesting that we need to go somewhere or change who we are. ‘Choose vegan’ could imply this is a choice, when it is more of a moral obligation. Veganism is more about tapping our basic respect for others and living in alignment with that.
I oppose…	Can eat/use…	Articulates we can eat them or what comes from them, we don’t as we don’t want to support rights violations. (For when someone asks us ‘Can you eat…’
Animal rights advocate Animal interpreter Animal rights activist (mindfully w/ non-vegans)	Vegan activist (Caveat)	I’ve found discussing ‘advocacy’ with people who are not yet vegan to be less derailing than talking about ‘activism’ which people can have a negative perspective of and associate it with terrorism and so on. (Thanks media /s) ‘Animal rights’ is used over ‘vegan’ to send a clearer (other) animal-centric and rights-based message. <u>Caveat</u>: This is situational and I don't see a problem discussing activism within activist circles and certain situations.

COMMON LANGUAGE WITHIN THE MOVEMENT		
Suggestion	**Used to replace…**	**Notes / Rationale**
Animal Rights Movement, animal movement, the animals' movement	Defend animals, animal protection movement, and similar	These terms could imply our aim is animal welfare rather than animal rights. Specifically, that we're campaigning to improve treatment, and 'protect' or 'defend' them from unfair use, which is quite likely as this is the predominate messaging used in the movement. 'Animal movement' vs. 'genuine animal rights' can also be used to articulate the widespread lack of adoption of a rights-based approach within the movement. (Through our language and campaigns)
Respect for others	Appeals to love, kindness, compassion	Animal rights is about respect and a strict sense of justice. Using words like kindness or compassion dilute this message and may appeal to fewer people.
"	Cognitive Dissonance (Sometimes)	This phrase should be limited to when people express discomfort with animal use. (Otherwise it's not accurate)
All animals have moral value	Animal lives matter, all lives matter	In the U.S. 'all lives matter' and similar can be interpreted as racist in response to the black lives matter movement. This can be re-worded to avoid this risk.
Adopt (Sometimes)	Rescue	We wouldn't 'rescue' a human foster child, we would 'adopt' them.

		This excludes individuals who live at sanctuary who have been rescued from being killed or similar circumstances.
We have to take care of ourselves to be sustainable	This is nothing compared to what the animals go through	While possibly true, this perspective often leads to animal advocates ignoring their own well-being and self-care. This is not likely to be a sustainable approach. We can't help anyone if we burn out. This is a marathon, not a sprint.
Human aspect of society	Society	Highlights that humans are not the only individuals here and that our fellow animals should be considered part of society, and by extension… be considered part of the moral community.
Focus: Our fellow animals Scope: All animals (Including human animals) Clear end goal of respecting our fellow animals through veganism / abolition	Advocating for: Go vegan for the animals, the planet, and our health. Animal 'welfare' Reduc-etarianism Saying: It's **only** about the animals	There is a balance to find between our advocacy becoming too human-centric, while on the other end of the spectrum not giving into the temptation of misanthropy, or hatred of humanity. One of tools that can help us navigate this balance is the focus vs. scope framing, where our fellow animals are the focus and the scope is peripheral issues - such as the environment or human issues. Personally, I think the focus should be 80-90% of our advocacy. I only bring up the scope when someone brings up a peripheral issue, address at succinctly and completely as possible before redirecting the focus back to our fellow animals.

		This approach can help our advocacy in many ways, such as if someone says: ‘Vegans only care about the animals’ We can as them: ‘Do you think if we can find a way to respect other animals this has the potential to increase the amount of respect humans have for each other?’

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION		
Suggestion	**Used to replace…**	**Notes / Rationale**
Inconsistent	Hypocrite	These say the same thing in a way that's less likely to derail the conversation. 'Justifications' may imply something is a valid moral justification, when it does not.
Belief, objection	Justification, Excuse	
We, us, I	You, them	'We' and 'Us' statements, such as 'we've all been lied to' help to build a connection, versus an 'us vs them' mentality. 'I' statements help us talk about what we're doing, versus what they should be doing. Such 'I was shocked to learn…'
Build awareness, inform	Educate, ignorant	The listener could take this to mean we're saying they're uneducated. This could also have classist implications.
Habit	Addiction (while there is evidence for this)	This can imply that the situation is beyond their control or be insensitive to those who have suffered from addiction themselves.
Affected, upset	Triggered	Insensitive to mental health issues: '…being actually triggered in the mental health sense is very serious and can have devastating effects on people's lives.' https://themighty.com/2017/12/stop-misusing-triggered-mental-health/
Morally inconsistent	Moral schizophrenia	Similar rationale to not using 'triggered.'

(OTHER) ANIMAL-CENTRIC FRAMING

It's tempting as humans to frame things as they relate to us.

This section explores specific ways to help us redirect the focus to where it belongs when we're discussing our fellow animals, them.

Suggestion	Used to replace…	Notes / Rationale
I oppose the breeding, use, and murder of our fellow animals, animal advocate, animal respecter	I'm vegan	By saying we don't support animal use, rather than saying 'we're vegan' articulates that veganism is not a diet for us, it's an ethical stance for them. (Also more other animal-centric) If someone asks us if we're vegan, we can say 'Yes, I don't support animal use.' 'Animalist' is another emerging term.
(a/an) [animal] + [how they're used]	[use] + [animal]	This has been covered elsewhere and is included here as word order is perhaps the best way to center other animals. By putting the animal first it also helps to articulate that they exist in their own right, not for their usefulness to us, such as: • 'A chicken's wing' vs. 'Chicken wings' • 'Horses who are forced to race' vs. 'racehorse'
Animal rights advocate	Terrorist	If someone claims that animal advocates are terrorists, they are likely thinking from a human-centric perspective. It may help to

		remind them of who the true victims are, our fellow animals.

DISMANTLING SPECIESISM

This section explores more overt ways we can use our words to help dismantle speciesism and human superiority.

The ‘flip it to test it’ strategy is a good test. If we wouldn't use the same terminology for humans, it’s quite likely it’s speciesist.

Suggestion	Used to replace…	Notes / Rationale
Community / group of…	Flock/herd/etc of…	Using the same terminology as we would for humans.
Murder boat	Fishing boat, fishing	Uses similar terminology as animals who don’t live in the water. ‘Floating slaughterhouse’ is also an option, however ‘slaughterhouse’ is less descriptive than ‘murder.’
Water prison	Aquarium	Articulates these animals are not free. Also consider ‘aqua prison,’ ‘victim of forced labor,’ ‘animal who’s forced to entertain,’ and ‘prison inmate.’ This ‘zoo’ pairing can be a useful technique, attaching our key message to the existing euphemism to improve the non-vegan translation.
Zoo inmate	Zoo animal	
Fishes, water animals, individuals who live in the sea	Fish, sea food, sea animals, marine life, aquatic life	‘Fishes’ highlights that they are individuals, not ‘fish’ who are often measured by the ton. ‘Water animals’ helps to highlight the similarities between fishes, etc and other (land) animals.

		‘Water’ is preferred over ‘marine’ ‘sea’ or ‘aquatic’ to apply to all animals who live in the water, not just the ocean. It’s also hoped ‘water’ will be the most easily understood.
I’m disappointed	I’m gutted	Etymology refers to the ‘gutting’ of our fellow animals.
Depersonify	Dehumanize, inhumane	Avoids implying humans are the only ones worthy of respect / giving it. It’s also important to articulate our aim is to ‘lift’ our fellow animals up. (Not pull certain humans ‘down,’ or ‘animalize’ them, which is a common misinterpretation)

RECLAIMING ANIMAL IDIOMS (EXPRESSIONS) Several existing idioms are disrespectful to our fellow animals. We can challenge this by being creative and creating new expressions that are respectful. These are just a few examples.		
Suggestion	**Used to replace…**	**Notes / Rationale**

As gentle as a cow	As fat as a cow	This can be done with any species and is a great place to tap into our creativity. These are just a few ideas to get us thinking along these lines. It's best to do this by referring to a specific individual we've met, or perhaps seen a video about. For example, 'they're as gentle as Rosie a cow at XYZ sanctuary.' This avoids the risk of suggesting that all members of a species have the same characteristics, which strips them of their individuality. It's also best to focus on personality traits, rather than abilities. For instance saying 'as smart as a pig' may send the message that cognitive ability is important when deciding someone's moral value, when it's more about their awareness and individuality. There are numerous expressions like this that we may not even be aware we're saying. The goal is to challenge ourselves when we say things like this, and reclaim the reference to a species using a positive spin.
As curious as a pig	As dirty as a pig	
As attentive as a chicken	As scared as a chicken	
As cuddly as a turkey	As silly as a turkey	
Brave as a cat	Scaredy-cat	
Friendly as a sheep	Shy as a sheep, sheepish	
Avocados in one basket	Eggs in one basket	
Fast as a fish	Smells like fish	
Not my first rodeo protest	Not my first rodeo	
Liberate a can of worms	Open a can of worms	
We need to talk about the elephant in the 'zoo'	We need to talk about the elephant in the room	
Getting in the cart before liberating the horse	Cart before the horse	

<table>
<tr><td>Cut two carrots with one knife, Dispel two myths with one fact</td><td>Kill two birds with one stone</td><td rowspan="3">Sometimes there may not be an obvious replacement such as when someone’s doing something first like ‘being a guinea pig’ or ‘being a sacrificial lamb.’ In these cases a literal replacement can be used.

This can help to build the case for all animals having moral value, versus potentially reinforcing speciesist ideology.

Colleen Patrick-Goudreau offers several alternatives: https://youtu.be/mU70LvwZoNw</td></tr>
<tr><td>Go forage</td><td>Go fish</td></tr>
<tr><td>Pretend not to see</td><td>Turn a blind eye (Ableist)</td></tr>
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CLOSING THOUGHTS

**"Language is the road map of a culture.
It tells you where its people come from
and where they are going."
-Rita Mae Brown**

Evolving our language is a continual process. The idea isn't to find a 'quick fix' or 'figure it all out.' The idea is to be mindful of all of the language we use, and continually question how non-vegans / speciesists may interpret what we're saying. Specifically whether we may be unintentionally reinforcing human superiority, or if we're building respect for our fellow animals and inviting the audience to see them in a new way - as the unique individuals who they are.

It's important our word choice consistently opposes all injustices, not just speciesism. (racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, etc) Autistic Hoya is a robust resource to learn more about ableist language, which often overlaps with speciesism: https://bit.ly/2P2pYqe

See my discussion guide and list of responses to 60+ non-vegan beliefs which are companion documents to this one at: https://www.veganinteractions.com/ (Advocacy Resources > Free Downloads)

If you have feedback / suggestions, please e-mail me at VeganInteractions@gmail.com. I love feedback as it helps me to evolve and I update this document regularly ☺

I'll see you in the Unlearning Speciesist Language FB group!

-Jeremy

Inter actions

This is a working document with contributions from many, especially the work of Joan Dunayer.