Veganism and the Veterinary Profession: An Incongruous Union?  
The Experiences of Vegan Veterinary Professionals Working in Small Animal Veterinary Practice in England

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Abstract

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This thesis examines the relationship between veganism and the veterinary profession. Veganism is a politically motivated, ethically underpinned identity and practice that involves a commitment to eschewing animal exploitation and the avoidance of contributing to unnecessary animal suffering. The western veterinary profession practices and promotes animal welfare, yet through its relationship to the state and its pivotal role in public health, it is enmeshed with systemic nonhuman animal use within the vast Animal-Industrial Complex (AIC). Thus, despite veganism and the veterinary profession each seeming to be dedicated to maximising animals’ wellbeing while reducing animal harm, they appear to be at odds. To explore if and how vegan veterinary professionals (VVPs) encounter and negotiate the apparent irreconcilability between veganism and veterinary practice in the small animal veterinary setting, this research adopted a qualitative, interview-based methodology. Twenty interviews conducted with veterinary surgeons and registered veterinary nurses throughout England identified numerous aspects of their professional role that they find challenging, foremost in relation to humans’ power over other animals, the consumption of nonhuman animals, and paradoxical cultural attitudes towards other animals. Ensuingly, VVPs employ various strategies to negotiate their discomfort with certain aspects of their professional role. Small animal veterinary practice is a specific social site where many of the paradoxical ways in which humans relate to other animals comes into view. Adopting a ‘vegan lens’ facilitates a critique of the veterinary profession as a microcosm of wider western ‘meat culture’ and invites a questioning of many socio-cultural paradoxes involving humans’ relations with other animals. This research contributes to empirical studies on the veterinary profession, animal welfare and veterinary ethics. It also contributes to empirical research on the subject of veganism within vegan studies and, notably, within critical animal studies through examination and interrogation of the veterinary
profession’s enmeshment with the AIC. In light of key findings, recommendations are made for reform of veterinary practice.

Key words: Veganism, Veterinary Profession, Critical Animal Studies, Anthropocentrism, Speciesism, Carnism, Animal-Industrial Complex, Human-animal relations

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For ‘Beryl’ 🐾

Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by me and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for the award of any other degree.

Signed: _____________________________________________
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Abbreviations

AIC Animal-industrial complex
ALF Animal Liberation Front
AS Animal studies
BVA British Veterinary Association
CAS Critical animal studies
CEO Chief Executive Officer
CPC Code of Professional Conduct
CPD Continuing professional development
DxE Direct Action Everywhere
FVE Federation of Veterinarians of Europe
HAS Human animal studies
HASU Harper Adams Students’ Union
LAVA The Laboratory Animals Veterinary Association
NGO Non-government organisation
PETA People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals
PIC Pharmaceutical-industrial complex
RCVS Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons
RSPCA Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
RVC Royal Veterinary College
RVN Registered veterinary nurse
RWA Right-wing authoritarianism
SDO Social dominance orientation
SPA Strong patient advocacy
UK United Kingdom
VS Veterinary surgeon
VVP Vegan veterinary professional
WSAVA World Small Animal Veterinary Association
Chapter One: Introduction

Humans live – and have long-lived – alongside other animals. The heterogeneity of human-animal relations in different cultures and across time is evident in historical accounts of human-animal relationships (see Serpell, 1986; Manning and Serpell, 1994). As Manning and Serpell state, “Animals have always formed and will always form a central feature of the human world” (1994: xi). But, of course, humans also enter into and have an impact upon the worlds of nonhuman animals. In addition to being highly significant – historically, socially, economically and politically – and situated in time and place, human-animal relationships are enduring, ever-changing, and, as will be illustrated throughout this thesis, profoundly paradoxical.

Animal domestication has integrally shaped humans’ relationships with other animals (Swabe, 1998). Definitions of domestication vary, with some positing it as a mutually beneficial relationship between humans and domesticated animals or, alternatively, as a process whereby humans “deliberately and with forethought assume control over the domesticate’s movement, feeding, protection, distribution, and, above all, its [sic] breeding—directed at achieving specific clearly identified goals” (Zeder, 2012: 162). Since humans’ domestication of other animals involves various provisions (i.e. food, water, shelter, grooming, health care), some of which are needed for subsistence, it is a process that has involved humans exerting control over domesticates in various ways (i.e. creating dependence, the use of confinement, training and restraint, and performing eugenics and neutering).¹ Indeed, Tuan (1984: 99) asserts: “Domestication means domination: the two words have the same root sense of mastery over another being – of bringing it [sic] into one’s house or domain”. Domestication occurred where animals were amenable to it and “easy to tend, control and maintain” (Swabe, 1998: 26).

The degree to which nonhuman animals have become enmeshed with society through domestication is reflected in the emergence of a profession dedicated to

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¹ Nonhuman animals benefit from domestication in various ways too, such as gaining provisions and (depending on their species) varying degrees of protection (Swabe, 1998).
caring for nonhuman animals’ physical and psychological wellbeing. The veterinary profession is recognised as the primary provider of medical care to nonhuman animals, most of whom are domesticated, as either animals bred and farmed for food or those bred to provide humans with companionship.²

The provision of care to domesticated animals through means of control is a paradoxical aspect of human-animal relations (see Tuan, 1984; Danten, 2015). Western culture is – and has long been – largely accepting of the control of nonhuman animals and of their use and consumption for human gain. Yet, there is – and has long been – opposition to humans’ control and exploitation of nonhuman animals. Individuals (i.e. Pythagoras, Jeremy Bentham, Frances Power Cobbe, and Tom Regan), groups and organisations (i.e. PETA, ALF, DxE³), and social movements (i.e. Animal Rights, Anti-vivisection), have vehemently opposed societal views about and uses of other animals as merely resources for humankind. An increasingly prominent socio-cultural group who eschew nonhuman animal exploitation and live accordingly so as to avoid contributing to causing nonhuman animals unnecessary harm are termed ‘vegan’.

This thesis is interested in vegans who work in the veterinary profession and, through considering their thoughts and experiences, it explores the apparent incongruity between a profession deeply enmeshed in the control and consumption of nonhuman animals – paradoxically through the provision of care – and members of a group within society who oppose nonhuman animals’ exploitation and consumption. While the breadth, depth and nature of the vegan-veterinary paradox is further explicated in Chapter Two: Context and literature – where more detail and relevant context about veganism and about the veterinary profession is provided – the focus of this Introduction establishes the basis of this research. It begins with a statement of the problem and introduces the two key research questions. The rationale and impetus for this study are then described. Critical animal studies (CAS) as an interdisciplinary field and three key concepts – anthropocentrism, speciesism and carnism – are explained before an outlining of

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² These are the two largest categories of domesticated nonhuman animals; however, veterinary professionals may also work with wild living animals.
³ People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals; Animal Liberation Front; Direct Action Everywhere
the implications of this research and the contributions that research on the experiences of vegan veterinary professionals (VVPs) working in small animal veterinary practice makes to existing knowledge. The chapter concludes with an outline and summary of the thesis structure.

**Statement of the problem and research questions**

Ethical veganism involves a commitment to eschewing animal exploitation and the avoidance of contributing to unnecessary animal suffering. The veterinary profession promotes animal welfare, meaning that the profession supports humans’ use of other animals⁴ as long as those animals are ‘treated well’⁵; thus, vegan ideology and the values and practices common to the veterinary profession seem at odds. If one’s veganism conflicts with the values and practices of one’s chosen profession and, furthermore, if one’s beliefs and behaviours differ from most of one’s colleagues, then based upon their veganism and choice of profession, VVPs likely encounter challenges working in veterinary practice. If so, they likely employ strategies⁶ to negotiate incongruity between their personal/political values and their professional role. This thesis explores if and how VVPs are affected by the apparent irreconcilability between veganism and the veterinary profession and how they negotiate any challenges they encounter in performing their professional role. To this end, it sets out to answer two key research questions:

➢ How are veterinary professionals in England who identify as vegans affected in small animal veterinary practice as a result of their veganism?

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⁴ The terms ‘other animals’, ‘nonhuman animals’ and occasionally ‘animals’ are used in this thesis to refer to animals other than humans (see discussion under heading Critical Animal Studies).

⁵ The UK veterinary profession is guided and bound by the Animal Welfare Act 2006 available at https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/45/contents. The Act legitimises humans’ use of animals within various parameters that differ according to species and an animal’s prescribed use.

⁶ ‘Strategy’ usually denotes a deliberate and long-term plan to achieve some end, however, the participants in this research were not always aware of or deliberate in their use of strategies and often strategies were used to help them negotiate daily (not long-term) challenges. Although it could be said that their long-term aim in employing strategies is to remain working in the veterinary profession.
How do veterinary professionals in England who identify as vegans negotiate the apparent irreconcilability between veganism and veterinary practice?

To answer these questions, this research adopts a qualitative, interview-based methodology to explore the experiences of vegan veterinary professionals working in small animal veterinary practice in England.

**Rationale for this study and the impetus for conducting research**

This research involved semi-structured interviews with VVPs (veterinarians and registered veterinary nurses) since they are arguably the only individuals who can provide the information required to answer these research questions. Veterinary surgeons and registered veterinary nurses’ roles are distinct, in that the former have more extensive training, greater responsibility and perform more frequent and invasive procedures on nonhuman animals, while veterinary nurses tend to provide support to veterinary surgeons and adopt a more ‘pastoral’ role in regard to caring for nonhuman animals (and clients). Despite these differences, their positioning as vegans and veterinary professionals employed in small animal veterinary practice was considered similar enough that both should be included in this study. Further, veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses comprise the majority of staff employed in small animal veterinary practices. Thus, by including veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses, as opposed to one group or the other, a more holistic and comprehensive exploration of the workplace experiences of vegans working in the small animal veterinary sector was sought and obtained.

This research focusses on small animal veterinary practice for several reasons. Firstly, because it is a large and significant sector of contemporary western veterinary medicine. Also, because small animal veterinary practice is a site that allows for exploration of VVPs’ thoughts about various kinds of animals across multiple domains of the Animal-Industrial Complex (AIC); for example, animals bred as companions, animals bred to become food, animals kept in laboratories, animals kept in zoos, animals used in sport, and wildlife. While other veterinary sites would make valuable foci for future research, research on VVPs who work in
large animal practice, in non-therapeutic role sectors such as Named Veterinary Surgeons who work in laboratories, or slaughterhouse veterinarians would likely not have captured such breadth. Arguably, nowhere else is the instrumental nature of human-animal relations, the paradoxical nature of these relations, and the veterinary profession’s enmeshment with the AIC more obscured than in small animal veterinary practice making it a unique and apt site for critique.

Also, small animal veterinary practices employ both veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses whereas other veterinary sectors may only employ veterinary surgeons. Finally, owing to the aforementioned, it was considered that vegans working in small animal practice may be more numerous and accessible. Indeed, some participants in this study commented on the difficulty one would face being vegan while working in a laboratory, slaughterhouse or large animal (agricultural) veterinary context; thus, focussing on small animal veterinary practice aided participant recruitment. VVPs working in veterinary fields outside of small animal veterinary practice, nonetheless, would be valuable to study.

While ‘veganism’ and what it means to ‘be vegan’ is explained in more detail in Chapter Two: Context and literature, broadly speaking, veganism is an ideology that opposes unjustified and unnecessary violence against and exploitation of nonhuman animals (but also humans and the natural environment). ‘Vegan’ is a label applied to people who embrace vegan ideology and practice veganism by avoiding – wherever practical and possible – contributing to or participating in violent and exploitative treatment of other living beings (The Vegan Society, 2021a). While vegans represent a demographic minority in the UK (Ipsos MORI, 2016) and in many other countries (Ipsos MORI, 2018; The Vegan Society, 2021b), the UK vegan population is thought to be increasing; indeed, it appears to have quadrupled between 2014 and 2019 (Wunsch, 2020). Thus, the personal and professional impacts of being vegan and the effects of practicing veganism in various settings will increasingly become an important area of social enquiry.

7 There is not one universally agreed upon definition of veganism; however, the UK Vegan Society’s definition seems widely referenced in studies on the topic of veganism and has been revised over the years.
The veterinary profession and the professionalisation of animal medicine are discussed in more detail in the following chapter; however, in brief terms, the veterinary profession is a coordinated and formally recognised group of individuals primarily involved in tending to the medical health and wellbeing of nonhuman animals (Swabe, 1998; Yeates, 2018). Importantly, though, veterinary medicine plays a role in society that extends beyond providing medical care to nonhuman animals and is an industry involved in the global ‘One Health’ agenda, which refers to the “incorporation of human, animal, plant and environmental health into one approach, recognising their interconnectedness and deep dependencies on one another” (Middlemiss, 2020: no page):

Diagram 1: One Health (Middlemiss, 2020: no page)

Thus, the veterinary profession also plays a pivotal role in society in the realms of human and environmental health.

Practice standards and the regulation of veterinary medicine in the UK are covered by several organisations (see Chapter Two: Context and literature). The British Veterinary Association (BVA) is one of these organisations and is the national
representative body for veterinary surgeons in the UK. The UK One Health Coordination Group (UKOHCG) is comprised of representatives from various organisations including the BVA. UKOHCG’s ‘One Health in Action’ report (BVA, 2019a) shows the UK veterinary profession’s clear support for the One Health agenda, emphasising the role that the veterinary sector will play in response to world human population growth, food safety, food security, increased demand for ‘meat’ protein, antimicrobial resistance, zoonotic disease control, alongside the need to maintain animal welfare and ensure environmental protection.

In supporting and promoting One Health, the UK veterinary profession legitimises what One Health represents. In focussing on the human benefits of using other animals and the natural environment as resources, One Health is decidedly anthropocentric. Furthermore, by focusing on how to better control and manage human-animal relations to prevent or reduce risks posed by disease (zoonosis, animal death as economic loss and poor-quality commercial animal products), One Health avoids acknowledging or redressing the exploitative nature of humans’ relationships with other animals. Indeed, while recognition of the interconnectedness of humans and other animals and the environment is laudable, One Health does not aim to address or abolish exploitative practices involving nonhuman animals. It rather masks animal exploitation and, whether deliberately or not, advocates for human beings to simply exploit other animals ‘better’, or ‘more safely’. The point here is that animal exploitation is a systemic enterprise that involves social institutions (i.e. law, government, science, medicine, and education), the economy (organisations, companies and corporations), and also professions (for example, human medicine and pharmacology, teaching (biological science), police and military, and the culinary arts), including the veterinary profession.

While this thesis is concerned with vegans and veganism, it is also interested in a specific profession. In sociological terms, what constitutes and delineates a

8 Also the “British Medical Association (BMA), The Wildlife Trusts, Royal College Nursing (RCN), British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA), Veterinary Public Health Association (VPHA), National Trust, Royal Society Public Health” (VPHA, 2020: no page).
9 Such as marine parks, animal racecourses, zoos, animal agricultural businesses, pharmaceutical companies, banks, clothing companies, food manufacture companies, and restaurants, to name a few.
‘profession’ (particularly in relation to other occupations) is contested. In this thesis, however, a ‘profession’ is viewed as an occupation “based on advanced, or complex, or esoteric, or arcane knowledge” (Murphy, 1988: 245). ‘Professionals’, then, are individuals who have obtained membership to a particular profession through completing a recognised, specialised regime of training and gaining certification (Schudson, 2014). Professions are important socio-cultural entities since they are in a relationship with – and are a link between – the state, the economy, and members of society (Macdonald, 1995). For example, in the UK, the veterinary profession and the state work together on matters relating to the environment, food production, rural affairs, animal health and welfare, and public health; and the veterinary profession provides health care provision to nonhuman animals made to work in state services such as the military, police force, quarantine, and customs, and so forth (Swabe, 1998).

Useful, here, for understanding how professions function in society, is the working theory of the professions and conceptual outline presented in Macdonald (1995), which aptly elucidates the relationship between professions, the state and society, and it highlights professions’ need for economic and social capital to prosper (see Diagram 2). Alongside the veterinary profession’s relationship with the state, the veterinary sector and those working within it pursue economic interests through the commodification of specialised knowledge or expertise, skills, and the provision of particular goods and services. To ensure they retain a distinctive niche in society, professions need to obtain and preserve repute and respectability, social status, prestige, and trust.¹⁰ Thus, professions, such as veterinary medicine, focus on both economic and social pursuits. The former is obtained through a monopoly of specialised knowledge to be traded, which is legitimised (legally) by the state with whom the veterinary profession works closely and comprehensively. In terms of the latter, the monopoly of knowledge and relationship with the state

¹⁰ Trust is extremely important to the veterinary profession evident in reports such as ‘Public Trust in the Veterinary Profession’ (Vet Futures, 2015b). Various leading veterinary schools are perceived as adding to the sense of prestige associated with the veterinary profession, reflected in competition to be ranked highly in the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings; top position in 2021 is held (retained) by RVC in London (Imrie, 2021).
confers upon the profession certain privileges and a legitimacy that fosters their status and respectability within society.

Diagram 2: “A working theory of the professions: a conceptual outline”  
(Macdonald, 1995: 32)

‘Social closure’ is achieved through groups gaining and maximising advantage for those within the group while excluding or closing access to outsiders (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner, 2006). In the case of the veterinary profession, this means the exclusive right to practice veterinary medicine is gained along with the respect afforded to the ‘veterinary profession’ and the titles ‘veterinary surgeon’ (VS) and ‘registered veterinary nurse’ (RVN). Visualising how a profession like veterinary medicine is positioned within this symbiotic matrix involving itself, the state, the economic sector/market and members of society highlights how these societal entities and the veterinary profession connect and collaborate to establish and maintain authority that legitimises and reinforces cultural norms; for instance,

11 Also known as ‘veterinarians’.
the use and consumption (in all its forms) of nonhuman animals. In essence, this thesis is interested in how vegans navigate working within this matrix. It is specifically interested in exploring how veterinary professionals who are vegan encounter and overcome challenges working within the veterinary profession. The veterinary profession is apt for such an enquiry because despite its most visible role being the provision of medical care for nonhuman animals, veterinary medicine is a welfarist, commercial entity that plays a pivotal role in sustaining the AIC.

As mentioned above, vegans are a demographic minority in most geographical locations, and so similarly, vegans working as veterinary professionals are likely a minority group within the UK veterinary profession (and this is probably the case in many, if not most, countries). Therefore, it follows that the commodification and consumption of nonhuman animals is likely normalised and socially acceptable for most veterinary professionals. Western culture is ‘welfarist’, meaning nonhuman animal use for human ends is socially sanctioned and considered justified so long as the animals are ‘treated well’ or ‘humanely’ in the process. In the UK, veterinary professionals work within the welfarist paradigm of veterinary medicine, a profession that supports the welfarist position common to western culture. In veterinary practice the bodies of animals are commodified and consumed in various ways. To begin with, meat and dairy\textsuperscript{12} products are consumed in the diets of veterinary staff.\textsuperscript{13} Meat and dairy products are also a key ingredient of commercial pet food used in-house, promoted, and sold by veterinary practices. Moreover, witnessing and or participating in animal exploitation (i.e. visiting slaughterhouses and performing dissection) is often a requirement of veterinary training and education.\textsuperscript{14} Furthermore, animal testing\textsuperscript{15} (i.e. experimentation and vivisection) is used in the production of pharmaceuticals and commercial pet foods used, promoted, and sold in veterinary practices to members of the public (clients).

\textsuperscript{12} The words ‘meat’ and ‘dairy’ are recognised here as generic, euphemistic terms for animals’ flesh, body parts and bodily fluids that disguise violence and exploitation (Adams, 1990; Fiddes, 1991; Dunayer, 2001) and are not used uncritically.

\textsuperscript{13} Drawing on observations made during my experience working in the Australian veterinary industry for 25 years (1993-2018).


\textsuperscript{15} Regulated under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (ASPA): https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1986/14/contents
Thus, animal use, animal products and products produced using animal testing are commonplace in the veterinary setting. Yet, the consumption of animals as food or commodities, and the use of animals as instruments or tools, conflicts with the vegan belief that humans should avoid contributing to unnecessary and unjustified exploitation of animals, especially since this exploitation and use often causes nonhuman animal suffering. It is the observation of this paradox and my own experience as a VVP of encountering tension between veganism and veterinary practice that prompted this research.

Critical animal studies

Trillions of living beings inhabit the world and, as such, our world is multispecies, as are ‘human societies’. Nonhuman animals have long been of interest to humans, philosophically, scientifically, figuratively, and materially (Ritvo, 2007). Thinking about other animals has helped humans to understand, define and distinguish themselves. Yet, despite nonhuman animals’ importance, significance, and centrality to understanding human being, ‘the animal turn’ in academic studies is traced back just a few decades (Nocella et al., 2014). ‘The animal turn’ refers to the recent burgeoning interest in nonhuman animals as a legitimate and respectable focus of scholarly inquiry (Ritvo, 2007). There are various academic fields of study within the Humanities interested in the relationships between humans and other animals. The multi-disciplinary fields of ‘Human-Animal Studies’ (HAS) and ‘Animal Studies’ (AS) explore the multitude of ways in which nonhuman animals exist in multispecies societies. These fields tend to concern themselves with the place and role of nonhuman animals in society and culture, and with how humans and other animals intersect and interrelate, but they do not aim to problematise, challenge or critique these places, roles, and relations. CAS is a body of scholarship that has emerged from within HAS (or AS) which explicitly sets out to critique, challenge and interrogate the problematic (violent, oppressive and exploitative) ways that humans relate to other animals (and also certain groups of humans and the natural environment) and advocate for change.

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16 Every human body is a holobiont.
17 Not to be confused with ‘Animal Studies’ in the natural sciences.
CAS follows the tradition of critical theory and the early twentieth-century Frankfurt theorists (Twine, 2012; Gunderson, 2014; Wadham, 2021) and their critiques of society, culture, and mechanisms of power. CAS has drawn on the late twentieth-century work of ecofeminists, who critiqued hierarchical dualisms, interlocking oppressions, and patriarchal domination of women and nature (Nocella et al., 2014). Considered ‘radical’ in its approach, critical theory has an emancipatory agenda, pursued through social critique, particularly critique of fascism and capitalism (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner, 2006; Bronner, 2017). In accordance with the critical theoretical approach, CAS is concerned with and dedicated to critiquing society, culture, institutions and power and it recognises the instrumental and exploitative mechanisms of capitalism, an economic and political system that promotes private ownership of capital and is geared towards profit. CAS as an interdisciplinary field recognises the importance of intersectionality and of giving equal consideration to all animals; it aims to identify and critique socio-cultural beliefs, practices, values, institutions, and systems that enable oppression, and exposes the social, cultural, legal, political, and economic mechanisms that mask that oppression (Best et al., 2007; Taylor and Twine, 2014). Importantly, it does all of this by recognising and acknowledging that nonhuman animals cannot be excluded from social analysis since they are enmeshed in human societies and have become entangled in systems of exploitation and oppression.

There are ten principles that underpin CAS (Best et al., 2007; Nocella et al., 2014), and several are worth highlighting as core to this research. Firstly, CAS recognises binary oppositions between humans and other animals as being socially constructed (Nocella et al., 2014) and as a primary characteristic of anthropocentrism (Calarco, 2020). CAS challenges Cartesian dualisms and the use of the human-animal binary to promote human exceptionalism and supremacy or posit humans as ontologically superior to other animals or the natural environment (Weizenfeld and Joy, 2014). Lune and Berg (2017: 23) write that theory has been considered within the social sciences as a means to explain or attempt to explain the relationship between variables whether it be “two or more objects, concepts, phenomena, or characteristics of humans …”. CAS incorporates various concepts that assist us to explain, for example, relationships between humans and other animals; anthropocentrism and biocentrism;
domination and domestication; commodification and liberation; carnism and veganism, to name just a few.

CAS is committed to the total liberation of all entities oppressed under capitalism (human, nonhuman animals and the environment). To this end, CAS scholars are aware of how language factors in power relations and how discourse factors in exploitation and oppression; hence, how language is used matters (Stibbe, 2001). As Deckha and Pritchard (2016: 184) explain:

> We attach labels to certain bodies based on particular characteristics, and then see these invented labels as immutable. These categories assist in organising animal bodies in ways that best serve human interests.

CAS recognises and challenges distinctions (linguistic and conceptual) made between various groups of nonhuman animals as socially constructed through the assigning of labels (Dunayer, 2001; Stibbe, 2001), for example, ‘livestock’, ‘pet’ and ‘pest’. CAS recognises how these labels benefit humans through reinforcing and normalising nonhuman animals as commodities, inferior, ‘other’ and less worthy (or unworthy) of moral concern.

The recognition of language as a tool of oppression (and so also a tool to counter oppression), has given rise to debates about terminology within CAS; for example, whether to call animals other than humans ‘animals’. While all human beings are animals, not all animals are human beings. Linguistically differentiating humans from all other animals detaches (or rather distinguishes) humans from the animal kingdom and reinforces the human-animal divide. In discussing the work of Derrida, Wright (2021: 8) explains “the very term ‘animal’ constitutes the animal (an abstraction) as ‘other’”. Thus, the term ‘nonhuman animal’ is often used within CAS. Yet, some argue that the prefix ‘non’ in ‘nonhuman animal’ implies lack, and so can serve to denigrate or diminish animals not classified as ‘human’. Thus, other terms that have emerged include ‘other-than-human animals’ and ‘more-than-human animals’. In this thesis, effort is made to resist linguistically reinforcing humans as being outside of the animal kingdom and superior to other animals. While there is valid critique of the term ‘nonhuman animal’ within CAS, it could be considered unproblematic to use the term if one does not accept the category
‘human’ to be normative or superior. Indeed, one might argue that to be ‘non-’ in relation to another can be a positive casting, particularly if the ‘other’ is highly problematised (for example, many would see it as positive to be considered non-violent, non-prejudiced, non-exploitative, and so forth). Further, none of these terms are ideal because they generically group an enormously diverse assemblage of nonhuman animals into a single, supposedly homogenous, category. Thus, where practical or relevant, specific names (i.e. dogs, rats, sheep, rabbits) should be used.

Another point of contention relating to language is whether to call those who care for domesticated animals ‘owners’ – which reinforces property rights discourse – or rather call them ‘carers’ or guardians’. Also, whether to call animals kept as companions ‘companion animals’ or ‘pets’. Calarco (2020: 102) explains the perspective that the term ‘pet’ “carries connotations of human dominance over animals and reinforces the notion that pet animals are the property of human owners”. Thus, some think that ‘guardian’ and ‘companion animal’ are preferable terms. The term ‘companion animal’, however, is also problematic because it ascribes a social role to animals that normalises their instrumentalisation as providers of companionship, in the same way social roles are ascribed to ‘guide dogs’, ‘lab rats’, ‘police horses’ and ‘dairy cows’. While the terms ‘pet’ and ‘companion animal’ are used in this thesis, they are viewed critically and, where possible, the preferred descriptor is ‘animals kept as companions’.

A final noteworthy characteristic of CAS is that it is – quite evidently – not apolitical (Best et al., 2007; Taylor and Twine, 2014; Nocella et al., 2014). Rather, it explicitly rejects the normative stance that anthropocentrism and humans’ many uses of other animals are unproblematic aspects of human-animal relations (Taylor and Twine, 2014). CAS is interested in more than just thinking about animals or about human-animal relations; rather, it is concerned with the animal condition (Pedersen and Stănescu, 2012: ix); that is, concerned about their literal circumstances and the consequences of their ubiquitous use and often unquestioned exploitation. Hence, while this research focuses overtly on better understanding the experiences and perspectives of vegans who work in the veterinary profession, in accordance with a CAS approach, it is also interested in critiquing the economic, legal, political and socio-cultural systems and institutions
that vegans and veganism oppose – and that the veterinary profession accepts and supports. These systems and institutions encompass all the various forms of nonhuman animal consumption that are linked to the Animal-Industrial Complex, which Twine (2012: 23 original italics) defines as:

\[a \text{ partly opaque and multiple set of networks and relationships between the corporate (agricultural) sector, governments, and public and private science. With economic, cultural, social and affective dimensions it encompasses an extensive range of practices, technologies, images, identities and markets.}\]

The term ‘AIC’ – thought to have evolved from a comparison to the ‘military-industrial complex’\(^{18}\) – originated with anthropologist Barbara Noske (1989) and it encompasses all the ways in which humans utilise nonhuman animals in society (Twine, 2012; Twine, 2013b). Calarco (2020: 9) explains: “Scholars who employ this term maintain that capitalism and the profit motive in particular are largely, but not exclusively, responsible for the widespread violence directed toward animals”. Pervasive and infiltrative, the AIC is linked to and overlaps with other capitalistic, institutional complexes such as the ‘military-industrial complex’, ‘the prison-industrial complex’, the ‘entertainment-industrial complex’, and the ‘pharmaceutical-industrial complex’, all of which, in various ways and to varying degrees, rely on the mass breeding of nonhuman animals to economically sustain them (Twine, 2012; Twine, 2013b). The veterinary profession is inextricably entwined with the AIC through its involvement with various capitalistic, institutionalised forms of nonhuman animal (and often human) exploitation, from agribusiness (animals bred to be intensively farmed), to ‘working’ animals (those bred to be used for therapy, guiding the blind, and as companions), pharmaceuticals (animals bred for medical testing and used as ingredients in medicine), and entertainment (animals bred to perform in racing, events like rodeos, and bred or captured to be exhibited in zoos). These forms of

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\(^{18}\) The military industrial complex (MIC) refers to the power in the “relations between a government’s military policy, the various armed forces, and the corporations that support the military” (Twine, 2013: 82).
consumption are normative within the realm of western culture and within the veterinary industry, but not normal when viewed through a vegan lens.

Situating this research exploring the experiences of VVPs working in small animal veterinary practice within CAS is appropriate because CAS is – at its most fundamental – interested in hierarchical, contested, and complex (or ‘entangled’) relationships, such as those between humans and other animals and, thus, by extension, between vegans and non-vegans: two groups whose attitudes towards nonhuman animals tend to differ in significant ways. Also, because of the veterinary profession’s enmeshment with the AIC and its simultaneous appeal to those who care about and want to care for nonhuman animals. Guided by the principles of CAS when designing this research and when analysing the data facilitated a better understanding of ‘the vegan perspective’. It would be difficult to gain insight into the views, opinions and experiences of VVPs without an understanding and appreciation of their perspective, which tends towards the belief that nonhuman animals are owed greater moral consideration than they presently receive; they have intrinsic or inherent value that is more significant than their usefulness to humankind; and their mass exploitation at the hands of humans is unjustified.

Indeed, CAS and veganism are correlated (Wright, 2015), evident in the prevalence of veganism as a subject of inquiry among CAS scholars and within CAS scholarship (Cole and Morgan, 2011; Twine, 2014; Greenebaum 2012a, 2012b, 2017; White, 2018). Also, most CAS scholars identify as vegan.19 Furthermore, there appears to be a higher percentage of vegans and vegetarians (veg*ns)20 among AS scholars than in the general population, and there is tension within AS about whether AS scholars who advocate for nonhuman animals should eat them (Watts, O’Sullivan and Probyn-Rapsey, 2018). In terms of scholars who write about vegans and veganism, some might be viewed as contributing to a nascent field of research called ‘vegan studies’. Wright (2021: 10) describes vegan studies as being “focused on what it means to be vegan, a singular identity

19 Some CAS scholars state that they are vegan in their scholarship (i.e. in declarations of positionality) but through attending CAS conferences and via my personal/professional CAS networks, it is clear that this is the case.
20 Veg*ns’ is a widely recognised term that includes vegetarians and vegans.
category that may or may not be linked to an ethical imperative with regard to one’s feelings about and advocacy for animals”. Drawing on Wright’s conceptualisation of vegan studies, Greenebaum (2018: 681) explains: “vegan studies is a scholarly enterprise that analyzes and deconstructs the history of veganism, vegan identity, and the representation of veganism in popular and academic discourse”. An important aspect of both CAS and vegan studies is the recognition of the interconnectedness of oppression under a dominant system, which is referred to as ‘intersectionality’ and, like many critiques of humanism and capitalism, in large part, derives from the important work of ecofeminists (i.e. Adams, 1990; Plumwood, 1993; Sturgeon, 1997).

**Key concepts**

CAS scholarship has problematised anthropocentrism, speciesism and carnism. These concepts are significant in this research because veganism opposes these ideologies through its emancipatory and liberatory principles whereas the veterinary profession reinforces them through the acceptance and support of the instrumentalisation and commodification of nonhuman animals. Since these concepts are key to this research and are used throughout this thesis, they require further explication.

Dominant in western culture, anthropocentrism “is the view that human beings (in opposition to animals and other nonhuman beings) are of supreme importance in ethical, political, legal, and existential matters” (Calarco, 2020: 18). It is “a belief system, an ideology of human supremacy that advocates privileging humans (and those who approximate humanity)” (Weizenfeld and Joy, 2014: 4).

Anthropocentrism when it relates to human supremacy or human exceptionalism adopts the view that humans “do not have ethical responsibilities to other animals” and sees humans as distinct from other animals, unique and thus superior to them (Gruen, 2011: 2). Stanescu (2018: 223) states that taken to its extreme, anthropocentrism “is a denial of the world mattering outside of human acknowledgement and intervention”. As previously mentioned, anthropocentrism is linked to the forging and reinforcing of humans as distinct from and superior to

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21 Also see Twine, 2001; Twine, 2010b.
other animals with humans bestowing upon themselves higher moral value (Calarco, 2020).

Calarco (2020) makes two important points about anthropocentrism: firstly, it can serve to dehumanise certain groups of humans and is thus implicated in human-human prejudice (i.e. based on ability, ethnicity, gender, race or sexuality) oppression, and exploitation. Secondly, although it is treated as ‘a theoretical concept’ here, Calarco (2020: 19-20) writes, “Anthropocentric ideas, attitudes, and dispositions are enacted through a robust and interlocking series of practices and institutions”, such as the AIC and, accordingly, the veterinary profession which supports it. From a vegan perspective, humans are not assumed to be exceptional in any way that would justify the (ab)use of other animals, who vegans tend to view as having ‘intrinsic value’; which means value outside of their usefulness to human beings (Regan, 2004). Vegans tend to see the inherent value in all animal life and so may not subscribe to notions of human exceptionalism as justification to exploit. Thus, when viewed in this way, veganism opposes anthropocentrism.

Strongly linked to anthropocentrism, speciesism is described as “an unjustified bias against animals based on the purported superiority of the human species” (Calarco, 2020: 124). The term originated with Richard D. Ryder (1989: 6), who argued:

[S]pecies alone is not a valid criterion for cruel discrimination. Like race or sex, species denotes some physical and other differences but in no way does it nullify the great similarity among all sentients – our capacity for suffering.

With speciesism, difference or disparity is the basis upon which a particular group comprising all nonhumans is denied certain privileges and become legitimated for subjugation and oppression because of their (nonhuman) species membership, or rather their lack of (human) species membership. Focusing on the similarities between humans and other sentient animals, foremost the capacity to suffer, means that vegans may oppose animal exploitation and consumption upon the basis that treating nonhuman animals differently because they are not human constitutes speciesism, which is akin to other forms of prejudice aimed at human groups centred upon difference. Vegans tend to reject semantic and symbolic
divisions between humans and other animals and do not typically support
differential treatment of nonhuman animals upon the basis of their species
membership. As with anthropocentrism, while speciesism is treated as ‘a
theoretical concept’ here, it is an ideology that has profound practical impacts
upon trillions\(^{22}\) of individuals of nonhuman animal kind that humans have
legitimised for use within the AIC for human gain and, as before, the veterinary
profession supports this.

Carnism is a term that denotes the violent, invisible belief system embedded in
western culture that teaches us that the various kinds of animals have been
assigned different categories and social roles and, as a result, some are deemed
edible while others are not (Joy, 2011). Weizenfeld and Joy (2014: no page)
describe carnism as “a sub-ideology of speciesism that dichotomizes non-human
animals into ‘edible’ and ‘inedible’ categorisations and legitimates the exploitation
and consumption of other animals”. Vegans tend to consider distinctions between
species – which determine how animals are perceived and thus treated – as
unreasonable and unjustified because, for example, in the case of dogs and cats
(considered inedible), pigs, chickens and cows (considered edible), they all share
the capacity to suffer, a desire to live, and they all obviously seek pleasure and
avoid pain. Thus, labelling some as ‘food’, and not all or none as ‘food’, exposes a
form of discrimination or species prejudice that leads to some groups of animals
being treated like objects and commodities with little to no legal protection.

While carnism dominates thoughts about nonhuman animals and meat-eating in
western society today, it is important to acknowledge that the fact we eat some
animals but not others is not arbitrary. Historically, relationships between humans
and other animals have been mutually beneficial and some kinds of animals have
been more amenable to humans’ domination of them (Swabe, 1998). Today,
however, humans’ relationships with other animals are coming under increased
scrutiny (CAS has played a large role in this), and questions regarding our
justifications for treating nonhuman animals differently based on their species are
now being asked. Joy (2011) identifies three myths that maintain the carnist
system; they are, meat-eating is ‘normal’, ‘necessary’ and ‘natural’. Institutions

\(^{22}\) Trillions including fish and other marine creatures.
play a significant role in perpetuating and maintaining these myths through indoctrination, by representing human beings as inherent meat-eaters, by reinforcing notions of human supremacy purporting it is humans’ ‘right’ to dominate nonhuman animals, and through reinforcing the belief that humans need to consume animals in order to be healthy.

Joy (2011) outlines ‘the cognitive trio’, which are the key mechanisms through which carnism efficiently functions. Firstly, institutions influence how we think about and treat other animals through their objectification. This occurs in the language we use to speak about other animals and by legally designating them to the status of property. Secondly, through deindividualization, which involves abstracting members of a species by speaking about them as collective, rather than in an individual sense. Thirdly, through dichotomisation, forging false distinctions between animal groups to enable us to disassociate and distance ourselves from the discomfort of perpetuating speciesism.

Diagram 3: The interrelationship between anthropocentrism, speciesism and carnism (author’s diagram using material sourced from Calarco, 2020; Ryder, 1989; Joy, 2011)
It is clear that anthropocentrism, speciesism and carnism are intimately linked and together reinforce species hierarchy by privileging human beings and fostering a dismissal of, or diminished concern for nonhuman animals and their capacity to suffer (see Ryder, 1989, Gruen, 2011, Weizenfeld and Joy, 2014). In sum, anthropocentrism, speciesism and carnism work together to a) legitimise humans’ power and dominion over other animals, b) normalise the ubiquitous consumption of other animals and, c) entrench a practically unquestioned acceptance of nonhuman animals’ use within western culture.

Implications of this research

This research has implications on three levels: individual, industry and global, outlined as follows.

If veganism continues to grow in popularity and prevalence, the implications of veganism for professions, including the veterinary profession, will increasingly become an important area of social enquiry. It is not currently known how many vegans work as veterinary professionals but since the veterinary profession appeals to individuals who care about animals’ welfare and wellbeing (Hamilton and Taylor, 2013; Morris, 2018), it may be a profession that appeals to vegans despite its moral contradictions. It is therefore an apt profession for a study exploring key barriers – personal, social, and professional – that vegans face daily: barriers that this research might help alleviate. Several studies have indicated that vegans are targets of stigma, prejudice, and bias and may encounter institutionalised discrimination (see Chapter Two: Context and literature). Hence, better understanding vegans’ experiences can generate knowledge to help to recognise and address these serious social issues in various settings, such as the workplace.

This study explores not only the challenges that VVPs may encounter in small animal veterinary practice arising from personal-professional values conflict, but also vegans’ and veganism’s presence in the small animal veterinary setting. Thus, in addition to having implications for vegans as individuals and as a unique socio-cultural group, this research also has implications for the veterinary
profession. The potential of vegan influence becomes particularly poignant when considering that presently, there is a sense that the veterinary profession is at a turning point and appears to be “undergoing a profound transformation” (Bonnaud and Fortané, 2021: 125). It has been said to be at “a pivotal moment in its history” (Hobson-West and Timmons, 2016: 59), “in the middle of the hourglass between…[the] past and…[the] future” (Yeates, 2018: xvii), trapped somewhere between a modern and postmodern paradigm (Whiting, 2010). Some of the more prominent changes currently occurring within the veterinary sector are outlined as follows.

In small animal veterinary practice, the veterinary practitioner’s role has moved away from the historically rooted ‘mechanic’ approach to animal medicine (although this approach seems to endure in animal agricultural practice) and away from viewing animal companions merely as objects or property, towards the veterinarian’s role being more akin to a paediatrician (Rollin, 2002, 2006; Hobson-West and Timmons, 2016; Coghlin, 2018). This is not a clear demarcation, however, since nonhuman animals, including animal companions, remain legally classified as property and many – across all species – remain treated as objects (i.e. commodities, resources, instruments, tools). Yet, in small animal veterinary practice most patients are pets, many are cherished and beloved. Thus, as people have increasingly come to consider their pets valued family members (Rollin, 2006), the small animal veterinary professional’s role has shifted to accommodate the greater affective consideration of animals kept as companions, deepened emotional connections to pets, and the higher expectations of those who present animal companions for veterinary services.

There are also changes relating to corporatisation. Corporate ownership of veterinary practices in the UK is linked to changes in rules that allow non-vets to buy and own veterinary practices; hence, corporatisation involves companies buying small veterinary practices and forming ‘chains’, meaning multiple practices in various locations under one name (Robinson et al., 2019). Rather than working for individuals (traditionally veterinarians or partnership), veterinary professionals instead work for a large company (i.e. Medivet). Corporatisation concerns many veterinary professionals who feel the corporate business model negatively impacts
upon patient care by focussing more on financial targets, turnover targets, sales and profit (Robinson et al., 2019).

Finally, the veterinary profession is becoming ‘feminised’ with increasing numbers of women working as veterinary surgeons (Ware, 2018; Clarke and Knights, 2018b; Irvine and Vermilya, 2010; Robinson et al., 2019a). While women were excluded from training as veterinary practitioners until 1919 and the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act (Hipperson, 2018), the 2019 RCVS Survey of the Veterinary Profession suggests that women now dominate the profession (58% of survey respondents) (Robinson et al., 2019). Indeed, in 2018, 14,925 women were registered as practicing veterinarians in the UK compared to 9,478 men (RCVS Facts, 2018). With more females than males enrolling in and completing veterinary science degrees, feminisation of the profession is likely to continue (William and Jordan, 2015). Feminisation of the veterinary profession is significant because while there may be more women in the profession, structurally, the profession remains masculinely gendered (Clarke and Knights, 2018b; Treanor and Marlow, 2019). Also, it seems that in general more vegans are women (Dean, 2014; Wright, 2017; Twine, 2018). If more women than men tend to be vegan, and there are more female than male veterinary practitioners, one might expect to encounter a higher number of female vegan veterinary professionals, and, as such, they may experience unique struggles working within the masculinely structured profession.

Considering these changes, the opportunity to critically evaluate some of the paradoxes affecting billions of animals who fall under the care of this profession presents itself. This thesis takes the opportunity to examine the veterinary profession adopting a novel approach in applying a ‘vegan lens’, in order to incite discussion about how the veterinary profession might be reconceptualised moving forward, and to encourage reflection on its current form. Hence, considering the many changes taking place, this research on the experiences of VVPs working in small animal veterinary practice proves timely.

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23 Veterinary nursing has long been dominated by women (96.8% of survey respondents) (Robinson et al., 2019b) and in 2018 in the UK, 15,407 RVNs were female compared to only 372 males (RCVS Facts, 2018).
There is further evidence that change within the UK veterinary industry is in progress. For example, the UK veterinary profession is currently focussing on its position, role, and responsibilities around some important and topical issues like diversity and sustainability. In terms of the former, the BVA recently conducted a survey and produced a report on discrimination in the veterinary profession (BVA, 2019b). The results revealed evidence of gender-based and race-based discrimination in the UK veterinary profession, leading the BVA to implement an equality and diversity policy aimed at “respecting and promoting equality and diversity in all its activities through an inclusive culture and working practices”; they have also made a commitment to “ensuring equality and the fair and respectful treatment of all individuals in connection with its work” (BVA, n.d: no page). Since vegans may experience discrimination, prejudice and bias, they must be considered in the BVA’s anti-discrimination, equality and diversity agenda.

The BVA states that it “recognises its responsibilities under equality legislation (in particular the Equality Act 2010) and seeks to operate in line with best practice guidance” (BVA, n.d: no page). Based on the BVA’s interest in identifying and addressing discrimination and to promoting equality, inclusivity and diversity in the UK veterinary profession, this research involving VVPs’ experiences working in small animal veterinary practice should be of interest to those who govern, regulate, represent, and develop practice standards within the profession. Furthermore, the veterinary profession should be interested in this research because ethical veganism recently became the focus of legal action in the UK and was ruled a protected belief under Section 10 of the Equality Act 2010 (O’Sullivan Garcia, 2020; Legislation UK, 2021d), and this has implications for vegans in all workplaces.

The emergence of veterinary sustainability agendas is laudable; however, the focus tends to be on working toward creating environmentally friendly workplaces through actions such as reducing energy use and recycling. While the BVA acknowledges that animal agriculture, livestock-raising, deforestation, and land conversion is a major contributor to greenhouse gases and climate change, they do not take a hard stance on meat and dairy consumption and rather promote eating less [quantity] and better [welfare/quality] (BVA, 2019c). Indeed, the BVA,
as representative of the UK veterinary profession, remains supportive of industries like meat and dairy that generate considerable greenhouse gases. Veganism has much to offer in terms of moving towards a more sustainable plant-based future and taking seriously the impacts of animal agriculture (and indeed activities of the wider AIC) on climate change.

Sustainability agendas have further-reaching implications. The BVA issued a policy statement outlining their position on UK sustainable animal agriculture. However, as mentioned, veterinary medicine is a welfare-oriented profession that is enmeshed in the AIC. At the time when this thesis was being researched and written, humans are embarking on the third decade of the 21st Century; the ‘Anthropocene’; “an epoch of crisis” marked by human activity and expansion, capitalism, neoliberalism, and a time when anthropogenic climate change threatens ecosystems, the existence of innumerable nonhuman animal species, the health of the planet and, potentially, the longevity of human beings (Cudworth, 2020). Additionally, in 2019, there emerged a global pandemic caused by a zoonotic pathogen called COVID-19, whose origin – while apparently unknown – is undoubtably anthropogenic and related to humans’ damaging and often dangerous relationships with other animals; yet, how humans relate to nonhuman animals remains inadequately spoken about. That is, spoken about in terms advanced by Arcari (2020), who argues for a holistic recognition, re-evaluation and end to how humans commodify, use and exploit nonhuman animals within the global AIC, whether animals are used as food, entertainment, sport, research, or companionship. In this sense, the ‘critical’ in critical animal studies reflects the urgent and vital need to interrogate and re-evaluate humanity’s relationship to other animals (and indeed the entire planetary environment). Veganism is highly relevant considering these serious contemporary global issues.

Humans’ relations with other animals are presently complex, contradictory and, for many, gravely concerning. The AIC breeds, commodifies, trades, utilises and then kills, or kills so as to utilise, trillions of nonhuman animals every year and this scale of animal industrialisation has consequences for the animals themselves, as well

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24 Also called other various names, including perhaps the most appropriate: ‘Capitalocene’ (Moore, 2016; Cudworth, 2020; Stuart and Gunderson, 2020).
as the environment (Twine, 2013b). There has been agitation for action and change as individuals and groups (i.e. new social movements) implore the public and politicians to take climate change and humans’ damaging and often dangerous relationships with other animals seriously (Martiskainen et al., 2020; Slaven and Heydon, 2020; Johnson and Johnson, 2020). Yet not all political activity is organised, public, or highly visible. Vegans engage in what Kalte (2020) describes as an unconventional, individualised form of political participation. Hence, exploring how a vegan lens can problematise and provide insight into relationships between the veterinary profession and the AIC in turn has broader implications for the relationship between the AIC and the disconcerting state of this remarkable multispecies world.

Contributions

This research contributes to scholarship involving nonhuman animals in sociological studies, to CAS scholarship broadly and CAS research within the social sciences and, specifically, within sociology. It also contributes to the sociology of professions; sociological studies of vegans and veganism, and vegan studies more broadly, sociological studies of the veterinary profession, and it contributes to empirical research on veganism and empirical research on the veterinary profession. Significantly, it is the only study to date focussing specifically on veganism and the veterinary profession.

Animals in sociology

To begin, this research contributes to knowledge and scholarship relating to the study of the relationships between humans and other animals in the discipline of sociology. The social sciences have a tradition of being anthropocentric, focussing on and foregrounding humans while often neglecting or overlooking nonhuman animals (Nibert, 2003; Peggs, 2013; Hobson-West and Timmons, 2016; Cudworth, 2016; Carter and Charles, 2018; Taylor and Sutton, 2018). Yet, as Peggs (2013: 593) notes, “Non-human animals are central to societies and thus are of sociological relevance”. Hence, counter to traditional sociology, this thesis
contributes to a “sociology for all humans and other animals” (Nibert, 2003: 21) and sees nonhuman animals as incorporated – whether willingly or not – into what humans call ‘society’.

Importantly, this research does not include nonhuman animals to contribute to “a sociology of other animals”, but rather it aims to represent “a sociology for other animals” (Taylor and Sutton, 2018: 11). Or, as Cudworth (2016: 243) explains:

On the one hand, we have a sociology which includes non-human animals and human-animal relations as worthy of sociological attention. On the other, we have sociological animal studies which raises questions about the exploitation and oppression of non-human animals, and is more reflective of critical traditions in sociological enquiry.

In accordance with the latter form of sociology, this research aims to raise questions about humans’ exploitation and oppression of nonhuman animals.

In this thesis, all animals – whether human or otherwise – are considered to have equal sociological significance and are viewed as equally important to studying this multispecies world. While humans have provided the data, conversations generated through interviews focus (either directly or indirectly) on nonhuman animals, and the animals being spoken about are conspicuous to the researcher (and hopefully to the reader) throughout the human-generated data (Taylor and Sutton, 2018: 13). Hence, this research “physically centres humans by focusing largely on their verbal participation, but discursively centres nonhuman animal experiences” through the subject matter (Taylor and Sutton, 2018: 6). Since the interviewees are human, the experiences and thoughts shared are unavoidably anthropo-focal, yet nonhuman animals – as the primary subjects of their discussion and the beings for whom the participants evidently stridently advocate – are not invisible to the researcher nor should they be invisible to the reader, as they are not intended to be backgrounded in this study. Through adopting this animal-centric approach, this research contributes to CAS scholarship broadly, and specifically, to CAS research within the social sciences and sociology.
Sociological studies of professions

The sociology of professions is a diverse body of scholarship, but within its scope are “studies of the characteristics and experiences of professional workers” (Adams, 2015: 156). This research contributes to the sociological study of professions by generating knowledge about how a specific group of people experience working in a particular profession, and, especially, how they encounter and navigate conflict between personal and professional values. Personal/professional values conflict has been explored when involving teachers (Hamberger and Moore, 1997; Jones, 2003), health care workers (Martin, 2000; Thompson, 2003; Jones and McCullough, 2004; Stacey et al., 2011; Fry-Bowers, 2020), pharmacists (Dresser, 2005), social workers (Furman, 2001; Osteen, 2011), counsellors (Fallon et al., 2013; Ametrano, 2014; Francis and Dugger, 2014; Thacker and Blueford, 2018), psychologists (Shiles, 2009; Paprocki, 2014) and corporate industry workers (LoMonaco-Benzing and Ha-Brookshire, 2016). There is, however, scant research exploring veganism as related to professions, professional or workplace experiences. An exception is Hirschler (2008, 2011), who conducted research on vegans working in five professions, but not in the veterinary profession. The absence of research specifically exploring the challenges vegans face working within the veterinary profession highlights the significant contribution this thesis makes to existing scholarship within the sociological studies of professions and accentuates the gap it fills by exploring the views and experiences of vegans working in small animal veterinary practice in England.

Sociological studies of vegans and veganism

This research also contributes to a growing body of scholarship focusing on better understanding veganism as an identity and practice, and vegans as a distinct socio-cultural group (i.e. Wright, 2015; 2017; 2021; Twine, 2014; 2017; 2018, Greenebaum, 2012a; 2012b; 2017; 2018; Giraud, 2021; Oliver, 2021). On a more individual level, it contributes to explorations of what it means and how it feels to ‘be vegan’ and practice veganism. Owing to the ubiquitousness of humans’ use of
other animals, being vegan tends to affect almost all aspects of one’s life and poses daily challenges. Veganism as a topic of scholarly enquiry has developed over past decades and while many studies have explored the effects of one’s veganism on personal relationships (see Chapter Two: Context and literature), as mentioned, there remains scant research exploring veganism within professions. By focussing on the unique experiences of vegans, with a focus on improving understanding of the challenges related to being vegan in a particular workplace, this study makes a significant contribution to sociological studies about vegans and veganism and to vegan studies.

Sociological studies of the veterinary profession

From within the social sciences, various aspects of the veterinary profession have been studied including challenges facing the profession, its characteristics and sociodemographic evolution, moral and professional dilemmas, relationships between veterinary professionals, and interactions between veterinarians, their clientele, and their animal patients (Bonnaud and Fortané, 2021). The veterinary profession has been the focus of numerous quantitative survey-based studies (for example, Mariti et al., 2018; Fawcett et al., 2019; Fuseini et al., 2019) as well as multiple qualitative interview-based studies (including Herzog, Vore and New, 1989; Hamilton, 2013; Clarke and Knights, 2018a; Knights and Clarke, 2018; Clarke and Knights, 2018b; Treanor and Marlow, 2019). However, as Clarke and Knights (2018a: 1412) note, there remains an “absence of empirical, qualitative and ethnographic studies of vets”, and others also identify the need for further ethnographic studies on the veterinary profession (Hamilton, 2013; Hobson-West and Timmons, 2016). While there are sociological explorations of small animal veterinary medicine, which tend to focus on “life in veterinary practices, on analysing relationships between professionals and on interactions between veterinarians, owners and their animals” (Bonnaud and Fortané, 2021: 132), there are none that incorporate or include veganism as central to the inquiry. Reviewing existing literature within the social sciences on the subject of the veterinary profession, Bonnaud and Fortané (2021: 144) write:
While veterinarians’ relationships with certain contemporary issues, such as animal welfare or ethical matters in both veterinary research and practice, are frequently examined in the fields of animal studies and veterinary sciences, they are rarely studied in the social sciences. These are clearly promising avenues for future research.

Hence, this sociological study of the experiences of VVPs working in small animal veterinary practice contributes to filling this prominent gap.

**Thesis structure**

In Chapter Two: Context and literature, veganism is defined and explained, including who vegans are and the various motivations for individuals adopting vegan praxis. Context relating to the history and development of the western veterinary profession is provided as is further explication as to what it means to be ‘a veterinary professional’. Having provided the necessary context for veganism and the veterinary profession, the chapter provides a review of literature.

Chapter Three: Methodology outlines how this research was designed and conducted and the qualitative, interview-based research approach chosen for this study is justified. The data collection and analysis processes are explained as are relevant ethical considerations. The chapter concludes with discussion of researcher positionality and reflexivity and an acknowledgement of the limitations of this research.

Chapter Four: Power is the first of three chapters to present data. Three aspects of VVPs’ professional role they find challenging are identified and explored: the breeding of animals as companions, the use and promotion of pharmaceuticals made from animals or tested on animals, and the killing of healthy or helpable animals. Through analysis of these aspects of VVPs' role, strategies that VVPs’ employ to negotiate feeling challenged are identified.

Chapter Five: Consumption focusses on how the consumption of nonhuman animals as food affects VVPs’ experiences working in small animal veterinary practice. Their encounters with and opinions about the ubiquity of meat and other
animal products in the small animal veterinary setting is examined. Various strategies that VVPs employ to negotiate feeling challenged by the consumption of nonhuman animals as food are identified.

In Chapter Six: Culture, VVPs’ perceptions of the environment in which they work as being imbued in ‘meat culture’ and some of the effects of opposing ideologies in small animal veterinary practice are explored. Psychocultural25 challenges like speciesism, the meat paradox, and cognitive dissonance that VVPs face working within this environment are discussed. This chapter also examines negative vegan stereotyping and vegan stigma. Strategies that VVPs employ in response to the challenges they face in the veterinary workplace as a result of meat culture and the associated psychocultural mechanisms are identified.

Chapter Seven: Discussion and conclusion presents a summary of the key findings, linking these to the key research questions. A more detailed discussion of the implications of this research is provided in light of the findings and recommendations for policy and practice are made drawing on the outcomes of applying a vegan lens to small animal veterinary practice in England.

25 The term psychocultural, here, refers to “the interaction between the culture in which individuals live and their psychological characteristics” (OED, 2021).
Chapter Two: Context and literature

This chapter expands on the meaning of the terms: ‘veganism’ and ‘vegan’, ‘the veterinary profession’ and ‘veterinary professional’ by providing historical and relevant information about veganism and about the veterinary profession. This clarification is important since this context provides the foundation for the empirical research that has been undertaken in this thesis and has shaped the development of the key research questions. This background and context also further highlights tension at the vegan-veterinary nexus. A review of relevant literature is then presented, providing an overview of existing research on the topics of veganism, and the veterinary profession. The literature review further illuminates the gap in knowledge mentioned in Chapter One: Introduction and re-emphasises why this research involving VVPs makes a valuable contribution to knowledge.

Veganism

Plant-based diets have been observed in various cultures and communities before being named (Leneman, 1999; Ruby, 2012; Vandermoere et al., 2019). Today, people avoid consuming animals and animal products for various reasons (Ruby, 2012; Kalte, 2020). Abstinence from consuming animal products may involve the avoidance of meat only, or meat alongside other animal products, such as eggs and dairy, in which case the term ‘vegetarianism’ is applied. Vegetarianism has been in circulation for centuries (Ruby, 2012; The Vegetarian Society, 2020), and the term ‘vegetarian’ remains widely used to this day.

In 1944, Donald Watson, an English animal rights advocate and founder of the UK Vegan Society and some of his colleagues sought to distinguish non-dairy vegetarians from other vegetarians and the term ‘veganism’ was coined (Watson, 2014; Potts and Armstrong, 2018; Wrenn, 2019). Today, ‘veganism’ is defined on The Vegan Society’s (2021a: no page) website as follows:

A philosophy and way of living which seeks to exclude—as far as is possible and practicable—all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to,
animals for food, clothing or any other purpose; and by extension, promotes the development and use of animal-free alternatives for the benefit of humans, animals and the environment. In dietary terms it denotes the practice of dispensing with all products derived wholly or partly from animals.

While diet is singled out in the final sentence, clearly, veganism was conceived to extend beyond the avoidance of the consumption of animals as food. It promotes the withdrawal of one’s support from all forms of cruel and exploitative animal use including animal by-products, vivisection, the use of animals for labour, exhibition, recreation, sport and entertainment.

While it could be said that veganism evolved from vegetarianism, or rather that Watson and his colleagues devised veganism to be distinct from vegetarianism, veganism should not be viewed as simply a more extreme version of vegetarianism or thought of as a sub-category of vegetarianism. While in nutritional and psychological studies, researchers have tended to group vegetarianism and veganism together, as Rosenfeld (2019: 40) explains, vegans and vegetarians “differ along a number of neurological, attitudinal, and behavioural variables”; thus, it has been suggested that they should be studied separately (Judge and Wilson, 2018; Rosenfeld, 2019). Unlike vegetarianism, veganism is a philosophy or value state that extends beyond diet. While both can be ethically motivated, vegetarianism concerns one’s diet, whereas veganism – owing to the ubiquity of nonhuman animal use – encompasses virtually all aspects of one’s life. Thus, while similar in some regards, the daily experiences of vegans and vegetarians would also differ in significant ways.

Despite The Vegan Society’s definition, veganism manifests in various ways. White (2018: 2) argues that recent developments that have seen corporate, profit-driven ‘lifestyle’ or ‘foodist’ approaches to veganism have detracted us from the radical origins and political imperative of veganism as a “strategy of resistance”. The terms ‘vegan’ and ‘veganism’ have come to be synonymously and interchangeably used with the term ‘plant-based’ (White, 2018); thus, it seems important to clarify the difference between these two terms. While being vegan
means one consumes only plant-based foods, the consumption of plant-based food only may not necessarily mean that one is vegan.\textsuperscript{26} This is because, as Twine (2012: 19) explains, veganism is “more than ‘just a diet’ and is better seen and practised as a systemic and intersectional mode of critical analysis and a useful lived philosophy counter to anthropocentrism, hierarchy and violence”. Today, people may consider or call themselves ‘vegan’ because they avoid eating animals and animal by-products; however, such people may still sanction or support humans’ use and consumption of animals in other ways and not consider themselves politically or ethically motivated (Wrenn, 2019). Vegans, on the other hand, problematise the view that animals should even be viewed as consumable (Panizza, 2020).

The Vegan Society UK’s definition of veganism is adopted in this thesis because it is a popular and widely accepted definition of veganism\textsuperscript{27} albeit not the only definition (North et al., 2021). Hence, here, veganism is viewed as a political, radical, and subversive means to reproach and reject the ubiquitous, systemic (ab)use and exploitation of nonhuman animals in society. Thus, the term ‘vegan’ hereafter refers to ethically and politically motivated individuals, while ‘veganism’, denotes the “anti- establishment politic, as well as an ethic about animal liberation” (Greenebaum, 2012a: 131). It is important to note, though, that there is not one universally agreed upon way to define ‘vegan’, to ‘be' vegan, or practice veganism (Wrenn, 2019).

Some information about vegans is known in the UK context. A 2016 Ipsos MORI poll conducted for The Vegan Society indicated that in a sample of 9933 adults aged 15+ in Great Britain, 1.1% self-identified as vegan (Ipsos MORI, 2016). Of those individuals, 63% were female, over half (61%) were aged under 44 years, 88% were urban and sub-urban dwelling, and 77% identified as white for ethnicity. This poll suggests that in Great Britain, vegans tend to be young, white, urban females. Importantly, though, vegans exist throughout the world today and the practice is not particular to any country, ethnicity, gender, age or religion. Vegans

\textsuperscript{26} See Lundahl (2018) for more on this distinction.
\textsuperscript{27} This appears to be the case both within and outside of academia
are not homogenous, nor are they a “unified group in possession of a cohesive ideological mandate” (Wright, 2017: 728). Vegan eating practices differ (Greenebaum, 2012a; Rosenfeld and Burrow, 2017; Twine, 2018), for example, some vegans may consider and call themselves raw vegans or fruitarians (Petti et al., 2017). Various reasons are cited as motivations for people being vegan with the three most common being human health, ethical concerns for the health of the environment, and ethical concerns for nonhuman animals (Greenebaum, 2012a, 2017; Lund et al., 2016; MacInnis and Hodson, 2017; Petti et al., 2017; White, 2018; Rosenfeld, 2019). Vegans may have mixed motivations; thus, they may cite one, two or more reasons for being vegan (Hirschler, 2011; Rosenfeld and Burrow, 2017; Souza, Atkinson and Montague, 2020). For example, practicing veganism often means concern for animals and concern for the environment are linked (Twine, 2017).

Vegans whose actions and beliefs align with the original, political, radical concept of veganism are arguably those whose lives are most affected by being vegan. This is a key reason why vegans whose commitment to veganism is primarily – although not necessarily exclusively – motivated by concern for animals are the focus of this thesis. They often go to great lengths to avoid eating animals or animal by-products, wearing or purchasing products made with or using animals, using merchandise containing animal products or those that are tested on animals and disapprove of all forms of animal exploitation. Practicing veganism means avoiding common items including leather, fur, wool, silk, feathers, ivory and pearls, as well as other animal derived products such as gelatine, tallow, lanolin, L-cysteine, cochineal or carmine, bee pollen, bees wax, shellac, isinglass, castoreum, chitin and casein. This avoidance requires effort and commitment since animal products and by-products are pervasive in manufactured foods, medicines, and common domestic products (Swabe, 1998). Veganism can involve deliberating over whether to use medicines that are mandatorily tested on animals or contain animal products and also involves taking a critical view of animal use for entertainment (circuses), exhibition (zoos), sport (horseracing, greyhound racing,

28 Indeed, this was often reflected in the data gathered through conducting interviews with vegans for this thesis.
rodeos) and in service roles (military, customs, security). Vegans may even disapprove of the breeding of animals to serve as companions although they may view adoption and rescue of unwanted animals as important since these animals would otherwise languish in shelters or be killed.

Vegans’ commitment to avoid contributing to animal exploitation and suffering has recently seen ethical veganism recognised as a protected belief under UK equality law. While in the past, legal cases for establishing veganism as a protected belief failed owing to perceptions of veganism as a ‘lifestyle choice’ (Page, 2005), the 2019 employment tribunal ruling in the UK deeming veganism a protected philosophical belief under the Equality Act 2010 has implications for vegans in their workplaces, which includes veterinary practices. The Vegan Society (2021c) outlines what, in general, equality law prohibits with regard to vegans in the UK; for example, it is unlawful to treat unfairly, treat in a way that disadvantages, harass or victimise a person because they are vegan. This determination obligates employers to ensure that they act to prevent vegans being directly or indirectly discriminated against in the workplace (The Vegan Society, 2021d).

For committed vegans, veganism is certainly a sincerely held belief. Vegans reject the dominant ideologies of anthropocentrism, speciesism and carnism that underpin western culture and so rather than opting into veganism, they are rather opting out of living in a way they perceive to be unethical. Another way to consider this is that vegans differ to other outgroups in that instead of engaging in perceived anti-normative behaviour, they rather fail or refuse to engage in perceived normative behaviour (MacInnis and Hodson, 2017). Indeed, Panizza (2020) contests the claim that practicing veganism for ethical reasons involves simple daily choices about what to eat or not to eat and employs the term ‘moral impossibility’ to describe how the reconfiguring of what constitutes food (the rejection of viewing animals as food) alters the vegan’s perspective. This means that vegans may feel they have little choice but to align their values and beliefs with their actions, and to not do so may affect their self-esteem, cause moral conflict and emotional distress.
While acknowledging that vegans are not homogenous, there are nevertheless some assumptions that can be made about veganism and vegans as a group. For instance, they often believe that humans should not unnecessarily and unjustifiably use and exploit animals (and for intersectional vegans this includes humans), meaning that they tend to align with an abolitionist stance. In reference to veganism, abolitionism is a “moral, legal, and political approach that entirely rejects all forms of animal exploitation” (Calarco, 2020: 1). Thus, vegans may reject welfarism and advocate for animal liberation and an end to humans’ exploitation of other animals (Kim, 2018). Francione (2010: 24) explains how the animal welfare position (welfarism) is “the prevailing paradigm for thinking about our moral and legal obligations to nonhuman animals”. He writes:

[The animal welfare position] maintains that animal life has a lesser value than human life and, therefore, it is morally acceptable to use animals as human resources as long as we treat them ‘humanely’ and do not inflict ‘unnecessary’ suffering on them (Francione, 2010: 24).

Being vegan, then, means opposing hegemonic western ideologies through questioning the prevailing paradigm because veganism challenges the belief that humans are inherently superior to other beings (anthropocentrism), that species is a basis for prejudice and discrimination (speciesism), and that humans’ consumption (in all its forms) of other animals is normal, necessary and natural (carnism).

The veterinary profession

Veterinary medicine today is a scientific discipline largely similar to the study of human medicine in that it incorporates medical knowledge (Swabe, 1998) and veterinary practitioners, much like human medical practitioners, perform diagnostics and surgery in order to heal. According to the 1966 Veterinary Surgeon’s Act (Legislation UK, 2021a: no page) to perform veterinary medicine involves:
a. the diagnosis of diseases in, and injuries to, animals including tests performed on animals for diagnostic purposes; b. the giving of advice based upon such diagnosis; c. the medical or surgical treatment of animals; and d. the performance of surgical operations on animals.

While a veterinary degree incorporates theoretical and practical, clinical and practice-based skills and knowledge, there is a focus on public health, animal husbandry, animal welfare and ethics. In the UK, upon graduating with a veterinary science degree, veterinary surgeons are permitted to enter the veterinary profession and practice veterinary medicine on any nonhuman animal. Similarly, veterinary nurses train to gain qualification to enter the veterinary profession and become formally registered (RCVS Knowledge, 2020d). In sum, veterinary practice in the UK today can most simply be said to provide diagnosis of illness and injury and medical or surgical treatment to wild, farmed and companion animals (Yeates, 2018).

Animal medicine is a profession, and professions hold their own, unique value-related beliefs and the public have certain expectations that professions exhibit and embody certain values; “a professional always serves the clients and promotes some goals that are important to them” (Airaksinen, 2020: 618). Veterinary medicine’s history is important for understanding how the veterinary profession’s role, values and actions have become embedded with anthropocentrism, speciesism and carnism. To begin, the veterinary profession is decidedly anthropocentric. To understand how this has come to be, it is useful to understand the historical development of animal medicine starting with the pre-veterinary era. Humans bearing titles such as farriers, horse-doctors and cow-leeches (Swabe, 1998; Hill Curth, 2002) have provided remedial care to other animals for many centuries (Yeates, 2018; RCVS Knowledge, 2020a). While animal medicine began with farriery and the provision of remedial care to horses made to work, including those used for transportation and in the military (Pattison, 1984; Swabe, 1998; Yeates, 2018), over time, animal medicine was shaped in various ways to become the current day veterinary profession. Highly significant was the increase in popularity of keeping animals as companions in the 19th and 20th centuries (Swabe, 1998).
Humans’ relationships to other animals have always been historically, geographically and culturally situated and contexts related to time, place and society (law, philosophy, science, religion) have vastly influenced the characteristics of these relationships at various times (Weil, 2018). Throughout time, orthodox religion (Scully, 2002), philosophical thought (Weil, 2018) the scientific revolution and the Enlightenment era (Yeates, 2018), the industrial and agricultural revolutions (Harrison, 1964; Nibert, 2013), and capitalism (Wadiwel, 2015) have all played a role in how we have come to view and treat nonhuman animals, as well as having influenced the evolution of veterinary medicine. Changing human-nonhuman animal relationships in relation to domestication, farming and agriculture is highly significant to the evolution of veterinary medicine. Swabe (1998) provides a detailed account of how humans moved from a predominately plant-based diet to hunting, using fire to cook meat, then from hunting to herding as human sedentariness increased and the domestication of nonhuman animals occurred.

Over time, proximity between humans and other animals gave rise to certain issues, such as disease. Disease in domesticated animals kept for consumption affected meat quality, and consuming spoiled or diseased meat posed health risks to humans; disease in farmed animals also had the potential to result in production loss and the loss of animals as an economic resource (Swabe, 1998). Animals’ domestication for consumption has also evolved to include the trade of animal bodies for capital gain; thus, a further concern has been the need for disease control to ensure a trade in healthy meat for human consumption (Yeates, 2018). Based on these consequences of animal sickness, the primary reasons why humans considered nonhuman animals’ health worth protecting appear to be embedded in anthropocentrism.

Indeed, the establishment of the world’s first modern veterinary school, which was in Lyon France in 1761, was intended to teach students about animal disease and illness, and disease prevention (Pattison, 1984; Yeates, 2018). Following this, in the UK in 1783, the Odiham Agricultural Society formed (RCVS Knowledge, 2020a) with the aim to merge farriery with rational scientific principles and they
proposed a British Veterinary School (RCVS Knowledge, 2020b). This proposal resulted in the London Veterinary College being established, which is considered the formal beginning of the British veterinary profession (Pattison, 1984; RCVS Knowledge, 2020a). Veterinary medicine today is a highly commercial enterprise and industry with its own dedicated profession. Indeed, public opinion suggests that veterinarians are some of the most highly trusted professionals (Vet Futures, 2015b). In private practice, income and profit are generated through the provision of goods and services, such as consultations, diagnostics, hospitalisation and surgical procedures, selling pet products and pet food, and dispensing pharmaceuticals.

Today’s veterinary profession has extensive societal reach. The role of animal medicine has long been, and remains, divided between maintaining public health, offering a service to the human community and exercising a duty of care to nonhuman animals (Yeates, 2018). Humans’ dependence on nonhuman animals in contemporary industrial society means that veterinary professionals are involved in virtually all aspects of human-animal relationships, playing a vital role in animal health and welfare, research, food supply and security, public health, the environmental sector and tending to the healthcare needs of animal companions. Thus, the veterinary profession has great social significance (Swabe, 1998).

Practice standards and the regulation of veterinary medicine in the UK are covered by three organisations: the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS), the British Veterinary Association (BVA) and the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE). The FVE is ‘the European representative body for the veterinary profession in Europe” (FVE, 2021: no page). The RCVS, which formed in 1844, is the principal regulator and governing body for the profession overseeing qualification and registration for veterinarians and veterinary nurses, and also generally represents the profession (Hobson-West and Timmons, 2016; Morris, 2018). It states its aim is to “enhance society through improved animal health and welfare” and demarcates its role as “[s]etting, upholding and advancing the educational, ethical and clinical standards of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses” (RCVS, 2021a: no page). The BVA was founded in 1919 and presents itself as “the leading body representing, supporting, and championing the whole UK
veterinary profession” and state their vision is for “A strong and respected veterinary profession working to improve animal health and welfare for the benefit of society” (BVA, 2021a: no page). These organisations have played a significant role in the professionalisation of veterinary medicine.

Professionalisation is said to be based on a ‘social contract’. Describing the essence of the social contract between physicians and society, Cruess and Cruess (2004: 185) explain:

Society granted physicians status, respect, autonomy in practice, the privilege of self-regulation, and financial rewards on the expectation that physicians would be competent, altruistic, moral, and would address the health care needs of individual patients and society.

The notion of a social contract underpinning the medical profession has been applied to the profession of veterinary medicine. As Andrew McCabe, CEO of the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges, explains:

Societies have given to the professions leeway in self-regulating and controlling themselves in return for the special expertise that we have. And so our professions, including veterinary medicine, have an obligation to make sure that our members are competent to practise (RVC, 2017: 1).

Being a member of a profession requires the exhibiting of professionalism. While there is no single universally accepted definition of ‘professionalism’, and indeed “no true definition of veterinary professionalism exists” (Mossop, 2012: 93), professionalism is typically thought to be defined through its association with certain behaviours or traits exhibited by those belonging to a profession (Swick, 2000; Hafferty and Castellani, 2010). For example, in the case of physicians, they should model the following:
To ensure professionals' behaviour reflects 'professionalism', professions are often guided and governed by codes of practice. In the UK, the RCVS' Code of Professional Conduct (CPC) is the principle ethical framework that guides and regulates veterinary practice. There is a CPC for veterinary surgeons and a CPC for veterinary nurses. These CPCs outline veterinarians’ and veterinary nurses’ professional responsibilities and provide advice on ‘proper’ standards of practice. They list veterinarians’ and veterinary nurses’ professional responsibilities as encompassing the following: responsibilities to animal patients, responsibilities to clients, responsibilities to the veterinary profession, responsibilities to veterinary colleagues, and responsibilities to the RCVS, and the public (RCVS, 2021b; RCVS, 2021c). As will become evident in the literature review and when discussing critiques of the CPC, anthropocentrism and divided loyalty can result in the privileging of human interests over nonhuman animal interests and impede the veterinarians’ capacity to honour their professional oath and practice animal-centric veterinary medicine.

Professions are powerful. As Airaksinen (2012: 617) writes: “All professions wield social power simply because of their expertise and rare ability to serve”. Foucault saw knowledge and power as inextricably linked, evident in his claim that “power
and knowledge directly imply one another” such that “there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations” (1991: 27). Furthermore, when the professional is in the field of medicine – whether human or nonhuman animal medicine – there exists ‘Aesculapian authority’, which is “the unique authority that accrues to medical professionals”; and indeed, it is one of the most powerful forms of authority within western society (Rollin, 2002: 1144). Public trust in a profession, particularly one involving medicine, endows that profession with a power that sees them able to establish and reinforce specific cultural values and norms.²⁹ Through its monopoly of animal medical knowledge, endowed Aesculapian authority, and its critical importance to the AIC, the veterinary profession is a powerful social institution.

Veterinary professionals primarily comprise veterinary surgeons and registered veterinary nurses.³⁰ In 2015, it was estimated there were 20,571 registered veterinarians working in the UK, approximately 12,670 registered veterinary nurses, and around 5,606 RCVS-registered veterinary practices (Vet Futures, 2015a). More recent statistics suggest that approximately 28,900 veterinarians were employed in the UK in 2020 and 4,058 veterinary enterprises were based in the UK in 2018 (Michas, 2020). In the UK, most veterinary professionals work in private practice operating on a fee-for-service basis tending small animals and ‘exotics’ (Robinson et al., 2019a, 2019b); although, those with a veterinary qualification can work in various settings (i.e. classrooms, laboratories, slaughterhouses) and within various sectors (i.e. government or NGOs) (Swabe, 1998; Hobson-West and Timmons, 2016). Hence, veterinary medicine is a “multi-spatial and multi-species” vocation (Donald, 2018: 470). While veterinary practice is overseen by the RCVS, it is important to note that veterinary practices “are heterogenous in their organization” (Clarke and Knights, 2018b: 5) and veterinary professionals are individuals with their own personalities and predilections. They

²⁹ For example, the western medical profession has traditionally promoted the consumption of meat and dairy as essential to a healthy and balanced human diet.
³⁰ Some may also be trained and work as veterinary technicians.
are not homogenous in the ways they think about and practice veterinary medicine (de Graaf, 2005).31

Despite differences in how they view animals and conduct practice, surveys of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses in the UK reveal that they consider one of the best aspects of their job is working with animals (Robinson et al., 2019a, 2019b). Thus, while surely not the only reason people choose veterinary medicine as a vocation, being an ‘animal lover’ is a motivation for many veterinary professionals choosing animal medicine as a career (Hamilton and Taylor, 2013; Ware, 2018; Clarke and Knights, 2018b). This dedication to nonhuman animal wellbeing is evident in the veterinary oath, which is crucial to the profession and differs between countries (Hewson, 2006; Hernandez et al., 2018; WSAVA, 2020). Of the countries whose veterinary oaths appear on the WSAVA Global Veterinary Community website, the UK’s declaration – which qualified veterinarians make upon gaining membership to the RCVS and gaining the right to practice veterinary medicine – is the most explicit in foregrounding the veterinarian’s duty to nonhuman animals:

I promise and solemnly declare that I will pursue the work of my profession with integrity and accept my responsibilities to the public, my clients, the profession and the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, and that, ABOVE ALL, my constant endeavour will be to ensure the health and welfare of animals committed to my care (RCVS, 2021b: no page).

As reflected in the oath, veterinary professionals have obligations to various parties (see section on their triadic role in literature review). While thought of and viewed as a profession dedicated to helping and caring for nonhuman animals, many countries’ veterinary oath requires veterinary professionals to promise to serve their human clients and society at large. As will become apparent throughout this thesis, having veterinary practitioners promise to work to benefit humans and

31 De Graaf found that veterinarians harbour various ethical discourses and these discourses lead them to face different moral questions in practice.
society can come into conflict with, and often subordinates, their dedication to prioritising their nonhuman animal patients’ interests.

**Literature**

This section of the chapter turns to outlining literature on the topic of veganism and on the veterinary profession to situate the research conducted for this thesis in existing knowledge. Since no studies have been conducted on the workplace experiences of VVPs, this review of literature provides an overview of research on the topic of veganism as an identity and practice, and vegan stigma, discrimination and bias. It then outlines literature relating to the veterinary profession, its triadic role, bifurcation of the profession, and evidence of tension at the vegan-veterinary nexus. This literature review synthesises the knowledge about veganism and about the veterinary profession that has shaped the design of this research involving VVPs.

**Veganism**

Research on veganism is topical and timely. The significance of veganism to nonhuman animals and the environment makes it vital to study and understand (Souza, Atkinson and Montague, 2020). Incorporating quantitative and qualitative methods, social scientific research on veganism encompasses a spectrum of foci: veganism as a social movement (for example, Leneman, 1999; Cherry, 2006; Portwood-Stacer, 2012; Bertuzzi, 2017; White, 2018; Martinelli and Berkmanienè, 2018; Christopher, Bartkowski and Haverda, 2018; Wrenn, 2019), as a practice (for example, McDonald, Cervero and Courtenay, 1999; Twine, 2014, 2017, 2018; Panizza, 2020), as an identity (for example, Greenebaum, 2012a; Rosenfeld and Burrow, 2017; Rosenfeld, 2019), and related to gender (for example, Potts and Parry, 2010; Dean, 2014; Thomas, 2016; Greenebaum and Dexter, 2018; Costa et al., 2019).

Researchers have explored the perspectives of vegans (see McDonald, 2000; Larsson et al., 2003; Hirschler, 2008, 2011; Greenebaum, 2012a; Radnitz,
Beezhold and DiMatteo, 2015; Lund et al., 2016; Bagci and Olgun, 2019; Rosenfeld and Tomiyama, 2019; Aavik, 2019; Kalte, 2020; Buttny and Kinefuchi, 2020; Souza, Atkinson & Montague, 2020; Giraud, 2021; Oliver, 2021), attitudes towards vegans and veganism (see Bresnahan, Zhuang and Zhu, 2016; Greenebaum, 2017, 2018; MacInnis and Hodson, 2017; Horta, 2018; Judge and Wilson, 2018; Markowski and Roxburgh, 2019; Bryant, 2019; Vandermoere et al., 2019; Parkinson, Twine and Griffin, 2019; Faber et al., 2020; Souza, Atkinson and Montague, 2020; Rosenfeld & Tomiyama, 2020), and media representation of vegans and veganism (see Cole and Morgan, 2011; Lundahl, 2018).32 Much research on veganism has been conducted in the last decade.

Scholars have noted various manifestations of veganism, such as ‘lifestyle veganism’, ‘corporate veganism’ (White, 2018; Kalte, 2020) and veganism as ‘an apolitical diet’ (Greenebaum, 2012a). There is consensus that vegans are not homogenous (Petti et al., 2017; Rosenfeld and Burrow, 2017); nevertheless, research on vegans and veganism often identifies three general categories of vegans based on motivation; vegans for animal ethics, vegans for health benefits, and vegans for environment ethics (Greenebaum, 2012a, 2017; Lund et al., 2016; MacInnis and Hodson, 2017, Petti et al., 2017; White, 2018).

Veganism is an important area of social inquiry owing to widespread recognition of its increasing popularity and prevalence in western culture (Vegan Society, 2016; Wright, 2017; Petti et al., 2017; MacInnis and Hodson, 2017; Rosenfeld and Burrow, 2017; White, 2018; Twine, 2018; Horta, 2018; Wunsch, 2020). There is some consensus that in western countries, veganism’s typical practitioners are white, upper-middle class, well-educated, urban females (Dean, 2014; Wright, 2017; Twine, 2018). Nevertheless, important research has been conducted on the subjects of male vegans (for example, Wright, 2015; Greenebaum and Dexter, 2018; Mycek, 2018), black veganism (i.e. Harper; 2010; Ko and Ko, 2017; Greenebaum, 2018) and indigenous veganism (see Robinson, 2013; Dunn, 2019).

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32 Many of these examples deal with topics that fit with multiple themes, such as gender and practice, or identity and practice.
Research indicated there are often personal and social consequences to being vegan, such as friend loss, anxiety, feelings of disconnection from others and family conflict (McDonald, Cervero and Courtenay 1999; McDonald, 2000; Hirschler, 2011; MacInnis and Hodson, 2017; Rosenfeld and Burrow, 2017), and potential conflict with co-workers (Hirschler, 2011). While veganism can be viewed as healthy, beneficial, virtuous or admirable (Cole and Morgan, 2011; Lundahl, 2018; Judge and Wilson, 2018; Parkinson, Twine and Griffin, 2019), and socially acceptable if not necessarily aspirational (Bryant, 2019), there is ample evidence that veganism is negatively viewed. Veganism has been cast as emotional and naïve (Wright, 2017), feminine (Greenebaum and Dexter 2018; Rosenfeld, 2019; Fidolini, 2021), “contradictory, elitist, ill-informed, and anti-social” (Wright, 2015: 20) and reductively considered a lifestyle movement and diet trend (White, 2018). It has been viewed as ‘a phase’ (McDonald et al., 1999), and linked to mental illness and eating disorders (Dean, 2014; Petti et al., 2017; Barthels, Myer and Pietrowsky, 2018; Aavik, 2019). Those who practice veganism have been cast “as arrogant as well as morally confused” (Horta, 2018: 361), as radicals and extremists (White, 2018).

Media representations of vegans have been found to be often derogatory, with veganism ridiculed and negatively stereotyped; Cole and Morgan (2011) found that veganism has been cast as food faddism and a cult diet in UK mainstream newspapers and vegans as sentimental and weird. Veganism has been deemed a cult whose members are zealots, sanctimonious, hypocrites, self-righteous, malnourished proselytisers (see Proud, 2016). More recently, media analysis suggests that apolitical ‘kinds’ of veganism have experienced normalisation and destigmatisation due to celebrity and fashion trends, but politically motivated veganism seems to remain socially stigmatised (Lundahl, 2018).

Much research exists on the topic of veganism and bias, discrimination and stigma (see Hirschler, 2008; Cole and Morgan, 2011; Greenebaum, 2012b, 2018; Twine, 2014; Bresnahan, Zhuang and Zhu, 2016; MacInnis and Hodson, 2017; Rosenfeld and Burrow, 2017; Greenebaum and Dexter, 2018; Horta, 2018; Judge and Wilson, 2018; Lundahl, 2018; White, 2018; Markowski and Roxburgh, 2019; Rosenfeld, 2019; Vandermoere et al., 2019; Aavik, 2019). It is thought that vegans
may be judged differently based on their motivation for being vegan with ‘ethical vegans’, meaning those associated with animal rights, being the most negatively evaluated (MacInnis and Hodson, 2017). Male vegans, who constitute a minority within a minority (Greenebaum and Dexter, 2018) may be the most heavily stigmatised since they pose a double threat to the status quo (MacInnis and Hodson, 2017) through contesting hegemonic masculinity, making them more liable to experience microaggressions (Greenebaum and Dexter, 2018).

Studies suggest that vegans tend to be judged worse than vegetarians (MacInnis and Hodson, 2017; Rosenfeld, 2019) and in general, people’s views of veganism are more negative than views of vegetarianism (Bryant, 2019). Many scholars suggest that negativity towards vegans and veganism stems from feelings of threat and judgement (Cole and Morgan, 2011; MacInnis and Hodson, 2017; Judge and Wilson, 2018; Horta, 2018), which may cause nonvegans to feel defensive (Greenebaum, 2012b; Minson and Monin, 2012; MacInnis and Hodson, 2017). People’s worldview has been found to influence how they perceive vegans with individuals harbouring right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) and or social dominance orientation (SDO) views most likely to consider vegans and veganism as a threat (Allen, Wilson and Dunne, 2000; MacInnis and Hodson, 2017; Judge and Wilson, 2018). RWA is associated with people who prefer cultural traditionalism, tend not to question authority and respond aggressively to the violation of norms and norm violators, while those who embody SDO beliefs are more accepting of hierarchy and reflect “a desire for group-based dominance and inequality among social groups” (Dhont and Hodson, 2014: 12). Women have been found to have more positive views of veganism and vegetarianism than men (Judge and Wilson, 2018; Bryant, 2019), and ‘vegaphobia’ – meaning prejudice against veg*ns (Cole and Morgan, 2011) – may be less common among the highly educated and women while vegaphobes (those who harbour prejudice against veg*ns) often fall into the demographic categories of mature-aged people and lower-educated men (Vandermoere et al., 2019).

Vegaphobia can take the form of jokes, remarks, harassment, being ignored, or disregarded (Horta, 2018), and the degree to which vegans are subjected to bias
has been found to be comparable to bias aimed at other typically targeted and stigmatised groups in society (MacInnis and Hodson, 2017). There is recognition that tension may arise between vegans and non-vegans (Joy and Freston, 2017) and this can stem from vegan bias (non-vegan hostility towards vegans) or because vegans may feel contempt or hostility towards non-vegans. Research suggests that ethically motivated veg*ns tend to have lower omnivorous regard (Rosenfeld and Burrow, 2017). Further potentially impacting interpersonal relationships between vegans and others, Markowski and Roxburgh (2019) found that non-vegans who are aware of vegan stigma may anticipate that they themselves could become stigmatised through association with veganism, and so may socially distance themselves from vegans. They may avoid interaction with vegans and or deliberately and strategically differentiating themselves from a stigmatised individual. While interpersonal tension can exist between vegans and non-vegans, from an academic standpoint, veganism, when used as analytical lens, sees the system (i.e. industrial capitalism), and not individuals (i.e. non-vegans), as the issue.

Vegans tend to be aware of vegan stigma and adopt strategies to mitigate negative repercussions arising from their veganism. For example, they may manage disclosure of their veganism (Rosenfeld and Burrow, 2017; Rosenfeld, 2019; Aavik, 2019) including attempts to conceal their veganism when job-seeking (Horta, 2018), although at least one study found no evidence to suggest vegans are discriminated against when applying for jobs (MacInnis and Hodson, 2017). They employ strategies involving moderating their behaviour when around non-vegans (McDonald, 1999; Hirschler, 2008; Greenebaum, 2012a, 2012b; Twine, 2014, 2018; Souza, Atkinson and Montague, 2020). Vegans employ situation management strategies that might include avoiding confrontation, waiting to be approached before engaging in discussion about veganism, animals or animal ethics, avoiding conversations about veganism, animals or animal ethics, avoiding speaking to hostile or difficult people about veganism, animals or animal ethics, waiting for appropriate times to raise the topic of veganism, and focusing on the health benefits of a plant-based lifestyle to avoid negative reactions to the term and negative connotations of ‘veganism’ (Greenebaum 2012b).
Some have explored how vegans negotiate being vegan in a world dominated by meat culture. When exploring perceptions about veganism, Souza, Atkinson and Montague (2020) identified numerous strategies vegans employ, including self-educating to empower, practicing patience, not relying on others’ approval, being assertive when conversing with others (educating others), practicing activism, feeling resignation, moderating their behaviour around others, and self-catering to counter plant-based food improvisation. Twine (2014), in his qualitative interview-based study of vegans, explains that vegans may find eating with non-vegans difficult and, thus, they employ co-habitation strategies and boundary maintenance as a way to ease their discomfort. Such strategies may include the separation of stored food items, using separate cooking implements, cooking at different times, and non-vegans’ gestures of courtesy and sensitivity, such as cooking meat with windows open or avoiding cooking meat when vegans are present. Boundary practices may extend to vegans not wanting to co-habit with non-vegans or not wanting intimate or romantic relationships with non-vegans (Potts and Parry, 2010; Twine, 2014).

A significant concept to be applied to the study of veganism is the figure of the ‘killjoy’. Drawing on Ahmed’s (2010) concept of the killjoy figure (the feminist killjoy, the unhappy queer and the melancholic migrant), Twine (2014) considers how the practice of veganism sees vegans adopting a killjoy position among non-vegans; particularly in social eating arenas where animal bodies are present as ‘meat’ and the consumption of animals’ bodies is for most a normal, daily affair. Ahmed (2010) proposes that ‘happiness’ is a form of worldmaking often used to justify oppression; for example, the myth of ‘the happy slave’ and ‘the happy housewife’ and, one might add, depictions of ‘suicide food’, deployed in popular food culture through “images of ‘suicidal’ or cannibalistic self-mortifying animals, often as cartoon characters smacking their lips at the thought of eating their own flesh, or that of one of their fellow creatures” (Cole, 2011: 94). ‘Happiness’, states Ahmed, corresponds to certain objects (social goods), and proximity to such objects can generate feelings, or produce affect. Deriving pleasure or joy from the same objects encourages the formation of social bonds and alignment within an affective community; alternatively, not sharing a perception of pleasure derived
from certain objects that are viewed as ‘good’ can result in alienation (Ahmed, 2010).

Twine (2014) utilises Ahmed’s work on killjoys to consider vegans and veganism, explaining how when situated in proximity to non-vegans who share in hegemonic meat culture, the presence of vegans can puncture the performance of normative meat-eating practices and traditions. Thus, like the noncompliant feminist killjoy, who refuses to laugh at sexist jokes, the vegan killjoy also constitutes an ‘affect alien’ in refusing to share the perception that the consumption of animals as good, benign and pleasurable, and through not viewing meat (or other animal products) as objects embodying happiness. Vegans are thus “strangers to the dominant [omnivorous] happiness order” (Twine, 2014: 625); and, by being present and openly vegan, in social eating arenas, the vegan killjoy “reimagines the animal, recalls the relational violence…” (Twine, 2014: 626). If speaking out, the vegan exposes carnism, which can make non-vegans feel uncomfortable and defensive. Those who speak out against, or refuse to participate in, the happiness order can be viewed by others as awkward, angry, difficult, joyless, negative, unhappy, unreasonable, unpleasant to work with, the cause of tension and a threat to social bonds (Ahmed, 2010). This can lead to the killjoy figure becoming the object of others’ anger. Thus, since – for the killjoy – speaking out “may engender anxiety, discomfort, guilt, and risks exclusion” (Twine, 2014: 625), vegans, like feminists, may choose to alter their behaviour in the company of those who do not share their views and may decide to keep their opinions and perspective to themselves. Or, alternatively, as Ahmed (2010) points out, they may actually derive joy from killing joy.

In addition to using strategies to navigate the world around them, importantly, vegans may feel discomfort if they fail to live up to their own standards, or break the ‘rules’ of veganism, experiencing guilt, feeling conflicted, hypocritical and fraudulent as a result (Greenebaum, 2012a). Greenebaum (2012a) found that the consequences of failure to meet their own standards leads vegans to employ numerous accommodating strategies, for example, they may alter their public behaviour and (over)compensate for their perceived inadequacy or violation. They may define a community ‘gray area’ whereby the impracticalities of practicing
'pure' or 'perfect' veganism is acknowledged, accepted and used to justify any perceived transgression. Finally, they may blame the social structure when there are no alternatives to violating their commitment to veganism, such as with the use of essential medicines. Clearly, research shows that being vegan in contemporary western society poses various and varied challenges and vegans employ a repertoire of strategies for negotiating these challenges.

While vegans use strategies to mitigate feelings of discomfort or to avoid conflict with non-vegans, they also use strategies to positively influence others. Research suggests that there is great capacity for vegans to incite change and positively influence those within their social circles (Hirschler, 2011; Twine, 2014; Vandermoere et al., 2019). Twine (2018: 177) explains what he terms ‘demonstrative veganism’, whereby vegans use ‘vegan food’ “to communicate with non-vegan friends and family about veganism, to draw omnivores into the material, sensual experience of vegan food”. Twine (2014: 635) also found that the presence of vegans among non-vegans can encourage non-vegans to act as “non-practising practitioners” whereby they become vegan allies and can become ambassadors for the vegans in their life. Vandermoere et al (2019) found that people tend to eat less meat if they live with a non-meat-eater and exhibit lower degrees of vegaphobia if they have vegans in their social circles, whether friends or family; however, they found no evidence that this is the case with colleagues.

Another pertinent topic in literature on the subject of vegans and veganism relates to discrimination. Vegans encounter private and public disadvantage (Horta, 2018) and vegan bias is often normalised, typically goes unchallenged, and is socially invisible (MacInnis and Hodson, 2017; Horta, 2018; Judge and Wilson, 2018). Structural disadvantage arises because of limited or lack of plant-based or vegan-friendly consumer options leading vegans to feel alienated and marginalised. Structural disadvantage may arise from a lack of vegan catering options in schools, hospitals, restaurants and cases such as where vegan employees’ tax or superannuation is invested in enterprises that conflict with vegan principles, or when “employment and workplace policies commonly entail the use of animal products when nonanimal products could serve the same purpose” (Horta, 2018: 366). Such circumstances might now more evidently present as discriminatory and
highly relevant to a study of vegans’ experiences in their place of work, especially considering the 2019 UK legislative ruling declaring veganism a protected belief under the 2010 Equality Act (O’Sullivan Garcia, 2020). Thus, discrimination against vegans is an area of research that has renewed importance.

This summary of literature illustrates that veganism is a rich and robust area of scholarly enquiry and demonstrates the value of empirical research exploring and better understanding vegans and veganism. Current research highlights the tension surrounding veganism as an identity and practice in western culture, identifies some of the daily challenges that vegans encounter, and uncovers how they negotiate these challenges. Existing research on vegans and veganism informs the research conducted in this thesis in many ways, evident throughout the forthcoming empirical chapters. In surveying research on vegans and veganism, this review of literature also illuminates gaps in knowledge. As noted in Chapter One: Introduction, scant research has been done exploring veganism and professions. No research exists specifically on the experiences of vegans who work in the veterinary profession. Also, no research has been done that critiques the western veterinary profession applying a CAS (or vegan) lens. Hence, research on VVPs and their experiences working in small animal veterinary practice contributes significantly to existing knowledge about vegans and veganism.

The veterinary profession

There is a vast body of research on the veterinary profession incorporating topics such as veterinary ethics, the veterinary profession’s role, the veterinary professional’s duty, and studies exploring the views and opinions of veterinarians and veterinary students. There are numerous quantitative, survey-based studies on the veterinary profession (for example Mariti et al., 2018; Fawcett et al., 2019; Fuseini, Grist and Knowles, 2019) as well as multiple qualitative, interview-based studies (i.e. Hamilton, 2013; Clarke and Knights, 2018a; Clarke and Knights, 2018b; Knights and Clarke, 2018; Treanor and Marlow, 2019); however, more qualitative studies on veterinary professionals and their profession is needed.
(Clarke and Knights, 2018a), and scholars have noted that there is overall a lack of ethnographic studies and critical analysis on the veterinary profession (Hamilton, 2013; Hobson-West and Timmons, 2016; Clarke and Knights, 2018b). The research conducted for this thesis contributes to addressing this void.

Despite the observed dearth of sociological research on the veterinary industry, several studies exist that establish the value in exploring the veterinary profession. Existing research falls broadly within the following topics: gender (Irvine and Vermilya, 2010; Gardiner, 2014; Mohamed Azahar, Mohd Fakri and Mat Pa, 2014; Hipperson, 2018; Clarke and Knights, 2018b; Treanor and Marlow, 2019), attitudes (de Graaf, 2005; Martin and Glover, 2008; Hazel, Signal and Taylor, 2011; Phillips et al., 2011; Fawcett et al., 2019; Fuseini, Grist and Knowles, 2019; Arhant, Hörschläger and Troxler, 2019; Clarke and Paul, 2019; Pirrone et al., 2019; Springer et al., 2019), duties (Yeates, 2012; Lachance, 2016; Coghlan, 2018; Hernandez et al., 2018), representation (Kilborn, Hibberd and Boyle, 2001; Mills, 2016) and practice (Clarke and Knights, 2018a; Knights and Clarke, 2018; Moses, Malowney and Wesley Boyd, 2018; Ware, 2018). There is also a body of research on the topic of veterinary ethics and the ethical issues that arise in veterinary practice and in the course of performing tasks related to veterinary medicine (see Rollin, 2006; Yeates, 2009; Batchelor and McKeegan, 2012; Campbell, 2013; Cornish et al., 2018; Moses, Malowney and Wesley Boyd, 2018).

While no research has to date focussed specifically on the workplace experiences of VVPs, there are a few studies on the veterinary profession that happen to include some vegan participants (Hazel, Signal and Taylor, 2011; Mariti et al., 2018; Balieva, Kirov and Kostov, 2019; Fuseini, Grist and Knowles, 2019), but vegans and veganism are not the primary focus. Notably, in examining the attitudes of veterinary students towards animals and their welfare, Mariti et al. (2018: no page) advanced the following finding:

Female [veterinary] students, who were mostly familiar with pets and aspired to work with species other than livestock, following an animal-free diet and being a member of an animal rights association, had a significantly greater odds of having a high Animal Attitude Scale score
(AAS), i.e., very positive attitude towards animals, versus a less positive attitude.

This suggests that female VVPs may be most sensitive to the challenging and paradoxical aspects of veterinary practice. This is significant considering the rise in veganism and increase in women in the veterinary profession. Relatedly, some studies suggest that female veterinary students tend to express more concern about animal suffering (Phillips and McCulloch, 2005; Fawcett et al., 2019), express greater emotional empathy with animals (Paul and Podbersek, 2000), ascribe more human-like sentience to animals (Clarke and Paul, 2019), and are more likely to endorse less traditional views of nonhuman animals as legal property (Martin and Glover, 2008). Again, this is significant because it suggests that female VVPs working in small animal practice may find aspects of their professional role especially challenging, since they exhibit the most positive attitudes towards animals.

Literature about the veterinary profession is largely uncritical of the aims, values and practices of the profession. Yet, critiques of the profession relevant to this study of the experiences of VVPs working in small animal veterinary practice in England exist. Critiques of the profession often note characteristics of contemporary veterinary practice that underlie the problematic vegan-veterinary nexus. Before discussing this literature, it should be said that the veterinary profession and the individuals who train to learn how to tend to the medical needs of animals and then work to medically and surgically assist animals to alleviate animal suffering undeniably do great good. There is much about the veterinary profession and those who work within it that is beneficial and laudable. The beneficence of the industry, however, should not, and cannot, be a barrier to critiquing – from CAS and vegan perspectives – the problematic aspects of the profession.

It was established earlier in this chapter that animal remedial care throughout the pre-veterinary era was predominantly anthropocentric in that it has focussed on the wellbeing of animals used to work for humans in society for the primary benefit of humans. As Hill Curth states, veterinary medicine “was created to keep animals
healthy so that they could continue to provide benefits to mankind [sic]" (2002: 376); thus, the anthropocentric foundations of veterinary medicine are evident in the fact that animal remedial care arose from a desire to keep animals healthy, thus productive, for human purposes. As outlined, historical accounts of the impetus for animal remedial care suggest that concern for animal health arose out of social and economic concerns about the negative impacts sick animals had on humans, in terms of loss of product(ivity) and human life, and was not primarily out of altruistic care or concern for the animals.

Even today, the veterinary profession is not solely focused on nonhuman animals and their interests. As veterinarian James Yeates (2018) points out, thinking about veterinary science means more than thinking about or caring for nonhuman animals; rather, it involves thinking and caring about human health and the environment as well, and the relationship between all three. Yeates touches upon the prevailing anthropocentrism of veterinary practice when he emphasises that protecting animals protects humans. Indeed, many contemporary critiques of the profession suggest that the anthropocentric impetus behind the emergence and development of the veterinary profession that has influenced its formation over millennia remains embedded in the profession today. The most relevant of these critiques are included in the following review of literature on the veterinary profession and will focus on the veterinary professional’s triadic role and evidence of tension at the vegan-veterinary nexus.

A fundamental issue that has repercussions for veterinary professionals, whether vegan or not, relates to the structure of the profession and the veterinary professionals’ triadic role requiring them to divide their loyalty. Divided loyalty is a topic that numerous scholars address (see Herzog, Vore and Hall, 1989; Rollin, 2002; de Graaf, 2005; Clarke and Knights, 2018b; Coghlan, 2018; Hernandez et al., 2018; Ware, 2018; Donald, 2018; Fawcett et al., 2019; Ashall, Millar and Hobson-West, 2018; Springer et al., 2019). Positioned to deal with nonhuman animal health, human health and the environment, the veterinary profession has wide reach and multi-focal responsibilities that may come into conflict. Small animal veterinary professionals serve the interests of, and have obligations to many parties, including their human clients, their nonhuman animal patients, their
employers, and governing bodies such as the RCVS. This split obligation is evident in the RCVS’ CPCs, which sees veterinary professionals positioned to serve the interests of multiple parties: clients, patients, the profession, their colleagues and the public.

The veterinary professional’s triadic role is the focus of a body of literature on the subject of the veterinary profession. Coghlan (2018) who focusses on companion (small) animal practice, engages with the concept of strong patient advocacy (SPA), which “implies ‘primary obligation’ to the patient” (2018: 355), in contrast to weak patient advocacy (WPA). He does this to explore how divided loyalty affects veterinary practice. Coghlan points out that veterinarians are often pressured, subtly, overtly, or even insidiously, to prioritise human over nonhuman animal interests (2018: 351). While veterinary professionals can influence clients in order to advocate for their patients, it is the client, as legal ‘owner’ of the nonhuman animal, who has the ultimate power to make decisions that affect the animal patient (Coghlan, 2018). Clients who choose to act in the patient’s best interest enable the veterinarian to perform a paediatrician-like role, but clients who do not choose to act in the patient’s best interest can force veterinarians to adopt a role more akin to a car mechanic (Rollin, 2002; Coghlan, 2018). This reflects a paradox whereby the way a nonhuman animal is viewed, as having either intrinsic value or instrumental value, can pose a dilemma for veterinary professionals. More so, perhaps, this may affect VVPs who do not consider human interests to be superior to nonhuman animal interests and who likely disagree with an ‘owners’ legal authority to exercise control over their animal companion’s welfare.

Hernandez et al (2018) similarly raise the issue of competing responsibilities in the veterinary profession. Using a series of case studies, the authors argue that a veterinarian’s ability to employ ethical reasoning can affect outcomes for their patients and improve animal welfare. While ethics is a subject now typically included on veterinary curricula, there is not one accepted ethical framework.

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33 Of course, SPA and always prioritising the nonhuman animals over other parties is not always practical or possible, and Coghlan (2018) lists some such instances.

34 As Coghlan (2018) points out, how nonhuman animals are viewed as having intrinsic or instrumental value is not always one extreme or another but rather exists on a spectrum.
through which decisions in veterinary practice are made. Depending on which ethical framework an individual veterinary professional adopts will influence the scale of their patient advocacy and can lead to ethical dilemmas when considering competing responsibilities. The legal status of nonhuman animals as property, for example, often means that client’s interests supersede that of the patient. Hernandez et al explain that speaking up in favour of the nonhuman animal patient over the human client can have negative consequences for veterinary professionals working in the profession. This may make advocating for nonhumans especially difficult and fraught for VVPs in the veterinary setting.

Also discussing divided loyalty, Ashall, Millar and Hobson-West (2018) explore informed consent as an ethical issue entangled within the veterinary professional’s complex role. In human medicine, autonomy typically lies with the human patient, whereas in veterinary medicine, autonomy does not lie with the nonhuman animal patient but rather with the animals’ human ‘owner’ (Ashall, Millar and Hobson-West, 2018). In veterinary practice, informed consent protects from the potential of violating humans’ property rights; thus, as the authors explain, informed consent does not “protect any legal or moral rights enjoyed by the animal ‘patient’ themselves” (Ashall, Millar and Hobson-West, 2018: 4). They explain that consent in veterinary medicine was “traditionally associated with making choices which preserved the economic value of a farmer’s stock” (Ashall, Millar and Hobson-West, 2018: 4), whereas today, humans’ relationships with ‘companion animals’, who are still considered property, tend to have “emotional significance rather than only economic value” (Ashall, Millar and Hobson-West, 2018: 5). Whether a nonhuman animal’s perceived value is economic or emotional, informed consent in veterinary medicine is essentially anthropocentric because it is “designed to allow the owner to make autonomous choices which protect the value of their animal (whether economic, emotional, etc.) to themselves” (Ashall, Millar and Hobson-West, 2018: 5 original emphasis). The veterinarian’s duty to be their patient’s advocate, the authors argue, “appears to be inconsistent with the current legal status of animals” (Ashall, Millar and Hobson-West, 2018: 10), which leads them to

35 For example, Hernandez et al list “utilitarianism, deontology, rights-based theories, virtue ethics, principle-based ethics, and social justice” (2018).
suggest the need for further consideration of informed consent in veterinary practice and the appointing of an independent body, such as an animal ombudsman or ombudswoman, to assist with veterinary ethical dilemmas.

Ultimately, it is the human client who pays for veterinary services and – as mentioned – veterinary practice today is a competitive commercial enterprise; thus, humans who keep nonhuman animals have immense power over nonhuman animal life. The veterinary practice establishes fees for services and clients can then decide what they are capable or willing to pay. Unlike human healthcare in many countries, such as the UK, where there are institutional frameworks such as public funded healthcare services, there is no government funded national health service for animal companions (Hobson-West and Timmons, 2016; Coghlan, 2018). Humans are considered persons and not property under the law and while there is little debate about humans being owed moral consideration, opinions about whether nonhuman animals are owed moral consideration are still disputed (Coghlan, 2018).

The degree unto which human interests can sometimes supersede the ‘best interests’ of nonhuman animals is evident in debates within the veterinary industry about Halal slaughter, where traditional religious values are viewed as sufficient justification for denying nonhuman animals the process of stunning (rendering unconsciousness) prior to slaughter (Fuseini, Grist and Knowles, 2019). This is an issue that involves the veterinary profession directly, as influencers of animal welfare (Hernandez et al., 2018; Mariti et al., 2018; Ware, 2018) as overseers of animal slaughter; and it is an issue that divides practicing veterinary professionals, as evidenced in Fuseini, Grist and Knowles’ 2019 study of veterinary students’ perceptions and understanding of Halal slaughter, indicating that 1.1% (so at least some) of veterinary students surveyed believed that religious beliefs should supersede animal welfare.

Further literature discussing anthropocentrism in the veterinary profession centres on the UK veterinary industry’s CPC. For professions, CPCs are important because “they provide a framework for right action, and because they can also promote public confidence in the profession as a body” (McCulloch et al., 2014: 67).
71). Magalhães-Sant’Ana et al (2015: 654) note that CPCs are “in essence, anthropocentric because they serve to protect the public against malpractice”. The RCVS’ CPCs advance the following five principles of practice:

![Diagram 5: The RCVS’ CPC Five Principles of Practice
(author’s diagram using material sourced from RCVS, 2021b; RCVS, 2021c)](image)

Veterinary professionals should adhere to these five principles in conjunction with the guidance provided in the CPC to “ensure the health and welfare of animals committed to their care and to fulfil their professional responsibilities” (RCVS, 2021b: no page). Donald (2018) argues that while the RCVS’ CPC overall foregrounds the nonhuman animal patient as the veterinary practitioner’s priority, it is decidedly anthropocentric as it reinforces nonhuman animals as the object of legal regulation, exhibits deference to rational scientism and a distrust of emotion and affect. Critiquing the five principles, Donald aptly notes that they are not inclusive of nonhuman animals and are clearly informed by a scientific objectivism that leaves little to no room for the personal or subjective, for emotional and affective geographies, nor for nonhuman animal agency despite veterinary medicine being “a sensitive and emotional profession in practice”.

68
Sociology has recognised that professions are gendered (Witz, 1992). The veterinary profession was an exclusively male vocation prior to 1919 when women were permitted to attend veterinary school and train as veterinary surgeons; yet, despite women comprising the majority of veterinary students and practitioners today, it remains imbued with “a masculine ethic” and embodies “masculine actions and attitudes” (Irvine and Vermilya, 2010: 56). This occurs within a professional epistemological framework of technical rationality (Clarke and Knights, 2018a) and a masculine entrepreneurial structure (Clarke and Knights, 2018b; Treanor and Marlow, 2019). Scientism in the veterinary profession has been linked to ‘anthropocentric masculinity’; whereby humans’ needs and desires are viewed as paramount, male veterinarians are privileged over female veterinarians, and nonhuman animals are dominated by humans (Clarke and Knights, 2018a).

In their critique of anthropocentric masculinity in veterinary practice, Clarke and Knights (2018a) invoke the western dichotomous ways of thinking about species, gender and society that have been highlighted within ecofeminism (see Cudworth, 2014). According to the feminist critique of patriarchal dualisms, humans, male, master, culture, the mind, rationality and reason are positioned in opposition to, and considered superior to nonhuman animals, female, slave, nature, the body, animality and emotion, with valorisation of the former often leading to the oppression of the latter (Plumwood, 1993). Hierarchical binaries manifest in veterinary practice as humans exert power and control over nonhuman animals, masculinity and male veterinarians are favoured over femininity and female veterinarians and rationality and objectivity is largely valued over emotion, empathy, sentimentality and compassion (Donald, 2018, Ware, 2018, Treanor and Marlow, 2019).

Whiting (2010: no page) explains how veterinary medicine is bifurcated and involves two consumer streams; the first is “related to animal health and productivity for future use as food and … [the second stream is] related to animal use as sport, leisure, entertainment and as pet/companions”. Whiting contrasts the “affective use of companion animals” with the “instrumental use of animals in food
production” (2010: no page), although there are certainly instances of affective use of farmed animals (i.e. petting zoos) and instrumental uses of animals kept as companions (i.e. puppy farms). Whiting (2010: no page) writes, “All veterinarians share a background mentalité regarding the instrumentality of animals”, and, he says, in terms of farming, “the rule of man [sic] over nature is firmly entrenched”. While surely not all veterinarians share this mentality, research suggests that some certainly do (Graaf, 2005). This is perhaps unsurprising since most veterinary students begin their veterinary degree having been exposed to, and immersed in, welfarist western culture, and are educated in a system largely, if not entirely, uncritical of animal use for human gain (Pedersen, 2015).

There is no doubt that the veterinary profession’s enmeshment with the AIC, and in particular with animal agriculture, supports and facilitates anthropocentrism, speciesism and carnism. As Swabe (1998: 114) explains, as a result of the veterinary professional’s role in large animal medicine, “The practicing veterinary surgeon is, therefore, one of the most important cogs in the wheels of the complex machinery that is responsible for the transformation of living flesh into animal product fit for human consumption”. As a review of literature critiquing the veterinary profession illustrates, viewing nonhuman animals as legal property, as commodities and as a means to generate profit, sanctioning dominance and power over nonhuman animal bodies for human gain and the veterinary profession’s tendency to prioritise human clients over nonhuman patients are just some of the ways in which contemporary veterinary medicine can be viewed as anthropocentric, speciesist, and supportive of carnism.

The vegan-veterinary nexus

Numerous editorial articles have been published online, in veterinary journals and magazines on the topics of veganism, activism, meat production and consumption. de Graaf’s 2005 study of veterinarians’ ethical discourses raises questions about inter-personal conflict should veterinary professionals harbouring disparate discourses in the workplace come into conflict over how they view nonhuman animals and approach nonhuman animal care:
Veterinarians who use a discourse similar to that of animal rights activists, for example, will ask themselves different moral questions than veterinarians who use a discourse in which the allegiance is clearly first and foremost to the human client (de Graaf, 2005: 560).

While discourses are personal, they are also cultural and structural, and evidence of conflicting discourses (anthropocentric versus animal rights) can be observed in online discussions as well as in veterinary magazines such as The Vet Times and journals like The Veterinary Record. Examples from each of these forums are included here because when considered together, they illustrate how discussions about veganism have escalated within the UK veterinary profession and highlight an ensuing tension.

Firstly, only a few articles and critical commentaries on the topic of veganism and the veterinary profession seem to exist. For example, in a piece published online in 2016 entitled “Why aren’t more veterinarians vegan?”, the author begins:

In an ideal world, I would take the companion animals I live with to a vegan veterinarian. I would be able to trust that my animal friends would have their health looked after and their safety regarded by an individual who does not partake in speciesism, and who understands how intrinsically immoral it is to exploit and consume both the bodies and the products of other creatures (McGrath, 2016).

McGrath calls vegan veterinarians ‘unicorns’ since they lack in abundance and laments the welfarist approach to animal care adopted by non-vegan veterinarians. She states that ‘livestock’ veterinarians are complicit in animal cruelty and unethical industries (agriculture, breeding, laboratories). The author mentions how veterinarians with public profiles justify meat-eating as veterinarians and how ‘the meat paradox’ (claiming to love animals while also eating them) and denial are mechanisms that non-vegan veterinarians employ to avoid feelings of guilt or discomfort.
Another example is Amanda James, who at the time of writing was a vegan veterinary student. James wrote a 2017 online article entitled, “Hey, veterinarians… we need to talk about veganism”. She also observes that vegan veterinarians are rare, again calling them ‘unicorns’. She explains how disclosing her veganism to potential employers can be fraught since veganism may be viewed as incompatible with the field of veterinary medicine. Quoting from the veterinary oath, James (2017: no page) writes:

This profession required us to dedicate our lives to the service of animals. We took an oath to uphold “the protection of animal health and welfare” and “the prevention and relief of animal suffering.” I would not have been able to do so consciously knowing that half of my patients would end up on my plate unnecessarily.

Whether veterinarians should be vegan, and why more veterinarians are not vegan, are questions being more frequently asked. In May 2020, PETA published ‘An Open Letter to Veterinarians: Why Aren’t You Vegan?’. In the letter, author, Laverdure-Dunetz, reminds veterinarians of their professional oath to protect all animals, and to prevent and relieve their suffering. Speciesism within the veterinary community is highlighted, as Laverdure-Dunetz (2020: no page original emphasis) writes:

[M]y question to veterinarians is a simple one: *If you have sworn to protect all animals, then why aren’t you vegan?* Those of us who trust you with the care of our animal companions know that you are dedicated. You work hard for long hours and perform arduous surgical procedures to save the lives of beloved family dogs and cats. And yet, many of you return home at the end of the day and consume meals made out of other animal species—cows, pigs, lambs, chickens, turkeys, or fish. You also recommend feeding these species to your clients’ companion animals. But these “food” animals who are treated as nothing more than commodities have families that love them, too. They also want to live out their lives in peace.
In 2021, an online article entitled ‘Why Aren’t More Veterinarians Vegan?’ was published, and in it, the author writes:

Yet for many veterinarians, their food choices do not reflect that oath, even though it does not specify companion animals. While they may not be consuming cats and dogs, they are most likely consuming other species like cows, chickens, and pigs. The irony, of course, is that these animals have the same wants and needs as the patients they treated that day. Call it speciesism, the mistaken belief that some species are more important than others, at its finest (Asp, 2021).

Asp’s commentary adds something important to the discussion, however, noting that speciesism is a societal issue. An individualistic behavioural psychological approach to western culture’s paradoxical views and treatment of animals can be problematic unless considered in relation to how products and their associated practices are socially constituted. There is more to anthropocentrism, speciesism and carnism than any one individual’s ‘wilful ignorance’ and or ‘lack of concern’ about other animals. These ideologies are historically, legally, culturally and sociologically instituted, which, no doubt, influences individual views and behaviour (see Chapter Six: Culture).

Discussions about veganism and the veterinary industry also appear in veterinary magazines. In October 2018, the online magazine *The Vet Times* published ‘Friends or food?’ written by a veterinary science student, Eleanor Goad, who begins:

The relationship between vets and animals is an odd one … When I tell people the course I study, 90% of them ask me if I’m vegetarian; when I say no, all of them ask me why not – and, to be perfectly candid, I never really know what to tell them (no page).

Goad suggests that to perform veterinary medicine, one must recognise that interests other than those of the animal patient must come into play. She contemplates her future as a large animal vet and recognises that choosing this
path will require her to develop the capacity to emotionally distance herself from her patients.

Also in 2018, *The Vet Times* published vegan veterinarian Jo Ireson’s letter to the editor entitled, ‘Time for a debate about veganism in the profession’. Ireson writes in response to a previously published editorial piece on the topic of antibiotic use in farming. She rebuts the author of the previous editorial for blaming vegans for attacking and damaging the dairy industry. She says that accusing vegans of spreading propaganda while overlooking the propaganda the dairy industry spreads is unfair. She further states that vegans aim to live kindly and it is not their primary intent to harm industries. Ireson writes: “We [vegans] make no distinction between species, and recognise the ability of all animals to feel pain, fear, frustration and grief – as, indeed, everyone in the veterinary profession should be more than aware” (2018: no page). The author finishes by suggesting that the veterinary profession consider debating veganism and find ways to better align personal and professional values.

Responding to Ireson’s letter, then livestock production veterinarian, Neil Howie, authored a piece entitled “‘Oxymoronic’ for vegans to work with animals”. In his article, he argues that animal instrumentalisation has greatly benefited humankind and advocating for the abolition of all animal use is impractical. He criticises a position taken by another vegan veterinarian published in an earlier edition of *The Vet Times* who argued that for environmental reasons, plant-based milks are a viable alternative to dairy and farmers should transition away from animal agriculture towards plant agriculture. Howie (2018a: no page) writes:

> The vegan aspiration to avoid the exploitation of animals suggests the keeping of all domesticated and working animals should be given up – no more pets, no more horses, no more racing pigeons. On that basis, it’s oxymoronic for a vegan to own or work in any way with animals…

Howie’s position highlights how the consumption of nonhuman animals for human benefit can be seen to outweigh the issues of animal instrumentalisation and how non-vegans may consider the abolitionist perspective impractical and a threat to
the veterinary profession and the socio-economic status quo. He also raises a question that might occur to many: if the veterinary profession is pro-welfare, legitimates and supports the instrumentalisation of nonhuman animals, why do vegans want to work in that sector? A more pertinent question might be, why do people who care deeply for nonhuman animals and their wellbeing seem ‘out of place’ in a profession supposedly dedicated to protecting animals and maximising their health?

Several debates about veganism and the veterinary profession have appeared in the editorial section of The Veterinary Record, the BVA’s official journal. In 2018, journalist Josh Loeb authored an article entitled, ‘Vets need to deliver ‘truth’ on farming’. Loeb begins by explaining how some think that vets “play a crucial role in helping moderate virulent disagreements between animal rights activists and farmers” (2018: 677). Rather than moderate to promote animal right’s perspectives, however, here it is the farmers who vets are said to be able to help by “countering negative views about livestock farming” (Loeb, 2018: 677). Vegan groups are accused of being implicated in the spread of anti-farming rhetoric that is ‘brainwashing’ members of society, particularly those of young generations. A few months later, The Veterinary Record published ‘Vegans aren’t brainwashing people’ written by vegan veterinary professional Ruby Shorrock. Shorrock responds to comments made at an animal health conference about vegans and animal activists. The comments related to the supposed spread of vegan propaganda, and conference speakers’ comments suggesting vets must “fight against vegans” because they are “‘brainwashing' people” (Shorrock, 2018: 200). Shorrock reminds readers – likely her veterinary peers – of the veterinary oath: stating, “As vets, we promised to make it our ‘constant endeavour to ensure the health and welfare of animals’ committed to our care” (2018: 200). Like Ireson, Shorrock emphasises that it is concern for exploited animals that underlies veganism and animal rights rather than any intent to persecute people or ruin livelihoods.

Also published in August 2018 in The Veterinary Record is an article entitled ‘Choosing veganism’, by vegan veterinarian Maureen Hutchison, in which the author commends Shorrock for her article, which had been published the previous
week. Hutchinson believes that being vegan and a veterinarian is not incongruous, veganism does not undermine farming, nor does it “threaten the livelihoods of farm animal vets” (2018: 225). The author does, however, point out the disparate agendas of farming and veterinary medicine, stating: “The veterinary profession is essentially concerned with the welfare of animals and farming is not” (Hutchison, 2018: 225). She also suggests that it is habit (or rather tradition) that keeps farmers in animal agriculture rather than moving towards non-animal-based food production and she raises the issue of the poor efficacy and sustainability of farming animals for consumption.

A month later, in September 2018, *The Veterinary Record* published a piece entitled ‘It’s oxymoronic for vets to be activist vegans’. The author, Neil Howie, begins, “The veterinary profession is being drawn into a debate about veganism…” and he casts veganism as a threat to the profession since the aim to eliminate all forms of human exploitation of other animals would necessitate having “no human to animal bonds at all, and therefore no veterinary interventions” (2018b: 358). Thus, as he stated in his *Vet Times* article, he views activist vegans being veterinary professionals as oxymoronic. Also, as he has done previously, Howie takes the opportunity to promote the health benefits of meat and dairy consumption and positions veterinarians as important to ensuring global food supply. Howie concludes by noting the veterinarians’ declaration to care for animals but reminds readers about the profession’s triadic role and the obligation to nonhuman animals but also its role in serving the environment and humanity.

Following on from his previous articles, ‘Should vets eat less meat’ is the title of Loeb’s 2019 editorial contribution to *The Veterinary Record*. Loeb demonstrates an interest in exploring issues related to meat consumption, and, like before, interest in the vegan-veterinary nexus. In this article, Loeb discusses the BVA’s position on sustainable agriculture. He explains that the position entails promoting ‘reductarianism’ or eating less meat of better quality. Regarding debates about meat, meat consumption, farming practices and sustainability, Loeb suggests the UK veterinary profession has “an obligation to show leadership” (2019a: 511). An interesting point the author raises here is that the BVA, while claiming to avoid “making statements that may be interpreted as infringing on client choice”, does
take a stand in relation to certain welfare issues associated with contemporary human-animal relationships, such as its campaign against breeding animals with brachycephaly and campaign against non-stun slaughter (Loeb, 2019a: 511). Thus, one might say that the BVA could – and arguably should – take a stronger position on animal use and consumption.

Moving on from the literature, a noteworthy event occurred in the UK veterinary community at the end of 2019 when students at the Royal Veterinary College (RVC) participated in the tradition of producing an annual veterinary calendar to raise funds for charity. The calendar features images of naked final-year veterinary students posing with nonhuman animals. In the 2020 calendar, one particular image of seven male veterinary students ‘tipping’ sheep so that the sheep were positioned on their backs with their heads obscuring the students’ genitals evoked backlash, resulting in threats aimed at the students. In what Loeb reductively deems “a bizarre row over the annual nude calendar” (2019b: 590), criticism of the depiction in the image, and criticism of the calendar in general, stemmed from a vegan veterinary organisation who felt the use and handling of the sheep (although ‘tipping’ is deemed ‘standard practice’ in the veterinary industry) was conducted for no benefit to the sheep, since they were not unwell or being medically examined. The RVC issued a statement in response to criticism of the calendar, and the photograph being questioned was removed. The conflict arising as a result of opposing views on what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable interactions with nonhuman animals here demonstrates aptly some of the existing tension at the vegan-veterinary nexus in the veterinary profession in the UK today. Notably, in mainstream media stories covering the incident, ‘vegans’, rather than animal advocates, were often named as those initiating the complaints.

More recently, Harper Adams Students’ Union (HASU) felt pressure from students and alumni to apologise and remove a social media post supporting Veganuary (Henderson, 2021). Harper Adams University in England specialises in providing higher education for the agricultural and rural sector. It was reported that some students felt as if veganism destroyed farmers’ livelihoods and caused farmers to
suffer mental health issues (Henderson, 2021). The HASU’s apology posted on Facebook\textsuperscript{36} on January 15th 2021, appeared as follows:

\begin{quote}
\begin{center}
Harper Adams Students Union
15 January, 2021
\end{center}

Earlier today we, Harper Adams SU, published a post intended to support members of our community who choose to follow or have been trying a meat-free diet. It was intended to show our approach to inclusion, which celebrates freedom of choice.

Our decision to refer to a specific movement in that post was ill-judged, and was perceived as an attack on British Farming, which we very much support. That was not our intention and we apologise for any offence caused.

Our students choose to be at Harper Adams to be the future of food and farming, alongside a range of other connected industries. You are learning to develop practices that will help us to maintain a secure, sustainable food supply whilst minimising the impact on the environment. Please continue to have those debates. Please connect us to causes you care about and show us the work you are doing to make a difference.

We have admitted we got this one wrong. We will not tolerate intolerance of anyone or anything different. But we will always support measured, informed debate.

\begin{center}
593 likes
435 comments
26 shares
\end{center}
\end{quote}

Apparent in this apology is that the HASU’s intent to be inclusive of vegans associated with the institution came into conflict with their support of animal agriculture, and this was made visible through complaints that forged a dichotomous option to either promote Veganuary or support British farmers and farming. To do the former meant one was not doing the latter. Subsequent to this incident, reports emerged about “an open hatred of vegans and vegetarians” and bulling of veg*n students at the university, particularly those who opposed hunting, and it was claimed that “the university’s vegetarian and vegan society has been forced to meet in secret because of safety concerns” (Hazell, 2021: no page). The

\textsuperscript{36} https://www.facebook.com/HarperAdamsStudentUnion/posts/2837321859821585
university responded to reports of bullying and discrimination against students (whether race-, gender-, sexuality- or belief-based) by issuing a public statement in February 2021 outlining the University’s approach to respect, and their stance against intolerance, harassment, violence, exploitation and intimidation (Harper Adams University, 2021). This incident is further evidence of tension at the vegan-veterinary nexus.

Chapter summary

This chapter has elucidated the paradoxical nexus between veganism and the veterinary profession that was established in Chapter One: Introduction by defining and discussing the terms ‘vegan’ and ‘veganism’ and discussing ethically motivated veganism as a philosophy, identity and practice that challenges and subverts the socio-cultural status quo by opposing anthropocentrism, speciesism and carnism. It has explained how the western veterinary profession is historically situated within a welfarist paradigm and explained how its development over centuries has taken an instrumentalist view of nonhuman animals and, whether intentionally or not, through its enmeshment with the AIC, is today a profession that reinforces animal use and consumption.

The review of literature presented in this chapter reveals a scholarly interest in veganism, vegan stigma, discrimination and bias and in veganism as an identity and practice. While no existing academic literature explores the vegan-veterinary nexus, findings from many of these studies do have implications for this study of vegans working in the veterinary profession. A review of the literature reveals that until research was conducted for this thesis, the relationship between the veterinary profession and veganism has been unexplored. This thesis contributes to filling that gap in research and thus makes a considerable and valuable contribution to knowledge.

Evidence of tension at the vegan-veterinary nexus makes this research timely and significant. As outlined in Chapter One: Introduction, this research has implications on personal, professional and global levels. Since veganism seems at odds with
the veterinary profession in many significant ways, an effective means to better understand this incongruency and its impacts is to speak to VVPs themselves. To this end, the following chapter outlines the methodology employed to conduct such a study.
Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter outlines why a qualitative methodology and the semi-structured interview as a method were chosen for this research. The research process is then explained including how participants were selected and sourced, how data was collected and analysed, and the chapter concludes with a discussion of key ethical implications and limitations of this research. As with many social scientific inquiries, this research began with an observation that then raises a question, or several questions (Lund and Berg, 2017). The veterinary profession is known for its dedication to the care of nonhuman animals and, similarly, veganism tends to be recognised as involving opposition to nonhuman animals being caused harm; thus, the aims of veterinary practice and veganism appear to be congruous. The idea for this research primarily arose from an observation that although they appear congruent, veganism – especially when primarily ethically motivated – and many of the values and practices of the veterinary profession, are arguably at odds. The significance of this observation was heightened upon considering that veterinary medicine is a profession that may appeal to vegans owing to the opportunity it affords them to work with and for nonhuman animals.

As explained in the Chapter One: Introduction, this research aims to answer two key research questions. It further explores two sub-research questions:

1. How are veterinary professionals in England who identify as vegan affected in small animal veterinary practice as a result of their veganism?
   a) What aspects of their role in small animal veterinary practice pose challenges for them as vegans and veterinary professionals?

2. How do veterinary professionals in England who identify as vegan negotiate the apparent irreconcilability between veganism and veterinary practice?
   a) What strategies do they employ to negotiate challenges they encounter in small animal practice as vegans and veterinary professionals?
To answer these questions, a qualitative, interview-based methodology was chosen to examine the experiences of VVPs working in small animal veterinary practice. It was determined that focusing on the lived experiences of VVPs would provide insight into how veganism, as an identity and practice, might come into conflict with, or can be reconciled within a profession whose actions and principles do not tend to align with vegan values.

**Methodological approach**

Empirical research is interested in observation and experience, and this research is primarily concerned with experience (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner, 2006). A qualitative approach was chosen for this study because of its ability to “give voice to a group of people or an issue”, and to “provide a detailed description of events or experiences” (Braun and Clarke, 2013: 19-20). Qualitative methodology was determined the most suitable approach because as Braun and Clarke (2013: 20) explain, qualitative research “is about capturing some aspect of the social or psychological world. It records the messiness of real life, puts an organising framework around it and interprets it in some way”. It is undeniable that both throughout the past and in the present, humanity’s relationship with other animals is rife with contradictory entanglements (Nibert, 2013, Wadiwel, 2015). Qualitative methodology was chosen because it is suited to research interested in living beings (human and nonhuman animals), relationships, entanglements, experience and meaning.

To answer the research questions, interviews were chosen as the data collection method. Interviewing is a common and successful approach to collecting qualitative data in research involving veterinary professionals, and vegans, evident in the review of literature in Chapter Two: Context and literature. Thus, this contributed to the determination that conducting interviews was the most appropriate data collection method for this study. Indeed, researchers have learned much about vegans and vegan praxis through speaking with vegans as individuals who practice veganism daily. As Twine (2014: 627) states, “Listening to vegans talk about their narratives of transition better locates the practice within the
ethical, political and relational complexity of everyday life providing lived knowledge that might not emerge from abstract philosophical discussion”, which is further applicable to the workplace context. While quantitative survey-based studies are valuable for research on vegans and veganism (see for example MacInnis and Hodson, 2017; Judge and Wilson, 2018; Rosenfeld, 2019), qualitative interview-based studies prove particularly insightful when exploring veganism and vegan experience, identity and practice (Twine 2017, 2018).

**Analytical approach**

In designing sociological research, decisions are inevitably made relating to the ontological and epistemological position of the research and researcher, and this means that various analytical approaches to conducting and analysing research are possible. This thesis adopts a constructivist paradigm, meaning that rather than seeking ‘truth’, knowledge is understood as constructed and interpreted, which involves the participants who give accounts, and the researcher who attempts to understand the participants’ complex lived experiences and perspectives. In discussing the fundamentals of qualitative research, Braun and Clarke (2013: 20 original emphasis) explain, “there is more than one way of making meaning from the data that we analyse, which means that there isn’t a single ‘right’ answer”. Hence, the meanings generated through collecting and analysing data for this thesis are based on the stories (accounts, memories, recollections) and the subjective feelings and thoughts of participants, and an interpretation deriving from the researcher.

Since research is designed, an interview is an organised occasion, whereby the researcher develops and guides a process to collect information (accounts) and the participant has agreed (self-selected) to present an account; hence, “… the data produced by interviews are social constructs …” (Dingwall, 2011: online). Thus, as Braun and Clarke (2013: 21 original emphasis), explain, qualitative data “are understood as accounts that are not produced in the ether. Instead, they are seen to be produced in particular contexts, by participants [and indeed researchers] who come from, and are located within, specific contexts”.

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Importantly, however, the unavoidable subjectivity in qualitative research need not be viewed as bias, but rather as something to be recognised, acknowledged and accounted for (Braun and Clarke, 2013).

**Method**

Semi-structured interviews were apt as a data collection method since the only way to gain insight into people’s thoughts and experiences is to invite them to speak and express their thoughts and share their experiences. Thus, using words as data, this study does not seek to uncover ‘one discoverable truth’, but rather it recognises there are “multiple versions of reality” and versions of reality are contextual (Braun and Clarke, 2013: 6). For example, data is shaped by numerous factors, such as a participants’ mood, faculty for recollection, their ability to articulate their feelings and memories, the interview setting, the interviewer-interviewee relationship, and the broader socio-cultural context.

This research utilised semi-structured interviews as the sole data collection method because it set out to explore the workplace experiences of VVPs and, as Braun and Clarke (2013: 81) assert, “Interviews are ideally suited to experience-type research questions”. Interviews were also chosen as the sole data collection method for this study because other methods had significant limitations. Surveys would not have enabled the gathering of rich, in-depth data, nor for participants’ freedom when discussing their thoughts and experiences. A survey would not have accommodated the exploration of unanticipated topics and tangents. Focus groups can be disadvantageous for studying busy people (as veterinary professionals are) and people in dispersed geographical locations (Braun and Clarke, 2013). It was anticipated that interviews would need to be scheduled around participants’ work schedules and that participants would be recruited from throughout the UK. Also, participant confidentiality was integral to this research, and conducting focus groups or participant observation would have precluded confidentiality. A lack of confidentiality may have deterred participation or resulted in potential negative repercussions for VVPs who participated.
Participants

Participants were deemed eligible if they were a qualified veterinarian, veterinary nurse or veterinary technician over the age of 18 who trained, works, or has worked as a veterinary professional in private practice in the UK. They also had to identify as ethically motivated vegan, which, as explained in Chapter Two: Context and literature, meant that their motivation for being vegan foremost, although not necessarily entirely, stemmed from concern for nonhuman animals. Non-qualified veterinary professionals were not included in this study because they have not typically been through the formalised training process involved in gaining qualification as a veterinary professional and participants’ experiences of and thoughts about the formal training process were of interest to this research. Veterinary professionals whose primary motivation for being vegan is health or environmental reasons were not included because vegans who are ethically motivated largely owing to concern for nonhuman animals would likely have a unique, perhaps more intensified or challenging experience working in veterinary practice.

Only VVPs with experiences of working in small animal veterinary practice were included in this research and not para-veterinary fields because of limitation of scope; since key aspects of small animal veterinary practice appear irreconcilable with ethical vegan ethos; because small animal veterinary practices tend to work in close-knit teams and this research is interested in professional interpersonal relationships; and because focusing on this one type of location/environment provided some consistency. Arguably, large animal, or perhaps even mixed animal, veterinary practice, are sites where veterinary practice is most evidently incongruous with veganism; however, it was considered that sectors of veterinary medicine involving large animals, most of whom likely exist for the purposes of animal agriculture, may not be fruitful for recruiting participants from the target population. Further, the experiences of veterinary professionals working with

37 Indeed, several participants commented that they thought it would be extremely difficult and rare to find an ethically motivated vegan working in large animal veterinary practice.
large animals, or ‘food’ animals, would differ significantly enough from small animal veterinary practice to warrant keeping the sample only to the latter. Future research could explore the prevalence of VVPs working in large or mixed animal practice and examine their views and experiences.

Although participants were sought from throughout the UK, no potential participants from Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland converted into an interview. Therefore, in total, 20 interviews were conducted throughout England between June 2019 and January 2020. Participants were aged between 26 and 62 years with an average age of 38.8 years. Participants had been a veterinary professional while vegan for between one and 15 years with an average of 4.52 years. Three participants said they were vegan before becoming a veterinary professional, 13 were veterinary professionals before becoming vegan, and four indicated that they had become vegan while training to become a veterinary professional.

Further participant demographics are as follows:

- 12 veterinary surgeons (VS)
- 8 registered veterinary nurses (RVN)
- 6 males (6 veterinarians)
- 14 females (6 veterinary surgeons; 8 veterinary nurses)
- 13 White British, 5 White Other, 2 Asian
- 14 in permanent employment (6 veterinary surgeons; 8 registered nurses)
- 6 locums (6 veterinary surgeons)

Participants’ demographic information is presented in Appendix A1.

Correspondence with an additional 16 individuals occurred of which six were deemed ineligible (one was vegetarian, one a receptionist, and the others were students, thus not qualified). The remaining 10 did not convert into an interview because at some point, they stopped responding to emails.
Participant recruitment

When designing this research, it was anticipated that participants would be recruited primarily via the social media platform Facebook. Social networking sites such as Facebook are often used to source participants for empirical studies (for example Lund et al., 2016; MacInnis and Hodson, 2017; Greenebaum and Dexter 2018; Martinelli and Berkmanienė, 2018). As Greenebaum and Dexter (2018) state, “Facebook groups enable people who share common interests to create a virtual community of likeminded people” (640). This is evident in the creation of The Veterinary Vegan Network (VVN) Facebook page, which is a group for ‘ethical vegans’ worldwide working in the field of veterinary science. However, since the group also accepts members who are not qualified veterinarians or veterinary nurses (students, para-veterinary professionals, family and friends of target members), it was unknown how many of the group’s members were qualified VVPs at the time of participant recruitment. Nevertheless, for several reasons, this social media group was deemed a good starting place to source participants. In February 2019, at the time of embarking on participant recruitment, the VVN comprised 1095 members. Also, it exists primarily for VVPs and the ethos of the group is explicitly aligned with ethical veganism and is abolitionist.

After contacting one of the group’s administrators (a community ‘gatekeeper’), permission was granted for information about the research to be shared with VVN’s members. Thus, in June 2019, information about the research project, a call for participants and contact information was disseminated in a post. As a participant recruitment strategy, calling for participants on the VVN Facebook page was not as successful as I had hoped. The post initially generated no emails or private messages, received no comments and only one ‘like’. This was disappointing and incited reflection on the limitations of VVN as a viable participant recruitment forum. As a result, I placed similar posts on Vegan Manchester Facebook page, Vegans UK and Vegans in Australia, groups with large numbers of members (some in the tens of thousands). Again, the response to the call for participants was poor. The nature of Facebook means that posts become less prominent over time and can be pushed down a list of posts rather quickly,
especially in large active groups like Vegans UK. One must then be strategic about ‘bumping’ their post ‘up’ for more visibility without seeming desperate or pushy or wait a certain amount of time (of a period that is sometimes intuitive, sometimes stipulated – i.e. one month) before reposting. Only three participants for this research were eventually recruited through Facebook, but fortunately, one of these individuals facilitated snowball sampling.

Purposive sampling was used in this research because I had professional-network knowledge of several vegan veterinary professionals in England and so in June 2019, I contacted three individuals directly by email. They agreed to be interviewed and one of these individuals facilitated snowball sampling. It was suggested to me at this time that it might be a viable strategy to recruit participants by visiting veterinary practices and asking if any vegans worked there. I was conscious that this approach could impact upon participant confidentiality, but this suggestion led me to consider canvassing veterinary practices via email. Using random location search websites (Google) and the RCVS clinic registry page, which has a ‘Find a vet practice’ search function, between July 1st 2019 and January 13th 2020, I sent the following email to approximately 200 veterinary practices located within England, Northern Ireland and Wales:

Subject: Staff Inquiry

Hello
I'm wanting to inquire whether you have any vegan veterinary staff and, if so, whether they might be interested in helping me with a research project by answering some questions? If so, I wonder if they might be happy to email me directly at [email address provided]
Thank you,
Donelle

The content of the email was intentionally kept vague at this stage and omitted any direct mention of the kind of research, or the topic of the research being conducted. This was to protect participants who wished to respond from feeling as if their colleagues may know the specifics of the project in which they were considering participating. In many cases, staff members (nurses or receptionists) receiving the email replied saying that they had forwarded the message onto vegan staff who then contacted me directly and, should they prefer, privately,
without the knowledge or scrutiny of their colleagues. Contacting veterinary clinics directly was a more successful participant recruitment method that resulted in eight interviews. In total, three participants were recruited using Facebook, eleven through purposive sampling (three via direct email to individuals and eight by canvassing veterinary practices), and six using snowball sampling method. These non-probability sampling methods were well-suited to my research aim, which was to collect rich and textured descriptions of the experiences of a particular group and “locate subjects with certain attributes or characteristics” (Lune and Berg, 2017: 39) needed for this study.

**Data collection**

The interview guide (see Appendices A2 and A3) was developed based on Braun and Clarke’s (2013) recommendations for designing and piloting an interview guide. This initially involved brainstorming a list of questions that related to areas of interest. This process was, in part, informed by a review of existing literature (on veganism and the veterinary profession), my observation of an apparent tension between veganism and veterinary practice, and my own experiences of being vegan while employed in small animal veterinary practice. Based on this, it was anticipated that VVPs may struggle with certain aspects of their veterinary role. Broadly, I was interested in exploring the aspects of VVPs’ role that they find challenging. For example, since vegans tend to eschew the consumption of nonhuman animals as food, it was considered that they might find the ubiquity of meat and dairy in veterinary practice (whether in the diets of colleagues or in pet food) challenging. Also, since vegans tend to disagree with animal exploitation, it was considered that they may struggle to promote and use pharmaceuticals that had been tested on animals. It was further considered that they might struggle working with breeders. Although these aspects of the veterinary role posing a challenge for VVPs was considered, interview questions were designed to allow any challenges, if present, to emerge without prompting.

Opening questions were aimed at establishing rapport and gathering contextual information (i.e. participant’s position in practice and length of time as a VVP).
Interview questions thereafter were designed to generate information in order to answer the key research questions; hence, participants were asked questions aimed at identifying aspects of their role they find challenging. Questions such as how being vegan affects one’s ability to be a veterinary professional and vice versa were designed to explore any challenges. Interview questions were also designed to seek information about various situations anticipated to be challenging for VVPs to learn more about the strategies they may employ to negotiate challenging aspects of their role. For example, the question: how would you express discomfort at participating in or witnessing activities in the workplace that challenge your vegan values?

Each interview closed with some broader questions designed to shift focus from VVPs’ experiences working in small animal veterinary practice to their thoughts about veganism and the veterinary profession more broadly. Only at the end of the interview, if any of the anticipated challenges (i.e. breeding, pharmaceuticals, pet food) had not been previously mentioned by the participants, they were asked their thoughts about these issues. For example, if a participant had not mentioned breeding as a challenging aspect of their role, near the end of their interview, they were asked: How do you feel about the breeding of animals for human use including companionship? Importantly, participants were not asked these questions until after they had had the opportunity to respond to the question: What aspects of your job as a veterinary professional and vegan do you find most challenging? All interview questions were open and worded to invite participants to respond freely and thus they could influence the focus and direction of the conversation. Indeed, some findings from this research arose in VVPs’ responses and accounts that were tangential to the questions that were asked. For example, no questions about killing or euthanasia were asked and yet this emerged as a dominant theme. In other words, participants’ responses often guided the discussion and the consequent findings, which was welcomed.

Once potential participants made contact to inquire about the research, they were told it was an interview-based PhD project and asked if they met the eligibility criteria. If they were eligible and keen to partake, they were emailed a participant
information sheet (see Appendix A4) that provided information about the research aims, informed consent, the interview process, withdrawal, risks and benefits, data management, communication of results and contact details. If they were satisfied with the participant information sheet, they were sent a consent form (see Appendix A5) and asked to sign and return it by email, although some consent forms were completed in-person prior to conducting interviews. Once informed consent was obtained the interview date, time and place were decided and scheduled.

Correspondence that occurred between the researcher and participants via email prior to meeting for the interview was important for establishing rapport, which fosters “understanding, trust and respect” between an interviewer and interviewees (Arksey and Knight, 1999: 100). Some interviews were arranged within days, others within weeks and others over months, and this process always involved consideration, negotiation, collaboration and dialogue.

Three methods – telephone, video call and in-person – were used for conducting interviews and collecting data but the format for starting all interviews was consistent. Two recording devices (a Dictaphone and a smartphone for back up) were used to capture data. These devices were placed on a table between interviewer and interviewee for in-person meetings and on the researcher’s desk for telephone and video call interviews. All participants were asked if they were comfortable being audio recorded prior to these devices being used to record. No participants indicated that the interview being recorded was an issue for them.

The nature of semi-structured interviews and the relaxed, conversational nature of the process was explained to all participants despite how they were interviewed (i.e. phone, video or in-person). They were told that although there are set questions as a guide, I may deviate (i.e. probe, follow tangents or request clarification) and they were invited to interject, or move between questions should they recall a memory or if thoughts arose. They were also told that they can stop or break at any time and did not have to answer all of the questions if they did not wish to. No participants requested a break or refused to answer any questions. In this study, the process for conducting interviews was much the same whichever
method was used but there were some differences (pros and cons) between these methods, as outlined in what follows.

Four participants requested a telephone interview. While in-person interviews have typically been considered the ‘standard’ and ‘ideal’ method for conducting interviews in the social sciences, other means of conducting interviews, such as telephone and virtual/online, are increasingly accepted, with all methods of conducting interviews having various strengths and weaknesses, advantages and disadvantages (Novick, 2008; Braun and Clarke, 2013; Lune and Berg, 2017). Indeed, it is judged that qualitative data collected via telephone interview has the capacity to be “rich, vivid, detailed, and of high quality” (Novick, 2008: 4). There was no discernible difference concerning the quality of data collected for this study whether interviews were conducted by telephone or using other methods. There are, indeed, recognised benefits to conducting interviews by telephone; for example, they facilitate safety of both parties, enhance participants’ privacy and confidentiality, participants may feel more relaxed and speak more freely, and there is decreased social pressure (Novick, 2008).

The primary difference when conducting telephone interviews, of course, is that the interviewer and interviewee cannot see each other. Thus, the interviewer cannot observe the participant’s body language or physical environment, and vice versa. Absence of visual cues is recognised as a disadvantage of telephone interviews (Novick, 2008; Lune and Berg, 2017). Rapport, which is so important in interview-based research, can be more challenging to establish and maintain when there is a lack of visual social cues (Irvine, Drew and Sainsbury, 2013). However, as Novick (2008) suggests, conversing casually prior to the interview beginning and employing selective and skilful intonation and word choice is important when conducting telephone interviews. I found that timing (when interjecting, probing, and progressing) and sensitivity to participants’ speech patterns and pauses was essential. Arksey and Knight (1999) state that where there is an absence of visual cues, as with telephone interviews, what is said, and the interviewer’s voice manner are key. Perhaps owing to my extensive training and experience in telephone communication (over two decades as a veterinary nurse and receptionist), in this study, the telephone interviews went well.
A disadvantage of telephone interviews that was noticed in conducting this research is the potential for participants to become distracted (Novick, 2008), either by someone or something within their environment. On just a few occasions, there was momentary interruption caused to a telephone interview owing to participants speaking with people in the background. This kind of distraction did not occur with in-person interviews although, of course, it can. It occurred a few times during video call interviews (i.e. a washing machine and some animal companions). Overall, while momentary participant distraction did occur when conducting telephone interviews for this study, it did not seem to impact to any significant degree.

On a final note, it has been suggested that owing to participant fatigue, telephone interviews risk being shorter than interviews conducted in-person (Novick, 2008). Overall, the 20 interviews conducted for this research ranged between 30 and 77 minutes, with an average of 53.85 minutes. Interviews conducted by telephone lasted between 32 minutes and 77 minutes; thus, there appeared to be no impact on time spent speaking with participants because the interview was being conducted by telephone.

Eight participants requested an interview via video call. Telecommunication applications like Skype, FaceTime, Whatsapp, and Zoom and so forth, allow for synchronous communication, facilitate participant and researcher safety and are convenient and low cost (Lo Iacono, Symonds and Brown, 2016), as long as one has access to a computer or smartphone and internet connection. Indeed, video call technologies have many advantages for conducting qualitative research and are considered a “viable alternative or complimentary data collection tool for qualitative researchers” (Lo Iacono, Symonds and Brown, 2016: 1). This is especially the case when participants are geographically distanced, time poor, or work long or unusual hours, as was often the case for participants involved in this research. In contrast to telephone interviews, using video call to conduct interviews meant that the interviewees and interviewer could see each other’s faces (and often upper bodies), which enabled some observation of each person’s environment and visual social cues. Video call interviews worked well, although on rare occasions, participants were briefly distracted, connectivity was momentarily
lost, or there was a lag in connectivity. Video call interviews lasted between 30 minutes and 66 minutes.

Interviews conducted using video call technology involved the recording of audio (as with telephone and in-person interviews) but not video. The first two video calls were conducted using Skype; however, the second of these interviews incurred a technological issue whereby a computer software update on the researcher’s computer had uninstalled the camera. Thus, when connecting with the participant, I could hear my participant’s voice and see them but the participant heard only my voice. The cause of the camera failure was not known to me immediately and so after a minute of troubleshooting, apologies were made and the interview began. Thus, this interview was more like a telephone interview from the participant’s perspective. However, the interviewer had the advantage of being able to observe the participant’s environment and non-verbal social cues. While this situation was not ideal, the need to prioritise the maintenance of rapport under these circumstances was recognised and it was felt that the interview proceeded well, despite the circumstances. Owing to this technology issue, the remaining six video call interviews were conducted using Whatsapp, since this enabled the researcher to bypass using the laptop and instead use a smartphone. Serendipitously, it seemed that Whatsapp was perhaps a better, more preferable option for potential participants since no one said that they did not have Whatsapp, yet a few said that they did not have Skype.

Offering telephone and video call as options for interviewing participants meant that individuals who may not have otherwise been willing or able to be interviewed in-person have participated in this study. As such, this research includes VVPs from throughout England.

Eight interviews were conducted in-person; they were scheduled in consultation with participants and conducted at an agreed time (during the day) and location (public). Seven in-person interviews were conducted in pre-booked, private rooms in public libraries located in participants’ towns or cities to where I travelled to meet them. One in-person interview was conducted in a private, pre-booked room at a university campus library because the participant was in the vicinity of my locale at
a particular day and time. All participants attended their interview at the agreed time and place.

Upon meeting the participant in a library, greetings and introductions proceeded entering into a private, pre-booked room for the interview. Once the participant had read and signed a consent form (if this had not been completed prior by email), recording devices were set-up and approved by the participant, and once the participant’s comfort (bathroom/toilet, drinking water etc) was ensured, the interview commenced. In-person interviews were conducted without incident. In-person interviews lasted between 43 minutes and 70 minutes.

Interviews were evaluated after being conducted to identify any means for improvement (for example, changing the question order). Notetaking after interviews was a means to record any nuances of the interview process that could be altered or improved. Notes were made about the interview immediately after or within a few hours of each interview being concluded. These notes included comments about how I felt the interview went, any issues, disruptions or interruptions encountered, comments on the logistics of the process and reflections on rapport and my interview technique, and so forth (also see Ethics section). I also made note of any perceived tonal shifts when participants spoke about certain topics or experiences. These notes also included demographic information (i.e. time being vegan, age, etc) and any additional, potentially relevant information (i.e. country where qualification gained if not UK, official role at practice, etc).

Finally, although participants were informed that they had the option to revoke their participation in this research and withdraw their data for up to 30 days after their interview, no participants requested withdrawal from the study.

Data analysis

Once the interviews were conducted and captured as audio recordings, they were converted to text. In-person interviews were transcribed using a voice-to-text smartphone app and then manually corrected. Telephone and video call interviews
were transcribed manually by the researcher. All typed transcripts were accompanied by some notes in track changes highlighting significant information or emerging, identifiable patterns. Potential identifying information (names, clinic locations, official roles etc) were redacted to ensure confidentiality and protect participants’ identities. Several initial interview transcripts were checked by a supervisor who provided feedback on the interview process and suggested how to make improvements to the interview technique. This guidance was invaluable to receive early in the interview process.

Data collected for this research was thematically analysed owing to this method’s suitability for “examining the perspectives of different research participants, highlighting similarities and differences, and generating unanticipated insights” (Nowell et al., 2017: 2). Thematic analysis occurs within multiple phases from familiarising oneself with the data, to initial coding, and identifying, defining and naming themes, and often these phases interlink and overlap (Nowell et al., 2017: 2). Analysis of data collected for this research involved various stages: pre-coding (i.e. preliminary notes), first cycle coding and second cycle coding, moving from initial codes through to grouping codes, developing categories and, eventually, chapter themes.

In qualitative research, a code, is “a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-base for visual data” (Saldaña, 2009: 3). Since coding involves “identifying aspects of the data that relate to your research questions” (Braun and Clarke, 2013: 206), data was coded using a complete coding approach. This meant paying particular attention to anything and everything deemed related or relevant to VVPs’ experiences working in small animal veterinary practice, challenges they face in the workplace as vegans and strategies they employ to navigate these challenges.

The coding of qualitative data, explains Saldaña (2009), can involve lumping or splitting data. Coding of transcripts initially involved splitting data; that is, splitting data into “smaller codable moments” (Saldaña, 2009: 19); however, as coding proceeded, it became evident that lumping data by coding longer passages – often
a participant’s entire answer to a particular question – was better for identifying patterns and themes and keeping what the participants said in context. Thus, rather than a paragraph of text being assigned multiple codes for clusters of words or phrases, lumping the data resulted in some sections of participants’ dialogue having multiple codes for one section or response (i.e. a collection of sentences or a lump of data may coincide with three codes such as 95. Disclosure reactions, 3. Being questioned, 15. Out-group interest). Changing the technique from splitting to lumping the data in the coding process assisted with identifying patterns that then formed categories and later in the process, chapter themes.

Initial familiarity with the data and the content of the interview was obtained through the process of conducting and transcribing the interviews. Thus, once all interviews were conducted, transcribed, and formatted as transcripts in Word documents, they were then read individually in their entirety and underwent what Saldaña (2009) calls ‘first cycle coding’. A coding diary was also started at this time as well as a coding master sheet in the form of a table. Initially, coding was done manually on paper by printing out and marking up/coding three transcripts. Each code was assigned a number.

Once a few transcripts had been through first cycle coding, a supervisor checked the coding and found there to be no issues. Thus, coding proceeded on the remaining interviews using and building upon the coding master sheet. Yet, instead of coding on paper, coding was done electronically in Word documents using track-change bubbles to highlight coded text and assign codes and their corresponding number to dialogue.

With each subsequent interview being first cycle coded, fewer new codes were generated. For example, the first interview generated 90 codes, the second generated an additional 49 codes, the third an additional 37 codes, the fourth an additional 4 codes, and so forth. When new codes were generated, previously coded interviews were revised for the applicability of the newly generated code. At the conclusion of first cycle coding on all 20 interview transcripts, the analysis had produced 220 codes.
Having completed first cycle coding and generated 220 codes, these codes were examined for consolidation and categorisation. This is the point where the coding diary was incredibly helpful for noting down and keeping audit of what codes were merged as a result of being too similar. However, prior to merging or consolidating any codes, codes were assigned categories to “develop a coherent synthesis of the data corpus” (Saldana, 2009: 149). The aim of second cycle coding, explains Saldana (2009: 149), is to “develop a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organization from your array of First Cycle codes”. Accordingly, first cycle codes were grouped into 11 categories: disclosure; exclusion; out-group; conversation; food; in-group; feelings; strategies, challenges, stigma and vegan-vet relationship. Each of these categories comprised between 3 and 22 individual codes that had some commonality. For example, under the smallest category ‘Conversation’, there were three codes: 10. Conversation, 3. Being questioned, and 155. Educating others.

Throughout the interview, transcription and coding process, themes emerged, and three key themes were identified for forming chapters: Power, Consumption, and Culture. For example, with Consumption, the category ‘food’ was comprised of 16 codes covering plant-based catering through to meat-based pet food. Throughout interviews, VVPs frequently mentioned food and it was apparent that ‘consumption’ would be a chapter theme. While the three chapters are distinct, there is also overlap between them as they inter-relate: power, consumption and culture are intimately linked.

Not all data drawn from interviews was able to be included in this thesis. The interviews conducted yielded rich, in-depth data; indeed, recorded interviews once transcribed resulted in approximately 177,000 words of data. Thus, only the dominant themes – those most frequent/evident during the coding process – were included in the thesis. Data collected on topics such as vivisection and dissection, and mandatory slaughterhouse visits as part of training, willingness to raise issues with employers and colleagues, experiences of reactions to one’s disclosure, and the use of restraint and muzzles, along with other topics that arose through the data collection and coding processes (i.e. issues with the property status of animal, desexing, chemotherapy) were not included. This does not mean they are
insignificant, but owing to the dominance of other topics, and limitation of scope, they were omitted.

**Ethics**

This research was designed and conducted adhering to Edge Hill University’s Code of Practice for the Conduct of Research and Research Ethics Policy. The project was subjected to ethical scrutiny and, subsequently, approval to conduct this research was granted by the Social Sciences Departmental Research Ethics Committee. Ethics can be thought of as “a set of values extrinsic to the researchers’ core task, which is one of producing knowledge” (Punch, 2016; 31). Ethics is more than a set of rules; rather, research ethics encourages researchers to foresee and thus prevent, or prepare to navigate problems and dilemmas that arise in the act of performing research. Some key ethical issues in social research include informed consent, confidentiality, harm, deception, benefits, and integrity. Research ethics therefore incorporate issues such as researcher obligations, risk assessment, consideration of beneficence and non-malfeasance and considers factors such as diversity, inclusivity and exclusion, limitations, positionality, and reflexivity. As a result of the rational deliberation of ethical issues related to this qualitative study, this section provides information about key ethical principles that have guided this research.

The principles that guided sourcing participants and ensuring informed consent were truth, openness, and disclosure. Participants were provided with the participation information sheet outlining the project, its aims, and the nature of their role in the process. Each participant was assured that their identity would be kept confidential (known only to the primary researcher). They were made aware of their right to withdraw from the research within 30 days of their interview being conducted. All participants were required to sign a consent form to indicate their willingness to participate in the research and to permit data being collected from them and used to further knowledge. No information about this study was withheld from participants and they were free to ask questions about me or the project at any time. No incentives were offered to participants and those recruited to
participate in this study were invited to partake and so their involvement was voluntary.

Confidentiality, in this study, meant making “an active attempt to remove from the research records any elements that might indicate the subjects’ identities” (Lune and Berg, 2017: 48). As mentioned, effort and consideration were made to keep individuals’ participation in this research confidential during the participant recruitment stage by encouraging potential participants to email me directly rather than reply on social media, and by keeping the email sent to veterinary practices vague in nature. Effort and consideration were also made to keep individuals’ participation in this research confidential when conducting interviews. When interviews occurred in-person, participants were involved in deciding the location where their interview was conducted and all VVPs interviewed agreed to meeting in a privately booked room in a public (or university) library. Furthermore, participants were assigned pseudonyms and all names of people or places (geographical locations/ workplaces) that they mentioned were redacted. Thus, to ensure confidentiality, care was taken to not include or present data that might lead to the identification of any participant. Finally, data was collected, stored and managed in accordance with Edge Hill University's research data policies and guidance.

Considering risk to participants was paramount and managed through ensuring their confidentiality. For example, as previously outlined, participants were asked to contact me via my email address or use private messaging to contact me rather than comment publicly on social media in response to the call for participants. Interview data was kept secured and password protected.

Protecting participants also meant anticipating that they may feel upset when recalling or explaining negative experiences, particularly traumatic experiences such as visiting slaughterhouses or if they have felt stigmatised, discriminated against, teased or bullied. While I was prepared should this occur, no participants requested or appeared to require emotional support. It was considered that as a marginalised socio-cultural group, VVPs may feel frustrated and silenced and so being provided with an outlet and forum to express how they feel and to describe their experiences to someone may in fact have been beneficial. Allowing
individuals to speak freely, openly and at length about their thoughts, opinions, feelings and experiences can be cathartic (Arksey and Knight, 1999).

More broadly, potential risks were considered against the beneficence of this research project; beneficence to me gaining skills and experience as a researcher, to the participants in terms of potentially improving their understanding of veganism and promoting inclusivity in the profession, to the profession in regard to industry development, the wider scholarly (CAS) community through contributing to knowledge and, importantly, to many nonhuman animals, who are arguably the most vulnerable and exploited beings in human dominated society.

Reflexivity is “the process of a continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of researcher’s positionality as well as active acknowledgement and explicit recognition that this position may affect the research process and outcome” (Berger, 2015: 220). Cutcliffe (2003: 136) writes, “qualitative research is a reflexive process, in that the researcher has an effect on the research and vice versa”. Accordingly, I recognise that my identity and experience as a vegan veterinary professional and a researcher has implications for this research. However, since all research involves some sense of interestedness (Barbour, 2014), no researcher – as an interested individual – or research project is entirely objective. Nevertheless, throughout the process of conducting this research, I remained conscious that as a researcher, I have “a priori knowledge/values/beliefs, [and] empathy” that require researcher reflexivity (Cutcliffe, 2003: 136). For example, I am informed and influenced by factors unique to me and my identity such as my positionality as a researcher, my experience as a veterinary professional, and my veganism. My recognition of these factors and how they may impact this study have been interrogated throughout the production of this thesis and a process of ongoing reflexivity has guided this project. Researcher reflexivity in this regard has meant being aware of my identity as being integrated into this study and remaining conscious of how this may impact this research. It has meant ensuring transparency, making explicit my a priori knowledge and values, and exercising self-awareness (Cutcliffe, 2003).

My positionality has been a positive feature of this research in numerous ways. Lune and Berg (2017: 82) explain that for a researcher, having similar
characteristics or experiences to interviewees can enhance rapport, which they
describe as “positive feelings that develop between the interviewer and the
subject”. Being vegan (or assumed to be vegan) seemed to assist with
establishing and managing positive interaction with participants in this study.
Berger (2015) identifies several benefits associated with being a researcher who is
an ‘insider’; that is, sharing one’s participants’ experiences. These benefits include
facilitating participant recruitment; having insight into a particular culture; fostering
trust and rapport; enhanced understanding and representation of participants’
experiences; and offers the researcher “a head start in knowing about the topic
and understanding nuanced reactions of participants” (Berger, 2015: 223). The
researcher who has shared experiences with participants can be “better equipped
with insights and the ability to understand implied content … [and be] more
sensitized to certain dimensions of the data”; they are familiar with the ‘language’
of a particular group and are “aware of potential sensitivities” (Berger, 2015: 223).
‘Insiders’ who conduct research can gain an understanding of participants'
responses "in a nuanced and multileveled way” such that they can “hear the
unsaid, probe more efficiently, and ferret out hints that others might miss” (Berger,
2015: 223). Indeed, vegan researchers undertaking research with vegans on the
topic of veganism is not uncommon (for example, McDonald, Cervero and
Courtenay, 1999; McDonald, 2000; Hirschler, 2008; Greenebaum, 2012a, 2017;
Twine, 2014, 2018; Wright, 2015; Giraud, 2021; Oliver, 2021) and numerous
studies have been undertaken in the past few decades in which the
methodological approach involved interviews with vegans conducted by vegan
researchers.

Despite these multiple benefits, acknowledging one’s positionality and reflexivity
are crucial in conducting qualitative research, and so I employed various
mechanisms for ensuring researcher reflexivity, transparency and to establish an
audit trail. These mechanisms included note taking, keeping a researcher journal,
and a coding diary. Self-evaluation is important when conducting empirical
research (Arksey and Knight, 1999). As mentioned earlier, self-evaluation
occurred in the process of making notes, which were important for reflexivity.
Transparency is also crucial (Nowell et al., 2017); and accordingly, immediately or
soon after the conclusion of each interview, notes were made about any relevant
conversation that occurred prior to or after the interview, such as if the participant asked me if I am vegan, a veterinary professional, or enquired as to why I had decided to conduct research on this particular topic. If any participants asked me whether I am vegan or a veterinary professional either before or after the interview (none asked me these question during interviews), I simply answered yes and did not elaborate; thus, self-disclosure was modest and minimised.

My veterinary nursing qualification was information provided on the participant information sheet. This knowledge was evidently beneficial to participants as they often used terms that may not be known to or understood by non-veterinary professionals (i.e. ‘reps’, ‘spay’, ‘scruffing’, medicines and their usages). Participants never explained these terms to me, nor did I have to ask them to. Hence, my insider knowledge of the veterinary profession meant that I was able to understand them without the need for interjecting for clarification and this meant that they could speak freely without feeling as if they had to constantly stop to ensure I understood their meaning.

While I do not have a public profile identifying myself as vegan, my public academic profile reflects my scholarly interest in veganism and vegan studies. Only one participant asked me if I was vegan before being interviewed and only a few asked me this question after the interview had concluded. Most participants neither asked me if I was vegan or a veterinary professional. I feel that some participants assumed I was vegan because they occasionally recommended vegan friendly places to eat in their locales. One participant did this via email when we were arranging to meet in her city and a few others did this after their in-person interview had concluded. I feel that being assumed vegan was beneficial as it possibly assisted with establishing rapport and perhaps fostered trust since no participants seemed discernibly defensive or wary of me at any time. After their in-person interview, several participants thanked me for conducting this research and approximately half of the participants wrote an email to thank me for their interview after the interview had concluded. Thus, I feel that being vegan, or assumed vegan, may have enhanced my access to and facilitated me gaining insight into a population that may have otherwise chosen not to speak, or speak so candidly, about their thoughts and experiences.
As mentioned, this research involved 20 participants. This research makes no claims for representativeness or generalisability since it involved 20 interviews, but it does offer rich and textured descriptions of the experiences of a particular group: vegan veterinary professionals, and it is the first, possibly the only study to date that explores VVPs’ workplace experiences. Moreover, Seidman (2013) suggests that sample size should be based on two factors: sufficiency and saturation. A sample size of approximately 15-30 individual interviews is considered adequate for identifying patterns in interview-generated data (Braun and Clarke, 2013). This considered, alongside the scope of this research and the nature of the data being sought (in-depth, rich data), it was decided that 20-25 interviews would be an ideal number for this study. It was found that after conducting approximately 16-18 interviews, and asking similar questions, nothing remarkably ‘new’ or significant was emerging; thus, saturation, which refers to “the point when additional data fails to generate new information” (Braun and Clarke, 2013: 55) felt like it had been achieved around this point. The interviewing process was therefore concluded after 20 interviews had been conducted.

Capturing diversity in factors such as gender and ethnicity can be problematic when conducting interview-based qualitative research. I anticipated that I may find more young, white, upper-middle class women in my sample because firstly, veganism is practiced predominantly by young, white, upper-middle, urban women (Wright, 2017) and in participant sourcing for similar studies, this has been the case (Dean, 2014; Twine, 2018). Secondly, because the 2019 surveys of the UK veterinary profession reflect a greater percentage of young, white female veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses (Robinson et al., 2019a, 2019b). Consistent with this, most participants in this research were female and only six males were included in this research and they were all veterinary surgeons. All but two participants identified as white and European.

In choosing a focus, all social science research excludes certain individuals or groups, but it is important that this is acknowledged as a potential limitation of this

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38 For veterinary surgeons, the proportion of female respondents was 58% with an average age of 40 years and only 3.5% of total respondents identified as being from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. For RVNs, the proportion of female respondents was 96.8%, with the average age of total respondents being 35.2 years, and only 1.9% of RVNs identified as being from black and minority ethnic backgrounds.
research. Large and significant portions of the present and future veterinary profession fell outside the scope of this research:

- Non-qualified veterinary professionals
- VVPs whose primary motivation for being vegan is health or the environment
- VVPs working outside of small animal veterinary practice
- VVPs outside of England

Those within these groups may have similar but also likely have unique challenges working in the field of veterinary medicine. Research on the views and experiences of members of these groups would be valuable in their own right and highly complementary to my study; particularly environmentally motivated vegans since animal agriculture is a major environmental issue as well as a growing focus on sustainability in veterinary practice (Vet Sustain, 2020).

Chapter summary

This chapter has outlined the methodology, data collection and analytical methods employed to research the experiences of VVPs working in small animal veterinary practice to better understand how they are affected by and negotiate the apparent irreconcilability of veganism and veterinary practice. In answering the two research questions central to this study, findings from this research have implications for industry and individuals. This research was designed upon the premise that speaking with VVPs can promote a better understanding of the challenges these individuals face in the workplace and thus could improve understanding of veganism more broadly, promote inclusivity in the veterinary industry specifically, and could potentially improve relationships between vegans and their non-vegan colleagues. In a broader sense this research contributes to societal reflection on human-animal relations, typical of the CAS and AS fields.
Chapter Four: Power

In Chapter One: Introduction, anthropocentrism, speciesism and carnism were introduced, explained, and presented as being important to CAS and relevant to the theory and practice of veganism. While these concepts are distinct, they are also related in that they involve the privileging of humans over other animals and are enmeshed with power. Power is a debated and ambiguous concept and there are many theoretical conceptualisations of power (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner, 2006; Palmer, 2017). Yet, many scholars, especially within CAS, have found Foucault’s work useful for analysing humans’ relationships with other animals (for example, Twine, 2007; Twine, 2010a; Sanbonmatsu, 2011; Cole, 2011; Taylor, 2013; Wadiwel, 2015; Chrulew and Wadiwel, 2017; Arcari, 2019). For Foucault, power is not something to be possessed, but it exists in a network of relationships, and power is contextual/situated based on when, with whom, and where relations occur; the mechanisms of power are “varied and heterogenous” but power is also ubiquitous (Palmer, 2017: 112). Foucault posited some key ideas about power that are particularly useful in examining human-nonhuman animal relations: biopolitics, sovereign power, disciplinary power and biopower.

Nonhuman animals, human animals, and power

Foucault observed a change in how power historically manifests and functions in society. Since early modernity, Foucault viewed the political paradigm moving from a supreme ruler who can frighten, force subjects to act in certain ways and execute/kill subjects toward a politics more focused on controlling individual bodies and populations (Calarco, 2020). This latter mode of power, which operates in a way that is “more subtle and supple, shaping and controlling bodies and populations in order to direct their living energies toward the goals of the state and other social, economic, and administrative powers”, is termed ‘biopower’ (Calarco, 2020: 29). This shift in the mechanism of power has had implications for

39 Nonhuman animals were not a focus for Foucault and his work on power.
nonhuman animals as beings enmeshed with politics. Calarco (2020: 31) explains how nonhuman animals have come to be subjects under biopower:

No longer are animals merely hunted in the wild or farmed in small numbers in domesticated settings; today, animal life is managed in massive numbers in highly technical, scientific ways in order to extract maximum profit from their lives, flesh, and even their left-over body parts.

The management of massive numbers of animals in highly technical, scientific ways requires the involvement and enablement of the veterinary profession.

In thinking about Foucault’s work, Wadiwel (2015: 21) reconceptualises the term ‘sovereignty’ arguing that it “might be understood as a mode of human domination of animals”. In terms of human-animal relationships, sovereignty can be observed in how humans self-appoint entitlement to create nonhuman animals, manipulate, regulate, kill, or have them killed, whether those animals are wild, or are domesticated for use by human beings (i.e. on farms or in laboratories) or provide companionship as pets. Legally defining nonhuman animals as property is one way that sovereign power serves to legitimise humans’ dominion over other animals and culturally normalise humans’ multitudinous uses of them (Francione, 1995). Furthermore, as Wadiwel (2015) notes, sovereign power functions through various distinctions such as race, gender, ability, and species. In relation to species, while all human beings are animals, not all animals are human beings. This distinction is significant because historically it has been employed in western culture to reinforce a biological, scientific, moral, sociocultural, and legal divide between humans and other animals (Weil, 2018) and secondly, as noted in Chapter One: Introduction, because CAS scholars recognise this ‘divide’ as problematic and thus challenge it (Nocella et al., 2014).

Language is another way in which sovereign power serves to legitimise humans’ dominion over other animals and culturally normalise humans’ extensive use of them (Dunayer, 2001; Stibbe, 2001). Categorisation is a means for socially constructing division, and language is widely employed as a legitimising tool of the
oppressor. For example, killing is legitimised and becomes normalised when it is labelled ‘culling’, ‘pest control’ or ‘conservation’, ‘recreational hunting’, ‘humane slaughter’, or ‘euthanasia’ when in each of these cases, killing constitutes “legalized lethal violence” (Taylor, 2013: 540). Humans also use language and categorisation to forge a distinction between humans and other animals as either ‘persons’ or ‘property’. As Aaltola (2008: 176) explains:

The value of animals often remains contextual and dependent on use categorization: the specific context by which the animal is approached (for instance, entertainment) affects the value he or she is given, and especially categories such as “production animal,” “experimentation animal,” “pet,” and so forth have a significant impact. It can be argued that it is precisely the lack of personhood that enables contextuality: in a circular manner, the personhood of animals is denied on the basis of lack of independent value, and the lack of independent value is denied on the basis of lack of personhood. That is, animals are valued contextually because they are not persons, and animals are not persons because their value is contextual.

Being denied personhood has consequences for nonhuman animals when categorised according to their ‘purpose’ or ‘function’ within society and, as such, they can be bought, kept and sold as commodities. Domestication and domination are synonymous (Tuan, 1984). Humans breed, ‘own’ and utilise nonhuman animals who can be killed or ‘humanely euthanased’ by humans in a relatively uncomplicated manner. Domestication is an outcome of sovereign power.

The means by which humans manage other animals significantly reduces or removes their capacity to escape or resist acts being done to them. Whether through genetic selection, training (positive or negative reinforcement41), confinement, physical or chemical restraint, humans control other animals.

40 See also Franklin (2020).
41 Positive reinforcement involves rewarding an animal for desired behaviour, which requires the animal to want something (food, toy, affection) that is being otherwise withheld, and negative reinforcement involves issuing a punishment, whether physical or verbal or both, for undesirable behaviour. Both forms of training involve humans’ exercising control.
Animals such as those subjected to selective breeding practices for the purposes of experimentation or for companionship are often purposely ‘created’ to be docile and productive, to make them more useful to humans (Palmer, 2017). For example, dogs specifically bred to be companions tend to be genetically bred to have amiable temperaments because those who do not submit to human domination and who bite human beings or other animals can be killed (Legislation UK, 2021f). Regarding animals bred for experimentation, Birke (2012: 170) explains that the use of nonhuman animals in laboratories for biomedical and other scientific purposes involves ‘standardisation’, the intentional and selective breeding of populations of genetically modified animals bred to be docile leading them to “embody wider systems of disciplinary control”.

Whether breeding animals for consumption as food or for other reasons, including companionship, and whether killing is termed ‘slaughter’ or ‘euthanasia’, humans’ rigorous control over other animal’ lives from birth to death has been viewed within CAS as biopower. Biopower, which involves the exercising of regulatory control over bodies, lives, and entire populations, is facilitated by sovereign power and when applied to human-animal relations, serves to reinforce boundaries between humans and other animals (Wadiwel, 2018). Sovereign power enables the AIC to exploit nonhuman animals for human gain, which is clearly anthropocentric. The exploitation of nonhuman animals within the AIC is legitimised through the reinforcing of nonhuman animals as nonhuman, which is clearly speciesism. Additionally, the various ways in which animals are bred, used, and killed for human consumption is normalised and goes largely unquestioned because of the invisiblized and violent ideology, carnism.

Thus, in western culture, sovereign power, disciplinary power and biopower, the AIC, anthropocentrism, speciesism, and carnism mesh within a matrix of power relations that benefit certain groups of humans (typically wealthy, white, male, and located in the global north) above all others. Further, it is a matrix with which the veterinary profession is intimately and extensively linked. In small animal veterinary practice, for example, biopower – the control and management of bodies – can be observed in a plethora of ways: the subjection of nonhuman animals to practices such as eugenics (selective breeding), inoculation
(vaccination), sterilisation (and other reproductive interventions such as artificial insemination), bodily mutilation (i.e. tail docking)\textsuperscript{42} and, of course, killing.

Since power is a defining feature of humans’ relationships with other animals – evident in the innumerable ways in which humans domesticate and exploit other animals (Tuan, 1984; Scully, 2002; Wadiwel, 2015) – and since vegans tend to problematise nonhuman animal exploitation, power emerged as the theme of this chapter. Interviews with VVPs revealed several ways in which humans’ relationships with other animals reflecting sovereign power, disciplinary power and biopower are challenging for them when performing their professional role. Humans control other animals from the moment of their birth up to the point of their death, and so this chapter is structured to represent three stages of nonhuman animals’ highly regulated lives. It begins with VVPs’ experiences of and thoughts about animal breeding before discussing animal testing to produce pharmaceuticals (and associated products) and concludes with the topic of killing.

**The breeding of animal companions**

Humans interfere with and manipulate the reproductive bodies of nonhuman animals in various ways and to varying degrees, but the most extreme human intervention into the reproductive lives of nonhuman animals is ‘controlled breeding’. Controlled breeding can involve the manipulation of ovarian activity and or forced insemination (Boden and Andrews, 2019) or involve the selective pairing of animals in confined spaces to mate and or the restraint of female animals for impregnation. Controlled breeding is employed widely to ‘produce’ animals within and for the AIC, and the veterinary profession plays a pivotal role in “the management of animal (re)production” (Swabe, 1998: 11).

While the breeding of animals used in the agricultural sector occurs to provide humans with food, clothing and innumerable other consumer products, other animals are bred for the sole purpose of providing humans with companionship.

\textsuperscript{42} UK law considers tail docking a mutilation and while the procedure is illegal in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, exemptions exist and veterinarians may dock tails for medical reasons or for certain breeds of dogs if they are made to work (BVA, 2019d).
Indeed, the breeding of animal companions is its own profitable industry as juvenile animals are widely bred and sold as commodities for profit. The profitable breeding of animals (mostly dogs and cats) to serve as companions is a domain of the AIC that largely provides an ongoing supply of animals that comprises the majority of clientele for small animal veterinary practice. Throughout the breeding process, small animal veterinary practices also offer services for a fee to those who breed ‘companion animals’ – from insemination or conception through to gestational care, birth and beyond. Hence, supporting and facilitating breeding is a role that contemporary small animal veterinary professionals are routinely involved in. This considered, it is, perhaps, unsurprising that breeding and working with breeders was an aspect of their professional role that many VVPs identified as challenging for them.

**Unwanted animals**

All participants disliked breeding although their reasons for this varied and were often compound. A common reason for their disapproval was the excess in unwanted animals languishing in animal shelters. Animal shelters present in various forms but are mainly publicly funded entities that exist to provide sanctuary to abandoned or unwanted animals (primarily dogs and cats) for an anticipated ‘temporary period of time’ until the animal is adopted or, if deemed unable or unlikely to be adopted, eventually killed (Calarco, 2020).⁴³ Palmer (2006) argues that society’s acceptance and toleration of the killing of vast numbers of healthy animals (again, primarily dogs and cats) in animal shelters is a significant ethical issue.

VVPs expressed awareness of the socio-cultural issue of unwanted animals and, resultantly, often attempted to deter people from purchasing animals from breeders and promoted adoption/rescue from animal shelters instead. For example, Gabrielle (VS) explained:

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⁴³ Although there are shelters in England and other countries that do have no kill policies (No Kill Network, 2021).
“Oh no, I’ve never promoted [breeders and pedigrees], no. Even with colleagues that would be saying I’m getting a dog, I’d be like, well, why don’t you rescue one, like, there is this charity, you can have a look”.

Gabrielle also promoted rescue and adoption over purchasing a pet from a breeder or pet store when speaking with clients:

“If an owner came to me and said, well, which breed do you recommend, I would just tell them go to a rescue centre and see. And just get a pet you get along with, rather than, or [a pet who] needs a home, rather than just getting another [specific] breed dog, yeah”.

Similarly, Paige (VS) said: “[P]eople will come in and say, can you recommend a breeder? No, absolutely not. I can recommend a good shelter”. As veterinarians, Gabrielle and Paige could be seen as utilising their Aesculapian authority in this situation to subvert the practice of clients purchasing juvenile animals of specific breeds over those from shelters.

RVNs also disliked breeding because of the surplus of unwanted animals. For instance, Lucie (RVN) said: “I don’t really like it [breeding] at all. The whole puppy thing upsets me a bit … I find sometimes, puppies just like represent to me, you know, a dog that’s not got a home in a shelter and things”. Also Ruth (RVN), who stated, “I just don’t agree with breeding. I think we’ve got enough pups in the world. We certainly don’t need to be breeding pedigree dogs and people selling them…”. A third example is Natasha (RVN):

“I just don’t agree with breeding. I just think there are so many animals that need homes. There’s so many dogs that need [homes], so many cats that need homes, and I worked at a rescue centre with them and it’s just really taxing to see the same cats there every week that just needed homes and they were lovely but, you know, there’s just not enough people wanting to rescue and everyone wants a cute little puppy and it just makes me sad. It’s just a general attitude of people or society towards animals, sometimes”.

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Natasha considers poor attitudes as the reason for unwanted animals and she suggests that wanton desire for a cute juvenile animal supersedes what she views as the more ethical or appropriate action: rescue or adoption of an animal otherwise overlooked because they are not as aesthetically appealing or are older. Paige (VS) similarly linked the issue of unwanted animals to poor socio-cultural attitudes:

“If it's just a pet cat that's gonna sit there and you want a specific cat with a funny colour tail or specific coat or a flat face or whatever, get over yourself, no. Go get a rescue. Don't go to a breeder. Don't inflict your selfish wants on something else”.

Paige criticised animals being used as status symbols, as did Ruth (RVN):

“You should have a rescue dog, you know. And there's so many getting put to sleep\textsuperscript{44} when you could give them a good home rather than buy a pedigree. But it's just a bit of snobbery, really, I think, isn't it?”.

Sanders (1999) explains how the keeping of ‘companion animals’ in western culture has been historically linked to social privilege and remains connected to social identity with people choosing to keep animals who represent or embody certain characteristics, like sportiness, power and aggression, or gentleness, and VVPs’ comments reflect this. Keeping animals with certain characteristics/traits or owing to their socio-cultural connotations or symbolism is often viewed negatively because aesthetic motivations deny a home to an animal who does not possess such characteristics but who needs adoption, and may be killed if not found a home. Some countries do not kill healthy adoptable animals in shelters (Talamonti et al., 2018), and in German-speaking countries, ‘convenience euthanasia’ (killing animals for humans’ convenience) is legally prohibited (Persson et al., 2020) but in many countries, including England, healthy animals can be (and are) ‘humanely killed’ by veterinarians (RCVS, 2021b: section 8), although some shelters in

\textsuperscript{44}‘Put to sleep’ is a euphemism for the killing of nonhuman animals (Franklin, 2020).
England and other countries do have ‘no kill’ policies (No Kill Network, 2021), as may individual veterinary practices.

Since humans breed dependent animals into being to provide humans with companionship, Palmer (2006: 181) argues we have acquired ethical responsibilities for them; owing to this, she writes: “It is questionable whether painless killing is an appropriate way of discharging responsibilities to unwanted but dependent animals humans have themselves created”. No kill policies, or veterinary practices permitting staff to be exempt from performing or assisting with ‘convenience euthanasia’ (see section on euthanasia), might be viewed positively, but such policies do little to address the root of the problem, which is humans’ perpetuation of an ongoing supply of purposely bred animals leading to the serious social and ethical issue of unwanted animals. Thus, Palmer (2006) argues, it is culture that needs addressing (or rather redressing), or more specifically, humans’ relational attitudes towards ‘companion animals’ that stem from instrumentalism and practices of domination.

**Selective breeding**

A common feature of breeding pet dogs and cats is selective breeding; that is, the deliberate selection of individuals who possess specific genetic traits being bred together, which produces ‘purebred pedigrees’ and in the case of dogs, ‘designer crossbreeds’. Hence, the breeding of animal companions often involves significant human intervention since humans control animals’ access to other animals, take advantage of animals’ reproductive capacity and genetically manipulate animals to produce more animals with specific (desirable) traits. Thus, we might see selective breeding as constituting eugenics, indeed, during the first

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45 For some, no kill shelters can be seen as problematic since they may do little to discourage ‘petkeeping’ generally and they participate in the biopolitics of performing invasive procedures on animals’ bodies to make them more suitable companions; furthermore, by not killing animals, they commit to keeping unadopted/unwanted animals in long-term or lifetime confinement, enduring what many would consider a suboptimal quality of life (Calarco, 2020).

46 There is a major trend in producing designer (hybrid) crossbreeds like cockapoos, huskitas, puggles etc. These are not ‘purebred pedigrees’ but they are being produced in huge numbers by commercial breeders.
decade of the 20th century, ideas from agricultural selective breeding explicitly informed the human eugenics movement (Twine, 2010a).

Several participants criticised selective breeding. For example, Fleur (RVN), said:

“[T]he way that it's currently at with people breeding these particular types of dogs and cats, it is horrific and we see some horrible cases. So, I personally advocate for everyone to go to adoption centres to rescue animals. I don’t advocate breeding”.

Fleur’s reference to the ‘horrific’ aspects of selective breeding and the ‘horrible cases’ relates to the selective breeding of certain ‘purebred pedigrees’ who have “welfare-affecting features” (Palmer, 2012: 161) as a result of being bred to exhibit specific traits (i.e. size, colour, shape, appearance). They may acquire congenital defects or suffer health problems as a result of the genetic selection. Consider brachycephaly, or being flat faced, a common desired trait for many dog and cat breeds such as Persians, Himalayans and British Shorthair, Boxers, Bulldogs and Pugs. These breeds are all characterised by brachycephaly, which is associated with various, serious health issues (from eye infections to breathing issues). Brachycephaly is so concerning that the BVA has issued a policy statement about brachycephalic dogs, which aims to improve breeding standards and promote education on the negative consequences of selective breeding to produce animals with flattened faces (BVA, 2018).

Rowan (VS), while happy to support ‘responsible breeding’ (albeit questioning what that might mean), criticised selective breeding for the suffering it causes animals:

“I’d be very happy to wipe five breeds off the face of the planet tomorrow if I had the power, and Shar Pei would be the first one to go.

47 For example, Chihuahuas are bred to be exceptionally small, Great Danes to be particularly large, Sphinx are bred to be hairless, Persians to be extremely hirsute, Dalmatians are bred to be spotty in colour, Scottish Folds to have folded ears, and so forth.
Not because they’re horrible but just because it’s a constant existence of suffering and if they don’t exist, they’re not suffering”.

In terms of canine breed standards, The Kennel Club (2021: no page) in the UK describes the ‘ideal’ Shar Pei as possessing traits such as loose skin, a frowning expression, an extremely harsh and bristly coat, and very small thick ears, and the risk of these traits being taken to the extreme are emphasised and discouraged. Meanwhile, the American Kennel Club (2021: no page), who promote what are arguably some of the most extreme breed standards, describe the Shar Pei dog breed as:

... an amalgam of odd physical traits: a broad “hippopotamus” muzzle; a blue-black tongue; small, sunken eyes with a scowling expression; tiny triangular ears; abundant folds of loose skin about the head, neck, and shoulders; the tapered high-set tail—all blanketed by a harsh, sandpapery coat.

Consequent to being bred to exhibit these physical traits, even when not done to excess, Shar Pei often suffer manifold health problems involving skin, ears, eyes and breathing issues (because of brachycephaly) (PDSA, 2021).

Although the BVA warns of the consequences of brachycephaly, selective breeding in general does not receive widespread or harsh condemnation within the veterinary profession. Indeed, Aaron (VS) noted that it is sometimes veterinary professionals themselves who breed such animals:

“When I see vets receive accolades or self-promote about their skills in breeding more deformed dogs, or dogs that we don’t need in the world or whatever, and I’m like, how could you possibly ever think that that is animal rights and wellbeing?”

Aaron alludes to the veterinarians’ duty and solemn promise here to constantly endeavour to ensure the health and welfare of animals committed to their care, as reflected in the veterinary oath. For him, it seems incongruent to express a
commitment to ensuring animals’ health and wellbeing while breeding animals who suffer discomfort and pain as a result of being selectively bred.

Lucie (RVN) also commented about veterinary professionals breeding animals: “[T]here’s a person that works with us who breeds [pedigree cat breed] and I’m still polite and everything like that, but I’m, yeah, I don’t agree with it because she breeds [pedigree cat breed]”. Lucie’s comment suggests that there may be implications for interpersonal relationships within the veterinary profession between those whose opinions differ on matters related to breeding. By remaining ‘polite’, she moderates her behaviour as a strategy to maintain professional relationships, despite feeling challenged by her colleague’s participation in selective breeding. Clinton (VC) also touched upon the potential for tension arising from differences of opinions on topics like breeding:

“The ethics with this work, you sometimes, you come across people who are very negative or have their own views already set and sometimes farmers or even pet breeders, we don’t see things eye to eye. So yeah, obviously something that you deal with almost on a daily basis. You don’t have to look for it, it just happens, and when it does happen, you just need to decide when to step in, interfere, or choose your battles really”.

Additional to tension among colleagues, Clinton mentions the potential for conflict with certain clients stemming from differing perspectives.

Pets for profit

Several VVPs felt challenged by the commodification of nonhuman animals and breeders’ views of animals as means to profit. Ruth (RVN) saw greed as underlying the breeding of ‘designer crossbreeds’ – whereby two individuals of different purebred pedigrees reproduce: “[Breeding] crossbreeds and calling them ‘Jackadoos’ and all that sort of thing, I mean, it's just another way of making a load
more money out of people, isn't it?”. Clinton (VS) also commented on the use of animals for profit:

“I am against breeding domesticated animals. When treating animals that belong to breeders, I would still do my best to look after the animal but probably will not share the enthusiasm with these customers when all their drive is to make money”.

Notably, Clinton suggests that his negative opinion of breeders who use animals to profit influences how he relates to them.

Also mentioning animal commodification for profit, Gabrielle (VS) explained:

“You get in some practices, breeders coming over and it’s just very challenging because they don’t see the pets as pets; it’s just a number. It’s kitten number one, kitten number two, kitten number three and that’s all they are, a number, to get some money”.

It was also mentioned how selective breeding often requires veterinarians to perform invasive procedures and conduct surgical intervention and, in terms of the former, Rowan (VS) commented on how some dogs kept for breeding are repeatedly artificially inseminated, about which, he said it “doesn’t go down well, [and is] usually quite resented [by the dog/s], understandably”.

Aisha (VS) said that she struggled working with breeders who keep “trying to push [for] caesareans”. She explained that breeders and veterinarians may often disagree about the need to perform caesarean section surgeries on dogs. Camille (RVN) also mentioned struggling with breeders’ (ab)use of caesareans:

“Seeing the same dogs over and over again pregnant. Seeing dogs under c-section [caesarean] and they nearly die but then [the breeder will] refuse to take out the uterus and have them spayed [sterilised] at the same time because they still wanna breed from them”.
Aisha (VS) acknowledged that tension arising from working with breeders also affects her non-vegan colleagues, and Rebecca (VS) echoed this sentiment:

“I wish 99.9 percent of breeding would stop because there’s a lot of dogs out there who already have been bred into existence, and haven’t been looked after so I do disagree with it, but, yeah, more from a vegan perspective than others. But lots of vets still actually feel that way, to be fair. Lots of vets do not like breeding because they see it done very poorly”.

Several VVPs mentioned disposability as another issue related to breeding for profit. As legal ‘property’ and thus ‘possessions’, nonhuman animals can be discarded with relative ease in many western countries. Thus, another feature of humans’ power over other animals who are legally owned and used as commodities is the prerogative to relinquish or request the killing of an animal. Camille (RVN) explained:

“We’ve got quite a few breeders on our books and I just hate the way that it’s all about money. So if there’s one [puppy], it’s probably gonna need a bit of care or something like that, they’ll probably opt to have it put to sleep if it’s got a cleft palate or something wrong with it, like half a foot or half a leg, they won’t continue with it. So I’ve got a lot of issues with that”.

Similarly, Siobhan (RVN) said:

“I don’t agree with breeding at all … We’ve had breeders in who have put animals to sleep because they got pyos [pyometra/infected uterus] and it is completely curable and because they can’t make them a profit anymore, they put them to sleep, and there’s nothing else wrong with this healthy animal, which is really annoying”.

A final example is Lucie (RVN):
“With puppy farms and everything, it kinda obviously gets into the bigger thing, like more of a capitalist society, it’s like, you know, animals being seen as objects; I want a dog, I want a dog, I want this dog, I don’t want that dog, whereas abandoned animals in rescues are put aside because they’re not part of what people want. I think breeding animals, especially dogs and cats, it’s just feeding that idea that they’re kinda disposable, and I get uncomfortable with that”.

Lucie implicates capitalism in forging animals as disposable, an inherently anthropocentric economic system (Ruuska, Heikkurinen and Wilén, 2020) involving the production and exchange of ‘property’ as commodities, including living bodies (Wadiwel, 2015). Capitalism has been critiqued for exploiting (many) humans and (most) other animals (Painter, 2016) and under capitalism, the property status of animals (like those bred for companionship) means they can be owned and traded like objects for profit and discarded with relative ease. As a result of the commodification of animals bred as humans’ companions, UK rescue shelters often operate at full capacity and can provide temporary (and sometimes rather long-term) housing for an estimated hundred thousand plus stray animals in the UK annually, mostly dogs and cats (Clark, Gruffydd-Jones and Murray, 2012; Stavinsky et al., 2012). Dogs Trust’s 2020 annual survey of stray dogs handed into local authorities in the UK reported that while 59% of stray dogs were displaced and returned to their homes and human carers, the remainder required rehoming and 2% (approx. 1165) of dogs were killed (Dogs Trust, 2021). UK charity Cats Protection state that they provide sanctuary and care for many thousands of stray cats at any time and rehomed 41,000 previously unwanted cats in 2019 (Cats Protection, 2021). These statistics exemplify the consequences of nonhuman animals being bred for human consumption as companions.

**Working with breeders**

Several VVPs’ reported experiencing – or anticipated – discomfort working with breeders in small animal veterinary practice. For example, Fleur (RVN) said, “I think of some of the things they [breeders] advocate and do in terms of the breeds...
that they are breeding and, yeah, I wouldn't feel comfortable working alongside breeders”. Gabrielle (VS) explained, “I don’t agree with breeders to be honest … it’s actually a challenge talking to breeders because … I mean, I guess it’s something I have to do and I can’t really tell them, well, they shouldn’t be breeding (laughs)”. Gabrielle’s need to work with breeders is an aspect of her role over which she feels she has little control and she implies that the need to remain professional means that she cannot express how she feels about breeding in the veterinary setting.

Gabrielle’s comment resonates with the required traits of professionals outlined in Chapter Two: Context and literature. Among the behaviours that Swick (2000) identified as essential to enacting ‘professionalism’ was the physicians’ requirement to subordinate their own interests in performing their professional role to meet the needs of those they serve. In the case of medical doctors, however, their patients are human beings. With veterinarians, their patients are nonhuman animals but their clients are human beings. Veterinary practice involves a triadic (physician/client/patient) rather than a dual (physician/patient) relationship. Gabrielle’s interest in advocating for animals by speaking out against breeding is subordinated to her belief that to do so would be unprofessional. Gabrielle, like several other VVPs when interviewed, seemed to view professionalism – in some contexts at least – as requiring them to place their human clients’ interests (not feeling criticised or challenged) above their own interests (expressing their sincerely held beliefs) in discouraging breeding, and above the interests of their patients who suffer the various consequences of being selectively bred for human profit.

While resignation and professionalism are strategies that VVPs use when working with breeders, there emerged other strategies. Consider Paige (VS), who discouraged breeding by not financially incentivising breeders:

“Breeders don’t get discount from me. I’ve got ten puppies to vaccinate. Good, I’m glad you’re vaccinating them. Can I get ten percent discount? Nope. Not from me. You might get that from another vet. No, I’m not gonna support you in that way”.
Breeders are often regular clients who present animals to veterinary practices in larger numbers (i.e. litters of puppies or kittens). They generate revenue as customers requiring many services (vaccination, microchipping, neutering, parasite control, pet food) and can be conduits for the future custom of those who purchase juvenile animals and may become long-term clients. Thus, bulk veterinary services for breeders are often discounted. Breeding is a business and so breeders are often cost-conscious so as to maximise profit, thus, veterinary practices offer discounts as an incentive to appeal to and retain the breeders’ custom and to expand their future and ongoing client base.

While disincentivising breeders by not offering discount, Paige, like Gabrielle, mentioned the importance of professionalism. Professionalism is of utmost importance to the veterinary profession, reflected in the RCVS’ CPCs. Paige (VS) explained:

“Would I give them [breeders] a discount for a caesarean? No, you’re a breeder. It was your choice to make use of those animals for your profit. You could have done another job … They don’t have to make money from breeding animals. Ah, how openly will I say that? Mmm, there’s where it gets difficult because you don’t want to get a reputation for antagonising or pushing away clients. So as a vegan, I’ll just maybe actively choose when I see that client on the day or push them across to a different vet”.

Several participants felt that to express how they feel about breeding while at work would compromise their professionalism. The RCVS’ CPC expects veterinarians to consider clients’ needs and requirements and Paige’s comment emphasises the anthropocentric nature of veterinary medicine and the importance of human clients to veterinary practice, as service users and fee payers. As a business, the veterinary industry, like all capitalistic enterprise, aims to generate profit and to achieve this, practices must attract and retain fee-paying customers. Thus, as Paige indicates, openly criticising a client's actions may jeopardise a business’ capacity to attract and retain clients and tarnish one’s professional reputation.
Veterinary professionals being critical of or antagonistic towards clients, including breeders, or refusing services to certain clientele could be viewed as problematic considering the RCVS’ CPC’s decree that clients be treated respectfully and with courtesy (RCVS, 2021b: section 2). Hence, Paige avoids having to choose between compromising her beliefs (that breeding is unethical) and professionalism by strategically avoiding clients who are breeders and deferring tasks involving breeders to her colleagues.

Importantly, as Rebecca (VS) acknowledged, breeding is not always conducted with utter disregard for the wellbeing of the animals being bred and bred from. While in general, she thought breeding was “pretty rubbish” saying “I dislike it intensely because a lot of people don’t, I say do it well, implying there is a well way to do it, but they certainly don’t do it with the animals’ interests at heart”, Rebecca acknowledged the dedication and passion of some breeders. She further distinguished between two types of breeders: those who breed for passion and those who breed for profit, and she indicated a preference for the former over the latter.

**Tensions between personal, practice and profession values**

VVPs’ frustration with pet breeding – whether owing to welfare issues or surplus unwanted animals – often goes unexpressed because it is difficult and disadvantageous to deter breeders and openly condemn the practice of pet breeding because breeders and those who purchase animals from breeders are a source of revenue. Thus, advocating for animals by criticising pet breeders and breeding becomes complex. There may even be consequences of speaking out, such as being seen as unprofessional, as Paige’s earlier comment suggested.

Veterinary practices and those who work in them are surely diverse in their perspectives on breeding; some may explicitly or implicitly recommend purchasing pedigree animals from breeders or they may explicitly or implicitly promote rescue or adoption. Since many VVPs indicated a preference for promoting adoption/rescue over purchasing pets from breeders and pet stores, some were
asked if they felt able to promote pet rescue in their practice and if their practice supported them in doing so. Several felt that they could not openly criticise or condemn breeding or breeders but could encourage clients to consider adopting and not shopping for a pet and they said that their colleagues and employers supported this too.

Some veterinary professionals are likely more openly critical of selective breeding, despite seeming unprofessional. They may speak out and advocate for animals used in and produced by breeding and risk offending or alienating their clientele in the process. Despite the risks, Jeremy (VS) saw condemnation of selective breeding by some within the profession as a positive thing:

“[W]ell interestingly, the whole brachycephalic dog situation is being, the profile of that has been really raised and some veterinary practices are raising their head above the parapet and saying we are not supporting the breeding of brachycephalic dogs going forth, which is really good. We’re not gonna provide any pre-breeding support, progesterone assays to work out the best time for mating. That’s brilliant”.

On the other hand, Camille (RVN) was critical of the veterinary practice where she worked saying that they encourage people purchasing from breeders by offering rewards and incentives to clients presenting puppies and kittens rather than to clients who adopt or rescue an animal companion, and she felt that her practice could do more to discourage breeding by promoting rescue and adoption:

“[The practice] do a lot of puppy packages and kitten packages and things like that. I don’t think they do enough for … I think they can promote – they should be able to do new rescue health checks or something like that. I think they can do that a bit more. We do try and say if people are looking for a dog or stuff like that, then we can say we’ll keep an ear and eye out in case anyone is rehoming or cats and things like that, but I think a lot of it is geared towards puppies and kittens, which tend to be from breeders”.

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More broadly, Hayley (VS) thought that the veterinary profession could do more to discourage the practice of pet breeding, rather than profit from it:

“Another big thing is trying to really put a stop to the breeding of companion animals. So, that’s something that I think should really be talked about more. There is this big movement about the brachycephalic dogs, which was great, but that’s just a few, very few breeds, and so we should definitely be recommending adoption more and try and discourage breeding rather than being the go-to of the breeders”.

The BVA and RCVS recognise aspects of pet breeding as unethical. The BVA are not neutral on the topic of selective breeding where it produces welfare-affecting features and they have launched a ‘Breed to Breathe’ campaign (BVA, 2021b). In addition to the issue of breeding brachycephalic dogs, they have policies explicating their position on extreme conformation, puppy farming, and tail docking in dogs (BVA, 2021c). The RCVS (2021b) CPC for Veterinary Surgeons provides guidance on questionable practices associated with breeding such as tail docking, dew claw removal, and canine surgical artificial insemination. Yet, neither the BVA or RCVS goes beyond addressing specific, high-profile concerns about breeding practices and they do not problematise the breeding of animals as companions in and of itself. Neither organisation questions the veterinary profession’s enmeshment with the AIC and commercial animal breeding in general. The benefits that the veterinary profession obtains from the ongoing supply of animals bred for companionship is underexamined, as is the tension between veterinary practice’s economic objectives, as a business, and the veterinary professional’s role as arbiter of animal welfare, health and wellbeing. Perhaps most evident in VVPs’ narratives about breeding is their discomfort as members of a profession that over-all supports pet breeding when done ‘ethically’, and their belief that nonhuman animals should not be bred selectively or excessively for human use.
The use and promotion of pharmaceuticals

In addition to breeding animals as companions, humans also breed animals to conduct medical experimentation on them, which is yet another facet of the AIC that invokes Foucauldian conceptualisations of power. Birke (2012: 170) writes, “Constructing lab animals – both literally and discursively as fundamentally necessary to the pursuit of medical knowledge – is an important facet of disciplinary power, part of wider systems of medical/scientific surveillance”. The animal bred for use in laboratories for testing and experimentation is most often “purpose-bred, standardized through selection for specific traits to become something which can generate useful data. Its very being is thus highly controlled” (Birke, 2012: 162 original italics). In Great Britain in 2020, 2.88 million procedures were carried out involving living animals of which approximately half were experimental procedures and half involved the creation and breeding of genetically altered animals; experimental procedures are undertaken for various reasons, including safety testing of pharmaceuticals and other substances (Home Office, 2020). It is difficult to know how many animals are used for experimental purposes worldwide but it has been estimated to exceed 100 million per year (Knight, 2011; Calarco, 2020). Thus, as Birke (2012: 156-7) observes: “western scientific medicine involves practices, knowledges and treatments based on experimental procedures carried out on other animals. The edifice of what we call scientific, medical, knowledge is built upon animal corpses”.

Anthropocentric and speciesist justifications have long been used to legitimise and normalise the use of nonhuman animals’ bodies on a vast scale to advance scientific and medical knowledge (Birke, 2012). Albeit with some regulation today (see Legislation UK, 2021b), the testing of products on nonhuman animals has long been central to pharmaceutical production and biomedical research. However, since at least the nineteenth century, there has been opposition to this particular use of animals (Finn and Stark, 2015), owing to factors such as ethical concerns for the animals themselves and or doubts about the efficacy of animal

48 Of course, humans and their bodies have also been used in various ways (and not always ethically) to advance science and medical knowledge too.
testing as a scientific method. In 1959, the 3Rs initiative was introduced, advancing three ways to make animal experimentation ‘more humane’ through replacement, reduction and refinement (Russell and Burch, 1959). In recent times, the 3Rs have been implemented as key principles in scientific research involving animal testing (NC3Rs, 2020). Replacement aims to use methods to test drugs without the use of animals; reduction aims to minimise animal use in experiments; and refinement aims to minimise suffering and improve animal welfare when they are used in experiments. While the 3Rs appears to be a positive initiative, particularly in regard to replacing animals in experiments, animal advocates may see the initiative as doing little or not enough to challenge the embedded socio-cultural belief that nonhuman animals exist for humans to use (Calarco, 2020). The Laboratory Animal Veterinary Association (LAVA), a specialist division of the BVA, states that they fully support the principles of the 3Rs within animal research (LAVA, 2016).

Many pharmaceutical products used and prescribed in veterinary practice are medications developed for humans (i.e. Diazepam, Metronidazole, Tramadol). Others are developed for use in nonhuman animals (i.e. Carprofen, Ivermectin, Baytril). Medicinal products made for humans but used in veterinary practice tend to be made using nonhuman animals as ingredients and are tested for efficacy and safety on live nonhuman animals kept in laboratories. Notable among the tests conducted to test pharmaceuticals is the LD50⁴⁹ test, “a statistical estimate of the number of mg of a given substance per kg [kilogram] of bodyweight required to kill 50 per cent of a large population of test animals” (Boden and Andrews, 2019: 514). Knowing that animals’ bodies are used and that animals die in the production of pharmaceuticals used and prescribed in veterinary practice emerged as challenging for many VVPs.

Although animal testing to produce pharmaceuticals was raised as an issue for most participants, their views about the topic varied. Several VVPs felt that animal testing was a ‘necessary evil’. For example, when asked how she felt about the use of animal testing to produce pharmaceuticals, Siobhan (RVN) replied:

⁴⁹ LD = lethal dose
“What can you do? Necessary evil at the moment but I would totally support a company who was trying to think of alternatives based on scientific research, you know. I do get frustrated… But if there was any scientific research from companies that didn’t test on animals that would be great”.

Another example is Rebecca (VS), who explained:

“I think it's a necessary evil to be fair. You're not going to know unless you test it if it's [a drug] working or not. And I think, correct me if I'm wrong, but I think in this country that's one of the stages that they have to go through by law. So, they can't produce a drug without testing it”.

Viewing animal testing as a ‘necessary evil’ reflects wider public views in the UK, whereby a majority of people feel they “can accept the use of animals in research as long as it is for medical purposes and there is no alternative” (Clemence and Leaman, 2016: 4). Neither Siobhan nor Rebecca expresses approval of animal testing and there is a sense of regret that animal testing is seen as unavoidable and necessary at this time. Resignation is a strategy that VVPs use to negotiate discomfort around knowing veterinary pharmaceuticals are tested on and made from and with animals’ bodies.

3Rs: Replacement, reduction and refinement

Participants’ views on animal testing tended to align with one or more of the 3Rs principle, although Jeremy (VS) was the only participant to mention the 3Rs specifically:

“Sadly it's [animal testing] been a mainstay both for testing for human products and stuff … so initiatives like that [3Rs] are really good and so I’m all for that kinda thing. But I think for some time to come, there’ll still
be – and if for no other reason that within legislation – it’s kinda like, you know, where it has to be done”.

Many VVPs felt that animal testing should stop and be replaced with alternative methods. They saw animal testing as unnecessary and or inefficient. For example, Rowan (VS) said: “I’m against it [animal testing]. I used to see it as a necessary evil. Now I think why not test it [drugs] on the species that it’s designed for [i.e. humans]”. Indeed, as Birke (2012) points out, to use nonhuman animals in laboratory research – such as rats, commonly used but not ideal models for some human traits – humans must genetically manipulate animals to make them more generalisable, better fitting ‘scientific models’.

When asked how she felt about animal testing to produce pharmaceuticals, Ruth (RVN) replied:

“Well, not happy. I mean, I don't really think it's proven that it’s necessary. I just don't think it should be happening… I know people say it's necessary to [test on animals] for us to have medication, but I really don't think it is. I just think it should all be stopped on that side of things”.

Camille (RVN) said: “[T]here’s lots of research about the inefficiency of testing things on animals, so I think such a way would be to move off generally, and I'd like to move off, and I’d like to have it not happen”. Rowan (VS) similarly saw animal testing as a scientific method as flawed:

“I took evidence-based medicine and then an animal welfare and ethics elective in school, so a lot of it was based around lab animals; how they’re cared for, what they’re used for, why they’re used. It seems to me very little of that information actually translates into useful information … [I]t seems to me that the vast majority of animal testing doesn’t yield useful information. It’s a great waste of life…”. 

Some VVPs seemed bothered by animal testing because they considered it to be ineffective. For example, Clinton (VS) said:

“We prescribe medicines which are tested on animals, so it’s always, always something challenging … all the information suggests that animal testing is not a very successful thing and most research and the dissections are not very successful and fail, and millions of animals have to pay for this every year. Yeah, so I wish I had alternatives when I prescribe medicine but at the moment this is what we have. If I have an alternative, I always prefer it, but at the moment there aren’t many”.

Clinton elaborated as to why he felt animal testing as a scientific method should be replaced:

“Most drugs trials tested on animals fail. Vivisection is not a good model to test drugs. Animals have different body systems and different metabolism when comparing to humans. The environment animals are kept in, laboratories, and how their body reacts to captivity conditions and stress affect the results and can never imitate normal life. Some animal trials are unnecessary and even sadistic … and are still performed even though the results are obvious and any person with common sense or a child would predict the results. However, they still have to be done for more accurate statistics etcetera. All animals – even those that participated in placebo groups – are euthanised and usually not used more than once or twice”.

The conditions of laboratories do indeed impact on the knowledge gained from animal experimentation (Sherwin, 2004) and animals tend either to be killed for the purposes of conducting experimentation (i.e. tissue culture), die as a result of procedures done to them, or they are killed (‘culled’) as ‘surplus’ after being experimented on (Birke, 2012). Notably, VVPs spoke about animal testing to produce pharmaceuticals for use in humans and other animals without really making distinctions, indicating that where they felt animal testing should be stopped, this meant stopped entirely.
While some participants thought animal testing should be stopped and replaced, others aligned more with the principle of refinement. For example, Rebecca (VS), who said:

“There’s half of me that thinks, I don’t think it would be possible [to stop animal testing]. As much as I would love everyone in the world to be vegan, in the veterinary profession you’re going to have to test on animals to get new drugs and new products. So, you know, that’s out straight away. So, it would be quite difficult, I think, pharmaceutical wise. It would be very difficult. I think they would always have to test on animals. I mean, I know that they could potentially test on animals, for example, if it was a new heart medication they could pick animals with heart conditions and test it on that and things like that and, you know, not use healthy animals”.

Paige (VS) felt the goal should be reduction:

“The animal testing, I get it has to be done but, really, does it have to be done to such an extent? And I think as vegans we tend to educate ourselves so little bits in the [drug promotion] brochure that are skimmed over, the LD50 etcetera, you’ll pick up on that and go, so how much of this was done? How much is necessary? Really? You know, so some things, yeah, absolutely, pesticides, you’re gonna want to know what a potentially toxic or lethal dose is but when you’re talking about shampoos and things like this, come on, really?”

Natasha (RVN) mentioned both reducing and refining animal testing:

“I think it’s a bit much to expect anyone in the veterinary world or the human medicine world to just think, oh, we’re just not gonna use animals; we’re gonna think about is it right to do that or not. I think that’s unrealistic. I don’t think that’s gonna happen any time soon so anything that can get them even just improving animal welfare and reducing the
amount of animal tests they do and things like that. Even just looking at those things would be good, I think, in the veterinary medicine world”.

A further 3Rs: Rationalisation, resignation and regret

Birke (2012) explains that for society to accept invasive practices being done on nonhuman animals in laboratories, the belief that these animals are being ‘sacrificed for the greater good’ is necessary, as is a belief that their ‘sacrifice’ will provide a significant (thus justified) advancement of medical knowledge. This reflects a utilitarian rationale, which several VVPs adopted in regard to animal testing. For example, Camille (RVN), when asked about challenging aspects of her professional role, said, “Medication tested on animals but that’s unavoidable and it’s for the greater good to help the animals [veterinary patients]”. Similarly Paige (VS) said:

“[Veterinary] products are tested on animals. Yeah, pretty much everything. You can’t get around that until we start and get replacement within animal testing. I think there’s far too much of it goes on, and then you get in that grey area in the middle of, well, if ten animals, a hundred animals die but you can save millions, mmm, I’m still a bit unsure on that argument…”.

A final example is Jeremy (VS):

“I know that they’ve [pharmaceuticals] been tested on animals and maybe the lives of a hundred animals were lost in testing this product. Well if it saves a thousand lives, well, on balance, it’s doing more good than harm”.

VVPs also spoke about the need to prioritise their patient:

50 Of course, public opinion and concerns for animals may vary according to the species being used, as Birke, points out, concern may be less for animal classified as ‘vermin’ such as rats and mice. Vegans, however, may be less inclined to see this label as a justification for lessening moral concern for members of these animals.
“If you have a cancer [patient] or something like that and you need to do something, then you need to do something, and yeah, if it [medication] is tested in animals, it’s not ideal but the option is either that or letting a patient die because you don’t want to use something that was tested in animals” (Gabrielle, VS).

Prioritising one’s patient is a strategy that VVPs often use (see Chapter Five: Consumption) when trying to reconcile aspects of their professional role with their vegan ethics:

“I guess that's one of the biggest challenges for me is like promoting all these products that have been tested on animals. Obviously, the patients need it so that they don't get these horrendous fleas and worms and diseases but it does make me feel uncomfortable and I wish there was kind of an alternative that wasn't tested on animals, but I guess that's not in the marketplaces of yet” (Siobhan, RVN).

“I wouldn't want any animal [patient] to suffer so if they need medication, they need medication, that's it. It's just in an ideal world it wouldn't be hurting any animals but we're not in an ideal world (laughs). So I have to live with it” (Natasha, RVN).

Alongside prioritising their patient, these comments reflect a sense of resignation in regard to VVPs’ inability to reconcile this aspect of their veterinary role and their vegan values. Many VVPs were able to rationalise their use of pharmaceuticals in veterinary practice, such as Bridget (VS), who implied the need for professionalism when she said, “Medicines are probably tested in animals. I can't be 100% vegan at work. I still need to do normal conventional medicine. So I'm not worried about that route”. Frequently, however, resignation and regret imbued VVPs’ comments about a lack of alternatives:

“I guess it’s not so hard because my patients are animals and they, many times, have to eat these things, and there aren’t any alternatives
so it’s not that hard because there aren’t alternatives, you know, but
sometimes I do feel like, you know, I’m killing something else to save
something or other” (Aisha, VS).

When studying vegan identity and authenticity, Greenebaum (2012a: 141) found
that vegans’ feelings of guilt are reduced when there is no perceived alternative to
“violating the vegan ethos”; in regard to pharmaceuticals, rather than feeling guilt,
participants in her study focussed instead on “public education, legislation, finding
alternatives, and the three R’s: replace, reduce, and refine”, which was a strategy
also observed in discussions in VVPs.

Tensions between personal, practice and profession values

For many participants, the issue of animal testing to produce pharmaceuticals
presented a quandary for them as vegans who themselves keep animals as
companions. For example, Josie (RVN) explained:

“Oh, that’s such a difficult one, isn’t it? ... I am so very against the
testing on animals because I don’t like how they’re [animals] kept and I
don’t like the pharmaceutical companies for what they do, and I look at
my companion animals and I look at the drugs that I use with them and I
think, if I didn’t have that drug would this companion animal die, but how
many other companion animals have died to get to this point? And I
have a real juxtaposition about it”.

Several participants mentioned supporting the Dr Hadwen Trust – now called
Animal Free Research UK – an organisation that promotes alternatives to animal
testing and states its aim is to replace the use of nonhuman animals in medical
research for ethical and efficacy reasons (Animal Free Research UK, 2020).
Camille (RVN) mentioned Dr Hadwen Trust: “So, I support the Doctor Hadwen
Trust that doesn’t test on animals and I’d like obviously that to be the main future
and that to be the main goal”. Also Laine (RVN), who said:
“I always tend to go for things like the Doctor Hadwen Trust and things if we're doing charity stuff because they do lots of non-animal testing and things like that … I'll be completely happy if there was a way [to stop animal testing] and there may well be because I just haven't looked into it to be fair. As I said, Doctor Hadwen Trust, they do all this testing without animals, so, I don't know if they've got limitations because of that. I'd have to look into it more. But if there is a way that we can avoid it, hell yeah, absolutely”.

Some VVPs were asked if they felt they had any control over the pharmaceuticals stocked in their practices and whether they could find or would be able to use alternative medications to those involving animal testing and ingredients. None felt able to influence this aspect of their role; although, some contemplated ways in which the veterinary profession more broadly could instigate change. For example Natasha (RVN):

“I think they [the profession] could be a bit more forward-thinking in their approach and their research and stuff and start looking at more ethical ways of doing things, especially like with animal testing. I don’t know. I think there’s only positive things that can come from it. Eventually, just challenge traditionally accepted views and values and just try and be a bit more forward thinking about how we are as a profession and how we obtain our knowledge as well, like, do we do it ethically or not, and how we can improve things”.

Michael (VS) saw advances in biotechnology as a potential avenue for the veterinary profession to lessen or cease its involvement with animal testing:

“I think we could certainly play a role in trying to stop, or at least severely limit the experimentation and – not necessarily vivisection, but the use of animals for research. I think it is appalling … Yeah, certainly it’s happening in humans now, with these organs on chips and things, which I can see coming into the veterinary field very soon, and that will be a very, very, very good way of avoiding animal testing".
Many VVPs consider the use of nonhuman animals as not essential to advancing medical/scientific knowledge and felt that the veterinary profession plays a role in broader discourses around animal testing. Knight (2008), a veterinarian and animal welfare specialist, argues that sufficient non-animal scientific methods currently exist such that animal testing could be replaced in biomedical research and toxicity testing. He writes: “Yet, such reliance on animal models persists for historical and cultural reasons, rather than because they have been demonstrated to be scientifically valid” (Knight, 2008: 226). Since animal testing is a legal requirement, it may appear as if the veterinary professional can do little to change the status quo. However, the veterinary profession, can and does, to some extent, play a role in whether and to what extent animals are used. For example, regarding veterinary training, the RVC declares that it “shares society’s desire to minimise the use of animal experimentation and increase the use of scientifically validated alternative methods that reduce, refine or replace the use of animal models”; and yet, they subsequently state: “Nevertheless, animal experimentation remains a necessary part of the scientific discovery process and development of new medicines for veterinary practice” (RVC, 2021). As discussed in Chapter One: Introduction, having a monopoly of knowledge and relationship with the state confers upon the veterinary profession certain privileges and a legitimacy that fosters their social status and respectability within society. Public trust in a profession endows that profession with a power that sees them able to establish and reinforce specific cultural values and norms. So the RCVS’, BVA’s and RVC’s positions on animal testing matters.

Under capitalism, a feature of the AIC is the inter-relations between the ways in which nonhuman animals are systematically and institutionally exploited in the pursuit of profit across a spectrum of industries. The overlapping nature of the AIC and the pharmaceutical-industrial complex (PIC) has been analysed. Twine (2012: 18) explains that nonhuman animals are used “as experimental subjects” in pharmaceutical production, and leading pharmaceutical production companies have “capital interests” in producing medications for both human and veterinary medicine sectors. The AIC and PIC view nonhuman animals’ bodies in two ways; in the first instance, as the means to produce pharmaceuticals and, secondly, as
the target market who will benefit from these pharmaceuticals. Thus, animals’ outcomes in life differ based on whether they attract the prefix moniker ‘laboratory’ or ‘companion’. In the case of the former, an animal (i.e. lab-rat) is used to produce the pharmaceutical and with the latter, the animal (i.e. pet rat) consumes the pharmaceutical. Highlighting how ascribed labels and socially constructed categorisations have real consequences for animals, Birke (2012: 159) explains: “Some species might be categorized as companions in one situation and vermin in another: thus, rats may at different times be pests, pets or paragons of biomedical research. Much depends on place and context”. The anthropocentric and speciesist nature of the use of animals within the AIC is evident to vegans, and this is reflected in discussions with VVPs about pharmaceuticals.

Euthanasia and the termination of healthy or helpable animals

Foucauldian conceptualisations of power encompass not only the production of lives through breeding nonhuman animals into existence, the regulation of domesticated nonhuman animal lives, but also the termination of nonhuman animal life. Humans kill other animals for innumerable reasons and call this killing various terms like ‘hunting’, ‘slaughter’, and ‘culling’ (The Animal Studies Group, 2006), and in the small animal veterinary setting, with regard to animals kept as companions, killing is termed ‘euthanasia’. When applied to nonhuman animals, euthanasia is defined as “a means of producing death free from ante-mortem fear or suffering” (Boden and Andrews, 2019: 299). The definition of euthanasia the RCVS provides is “painless killing to relieve suffering” and they state: “The primary purpose of euthanasia is to relieve suffering” (RCVS, 2021b: section 8). The BVA note there are many ways that euthanasia is defined and they provide two such definitions: “The act or practice of putting painlessly to death” and “The action of inducing a quiet and easy death” (BVA, 2016: 1). ‘Euthanasia’ is a powerful tool as it terminates life (Rollin, 2011), but it is also a tool of power because it permits the termination of life.

Euthanasia in small animal veterinary practice typically involves a barbiturate overdose and is considered a means to end suffering; yet not all killing of animals
in veterinary practice is performed to this end. For example, barbiturate overdose may be used to kill healthy unwanted animals or may be administered if ‘owners’ request their animal’s life be terminated, which in some cases involves healthy or helpable animals. Further, killing animals may be required by law should veterinary professionals come to be responsible for (healthy or helpable) individuals of certain ‘wildlife’ species given stigmatising and devaluing labels like ‘introduced’, ‘invasive’, ‘pests’, or ‘vermin’, and, if captured, cannot legally be released. Regan (2004) argues that euthanasia involves more than enacting a painless death, and requires the reason for killing to be a decision made for the individual’s own good and in their best interest. Hence, it should be an act of compassion to end or prevent current and further suffering. Thus, it is important to emphasise here that while the euthanasia of nonhuman animals always involves killing, their killing by humans does not always constitute euthanasia, even though it is widely called so.

Laws, regulations and procedures around euthanasia in veterinary practice vary between countries and how euthanasia is handled varies among individual veterinary practices and veterinary professionals (Persson, 2020). What is evident is that many veterinary professionals struggle with killing animals (Rollin, 2011). This is unsurprising since – as established in Chapter Two: Context and literature – being an ‘animal lover’ is a prime motivation for many veterinary professionals choosing animal medicine as a career. As Herzog, Vore and New (1989: 181) explain:

Students typically enter veterinary medicine because they love animals and want to care for them. But aspects of their professional education dictate that they inflict pain on animals and sometimes kill them.

This conflict arising in the veterinary training and education process persists throughout veterinary professionals’ career. The desire to help animals alongside the requirement to kill them, especially animals who are healthy, often gives rise to ethical conflict and moral stress; Rollin (2011: 651) writes:

… most veterinarians enter the field to treat disease, alleviate pain and suffering, and provide high-quality of life for the animals to whom they
minister. Yet historically, veterinarians, like humane society workers, have been called upon to kill unwanted animals for appalling reasons, what has been called convenience euthanasia.

In speaking with VVPs about aspects of their role that they find challenging, killing animals was frequently mentioned. Yet, performing euthanasia when it was being done to end suffering was acceptable to all but one participant. Michael (VS) found performing euthanasia difficult under all circumstances: “I do find it difficult euthanasing animals. I try and avoid it now as much as I can”. Otherwise, euthanasia being performed to end or prevent suffering was considered acceptable, evident in the following quotes:

“If that animal is suffering, I have no qualms about it at all. Absolutely not” (Laine, RVN).

“I'm quite comfortable with it [euthanasia], as long as the animals have some kind of welfare, it's OK” (Aisha, VS).

“I wouldn’t see a huge ethical problem in neutering a [pregnant] cat. These kittens will be unconscious and you'll stop these kittens coming into a world and potentially being homeless, neglected, and so I’m minimising suffering for animals by terminating the pregnancy. So I don’t have an issue with that” (Jeremy, VS),

In contrast, most VVPs struggled with performing or participating in the killing of healthy or helpable animals in small animal veterinary practice.

‘Convenience euthanasia’

Many VVPs found it so difficult to perform ‘convenience euthanasia’ (as veterinarians) or assist with it (as veterinary nurses) that they refused to partake in it. Refusing to partake in killing animals when performing one’s professional role because of sincerely held personal values or beliefs invokes the question of
Conscientious objection involves essentially an agent’s refusal to comply with an authoritative standard or rule that applies to him [or her] because doing so entails betraying one or more of his [or her] deepest commitments” (Kassner and Lefkowitz, 2012: 594). It matters not whether a person’s beliefs are deemed ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ in coming into conflict with law, policy or other authority, or what these beliefs comprise, but rather that the act one is refusing to perform would impede upon their autonomy, compromise their personal integrity, force the breaking of a personal commitment to uphold certain core values, and may lead to a person feeling as if they have committed self-betrayal (Kassner and Lefkowitz, 2012). For vegans, as mentioned in Chapter Two: Context and literature, the thought of acting in ways that violate their sincerely held ethical beliefs can cause significant psychological distress and to contemplate such violations becomes a moral impossibility. Since the Equality Act 2010 now applies to ethical veganism as a protected characteristic under UK discrimination law, it raises the question as to whether forcing VVPs to kill healthy or adoptable animals would contravene Equality Act protection.

The topic of conscientious objection or conscientious refusal has given rise to debates about a professional’s moral right to freedom of conscience and a person’s human right to refuse to perform acts they disagree with or find morally objectionable, and the expectation that professionals perform certain tasks related to their job (Dresser, 2005). Conscientious objection is also problematised in several ways. Firstly, the state licences and regulates – or is involved in the licencing and regulation – of professions and professionals; also, professionals have an obligation to provide services to the public and people seeking to procure professional services also have rights and interests (Kassner and Lefkowitz, 2012). Obligations to authoritative bodies (state, law, a profession’s regulators and governance, employers) can become a significant issue when a professional opts to conscientiously object.

The concept of conscientious objection is useful here because while it typically refers to a person seeking exemption from a legal requirement and a failure to comply with the law (i.e. military conscription), conscientious objection is applicable to professional codes of conduct and contractual employment
conditions, whereby employees are legally obliged to comply with requests in performing their role so long as any tasks asked of them are not illegal, unsafe or unreasonable. Numerous examples of conscientious objection arose when speaking with VVPs about killing animals. Consider Gabrielle (VS):

“People bringing you animals to be put to sleep … when they are in a pretty good condition and I’ve refused to do it a few times because it’s not my role to decide that. It’s one thing when they are old and they are dying and I think I’m doing the best for the animal, another thing is when I think I am doing the best for no one really, maybe for the owner because they don’t wanna bother so, yeah, in those cases, it’s a bit difficult”.

Further to being an example of conscientious objection and refusal, Gabrielle’s comment reflects the problematic triadic role of veterinary professionals that was discussed in Chapter Two: Context and literature. The need to balance her obligation to the nonhuman animal patient and the demands of human clients is challenging.

Another example of conscientious objection and refusal came from Ruth (RVN):

“If it was just an animal that was able and fit, there's no way I would assist with putting that to sleep and I've always made that clear anyway, ever since I've worked here. I mean it doesn't happen as often now, but we used to have a lady that’d bring greyhounds in that would – she didn't want to race them anymore because they're obviously passed their best, but she just wanted them putting to asleep, and I would just say, I'm having nothing to do with it”.

A final example is Josie, (RVN), who like Gabrielle and Ruth, had refused to partake in animal killing despite it being an aspect of the veterinary role: “[I]f it’s a euthanasia I do not agree with, I will say to my boss, I can’t help you with it. I’m really sorry".
Killing wildlife

Some VVPs mentioned the killing of healthy or helpable wildlife as a challenging aspect of their role. Responsibility for injured or orphaned wildlife in the UK is shared between the RSPCA, veterinary practices and wildlife rehabilitators/centres (RSPCA, 2021a). As such, employees of small animal veterinary practices often tend to and treat wildlife. Since the RCVS’ CPC requires veterinarians to treat all animals presented to them in need of care, this means that private veterinary practices frequently treat wildlife without receiving any payment.

Before discussing VVPs’ negative experiences with the killing of wildlife, it is important to note that several participants reported working in practices with positive approaches to helping wildlife. For example:

“We are quite good at the practice I work at, sending [wildlife] to wildlife centres, so if a bird is too young, actually we will say look, it's got a good chance, let's send it to a wildlife centre. So thankfully we don't outright euthanase everything” (Fleur, RVN).

“We get birds in but we would only put them to sleep if they couldn't survive and we know quite a lot of local wildlife places and one of us will go and take it to the place where they look after them” (Ruth, RVN).

While VVPs seemed comfortable with euthanasing wildlife who could not be treated or rehabilitated, they expressed discomfort with killing healthy animals, especially those labelled ‘pests’ or ‘invasive species’. Invasive species, explains Calarco (2020: 87-88) “are species that have been introduced by human beings into regions beyond their typical geographic range and, once introduced, expand their numbers by displacing species native to that habitat”. Under UK legislation, it is illegal to release into the wild any animal classified as a member of an ‘invasive alien species’ (Legislation UK, 2021c). One such species is Sciurus carolinensis, or the grey squirrel, whose status as a ‘pest’ means they should not be released if caught and can be ‘humanely’ killed by anyone. Since October 2019, releasing
grey squirrels back into the wild in the UK has become illegal (Gov.UK, 2019), and this legislation profoundly affects veterinary professionals. As Rebecca (VS) explained:

“Yeah, the grey squirrels recently have changed their status so now you just have to blanket put them to sleep because they're classed as vermin, which, yeah, it annoys a lot of people … Yeah, there is a policy in place that's not just on a small scale, it's on a nationwide scale so you would actually be in breach of laws as well if you didn't [kill them]”.

Calarco (2020: 89) explains that labels like 'pest', 'vermin' and terms like 'invasive' when applied to animals introduced into secondary locations only for humans to later decide they are undesirable there, “tends to reinforce anthropocentrism and pernicious ideas about animals being fundamentally lower in worth than (certain groups of) human beings”. The sense that these animals are the regrettable victims of an anthropocentric and speciesist legal system was evident in the resignation expressed by Ruth (RVN):

“Well, I'd make sure, I'd make it clear that I wasn't happy about it at all and then obviously, I wouldn't have anything to do with it but sometimes you just have to accept it really, don’t you? You know, you can't always help everything and it is the legal aspect of the grey squirrel part of it, isn't it, you know”.

Ruth’s comment illustrates the legitimising power of the law. While the law offers many protections to nonhuman animals in the form of anti-cruelty and animal welfare legislation, it is also the institutional domain in which animal use is ratified, and practices that many consider to constitute cruelty are socially sanctioned (for example, hunting and fishing, horse and greyhound racing, dehorning, debeaking, maceration, lethal wildlife control, and so forth). It is the innumerable instances in which nonhuman animal use and exploitation is legally sanctioned that animal advocates tend to find frustrating and challenging. Indeed, the legal requirement that healthy squirrels be killed if presented to veterinary practitioners, rather than
be released, is where conscientious objection (to the killing of healthy animals) comes most visibly into conflict with the law in the veterinary setting.

The parakeet was another species mentioned whose members may be killed, even if healthy, owing to them being considered ‘feral’ in the UK:

“So, we did have a situation with a healthy parakeet. It’s considered a pest and because it’s not a native species, it should be put to sleep if it was brought to the vets. So, in such a situation, I just asked another colleague of mine who was not vegan and didn’t have a problem with that to euthanase the bird and it was not a problem” (Hayley, VS).

Deferring tasks to colleagues who are willing to provide a particular service or perform a particular act is one way in which conscientious objection can be managed in healthcare settings (Dresser, 2005). Deferring tasks to non-vegan colleagues was a strategy that arose when VVPs discussed the challenges of working with breeders. Here, it is used in relation to VVPs’ conscientious objection to killing healthy animals. Importantly, Rebecca, Ruth and Siobhan all mentioned that the killing of healthy animals is an aspect of their role that many veterinary professionals struggle with, whether they are vegan or not (see Rollin, 2011). Hence, one’s ability to defer this task would depend on the views of one’s colleagues since non-vegan veterinary professionals may also conscientiously object to killing healthy or helpable animals (Yeates and Main, 2011). However, Fogle and Abrahamson (1990) found when surveying British veterinarians that most indicated they would be prepared to kill a healthy or helpable animal upon a client’s request. This suggests that perhaps non-vegan veterinary professionals are more likely to be willing to kill healthy animals. A subsequent survey conducted in Japan (Sugita and Irimaiiri, 2016) revealed that veterinarians were less willing to perform ‘convenience euthanasia’ than veterinarians in Great Britain, indicating that a willingness to kill healthy or helpable animals in small animal veterinary practice varies culturally. Of course, deferring a task to a colleague may not be an option where veterinary professionals work in sole charge or work in one vet/one nurse practices, and, thus, they may be the only one available to tend clients’ requests (or deal with wildlife). In this case, the only option for avoiding the task
may be to refer the client and patient to another veterinary practice, which may displease the client being referred, and or the employer.

Lack of compassion for wildlife

Some participants mentioned feeling challenged by a perceived lack of empathy and compassion for wildlife presented to veterinary practices. For example, Clinton (VS) remarked, “Sometimes we get injured birds that 99 percent of the cases will be put down by vets very easy on the needle”. Similarly, Gabrielle (VS) said:

“I think it’s quite common in a lot of practices, but people, for example, mainly with wildlife and things like that, they will, if a pigeon is brought in, most people’s attitude will first be OK, just put [him or her] to sleep. They don’t even think about it. They don’t actually care a lot of the times. I’ve seen people like barely looking at them. They’re just like, oh, it’s the easiest thing to do rather than actually bothering and, yeah. I think that’s very frustrating to see that happening … In some places they don’t even think about it. They don’t really care and they’re talking and doing other things while they’re putting the pigeon to sleep”.

Pigeons are prolific in urban spaces in many places including the UK and in western culture they carry the pejorative label ‘rats with wings’ (Allen, 2009). Perhaps owing to their ubiquity, commonness, perceived ordinariness, tendency to occupy and ‘foul’ public spaces and buildings, or their association with disease, people – including veterinary professionals – may be less empathetic towards them.

Josie (RVN) seemed disappointed by her employer’s dismissal of healthy or helpable wildlife:

“If I’ve got a fledgling or an emaciated hedgehog or a little baby squirrel that we’re talking about and the answer from my boss is euthanase, I can’t, and I tend to bring them home because I actually feel that it is
ethically very wrong to put an animal to sleep that we can fix … it breaks my heart, genuinely, to see an animal who has been brought in to us by a trusting member of the public with the thought that we are going to fix it. I feel like we are betraying them, the member of public. I feel like we’re betraying the animal that has been brought in because there is something that we can do as veterinary professionals and we’ve taken an oath to look after these animals, to do no harm to these animals, and the easy option is to euthanase and it’s not an option that I am comfortable with”.

When asked why she thinks there is a disinterest in helping wildlife in the veterinary setting, Josie (RVN) said:

“My boss’ point of view or concern is because there’s no one to financially pay for them, so they’re, you know. If he hears the words a pigeon is coming in, he says, get the Euthetal [barbiturate] out, kinda – ah, ah, no, let’s see what’s wrong with it. [He says] but they’re vermin, I don’t care. They’re vermin”.

While the veterinary profession sees itself playing an important role in the care of wildlife, one study identified shortness of time and financial costs were barriers to helping wildlife in UK veterinary practices; indeed, some veterinary professionals feel it is “asking too much of the profession to invest time and/or funds in treating wildlife” (Barnes and Farnworth, 2017: 197). Resistance to treating animals who do not generate income is reflected in Josie’s thoughts about her employer’s perspective along with the consequences of negative labelling resulting in lower empathy and concern for individuals of certain species.

**Tensions between personal, practice, profession values**

Some VVPs advocated for animals and intervened to save their lives. Josie (RVN), for example, took personal responsibility for injured or orphaned animals that colleagues would have killed. Many VVPs spoke out on behalf of animals and – as
has been discussed – many refuse to partake in killing them. Refusing to perform an expected aspect of one’s role as a veterinarian can have consequences, as Clinton (VS) explained:

“I had a case that I was asked to put down a healthy squirrel because it is considered a pest in England. The grey squirrel is not local to the UK. So, someone caught the squirrel in their loft and brought it to the clinic in a pet carrier and was even willing to pay 50, 60 pounds for the vet to put it down. Someone gave me the syringe with the poison to put it down and I refused. I lost my job for it (laughs) but it was worth it, just to say my point”.

Losing one’s job for refusing to kill a healthy animal seems ironic for an individual whose professional training is largely designed to teach them how to make and keep animals healthy and – according to the RCVS veterinary oath – act in the best interest of nonhuman animals. Moreover, since veganism is now recognised as a protected belief under UK equality law, a VVPs’ refusal to kill a healthy animal may come into conflict with legislation decreeing that they must if that animal is labelled ‘invasive alien species’. The RCVS (2021b: section 8.2) guidance on euthanasia states the following:

Euthanasia is not, in law, an act of veterinary surgery, and in most circumstances may be carried out by anyone provided that it is carried out humanely. No veterinary surgeon is obliged to kill a healthy animal unless required to do so under statutory powers as part of their conditions of employment.

This raises the question as to which guidance or legislation prevails in a circumstance whereby a veterinary professional (and particularly a vegan) is expected to kill a healthy animal such as a grey squirrel. There seems to be some discord between the Equality Act 2010, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, one’s human right to conscientiously object and statutory powers under conditions of employment. In such cases, at present, it seems only a court could decide based on the merits of the case.
On the other hand, many participants stated that they were not forced to kill healthy animals in their workplace, such as Laine (RVN), who said, "If we have a problem with euthanasia, we are allowed to say I don’t want to be part of this", and Josie (RVN): "I am fortunate that … my boss … has never made me participate in a euthanasia that I feel uncomfortable with. If I say I won’t do it and I’ll take an animal home, he says fine you do that, your time, your money. I don’t care". Indeed, Josie’s (RVN) workplace had a policy regarding convenience euthanasia, which meant that veterinary staff were able to avoid involvement:

“We have a practice policy that we do not euthanase just because people want to. One of the main reasons I work at the practice I work at is that my vet has turned away more euthanasia than I think any other practice I’ve ever worked at. He will not do it and for that I’m grateful”.

Yet, Rebecca (VS) stressed the potential risks in turning away animals presented for euthanasia:

“If an owner wants to put an animal to sleep they have every right to do so. You have a right to decline as a vet but you have to make alternative arrangements for them … I’ve had people come in and be like, I’ll just hit him on the head with a shovel then”.

Rebecca touches upon the property status of animals here, which, as mentioned earlier, places animals’ wellbeing and very existence in the hands of the ‘owner’ and poses a dilemma for veterinary professionals who would prefer not to kill an animal but feel obliged to. Rationalisation is a strategy common to veterinary students who feel conflicted over certain aspects of practicing veterinary medicine, like killing (Herzog, Vore and Hall, 1989), and it is also a common strategy used by practicing veterinarians, who mitigate feelings of guilt over killing healthy animals by rationalising the client has a legal right to request the termination of an animal’s life, and that the client could go elsewhere to have the animal killed or, worse, do it themselves (Sanders, 1995).
The RCVS’ stance on euthanasia may afford VVPs who cannot or do not want to kill healthy or helpable animals some capacity to negotiate. This is reflected in the following comment by Christopher (VS), who as a locum veterinarian establishes with his employer prior to accepting a role aspects of the job he will not perform:

“Convenience euthanasia and cosmetic surgeries. So I don’t do those procedures. So I try and get that out preferably in writing, at least, so if someone does put me on the spot and ask me to do x, I say sorry, I don’t do that”.

Of course, not all VVPs, particularly new graduates or junior members of staff, will feel that they are in a position to negotiate such terms. Also, as before, veterinary professionals who work alone or with just one veterinarian or veterinary nurse may be the only one available for tending to a client’s request. Nonetheless, for those desiring exemption from performing certain tasks associated with their role, negotiating with potential employers can bypass issues arising between professional and contractual expectations (even obligations) and conscientious objection/refusal.

Chapter summary

Foucault's theory of power enhances understanding of the prevalence of anthropocentrism, speciesism and carnism in western culture. Foucault’s view of power as existing in a network of relationships and as ubiquitous aptly captures the nature of humans’ power relations with other animals within the extensive and pervasive AIC. Biopolitics, sovereign power, disciplinary power and biopower are reflected in the aspects of small animal veterinary medicine presented in this chapter that VVPs identified as challenging for them. Since, as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, biopower tends to function as a subtle, supple, shaping and controlling of bodies and populations to direct living energies toward the goals of the state, it could be viewed as particularly insidious. Thus, through positing that various challenges that VVPs encounter working in small animal veterinary practice relate to or reflect biopower, otherwise largely unquestioned
interrelations between humans and other animals, the veterinary profession, state and society, is made visible and exposed for critique. The application of a Foucauldian concept of power in this chapter elucidates how biopower is enacted through the AIC and within the veterinary profession specifically as complicit in the domination, instrumentalisation, exploitation, consumption and control of vast populations of nonhuman animal beings. It emphasises the hegemonic enormity and magnitude of the social, cultural, economic and political system that vegans reject and resist.

Three aspects of VVPs' role working in small animal veterinary practice that they identified as challenging are the breeding of animals as companions, the use of animals for producing and testing pharmaceuticals, and the killing of healthy or helpable animals. Strategies that VVPs employ in the workplace to negotiate discomfort experienced when encountering these aspects of their role were identified: they may moderate their behaviour to remain polite, maintain professionalism and foster positive workplace relationships; self-censor and feel unable to express how they feel about certain practices; defer difficult tasks to colleagues or set boundaries and refuse to perform tasks, and finally, it was common that they rationalised and focussed on prioritising their patient. Some felt able to speak out and advocate for animals and intervened to save animals' lives. Importantly, as several VVPs noted, issues around breeders and breeding practices and the killing of healthy or helpable animals are not limited to veterinary professionals who are vegan.

This chapter focussed on humans' consumption of nonhuman animals as companions, commodities, and scientific objects or instruments. The following chapter examines the widespread consumption of animals' bodies in veterinary practice in human diets as well as in pet food, which were two further issues to emerge from interviews with VVPs.
Chapter Five: Consumption

In the previous chapter, three aspects of the veterinary professionals’ role related to humans’ exertion of power over other animals were explored; findings highlighted that VVPs often feel challenged by these aspects of their role and negotiate feelings of discomfort by employing various strategies. In this chapter, the focus turns to consumption; specifically, the role of food in shaping VVPs’ experiences working in small animal veterinary practice. While food consumption is the focus here, eating is just one form of consumption (Warde, 2016), as there are innumerable ways in which humans consume other animals. For example, for companionship (see Chapter 3) and for the purposes of providing exhibition and entertainment (see Chapter 5).

Although the consumption of animals as food is the focus of this chapter, it is crucial to reemphasise that veganism is not ‘just a diet’. As established in Chapter Two: Context and literature, its radical origins make it a political strategy of resistance. It is also necessary to mention here that while food consumption may be thought of as an activity involving choice (deciding how, when, what and whom one consumes)\textsuperscript{51}, Panizza’s (2020) argument, presented in Chapter Two: Context and literature, advances the premise that for many vegans, consuming animals and being part of a carnist system is a moral impossibility owing to a reconfiguration of their understanding of nonhuman animals, and their coming to view them as non-commodities and non-consumable (ethically, not literally).

To begin, it is necessary to define consumption and provide an overview of this chapter’s trajectory. Consumption can be viewed in two ways: as related to purchasing (i.e. goods and services) or as in ‘using up’ (like ingesting or absorbing, either physically and/or psychologically); Warde (2005: 137) describes consumption as:

\begin{quote}
\text{a process whereby agents engage in appropriation and appreciation, whether for utilitarian, expressive or contemplative purposes, of goods,}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{51} Of course, one’s access to food can limit or shape one’s consumption practices and not all people have the same access to resources and consumer products (i.e. supermarkets, processed foods, alternatives to animal products).
services, performances, information or ambience, whether purchased or not, over which the agent has some degree of discretion. In this view, consumption is not itself a practice but is, rather, a moment in almost every practice.

If consumption is a moment in almost every practice, then it follows that consumption is highly sociologically significant.

Veterinary practice is a place where both forms of consumption identified by Warde occur; products are consumed on-site (i.e. staff meals, feeding hospitalised patients), and products are sold for consumption (i.e. pet food). In terms of the former, VVPs frequently encounter non-vegans eating other animals. As Jeremy (VS) succinctly stated, “Well, it’s inevitable that such products [meat and dairy] are gonna be consumed [in the workplace] because the majority of my colleagues are non-vegan”. In terms of the latter, small animal veterinary practices typically sell commercial pet food and remedial products (i.e. prescription diets) to generate revenue. The negative impact of humans’ consumption of other animals has recently attracted attention in terms of animal ethics and environmental concerns, yet less attention is paid to the impacts of ‘companion animal’ diets. Yet, as Ward, Oven and Bethencourt (2020: 47) explain, “When we feed our dog or cat an animal meat-based food, hundreds or thousands of sentient animals suffer the consequences”. Also, pet food manufacturing – another facet of the AIC – sources animal-based protein from the industrial animal agricultural sector, meaning it has substantial environmental impact (Ward, Oven and Bethencourt, 2020).

This chapter begins with discussion about humans eating other animals with a focus on commensality and catering in veterinary practice. The term ‘commensality’ can include many activities related to food consumption (i.e. shopping, cooking, eating and cleaning) but the term can also be used more specifically and simply to mean ‘eating together’ (Kniffin et al., 2015). The importance to humans of eating in communion, the centrality of food and eating to rituals and celebrations, and the social and psychological benefits of sharing food and spaces where food is consumed are all features of humans’ food consumption that are enduring, well-evidenced and well-established (Kniffin et al., 2015). Fischler (2011: 529) explains that commensality “in its literal sense, means eating
at the same table (mensa)” and he describes humans’ propensity for eating together in groups as “[o]ne of the most striking manifestations of human sociality”. Commensality is thought to facilitate bonding, unite individuals and “signify (or create) intimacy” (Fischler, 2011: 533); it can foster positive, productive professional relationships and even enhance “work-group performance” (Kniffin et al., 2015: 299). Conversing while eating with others is common and is thought to enhance cooperation and organisational performance between familiar co-workers (Kniffin et al., 2015). The implications of commensality for shaping personal and professional relationships in the workplace is significant since employees tend to need to eat and drink while at work and often several times a day.

While commensality is typically viewed as being beneficial, eating with others can also be problematic (Greenebaum, 2012b). Regarding commensality, it is often assumed that people are sharing the same food (Fischler, 2011). Yet, as Warde (2016: 1) states, “Food is a political issue”, and this is especially the case for vegans who eschew the food eaten by the majority of those around them, including their co-workers. Exploring vegan practice, Twine (2014: 626) observes: “in the case of vegans, the table is materially and symbolically central for those reiterated performances, disruptions, inquisitions around counter normative eating practices, around counter hegemonic ways of valuing other animals”. Vegans may encounter problems eating with non-vegans in any professional setting but what makes VVPs’ circumstances unique is that they are working in the veterinary profession and the food ingested by their non-vegan co-workers may be of the same species as those presented to them as patients. While the act of simultaneously caring for and eating animals (‘the meat paradox’) is examined in Chapter 5, the first part of this chapter explores how being vegan and a veterinary professional might relate – positively or negatively – to commensality. It explores how food – its presence, form and consumption – affects VVPs’ experiences in the workplace and identifies the strategies they employ to deal with any challenges or feelings of discomfort that ensue. VVPs

52 Unless, perhaps, one works in a rare organisation where only people who eat plant-based food are found and where only plant-based food is provided and or consumed.
53 Here, Twine is using Ahmed’s conceptualisation of the killjoy figure to examine how vegans interrupt normative social performances of happiness, one of which is commensality.
54 For example: cows, pigs, sheep, ducks, and chickens in large animal practice and rabbits, ducks, and chickens in small animal practice.
exhibited awareness of the speciesism involved in the production of animal-derived food since farmed animals are deprivileged through the commodification of their bodies for consumption for the benefit of the more privileged (human and ‘companion animal’) species who eat them. Thus, this chapter also looks at nonhuman animals’ consumption of other animals in the small animal veterinary setting, which VVPs identified as challenging for them.

Humans eating other animals

Social and symbolic aspects of lunchroom meals

The term ‘meal’ embodies both content and occasion, referring “to foods that are ingested and to the encompassing social arrangements of an event involving location, time and companions” (Warde, 2016: 60). VVPs mentioned the veterinary practice lunchroom as a location where staff can eat meals or go for meal breaks. The lunchroom is a site where veganism and carnism intersect; thus, it also exemplifies a location where “morally divergent eating practices and affective attachments” exist (Twine, 2014: 634). Many VVPs expressed having an aversion to meat – meaning they feel uncomfortable in the presence of meat and its consumption – and this was evident in their mention of the lunchroom as a site of discomfort. Being around and exposed to animal products in the workplace was a significant issue for some, like Natasha (RVN), who said, “I don’t really like, I had a colleague who’d always eat chicken. She’d come in and eat chicken off the bone kind of thing and leave it on top of the bin and I just find that a bit insensitive”.

Similarly, Fleur (RVN) remarked:

“Sometimes when people just bring in buckets of KFC [Kentucky Fried Chicken] and just huge amounts of – it may be leftover ribs and things like that – and they’re just casually eating away, and with our lunchroom, it’s a very small space, which can be very difficult sometimes …I find it difficult when they’re eating things like KFC because it’s so obviously what it is. Fish as well I find quite difficult
because of how strong the smell is, but yeah, it can be challenging for sure”.

The smell and sight of certain foods, and the pageanting of the animal (chicken) in the meal (KFC) causes Fleur discomfort. These comments illustrate how the way in which vegans view and relate to meat differs from those around them who eat meat. All participants were non-vegan at some point in time.55 Thus, Natasha and Fleur capture how vegan transition involves a vast shift in perspective from being non-vegan and benignly viewing animals’ bodies as ‘food’ to associating animal products with suffering and violence, such that, Twine (2014: 634) explains, “Smells that once were part of the commensal happiness of routine animal consumption come to evoke disgust and horror”.

Twine (2014: 632) writes, “For many vegans … eating alongside omnivores becomes affectively difficult” and, indeed, this was reflected in conversations with VVPs.56 For some participants the discomfort caused by sharing space with colleagues eating animals leads them to eat lunch elsewhere or at alternative times. As Michael (VS) explained:

“I think one of the major things that I just find personally uncomfortable is when everybody is eating, and I don’t want to see what they’re eating. You know, at practice meals, or at lunchtime. I find that quite unsettling …But I say, at our workplace, out of preference, I don’t like eating where people are eating meat. So, I tend to avoid sitting with them. So, I’ll either go in after they’ve done eating or I’ll leave before they start eating”.

Similarly, Bridget (VS) said, “I tend to avoid … [eating in] the same room. So I may eat at a different time if I see they are eating meat. I also don’t like the smell”.

VVPs avoiding eating alongside non-vegans in their workplace is an example of

55 Smells being at one time part of the commensal happiness of routine animal consumption may not apply to all vegans if they were vegan from birth. Yet many, if not most vegans in western society, transition to veganism at some stage in their life. No participants in this study said that they were vegan or vegetarian from birth although several transitioned to veganism from vegetarianism.

56 Some vegans take ‘The Liberation Pledge’, meaning that they will refuse to sit where animals and animal products are being eaten (see http://www.liberationpledge.com/). This may be more politically motivated rather than related to affect, or it could be for both reasons.
‘boundary maintenance’, a temporal and spatial strategy that vegans employ to avoid feeling discomfort themselves or to avoid being the cause of others’ discomfort (Twine, 2014). Yet, clearly, avoiding eating with colleagues could alienate VVPs or negatively impact upon the benefits of workplace commensality.

Fleur (RVN) raised the issue of causing colleagues’ discomfort:

“I think for people that know me, there’s a small handful of really close people I work with who will make an effort and say look, I apologise, I didn’t realise we’d be on lunch together or, yeah, I’m sorry, and I say look, it’s fine. Thank you for acknowledging that it might be difficult. But there’s, I would say eighty percent of people maybe, even eighty-five percent of people [colleagues] don’t, aren’t aware, don’t realise [that I am uncomfortable].”

Clinton (VS) spoke about his avoidance and colleagues’ discomfort:

“I just try to avoid eating in the staff room because of that [others eating meat]. So, I’m pretty sure they know, or if I go into the staff room and, you know, they are eating something non-vegan, then I see their faces. I see that they don’t feel very comfortable with it”. 

Bridget (VS) was asked if she thinks her colleagues are aware that she avoids eating with them in the lunchroom, to which she replied, “Probably not. Probably not, but I don’t feel comfortable to say to them at the moment (laughs).”

In considering his colleagues’ discomfort eating animals in the presence of a vegan, Clinton said, “I don’t feel comfortable with them feeling uncomfortable with it. It’s not that it’s coming from me, but in a way, maybe it’s a good thing (laughs). If they are aware of it”. In contrast to Bridget’s self-censorship, Clinton’s comment invokes the ‘vegan killjoy’ (Twine, 2014), whereby his veganism disrupts the status quo and draws attention to the invisible mechanism of carnism. As explained in Chapter Two: Context and literature, the killjoy refuses to participate in shared cultural happiness and prevents the shared cultural happiness of others proceeding unquestioned. Killjoy figures can ‘kill others’ joy’ by merely being present or by speaking out. Clinton is an example of vegans killing joy by mere
presence, and he suggests it is perhaps ‘a good thing’ that his being vegan causes others discomfort. An example of a vegan killing joy by speaking out came from Michael (VS), who when asked if he thinks his colleagues notice that he avoids eating with them, replied, “Oh, yes. And I’ve told them. I’ve said the moment that all food is vegan, I’ll sit with them. Until then, I won’t”.

While all participants (had) worked in small animal veterinary practice at the time of being interviewed, one participant, Paige (VS), did mention large animal practice:

“Back in the day, large animal work, farmers group, I’d probably not be very vocal about my dietary choices. Only because I wouldn’t want that to come back on my employer. Now I’m not even involved in that industry and I wouldn’t want to be. But, yeah, if you’re surrounded in a room full of people who make their living by milking those cows and shooting those calves and exploiting those animals, … and [there’s] only one of you, that’s probably not the time to (laughs) make your choices too well known”.

Paige’s comment raises the question as to whether there is perhaps greater risk of encountering hostility from non-vegans (veterinary professionals/colleagues, farmers/clients) in the large animal veterinary sector stemming from commensality with, perhaps, more serious consequences associated with being vegan; this would be a valuable avenue for further research.57

Meals with colleagues

Several VVPs mentioned clinic meals, which encompass special events such as staff birthdays, when staff are leaving a practice, and other social get-togethers for the purposes of staff bonding/team building. These events were often inclusive of plant-based food, particularly if the individual focal to the celebration is vegan. For example, Ruth (RVN), said “it was my birthday last year and they put on a little bit of a [celebration], and they had a vegan cake specially made for me”. There were

57 Indeed, many participants expressed the view that it would be difficult to impossible to reconcile working in large animal practice with veganism.
further instances of VVPs recalling times when colleagues had made effort to include vegans:

“[At my previous practice] I didn’t have any negative things about veganism. I remember my boss, for my leaving thing, he cooked food at his [house] and he made all this vegan spread and everything and so in regard to me being vegan, everyone was lovely and supportive and really nice” (Natasha, RVN).

Speaking about her colleagues’ efforts to include vegans in workplace celebrations, Josie (RVN) said: “When we have our little get-togethers, you know, if we’re doing a little lunch together, we always make sure there’s vegan food, and they’re very encompassing in that way”.

Similarly, Lucie (RVN) explained:

“They’ve been actually really good because if they do … a staff dinner, a kinda afternoon tea or something, if somebody is leaving, the company will, one of the head nurses will go out to the food shop and get stuff. They’ll always get [vegan friendly] alternatives for me, which is really nice actually. They’ll always get a few bits and bobs that they know are vegan and stuff, and they’ll think of me”.

Sharing pizza emerged as common in veterinary practice:

“Yeah, so they [previous practice] used to order sometimes, depending on how numbers went at work and things, order pizza on a Friday and obviously they knew I was vegan so they just asked me, what do you want, and obviously they would take the cheese out of the pizza. Yeah, it would be quite nice. So if I wasn’t at work, they would message me, like what do you want, and we’ll order for you … I never asked for anything. I would just expect them to just not order anything for me, but no, they had definitely [said] we can order a vegan one for you. It was their initiative, so that’s good (laughs)” (Gabrielle, VS).

The frequency with which participants mentioned pizza is, perhaps, unsurprising since it is a food commonly shared between people, meaning it has inbuilt
commensality. VVPs mentioned being asked if they would like their own separate pizza rather than share the communal pizza, however, while making them feel included, this could still deprive them of the many benefits of sharing food, such as improving cooperation, cohesion, and social connectedness (Wooley and Fishbach, 2019).

Despite many examples of VVPs feeling welcomed and included in their workplaces, some of their experiences were less positive. Consider Camille (RVN):

“I don't really feel included in that, yeah, like I went to one of our summer parties, which was hosted at one of the director’s houses and, they’d basically hired an outside catering company to come in and they, you know, this was only like last year [2019] so I'd been [employed] there two-and-a-half years. They knew very much that I was vegan, and I got there it was an all-night kind-of-thing and they hadn't organised any vegan food, so I literally was like, I have nothing. And so the majority of people don’t accommodate and it’s things like, someone bought ice creams for everyone in the summer, but they didn't get anything [for vegans], even like a cheap ice pop or anything for us, because I've got another colleague that's vegan there. So, I don't really feel that there, there’s one or two people that do [welcome us], but the general majority don't try and accommodate [vegans] at all, really”.

Several VVPs mentioned attending or declining to attend the practice Christmas celebration, which often involved a staff party (also called a ‘do’) or visiting a restaurant. Again, there were examples of VVPs feeling welcomed:

“I mean my colleagues at work are really nice and they’re quite understanding … for example, we’re going for our Christmas meal, we’re going to a vegan restaurant and that was the vet who decided, you know, there’s a nice vegan restaurant, we’ll go there. Yeah, I've been to colleagues’ houses and they put on vegan food for me as well and they’re all very nice about it” (Natasha, RVN).
Siobhan (RVN) suggested being well-catered for as a vegan in her practice was owing to several veg*ns working there:

“They’ve always been really accommodating, like Christmas parties, they’ve always accommodated for us, made sure there’s enough for vegans because there’s at least four, five, six of us going (laughs) who need a vegan option and vegetarian options. So they’ve always been really good like that; making sure we’re catered for”.

While most participants indicated that they were the only vegan, or one of a few veg*ns employed at their practice, some VVPs mentioned working at practices where more than three veg*ns were employed. VVPs seemed well provided for in these instances. This suggests that the more vegans there are employed at a practice, the better the awareness of veganism is and ensuing provision of plant-based food and beverages.

Despite feeling accommodated as a vegan, Natasha (RVN) harboured reservations about attending clinic festivities owing to her aversion to meat:

“It wouldn’t stop me going to the Christmas party if other people have meat there. And barbeques, I don’t, I think I (sighs), it depends, it depends. I might, I probably would go, I think if they had, hopefully they had a vegan barbeque going on. There’s sometimes, with meat it’s just, like, it depends”.

Natasha’s comment suggests that the presence and consumption of meat might cause some vegans to avoid attending workplace social events. Alternatively, Aisha (VS) saw attending workplace festive events where meat is consumed as an opportunity to visibilise veganism and promote plant-based food:

“With other parties, like the Christmas do or whatever … you just say you want the vegan option. I mean, I still go along to those [events]. I would, yeah, and I use that as an opportunity actually to raise vegan awareness. I think it’s good that I go and I’m having a vegan option. They’ll be like, oh, what are you eating? Hopefully it’s great and I can
go, yeah, it’s great, you know. And then so that brings the awareness. For me that’s quite important, yeah”.

Attending events alongside non-vegans enables vegans to “lead by example” and to “emphasize the ease and joy” in eating a plant-based diet; such events are also an opportunity to counter non-vegans’ perception of plant-based food “as being tasteless, boring, and gross” (Greenebaum, 2012b: 320, 319). Like Aisha, who values the opportunity to showcase plant-based food to non-vegans, Siobhan (RVN) recalled an occasion when she was pleased that the plant-based food she was provided with was perceived as better than her non-vegan colleagues’ food:

“Their meat was really, really dry. You know when you get mass produced Christmas dinners and it’s horrible, and then I had my lovely risotto, which is freshly made (laughs). They were like, yours is well nice”.

Bridget (VS) provided another example of showcasing plant-based food at the practice Christmas dinner:

“I was the only one having the vegan dinner because we ordered before and my meal looked much better than others. It was quite impressive because it was a squash with beans and tomato sauce inside, like really pretty. So I’m quite sure mine was better than theirs because theirs was not that amazing. It was like a chicken breast with something. It didn’t look that appealing so they were all interested in mine”.

Despite their aversion to meat, some participants considered it important to attend workplace events because to decline upon the basis of one’s veganism may lead to negative judgement:

“Yes, I do participate in these things and I just always mention my dietary requirements and make sure that there would be something for me … I don’t think by saying I would not go to the Christmas party or a barbeque because other people will be eating meat there, I don’t think it would make any favour in terms of trying to make my colleagues vegans. They would just feel offended probably. Maybe they would feel
that it’s too extreme and I think that this is not what I want people to feel” (Hayley, VS).

While Hayley thought declining to attend events was counter-productive, she also saw attendance as an opportunity to showcase plant-based food: “I think by me going there with my delicious vegan food and telling them look, this is what I eat and it looks yummy, and please help yourself, I would do more good than not going at all”.

Although most participants said that they would attend workplace festive events where meat is cooked and consumed, many said it would cause them discomfort, evident in the following quote:

“I’ve been to Christmas parties and stuff and, again, I’ve always got my own vegan food but it’s not an inherently vegan affair, so there’ll be always like a giant turkey on the side or something for our Christmas, and I’m like, gonna have to power through that one” (Rebecca, VS).

Some participants would decline attending workplace festive events if meat was present; for example, Bridget (VS), who said:

“Probably if there was a turkey, we [referring to her family] probably wouldn't go. I don't think so. We are getting more uncomfortable with eating with other people that cook meat”.

Also Michael (VS), who stated:

“I just won’t attend …I find it difficult to participate in team activities such as practice meals. I won't eat with people who are eating animal products and [attend] fundraising events for charities who support animal exploitation”.

The previous and following comments aptly reflect the impacts of VVPs’ aversion to meat, which sees them unwilling to attend all or certain workplace events:

“I would join if the place caters for vegans. Even if not the most creative vegan food available such as chips or jacket potato, but I would avoid
going to places or events like barbeques or a meeting at a steakhouse or restaurants like KFC or McDonald’s where I don’t feel comfortable, not to say welcomed” (Clinton, VS).

“If it was like a home barbeque I probably would decline, just because it’s kind of different when it’s in a restaurant because you’re not actually around meat cooking” (Lucie, RVN).

“I mean if it was a meat barbeque, I don’t think I would go. I may join them afterwards, because even if they would give me an option, I wouldn’t really want my stuff being cooked in the same place (laughs). And also, I don’t really feel comfortable being surrounded by so much meat so I don’t think I would go. If it was like an event in a place where I could have a vegan option then each one would be eating their own thing then maybe, obviously, then I would consider it, but if it was something like a barbeque or something actually related like, I dunno, a pig roast (laughs) or something weird then definitely, definitely a hundred percent no (laughs)” (Gabrielle, VS).

Several participants mentioned pig/hog roasts, including Fleur (RVN) who stated: “I wouldn’t sit around a hog-roast”, and Ruth (RVN), who said, “I wouldn’t go to something like that [a hog roast] … I don’t think I’d even go to a barbeque actually where you can smell, sort of, meat cooking”. Like Ruth, Natasha (RVN) also mentioned an aversion to the sight and smell of meat:

“I don’t wanna smell other people’s meat and I don’t want to see it that much and so if it was gonna be a hog roast, kinda thing, I don’t know that I would go. I don’t really want to see that. It all just depends. I don’t know. I have been to barbeques before and things, and usually there’s a vegan option so I wouldn’t say, oh no, I wouldn’t go. If they are gonna do a hog roast I’d think differently. I don’t really wanna smell that or see that. Really, I don’t”.

Participants’ willingness (albeit reluctant) to attend events involving meat consumption (i.e. barbeques) or venues where meat is cooked, served and consumed (i.e. non-vegan restaurants) but emphatically declining to attend an
event involving a hog roast seems noteworthy. Perhaps it is less challenging for some vegans to attend barbeques and self-cater, or attend non-vegan restaurants offering vegan options, because non-vegans are more likely to be consuming ‘absent referents’ at these occasions. Adams (1990) describes the ‘absent referent’ as the animal (the cow, sheep, pig etc) who is rendered invisible through being literally fragmented (slaughtered and dismembered) and linguistically distanced from its original form (a living, sentient being) to become ‘meat’ (for example, ‘a sausage’ or ‘steak’). Since this is how the bodies of nonhuman animals tend to be consumed in western culture (at least at barbeques and restaurants), it may be ‘easier’ or less confronting for vegans to attend places where animals are ‘absent referents’ rather than a hog roast, where the pig is not fragmented but is rather spectacularised, or a restaurant pageanting animals being eaten (i.e. KFC, Nando’s, a steakhouse).

Employers and colleagues may view VVPs’ nonattendance at workplace social events negatively; on the other hand, VVPs may experience discomfort attending workplace social events. Whether or not VVPs feel comfortable attending workplace events that involve meat consumption is significant because of the importance of being considered a ‘team player’ in a work or employment context, and because of the importance of inclusion and commensality. As mentioned, the benefits of commensality can be problematised when people do not share the same food (and particularly if this difference is ethically/values motivated, as will be discussed in Chapter Six: Culture). Hence, it seems worth considering offering plant-based catering since vegans, vegetarians and those who eat an omnivorous diet can all eat plant-based food. In contrast to VVPs’ aversion to meat leading them to avoid attending events, some saw their attendance, despite their discomfort, as an opportunity to give veganism visibility and plant-based food a presence in a setting that would otherwise be dominated by meat and meat consumption.

58 Steak and sausages
Catering

Catering for vegans has more recently become a significant social and legal issue. As mentioned already, veganism is now recognised as a protected belief in the UK and ethical vegans fall under the 2010 Equality Act. For workplaces that employ vegans, not providing vegan-friendly food at catered events could now constitute indirect discrimination (The Vegan Society, 2020). This has implications for employers who employ vegans as there is now a legal precedent for vegans to challenge both direct and indirect forms of discrimination. Absent or inadequate provision for vegans in the public sector (in institutions such as schools, hospitals, restaurants and universities), argues Horta (2018), constitutes structural disadvantage. Recognition of structural disadvantage affecting vegans has led Portugal to pass a law in 2017 requiring at least one vegan menu option to be offered in public sector institutions (i.e. schools, universities, hospitals and prisons) (The Vegan Society, 2017). Since 2018, The Vegan Society has been campaigning to change UK legislation to ensure vegans are sufficiently provided for in the public sector and in workplaces (The Vegan Society, 2021e). How vegans are catered for at workplace events is therefore important since poor and inadequate provision for vegans – including being provided nutritionally unbalanced meals or being provided with poorer quality meals than non-vegans – can constitute discrimination. Further, based on the previous discussion of commensality, it seems important that attention is paid to the experiences of vegans when eating among others in the veterinary setting. It matters if and how vegans are catered for, how they experience catered events, and whether (im)provision affects their willingness to attend such events.

Lunch and learns

Participants mentioned catering for staff meetings, particularly events called ‘lunch and learns’, whereby a sales representative from an animal health company attends the practice to discuss an animal health topic and or promote a product (i.e. vaccines, diagnostics, vitamins, parasiticides, antibiotics, dental chews, anti-inflammatories, commercial pet foods, prescription diets or food additives). These
individuals, called ‘drug reps’, often provide lunch for those attending as a good will gesture or gratuity for the time and attention of veterinary staff who typically schedule these visits between consultations and surgeries. Furthermore, as salespersons, they surely want to be liked. Speaking about such events, Siobhan (RVN) said:

“Yeah, because reps will always ring up first saying like has anyone got any dietary requirements. We’re like, yep, vegan (laughs). There’s at least two or three of us, so I think – and the ones that come and see us regularly know now to make sure that there’s a lot of [vegan] options and if they just go to Marks & Spencers, they can pick up vegan sandwiches, which are really, really nice, or Asda even, you know. Everywhere has got an option now rather than just a side salad or a fruit bowl, and again, it’s just much more awareness now”.

Indeed, of late, there has been an increase in the variety of plant-based foods commercially available and some participants seemed optimistic that this translates into improved catering for vegans in the workplace. As Hayley (VS) stated: “I think in terms of food, it’s really not that difficult because everywhere there are vegan options at the moment; like, I never really struggled to find a place to eat”.

Siobhan (RVN) also spoke about improved access to vegan-friendly food:

“When we first started having meetings, it was a bit limited (laughs), but I think now that fast food chains like Papa John's do vegan pizza, and Pizza Express, and it's a lot more accessible now, so yeah …I’d say where I work, they probably put a bit more effort in (laughs) in terms of what we [vegans] get. Yeah, and like I say, it's more accessible now so it’s not actually that much of an effort to go to Papa John’s for normal pizzas, and for vegan pizzas”.

Notably, Siobhan’s comment reflects a cultural ‘othering’ or decentring of plant-based food. Although vegan herself, she calls plant-based pizzas ‘vegan pizzas’ and other pizzas ‘normal’. This othering is evidence of the normalcy and dominance of meat culture and notions that meat-eating is ‘normal’ and plant-
based food is ‘abnormal’. It is telling when vegans – whose daily actions (through avoidance, abstinence and advocacy) express the belief that it is not normal, natural or necessary to eat animals – employ language that normalises and centres animal products, and abnormally centres plant-based food.

Laine (RVN) observed an improvement in and increased awareness about vegan catering at workplace meetings and among drug company representatives who visit her practice, making it easier than before for drug company reps to provide adequate food for vegans: “Reps are getting really good now actually, learning what I can and can’t have, because it always used to be get, like, a bag of salad”. As did Rebecca (VS):

“[Catering] used to be a real problem because all the reps would come around for their lunch and learn as we called them and would never have anything for me (laughs), but actually most of the time now, with the sort of huge plethora of vegan meal deals that are now available at most supermarkets, it tends to be not such a problem anymore”.

Indeed, comments about how catering for vegans has improved in recent times were frequent:

“Probably since I first started, so probably four, five years ago and it would be, you’d just get this bag of salad and maybe like a bottle of water and you’d be like, that’s not really a lunch, is it (laughs). But now, I mean it’s because of the supermarkets because obviously the reps just go into the nearest Tesco’s, Asda, whatever …Tesco have got their ‘Wicked’ range, Sainsbury’s have got all the vegan wraps and Waitrose has, Marks & Spencers, like, they’ve all got a vegan sandwich and such, so it’s easy, you know” (Laine, RVN).

More commercially available plant-based meal options have improved catering experiences for VVPs in the workplace. Yet, those who purchase and provide food to employees, such as visiting drug company representatives, also have immense influence over the quality of food provided to VVPs. This capacity for influence is reflected in the following comment:
“Ah, lunch and learns, we had one today and we’ve got one rep that’s really good. He always goes and gets lots of vegan options and choices. When you sign up for the lunch and learn, you put in your dietary requirements [with colleagues] so that when they [reps] ring, it gets passed on. So one rep is really good. All the other lunch and learns, everyone else would get donuts, crisps and things like that, and I would just get like literally, you know, those plastic tubs with just like salad leaves. I’d probably get one of them. That’s the majority that I would get” (Camille, RVN).

Clearly, drug company representatives can improve VVPs’ experiences in small animal veterinary practice by providing plant-based food that is acceptable to vegans and of equal quality and quantity to the food given to non-vegans. In this sense, they could be seen as vegan allies.

Drug company representatives working in the animal health industry connect the pharmaceutical companies with veterinary practitioners. Indeed, these animal health industries, explains Twine (2013a: 505) “are the clearest point of overlap and coproduction between the pharmaceutical-industrial complex and the animal-industrial complex”. The veterinary pharmaceutical sales rep’s job is to ensure veterinary professionals are aware of existing and new products that the company sells so that these products (often drugs) will be bought by those working at the veterinary clinics to be sold to their clientele. Veterinary pharmaceutical sales reps often need to have strong interpersonal, sales and marketing skills alongside knowledge of nonhuman animal aetiology and pharmacology. They have sales targets to achieve and work for companies who are in fierce competition with other companies for veterinary practices’ custom. Hence, because of their position as salespeople, their appearance as ‘vegan allies’ (meaning a non-vegan who supports vegans and veganism) is underpinned by a capitalist agenda and problematised by their indelible links to the AIC.
Vegan allies and vegan influencers

Regarding vegan allies, VVPs often mentioned encountering non-vegans in their workplaces who are accepting of vegans and make efforts to embrace veganism despite not practicing it themselves. As Joy and Freston (2017) explain: “an ally may not share your views, but they fully understand and respect those views and they fully support and respect you for who you are and what you believe”. Twine (2014: 635) discusses those “who inadvertently promote the [vegan] practice” and calls them “non-practising practitioners” and, he explains, that through their affinity with vegans, they become “non-vegan vegan advocates” who, whether intentionally or not, end up socially extending the practice. VVPs appreciated the efforts of non-vegan colleagues who acted to ensure vegans’ inclusion in catered meals and at clinic meetings:

“[My colleagues] always do try very hard to accommodate me if, you know, with food and stuff if they can. They always make a point of pointing it out to visiting drug reps, or something, you know, if the drug rep is getting food, they’ll make a point of saying, oh, [Michael] won’t eat that, because he’s vegan” (Michael, VS).

“If we’re getting pizza, they’ll be like, well [Rebecca’s] vegan; make sure you don’t get cheese. So they don’t find it difficult to make those sort of allowances…” (Rebecca, VS).

“Yeah, if we have staff meetings and things, they usually get pizza in but they’ll always make sure there’s a vegan option for me” (Ruth, RVN).

“They’d have practice meetings [and say, Paige] we’ve bought you a packet of Hobnobs because we know you can’t eat the cake, but these haven’t got animal products in. Little things like that which I think are lovely” (Paige, VS).

“They always think of me. So when we do lunch and learns, like if we have reps come in to tell us about new products, they’ll always make sure they order me a vegan option. If we have staff meetings, they’ll
always make sure I have a vegan option and things like that and, yeah, I do feel welcome to be fair” (Laine, RVN).

“Going back to lunch and learn, they always try to make sure that they mention that there is one person that is vegan, and they always try to sort something for me…” (Hayley, VS).

“[My] colleagues will always, if we have a [drug] rep coming to us, they will always say there is a vegan lunch required” (Josie, RVN).

“To be fair, today we had a [work] do, and probably eighty percent of the food was vegan. So we’ve got a new practice manager, who’s quite on board. She’s not vegan but I think she’s got potential (laughs)” (Michael, VS).

Supportive social networks are important to vegans and vegan praxis (Cherry, 2006), and clearly, as these quotes reflect, this applies to vegans in veterinary practice. Additionally, VVPs appreciated non-vegan colleagues making vegan-friendly food to share with staff:

“People like to bake cakes and stuff a lot here, because there’s quite a few people [who] work here, so it feels like there’s cake on the table all the time, and when people have actually gone out of their way to make vegan items when they’re not vegan, it’s really nice of them. That they actively get alternatives when they’ve brought things into work. Things like that” (Lucie, RVN).

“So there’s two people that bake cakes quite regularly. They always occasionally bake some vegan ones as well, so even without me kind of asking. Like yesterday, I went in and my friend [a colleague] was like, oh, [another colleague] made some vegan cakes and they were really nice and so there’s a couple of people that will include me” (Camille, RVN).

“People, on knowing that I am vegan, will sometimes make special cakes and things, which I think is really, really nice. You know, on
finding out, oh, you've missed all of that bunch of food, let me make something for you that you can actually eat, which I find really nice" (Fleur, RVN).

When bringing in vegan-friendly food to work, Fleur said her colleagues "will put a sign on it", so it is clear what she can and cannot eat.

There were also examples of management being inclusive of vegans:

“Each month we have so much money for buying treats and things and I've noticed that the practice manager now always brings a bar of chocolate for me, you know, dark chocolate to make sure I've got something" (Ruth, RVN).

“So, for Easter they [management] gave everybody an Easter egg. Obviously for us vegans they went out and bought like a vegan-friendly Easter egg, which I thought was really nice because it is more expensive and they've gone out their way to do that" (Siobhan, RVN).

VVPs’ narratives illustrate the importance to vegans of having vegan allies in the workplace and the significance for inclusion of others catering for vegans when bringing food into the practice to be shared.

There were also examples of what Twine (2014: 636) calls “demonstrative vegan practice”; that is, vegans providing vegan-friendly food to be shared with non-vegans. This typically involved VVPs bringing plant-based food into the clinic to share with colleagues. Scholars have suggested that vegans can instigate change and positively influence those within their social circles (Twine, 2014; Vandermoere et al., 2019) and they may be creative with food in order to stay involved in cultural celebrations (Twine, 2018). Indeed, “performing veganism with non-vegans”, asserts Twine (2014: 637), "can serve to restore a sense of commensality and social connection with food". Ruth (RVN) provided an example of this:
“Yeah, they all try it [plant-based food], and if I bring things in, you know, and I always say just help yourself and they all, they’re always quite surprised how nice it is actually”.

Although there were examples of plant-based food being well-received, it seems that ‘vegan’ food remains somewhat stigmatised. Talking about vegan-friendly cakes, Camille (RVN) explained:

“Everyone ate it, and they eat it, they enjoy it but then you still get from a few of them, the, oh, you can tell it's vegan, or kind of, it's not as good as a non-vegan cake. So, you know, they partake and may join in things like that, but yeah, of course they kinda make comments about it”.

Thus, while non-vegans might eat ‘vegan’ food, its consumption can incite comparison to ‘normal food’ and it may be cast as inferior.

**Conferences and continuing professional development (CPD)**

Attending conferences and CPD events is important for veterinary professionals. As with attending social workplace events, many VVPs interviewed said that they felt happy to attend industry events for educational or training purposes so long as they were offered a vegan-friendly meal option. As Laine (RVN) explained, “I always just make sure to let them know when I’m booking stuff that I am vegan, just so they can cater for me”, and similarly, Ruth (RVN) said, “It's just as long as I make them aware that I need vegan options, it's fine, yeah”. In terms of their overall experiences of conference and professional event catering, accounts varied with only a few participants reporting having had positive experiences. Most recalled negative ones.

**From bountiful buffets...**

Only a few participants had encountered what they considered to be exceptional plant-based provision at veterinary industry events:
“I go to [name] conference every year and they've always catered for me really well actually … It was actually a buffet so they did a normal buffet for everyone else and then they had like a little section of the buffet that was just vegan … It depends on the catering they have because obviously they move venues every year and it depends on just who's catering at a time. The first year it was just amazing. They brought me out so much food and I loved it and it was all really yummy … Yeah, it does make a difference” (Laine, RVN).

It is noteworthy that, again, as was pointed out earlier in regard to Siobhan’s quote about ‘normal’ pizza, Laine reproduces cultural ‘othering’ or decentring of plant-based food by calling the non-vegan buffet ‘normal’, reflecting the embedded normalisation of animal-based food in western culture. Worth noting here is the false distinction that exists between the food that vegans eat and the food that non-vegans eat. Both vegans and non-vegans eat plant-based food, in the case of the former, as their entire diet, and in the case of the latter, a large portion of their diet. Thus, non-vegans routinely eat ‘vegan food’ and in often copious quantities. Thus, it seems a deliberate act of cultural othering to cast food comprised entirely of plants as somehow ‘distinct’. Even though animal products may comprise only a portion of the ‘normal’ [omnivore] buffet; plant foods when associated with ‘veganism’ are suddenly seen as something different. This exemplifies the cultural significance and centrality of meat and animal products in the western context.

For Ruth (RVN), plant-based catering at veterinary conferences is not only improving, but it is sometimes considered better than the food served to non-vegans:

“That last one [conference] I was on, people were saying to me, where have you got that [food] from, because they’d all got some fried stuff and things that were a bit high fat and they were like, where have you managed to get hold of that? And I was saying it’s because it’s the vegan option”.

Ruth’s comment resonates with the discussion earlier involving Aisha, Siobhan and Bridget, whereby vegans attending events alongside non-vegans and ordering
plant-based food can visibilise veganism and promote plant-based food. Venues
doing well to provide adequate and quality (relating to variety, nutrition and taste)
plant-based catering may work to counter narratives casting ‘the vegan diet’ as
bland and restrictive. Further, these comments suggest that many non-vegans
may enjoy the option of plant-based food at such events. Indeed, this finds support
in the following comment:

“I always choose obviously a vegan option. I find it very difficult often to
get the vegan option because generally what happens is by the time I
get there some other bastard has taken the food anyway. The non-
vegans tend to get it” (Michael, VS).

If a variety of nutritious and delicious plant-based food can be enjoyed by vegans
and also non-vegans (including vegetarians and those with animal-product related
food allergies), it begs the question as to why catering at such events should not
be entirely plant-based. Advancing an argument for avoiding indirect discrimination
against vegans by providing plant-based catering, Horta (2018: 369–70) explains:

[W]e must remember again that nonvegans can eat vegan food too.
They can enjoy it too (unless it is poorly prepared, something that would
be unfair to vegans anyway). This means that when vegan options are
not available in public places, significant interests of vegans are
thwarted without equally important interests of nonvegans ever being at
stake.

Thus, it makes more sense to have a 100% plant-based buffet (or vegan pizza for
clinic meals) since both vegans and non-vegans can, and clearly do, consume
plant-based food, or, as a participant in this study suggested,59 make plant-based
foods the default and make animal products (meat and dairy) an option for those
who want to consume them.

59 Christopher (VS) said that if he had his own veterinary practice, he would routinely stock only
plant-based pet food and offer clients the option to have meat-based pet food ordered as
requested.
In contrast to the few positive experiences of professional catering at industry events, many VVPs lamented a lack of adequate provision for vegans. Clinton (VS) said, “The vegan food offered is either very basic (salad, crisps) or not very edible, even at the most prestigious congresses”. There was often a sense of resignation in the quips they made about being given ‘just salad’ or being left with hot chips as their only meal option: “I went to [a specific conference] this year … [they] didn’t really have anything catered for us [vegans] really. Yeah, I guess so there’s always chips (laughs)” (Siobhan, RVN). And Gabrielle (VS) said:

“I think most of the time we don’t really have many options. I remember this one conference … I remember going there and I kind of assumed there would be vegan options but no, there was some veggie options but they all had like cheese or eggs or something and I think the only thing was fries really, so I ate fries. Quite a lot of fries (laughs) … It was just a three-hour thing but it had food and I hadn’t eaten because I thought there’s definitely gonna be some vegan options (laughs). It was only fries, so (laughs). So yeah, there was fries and water (laughs)“.

There were further examples of inadequate catering for vegans at veterinary industry events:

“I’ve been on a couple of CPD days in the last two months. I’ve done one with [a pet food company] and one with [another company] they were all at hotels and that was pretty shocking really. I let them know in advance that I was vegan and, yeah, that’s really surprised me because I don’t usually do days out, but I treated myself to two CPD days this year and when it came to lunches, I had to stand there and go, is there anything I can eat here please?” (Josie, RVN).

“Oh, it’s pretty grim (laughs). I went to [specific conference] fairly consistently and they give you the option of selecting a vegan diet. So you’ve got the long tables and at the end it’s like the weirdo table, so the gluten free or the vege or the whatever else. It’s almost consistently
always some sort of like humus wrap or falafel or something easy” (Rowan, VS).

“I’m so fed up with falafel. Like, I just don’t want to eat another falafel. I just, it’s really put me off it, street-market, ready-made falafel; I just can’t eat it. I never choose to have falafel and that tends to be the go-to vegan option … Yeah, there’s usually not that much option. Usually it is just falafel and some crisps of something, but at least there’s something. There’s always an option but, I just, yeah, I can’t eat falafel anymore (laughs)” (Natasha, RVN).

Despite the food provided for vegans at industry events being poor in quality or lacking variety, comments like Natasha’s show how some vegans feel grateful for being provided for at all. This reveals the low expectations vegans often have of plant-based catering and illustrates the lack of attention that has historically been paid to catering for vegans.

**Improvements to plant-based catering**

Several VVPs thought the catering for vegans at industry events has improved in recent years, evident in the following quotes:

“Yeah, there was a CPD [event] I went to a couple years ago and I let them know [I am vegan] and when I got there, there was barely anything and I ended up with some chips and salad and that was it, you know. But I think things have moved on a lot since then. It was just a hotel in [UK county] and I don’t think they even really thought much about it, you know” (Ruth, RVN).

“[Conference catering] was quite often poor. This may be something that’s improving over time. Very often the vegan option was lettuce and tomatoes, chopped tomatoes for lunch, and my considered position on that is, ah, I do not look like a rabbit, and I can’t survive on just rabbit food. And I’ve expressed that opinion to various organi… And it’s not uniform; there
are better options sometimes as well. But sadly, that has been something I've encountered on a number of occasions” (Christopher, VS).

“I think it’s getting better and better. A couple of years ago just when I first started, I went to a conference and the food was really, really boring, it was just salad, the usual go to, quite horrendous. But this year I went to another conference and the food was amazing and there were more and more options so I think, yeah, I think it’s getting better” (Hayley, VS).

“You can either usually make requests of your meal requirements or they do inherently just have a vegan option, which yeah, even in the last three years that’s been a massive difference because they didn’t used to do that two or three years ago. So, usually now for external conferences, it’s fine as well” (Rebecca, VS).

“In the past two to three years, there has been an improvement and vegan vets and nurses are given the option or asked to tick our dietary requirement when registering to seminars and courses” (Clinton, VS).

The improvements that VVPs have observed in the provision of plant-based food for vegans at some veterinary related events is promising and indicates that perhaps the mainstreaming of veganism (Doyle, 2016), which has led to an increase in plant-based alternatives (Sethi, Tyagi and Anurag, 2016; Curtain and Grafenauer, 2016) is influencing the provision (inclusion, variety and quality) of vegan-friendly food. It could also reflect an increase in awareness of and demand for plant-based meal options and this may continue if the number of vegans in the UK and in the veterinary profession rises.

Self-catering

Owing to poor and inadequate plant-based catering at workplace and industry events, several VVPs said they self-cater as a strategy to ensure they have food to eat. As Paige (VS) explained:
“Conferences, any training weekend that I go away to, I’ve got a giant-sized packet of peanuts, and some butter-free flapjacks in my bag (laughs), because I know the flapjack will give me some energy (laughs)... If it’s attending and knowing full well I’m not going to be catered for from the point of view of food, I’ll just go and pack my own bag. I’ve had that for years”.

Another example is Gabrielle (VS), who said, “What I always do, I always carry something with me, like, even if it’s like a cereal bar (laughs) or something”.

Participants also mentioned milk for hot beverages consumed while at work. Practices often provide cows’ milk for staff to make hot drinks (tea and coffee) but since vegans do not consume dairy products, some VVPs provided their own plant-based milk:

“Not having soymilk as a locum veterinarian [is challenging]. I would go into a lot of clinics for short periods of time and when it comes to make coffee, and I drink a lot of coffee actually, there would not normally be soy milk available, so, fairly soon I would go and buy some but if I was only there for one or a couple of days, then I might not have any soy milk (laughs)” (Christopher, VS).

“Yeah, so I bring it [plant-based milk to work] myself … Yeah. It's one of those things, you know … in a little private practice vets, you know, you just, on my first day I just brought it with me because I just assumed there wasn't going to be any there” (Laine, RVN).

“I think I was the only vegan for a while but then I always used to get annoyed because I’d always forget my oat milk or whatever and then I wouldn't be able to have a cup of tea” (Lucie, RVN).

Notably, several VVPs worked at veterinary practices where plant-based milk was provided for everyone and was consumed by both vegan and non-vegan members of staff:
“Yeah, we do [have plant-based milk], yes. We order it. So, we had soya but then they actually asked us what we really wanted and we were like, oat milk please (laughs). So we do get a mixture of soya and oat milk now” (Siobhan, RVN).

“Yeah, there’s definitely a good number of people who are vegan [at the practice] and it’s enough now that people, that we now, because before they used to only offer like dairy milk for cups of tea and stuff and they now provide oat milk as well as dairy milk. So, there’s enough of us that request it. There’s a lot of people that also drink that that aren’t vegan as well” (Lucie, RVN).

Siobhan and Lucie both worked with other vegans and Lucie’s comment suggests that increased demand for plant-based alternatives within a practice (i.e. since more VVPs are employed there) might improve the chances of non-dairy milk being supplied by the employer. Ruth (RVN), however, worked at a practice where it was the non-vegans who requested and consumed the plant-based milk: “I don’t drink milk at work because I don’t drink tea or coffee at work. So, we don’t have it in for me, but they tend to have it themselves. It’s just something that they’ve moved onto”. Since people avoid dairy products and consume plant-based milk for various reasons (Sethi, Tyagi and Anurag, 2016), it is possible that plant-based milk may not carry with it the counter-hegemonic stigma associated with rejecting the consumption of meat. Importantly, the provision of milk for staff to share is significant because knowing that a colleague cannot use a product because they are vegan (a protected sincerely held belief), and not providing an alternative or leaving that staff member with no choice but to provide their own milk, may constitute discrimination. Thus, providing plant-based milk is a simple and easy way that employers can foster a more positive and equal work environment for all employees (The Vegan Society, 2020).
Nonhuman animals eating other animals

The use and promotion of meat-based commercial pet food

Many VVPs found it difficult to promote and use meat-based pet food in veterinary practice. Laine (RVN) was the only participant who seemed entirely comfortable recommending meat-based pet food but she recognised how others might see this as unusual with her being vegan: “Funny enough, the diet that I recommend the most personally for cats and dogs is a raw diet, which I think everyone gets a bit shocked that I’m so pro-raw because they’re like, but you’re vegan...”. When asked what aspects of their professional role they find challenging as vegan, many participants mentioned dealing with meat-based pet food. Jeremy (VS), for instance, replied, “Yeah, (long pause), probably the main thing would be the fact I’m recommending pet food with meat in it. That would be the main challenge”. Jeremy was uncomfortable with knowing that humans keeping animals as pets – particularly obligate carnivores such as cats – meant other animals were being killed to feed them: “I think it’s on advising clients to feed. And then I, you know, supporting and being, helping animals that are carnivores and that their survival depends on, you know, the death of animals, you know”. However, he later explained how he negotiates his discomfort:

“I accept the limitations of working in this profession when you’re supporting carnivores in their health and with limited vegan resources with which to feed them and limited evidence to support those as well. So, I don’t lose any sleep over it from that perspective” (Jeremy, VS).

Citing a lack of alternatives (discussed in Chapter 3 regarding the use and promotion of pharmaceuticals) is a strategy that vegans may use to reduce feelings of guilt associated with violating the vegan ethos and this is reflected in Jeremy’s comment because while he is uncomfortable promoting and selling meat-based pet food, he appears to mitigate his discomfort by emphasising lack of options.

Others also identified pet food as a challenging aspect of their role:
“Yes, I do struggle with a few things. The main thing is food for animals. That’s what I find hard sometimes, you know, advising customers or clients to feed their animals meat. Yeah, that makes me feel uncomfortable” (Hayley, VS).

“I’ve seen animals with known food allergies and we’ve got to talk about the only food this animal doesn’t react to is venison and pea or whether we’re talking commercial or homemade diet. (Sighs), I find that really hard sometimes. Especially when I know the animal could probably do quite well on a vegan diet or even a vegetarian diet and yet we’re having to look at venison because the owners go, ooh, what about this” (Paige, VS).

“One of the major issues is dog food and cat food because obviously that’s made of corpses and that’s quite difficult because obviously we’re supposed to recommend various dog foods. I find it very difficult to recommend them” (Michael, VS).

Veterinary practices are often incentivised (given bulk purchase discounts, rewards like gifts and vouchers and provided with promotional materials) to promote and sell a particular brand of commercially produced pet food. This relationship between veterinary practices and pet food companies is reflected in the following comments:

“We do have Royal Canin in our practice so that’s what I would promote” (Siobhan, RVN).

“I think most clinics will have a relationship with a particular [pet food] supplier, so Royal Canin in this instance. We don’t stock anything other than Royal Canin and I can’t imagine that would change because of the benefits they probably give us” (Camille, RVN).

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60 Michael’s use of the word ‘corpses’ here is noteworthy because it well-represents how vegans tend to view the bodies of animals made into ‘food’ both literally (a corpse rather than the euphemistic ‘meat’) and as abject (something causing aversion).
“We are what you call a Royal Canin practice, so that's the pet food we have. So, there isn't really an option to have a different one and we're owned by a [corporate company]. So we have to stock what they direct us to stock” (Ruth, RVN).

“[Corporate practices have] these relationships with Royal Canin and Hill’s already established and things … I know those practices, most of them, I think all of them now are like Royal Canin practices and that’s the contract they’ve got with them …” (Natasha, RVN).

These mutually beneficial relationships between pet food companies and veterinary practices – whereby the former offer incentives and discounts as gratitude for the latter’s custom and loyalty – makes it difficult for VVPs working in small animal veterinary practices to recommend alternative products. Being restricted to selling a specific pet food brand is challenging for some VVPs and this was especially the case for those in favour of plant-based pet foods. For example, Christopher (VS) said that the promotion of commercial meat-based pet food over plant-based alternatives is difficult for him because he strongly believes that plant-based diets are a viable and preferable option for dogs and cats:

“The other thing [I find challenging] would be prescribing veterinary prescription diets, which are full of meat, versus plant-based diets for companion animals. The latter is a topic I know about and I advocate for”.

Aisha (VS) tried to ease her discomfort through education:

“I think the diet thing is my main issue. When I’m having to recommend diets. That’s why I did a veterinary nutrition course. To try and like get around this but that’s an issue I have, telling them [clients] to have chicken and rice, fish and rice [for their pets]. That’s an issue. That’s a main thing I have”.

Self-educating is a strategy that has emerged as important for vegans when dealing with others with contrasting beliefs. Hirschler (2011: 168), who conducted
interviews with vegans, writes: “Education, primarily in the form of self-directed learning and discussions, was often sought as a means of providing the ability to defend against attacks on their beliefs and to become more effective advocates for the animals” (168). Aisha empowers herself as a vegan veterinarian to improve and strengthen her advocacy by learning more about nutrition for animals kept as companions so that should the opportunity arise, she can more confidently and effectively promote plant-based diets for pets.

Camille (RVN) used a different strategy to deal with her discomfort promoting commercial pet food:

“I guess that’s another [challenging] aspect, when I’m trying to do like consults and things like that and I’m talking about diets and whatnot and I guess it’s difficult … I still am, I guess, talking about meat-based diets and whatnot, yeah. I do try and, when I am recommending, I always will try and say, kind of, go for your human-quality meat because then I at least know it [farmed animals] should have had a better life and standard of life then … It’s something that’s kind of always there in the back of my mind”.

Fleur (RVN) too felt discomfort but emphasised the need for professionalism:

“Often we have clients say, you know, (sighs) my animal or my dog’s got a sensitive stomach, so we’re trying to feed only pure meat and sensitive [sensitivity diet] whatever and we’ve been feeding him reindeer ears and reindeer everything, and you just think, OK. And you have to, you know, again, take a step back and just say, you know, we’re not here to discuss this [animal ethics]. We are here to discuss whatever [the pet’s condition], but yeah, it can be difficult”.

For Rowan (VS), resignation and compartmentalisation were strategies he used to deal with his discomfort promoting meat-based pet food: “It is very difficult to ascertain where it’s [pet food] sourced from and etcetera, so I suppose that’s a challenge but an accepted part of my job role and I try not to think about it too much”. Rebecca (VS) also spoke of altering her mindset and rationalised to lessen her discomfort:
“There’s probably always some elements of self-preservation if you, and there’s still some elements of cognitive dissonance you have to, everyone engages with in order to deal with some aspects of these sorts of things … I don’t routinely recommend any particular dog food. It’s not really most of what happens on the job, but there are some specific foods, cats with kidney disease or there are certain foods that are medicated for certain conditions, yeah. You will recommend and it just flows out of my mouth like, oh, it’s Royal Canin Renal [diet] and you can have chicken, beef or fish (laughs), and it is something I am aware of that I am doing but I just kinda have to… And I think about it and I still kinda shelve it for my eventual thoughts but it’s not something I will really deal with that moment because there just are no alternatives unfortunately”.

As with VVPs having to use and sell pharmaceuticals, Rebecca expressed resignation at there being a lack of alternatives to meat-based pet food. Her comments reflected the need for professionalism and prioritising the patient, strategies that have emerged in other VVPs’ accounts of feeling challenged by various aspects of their professional role:

“I would be considered remiss if I didn’t talk about it [prescription diets] … Ultimately, I’m still in that moment prioritising the animal you can see in front of you. I’m doing what anyone else does who is not vegan, which is if you can’t see, you don’t think of it as much, you know. Whereas that cat is in front of me; if it was the cat and then this is the chicken we’re gonna kill for it, I obviously wouldn’t be able to do that (laughs) but because it’s not immediately obvious to me, I just sort of have to sometimes let that slide… And, yeah, there’s not really any plant-based alternatives for these things and I would be considered to not be doing my job well, from a legal standpoint as well as probably my own intrinsic standpoint if I hadn’t spoken about those things [prescription diets]. So it’s a bit of a yeah, it’s a hypocrisy, but (laughs)” (Rebecca, VS).
As mentioned in Chapter Two: Context and literature, Greenebaum (2012a) found that vegans may feel discomfort if they fail to live up to their own standards or break the ‘rules’ of veganism, which can lead them to feel like hypocrites and frauds. Thus, the use of the term ‘hypocrisy’ here is significant in that it reveals the depth of some vegans’ personal commitment to veganism such that there is a sense of self judgement, perhaps disappointment, guilt, or shame, in participating in acts that violate the vegan ethos.

Like Rebecca, others who were uncomfortable with promoting or selling meat-based pet food mentioned prioritising their patient as a means to lessen their discomfort. Consider Siobhan (RVN), who said:

“I think I have to prioritise the patient's welfare. So if they have a special unique dietary requirement, and we do have Royal Canin in our practice so that's what I would promote, and I think we have to put the welfare of the animal [patient] first”.

Several participants recognised speciesism as underlying the unquestioned feeding of farmed animals to ‘companion animals’. For instance, Aisha (VS), when discussing her consultation process for recommending diets for patients, said:

“Even as a vegan you have categories of sentience in your head, right. So yeah, I don’t want to kill anything but if I had to choose between a chicken and a fish, you’re making all the mental arithmetic in your head. Well, what can I say [to the client] that’s less harmful, you know? So yeah, saying things like this for me doesn’t sit well because I’m like, oh well, your dog has gastroenteritis and now, I know they already eat chicken, but I’m encouraging you to go and kill a chicken so you can make the dog feel better. So, it’s hard…”.

Another example is Aaron (VS), who stated:

“There will be vegans here [employed at the practice] who, for example, wouldn’t have thought deeply enough about speciesism and the feeding of dead pigs to other animals and so on; they would think that’s fine, right, and this is again, so like, I'm [not] representative of all vegans, but
certainly from where I am, that's completely not fine. But we've
domesticated and imprisoned the bunch of animals and said now we’re
going to feed you your brethren (sighs), and created this sector that’s
now run by a bunch of capitalists (laughs), so it's madness, but it is
where we are”.

Animal welfare issues and the detrimental effects of animal agriculture on climate
change has prompted the development of alternatives for meat-based pet food
(Ward, Oven and Bethencourt, 2020). Jeremy (VS) had considered some of the
proposed alternatives to feeding pets like dogs and cats on traditional meat-based
protein but found these to be somewhat problematic:

“Yora is a brand that’s coming in with insect food but there’s still some
question marks about the ethics of that still. I mean there’s some level
of consciousness within an insect and if there’s billions of insects in one
bag of food then, you know, maybe you’re doing as much damage as
[killing] one pig”.

Aisha (VS) felt that promoting and using prescription meat-based pet food was an
aspect of her professional role that troubled her commitment to veganism:

“[Being a vet], it does affect it [commitment to veganism] because
again, I think, yeah, when I’m recommending certain foods and things to
people, it’s definitely one [issue]. A lot of the scientific, the medical
diets, like your liver diets, your kidney diets, or whatever, there aren’t
any vegan alternatives for it, so that is it if our patients have got liver
disease or whatever. That's all I can offer them. So that makes it
difficult, it does. So, then I’m constantly breaking that [commitment to
veganism], as a vet”.

Prescription pet food formulated for animals suffering from specific diseases or
health conditions (i.e. diabetes, pancreatitis, thyroid conditions, kidney or liver
disease, allergies, arthritis) merges ‘the medicinal’ with the nutritional, making it
difficult for veterinary professionals to avoid its prescription without risking being
seen as professionally negligent. Some of these diets are designed to alter
nutrient intake (for example, low in fat, carbohydrates or calories, low or high in
protein, exclusion of certain proteins) but others have therapeutic components added to prevent or reduce symptoms of disease (i.e. antioxidants, fish oil, glucosamine and chondroitin for arthritis). Large, market-dominating pet nutrition companies such as Hill’s Pet Nutrition, owned by megacorporation Colgate-Palmolive (Hill’s, 2020), bond with the veterinary profession and monopolise the prescription pet food market. In presenting the pet food as ‘medical’, and by only guaranteeing therapeutic efficacy when fed as the sole source of nutrition, pet food companies that manufacture prescription diets compel veterinary professionals and their clients to use prescription pet food or risk animals’ health, or accusations of malpractice.

Veterinary medicine gives rise to many pressures and tensions for veterinary professionals emerging as a result of paradoxes stemming from how humans think about and treat different nonhuman animals. Consequently, many dedicated and passionate individuals leave the profession. On this topic, Yeates (2013: 3) explains:

> We [veterinary professionals] are personally involved in and affected by the pressures, tensions and conflicts we experience. These can cause stress, disillusionment and anger. Some people even leave the veterinary professions, and this is both terribly sad for them and a great loss for animals - especially if it is some of the most welfare concerned people who are vulnerable to these stresses.

VVPs are surely among those most concerned about animals’ welfare. Gabrielle’s (VS) discomfort with various aspects of veterinary practice appeared irreconcilable with her veganism:

> “I’ve met other vegan vets and they are perfectly comfortable with pharmaceuticals and with the foods and they don’t think about it. To me, it does bother me and I’ll be completely honest with you that for a while now I’ve been actually thinking of considering doing something else [as a job]. Just because I feel like there is that kind of debate in my mind of what’s right, what’s wrong, and obviously I know someone needs to do the job but whether I’m comfortable enough to be recommending
certain things, yeah, depends on, I guess, the level that affects you and which, I dunno, power you have to do anything about it really”.

For VVPs who struggle with promoting and selling meat-based pet foods as part of their professional role, and who have not found or adopted strategies to mitigate their discomfort, the option of being able to promote or sell plant-based diets for pets (or potentially pet food made from cultured meat in the future61) may enable them to feel better about themselves, perform their role with less discomfort and could resolve this one troubling aspect of their professional role.

Feeding meat to hospitalised patients

Many VVPs struggled with the feeding of meat-based pet food to hospitalised patients. As Aaron (VS) explained, “[T]he bottom line is we are feeding dead animals to our patients. That’s horribly uncomfortable for me, you know. We have a food prep room that’s full of dead animals”. Despite being in a senior role at his practice, he expressed feelings of powerlessness:

“So on a daily basis, we do [hospital] rounds and people [staff] say this dog ate chicken and the dog ate fish and someone posts about can we get frozen chicken? … and I can’t, what can I do about that? Because there’s nothing I can do…”.

When asked if he felt able to express his discomfort to his colleagues, he replied:

“No, I keep it to myself… now’s not the time to flag my discomfort with that practice because then it takes me down the path that ends up with me saying that actually I don’t see myself being here – because I don’t agree with what we do here (laughs), so, you know (laughs)”.  

61 Cultured meat, invitro meat or ‘clean meat’ is animal flesh cultivated in a laboratory setting that ideally would not require the suffering or death of sentient beings to produce it for consumption. However, there are currently ethical concerns about ‘lab-grown meat’ within CAS (see https://www.cleanmeat-hoax.com/). See also Harmless Hunt cat food made from cultured mouse flesh https://becauseanimals.com/
Like Gabrielle earlier, Aaron implies that his discomfort with some aspects of his professional role and a perceived irreconcilability between his veterinary role and his veganism may see him exit the profession.

Ruth (RVN) found feeding hospitalised patients canned meat challenging:

“When I’m working with the animals and things obviously, I just feed them the food that we, you know, like normal dog food. It’s post-op [post-operative], we just feed them tinned food and sometimes I’m a bit, not really keen on handling it because obviously it's more obvious that it's meat isn't it than giving biscuits and that sort of thing”.

As established, VVPs often harbour an aversion to meat and, as before, the aversion seems stronger when the meat product more closely resembles flesh. Hence, the size and appearance of the meat is relevant here and perhaps meat presented as small, dry kibble better disguises the fleshiness or meatiness of the food.

The hierarchisation of values was evident in speaking with VVPs. In essence, to 'be professional' means to adhere to established traditions and rules. Professional codes of conduct reflect the importance to professions of order and conformity. Thus, there is little room for nonconformity in a profession without risking violating the professional code. It is hence, perhaps, unsurprising the different ways in which VVPs hierarchise personal and professional values, but it is noteworthy. The notion of ‘professionalism’ was mentioned in Chapter Two: Context and literature and, in addition to requiring physicians to subordinate their own interests to the interests of others, professionalism requires professionals to “be able to reflect dispassionately upon decisions made and actions taken, not only to improve their knowledge and skills, but also to bring balance to their professional and personal lives” (Swick, 2000: 615). As a strategy then, when faced with challenges, VVPs elevate the need for professionalism and professional values above their personal values, which is a way to negotiate or diffuse tension between these value sets. Evidence of professionalism as a strategy arose in many VVPs’ accounts, often linked to the need to prioritise one’s patient:
“Feeding animals meat [is challenging]. We have a lot of chicken for our sick animals that stay in hospital, but I guess that doesn't bother me too much as long as they’re eating and getting better … I'll feed the animals meat products. If there was a very strict vegan who wasn't OK with touching the meat or the meat products, they wouldn't be able to fill their duties to feed the hospital patients, but that's not something that any of my colleagues are familiar with. We all prioritise patients' wellbeing first” (Siobhan, RVN).

“When you are focused on trying to save a patient you’re working with I find I become very focused on that patient. It's often my kidney cats or my pancreatitis dogs … and I need to get them to eat something otherwise I know the patient that I am caring for is potentially going to die but it doesn't have to if I can get its body working again … I go right, I [have] got this patient, my patient. I have to get my patient healthy and it does mean I’m uncomfortable, and I will go and I will just go and find what I can that will hopefully make my patient eat but I am really, more so now than I was a few years ago, even as vegetarian I was uncomfortable. Being vegan I’m more uncomfortable but I still do it because I want that patient to survive” (Josie, RVN).

Josie’s repeated and emphatic use of the word ‘my’ here reflects the personal relationship she develops with her patient and the strength of her professional commitment to that individual’s wellbeing.

Another example is Lucie (RVN):

“I suppose the main thing that I do is I don’t let the job, like, let my feelings go above my job. I won’t refuse to do certain things. If a patient needs handfeeding, I will feed chicken. I will feed meat because that’s what needs to be done, and I just have to put that bit [vegan values] aside for the time being”.

Again, in the veterinary setting, patients’ needs and professionalism subordinates Lucie’s own interests in and commitment to veganism.
A further example is Camille (RVN):

“I don’t really like doing it but I work alone at weekends and I’m not gonna stop that animal eating over a weekend because at the end of the day, yes, it’s not nice, but I’m there to also care for the patient. Just because I don’t like feeding them, I can’t turn around and go, well I’m the only one here all weekend so you’re not going to have any food because that’s quite a contradictory one, where you have to think it’s, I guess it goes back to the, you know, yes, it’s not great but these animals are here now so we do have to look after them the best we can and minimise where we can but certain species just can’t be vegetarian and as long as, I guess, the insects [being fed to exotics] are fed and watered (laughs) and have the best life they can before, there’s not much we can really do without starving other animals”.

Like Lucie, Camille emphasised the importance of professionalism and prioritising the patient.

Also reflected in VVPs’ comments about feeding meat to hospitalised patients is a sense of disempowerment at having a difficult choice. They can either refuse to feed animal products to patients, believing this may risk the health and wellbeing of their patients and potentially risk their job, or they must participate in the purchasing, handling and feeding of meat to animal patients, leading them to rationalise to mitigate their discomfort. This dilemma seems reminiscent of debates about whether vegans who are parents should feed animal products to their children owing to concerns about nutritional wellbeing (see Milburn, 2021). Such dilemmas raise questions about ‘obligations’ (to dependents), and ‘commitment’ (to sincerely held beliefs), and ‘compromise’ (with other adults or the status quo). For VVPs, cultured meat (also called invitro meat or ‘clean meat’), which is animal flesh cultivated in a laboratory setting, might solve such dilemmas as the production of such meat for consumption would not, ideally, involve the suffering or death of sentient animals (Ward, Oven and Bethencourt, 2020).
As several participants identified, it is, of course, speciesism at the core of VVPs’ dilemma over feeding meat-based pet food to their animal patients. Camille (RVN) exemplified this point:

“Yeah, [we feed patients live] crickets and stuff. So not [live] mice or anything like that. I wouldn’t ever, and I know it’s probably a bit speciesist but, luckily we aren’t allowed to do live feeding of like mice and things because that’s something I’d never do so. I worked in [a non-UK country] and they were live-feeding rabbits to birds [raptors] and I didn’t have anything to do with it. I was just like, no. I went as far away as I could and just refused to do it … I was vegetarian then. I wasn’t vegan. I was vegetarian but even then, I was like, I’m not doing anything like that and I know it’s speciesist between rabbits and insects but I just, I don’t know, there’s, I think, yeah, it was just difficult. I don’t know why I have that. I wouldn’t do it, feed a live mouse to a snake but I would feed a [live] cricket to a, I guess because (pause), I don’t know. It’s a hard one but I don’t know”.

The embeddedness of speciesism is reflected in Camille’s comment here as she recognises her own propensity to view animals through a speciesist lens and seems uncomfortable about why she can feed live crickets to patients but not feed live mice to patients. Camille’s susceptibility to speciesism despite her recognition and rejection of it is not uncommon for vegans (Hirscher, 2011). Her struggle to reconcile her duty of care to her patient, which involves feeding live animals, reflects the earlier discussion of professionalism, and the ways in which VVPs negotiate through compromise, however uncomfortable it is for them, and how they prioritise professionalism – such as the requirement to subordinate their own interests in performing their professional role to meet the needs of patients – above their personal values and commitment to veganism.

Chapter summary

This chapter began with a discussion of consumption and commensality, and established consumption as being political, and commensality as important for
human connection. Regarding the former, to understand the social significance of consumption to VVPs’ experiences in the small animal veterinary setting, it is essential to appreciate the act of consumption as extensive and perpetual. Such an appreciation reveals how casting veganism as ‘just a diet’ is wrong and reductive, as is any underestimation of the impact that ubiquitous animal consumption has on vegans. Understanding that consumption is not only a personal (and political) undertaking but also an economic, capitalistic enterprise is essential to illuminating the paradox in small animal veterinary practice whereby the bodies of nonhuman animals are simultaneously cared for and consumed.

In terms of commensality, to appreciate the degree unto which one’s consumption choices can impact interpersonal relationships is crucial to understanding VVPs’ workplace experiences. Through highlighting how commensality is beneficial to humans forging interpersonal connections, the consequences of deviation from dominant communal eating practices becomes better appreciated and understood. Recognising the importance of eating and or sharing food with others is essential to emphasising what is at stake for vegans who refuse to consume animals or be around others who do so, who decline invitations to events involving animal consumption, or who act as vegan killjoys. Thus, sociological perspectives on the topics of consumption and commensality are essential to understanding VVPs’ accounts of their workplace experiences.

This chapter has explored how the normality and ubiquity of meat and other animal products in small animal veterinary practice is challenging for VVPs and various strategies that VVPs use to negotiate discomfort stemming from humans’ consumption of other animals in the veterinary setting have been identified. These strategies include VVPs negotiating discomfort through boundary maintenance so as to avoid being around colleagues if animals are being eaten. Also, through declining to participate in or attend workplace events that pageant or spectacularise meat and its consumption; or alternatively, attending such events to lead by example, visibilise veganism and showcase the plant-based diet.

Inadequate food provision for vegans was often an issue with self-catering emerging as a strategy for VVPs to ensure they have suitable, sufficient food and drink while at work and events. There was also evidence that veganism influences
consumption practices in small animal veterinary practices where vegans are employed. This was seen through non-vegans providing plant-based food for staff to share while at work, and vegans bringing plant-based food into the workplace to share with colleagues, along with the growing popularity of plant-based milk.

VVPs mentioned feeling uncomfortable about using and promoting meat-based pet food and veterinarians especially seemed to feel disempowered about needing to be professional and promote meat-based pet food, particularly prescription diets. When required to feed hospitalised patients, VVPs often struggled with aversion to meat and thoughts about speciesism. They negotiated this discomfort by prioritising their patient, altering their mindset (stepping back, employing cognitive dissonance), expressing resignation and accepting the status quo, citing a lack of options, and emphasising the need for professionalism. Some engaged in self-education on the subject of nutrition while others subtly exerted influence, such as suggesting clients purchase more ethical meat (i.e. human grade), delivering facts about pet food and its production to clients.

This chapter also touched upon some of the cultural aspects of meat consumption and psychocultural mechanisms such as the meat paradox and cognitive dissonance. The culture of a society largely shapes and influences the culture within professions, and this is the case within the UK veterinary profession. The effects of culture on VVPs and their workplace experiences are explored in the following chapter.
Chapter Six: Culture

In the previous chapter, VVPs' experiences of commensality and catering in small animal veterinary practice were presented as well as a discussion of some of the strategies that VVPs employ to manage discomfort arising from the presence and consumption of meat and dairy in small animal veterinary practice in the diets of colleagues and in pet food. This chapter complements the previous chapter through its focus on culture, and outlines VVPs’ perceptions of the environment in which they work as being heavily imbued in ‘meat culture’. It also identifies some of the psychocultural mechanisms that VVPs encounter working within this environment: such as speciesism, ‘the meat paradox’, and ‘cognitive dissonance’. This chapter also presents VVPs’ thoughts about and experiences of negative vegan stereotyping in their workplaces, their concerns about vegan stigma and how they perceive their colleagues to view vegans, veganism and vegan activists.

The concept of culture can be used in several ways, such as to mean “way of life”; in reference to the “learned, non-biological aspects of human life”; as a synonym for civilisation in opposition to nature, and it can also be synonymously linked to ideology in reference to the way that social groups adopt certain “attitudes, beliefs and practices”, which includes “tastes in food” (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner, 2006: 92). Culture and ideology are linked and, like culture, ‘ideology’ can have several meanings; one of which is “a systematic body of ideas articulated by a particular group of people” (Storey, 2009: 2). With this meaning in mind, within the veterinary setting, there exists ‘the profession’s ideology’, which, as established in Chapter Two: Context and literature, aligns with welfarism, meaning a system within which nonhuman animals are legitimatised as beings apt for humans’ use. Since welfarism is both promoted throughout veterinary training (Pedersen, 2019) and because the majority of veterinary professionals are not vegan, many veterinary professionals likely align their personal ideology regarding nonhuman animals with the profession’s ideology, and believe that humans’ use of other animals is justified as long as the animals are subject to certain welfare standards. As established in Chapter Two: Context and literature, vegans, in contrast, tend to lean towards abolitionism, and share an ideology based on a rejection of the
premise that humans should indiscriminately use nonhuman animals or that their use and their consumption can ever be ‘humane’.

Veganism is an ideology but so too is carnism. Some ideologies involve “masking, distortion, or concealment” and can “work in the interests of the powerful against the interests of the powerless” (Storey, 2009: 3) and, as Joy (2011) argues, carnism functions in this way. Ideology manifests in more than our thoughts or idea(l)s and exists in “the practices of everyday life” and in the way “certain rituals and customs have the effect of binding us to the social order” (Storey, 2009: 4-5). This featured in Chapter Five: Consumption in the rituals and practices around commensality and food consumption in veterinary practice and at veterinary events. The significance of the practices of everyday life is further explored in this chapter through looking at the cultural normalisation of events that involve the use and consumption of nonhuman animals for exhibition and entertainment.

Arguably, it is ideology that makes the cultural political. Since not everyone necessarily adopts the dominant cultural ideology or subscribes to cultural norms, the term ‘subculture’ denotes a “system of values, attitudes, modes of behaviour and lifestyles of a social group within a larger whole” of which some groups comprise ‘countercultures’ that deviate from cultural norms and adopt attitudes, beliefs and practices that “run counter to conventionally accepted values and patterns of behaviour” (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner, 2006: 384, 85). In this sense, veganism comprises both a subculture and a counterculture. The ubiquity and normality of meat eating alongside other socio-cultural forms of animal consumption in western societies is what Potts (2016: 19) terms ‘meat culture’; that is, “all the tangible and practical forms through which the ideology [carnism] is expressed and lived”. Meat culture is dominant in the contemporary western world.

Paradoxes in how humans view and treat other animals are rife in western culture. As Aaltola (2019: 1) explains, “Western cultures have witnessed an intriguing phenomenon in recent years: People are both more concerned for animal wellbeing and consume more animal products than ever before”. Or, as Whiting (2010: no page) states, we are a society that “values low priced eggs and

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62 While veganism remains counter to the dominate [meat] culture in the western context, its mainstreaming could change its status in this regard as it achieves greater socio-cultural visibility and broader social acceptance.
simultaneously abhors the presence of puppy mills”. Paradox is also evident in our propensity for categorisation and how a rabbit can have a vastly different experience of life depending on how he or she is labelled (Stewart and Cole, 2009). Herzog, Vore and New (1989: 181) state that the complex and paradoxical nature of humans’ relationships with other animals is no more evident than in the veterinary setting:

Veterinarians, perhaps more than any other professional group, are faced with ethical dilemmas and conflicts associated with their relations with animals and their owners. In this regard, these individuals exemplify the complexities that often characterize human-animal relationships.

This chapter explores some of the paradoxes in how humans think about and relate to other animals. Through speaking with VVPS – whose vegan praxis provides them with unique insight and the capacity to see what might otherwise be taken for granted – indeed, small animal veterinary practice is revealed to be a prime site for examining the kinds of complexities and paradoxes attached to contemporary human-animal relations.

One paradox that VVPs frequently noted is the ‘meat paradox’. Loughnan, Haslam and Bastian (2010: no page) explain, “Many people enjoy eating meat but few enjoy harming or killing other sentient creatures. These inconsistent beliefs create a ‘meat paradox’; people simultaneously dislike hurting animals and like eating meat”. As previously established, being an ‘animal lover’ is a key motivation for many veterinary professionals dedicating their professional lives to helping animals (Ware, 2018; Clarke and Knights, 2018a); thus, it could be said that veterinary professionals, as animal healers, epitomise the virtue of preventing animal harm. Perhaps a reason why there are not more VVPs is because the meat paradox manifests not only in the behaviour of the individual, but also in broader culture. Hence, VVPs’ encounters with the meat paradox in the veterinary profession likely reflect wider paradoxical societal views about nonhuman animals.

It is thought that the meat paradox causes individuals to attempt to reconcile the conflict between their beliefs (animals should be loved and protected) and their actions (consuming animals). Aaltola (2019: 3) explains there are many ways that
an individual whose values and actions are in discord might lessen ensuing discomfort; for example, they may employ strategic ignorance, which involves “a state of ambiguity or denial by willfully ignoring beliefs that one deems as threatening to one’s choices”. Alternatively, or perhaps even simultaneously, they may engage in disassociation by avoiding information about or avoiding being confronted with facts about how nonhuman animals are bred, raised, used and killed, or they may employ cognitive dissonance (Rothgerber, 2020). While strategic ignorance, disassociation and cognitive dissonance are three factors intimately related to the meat paradox, it is the latter that is the focus here, but not because it is the only or the most significant theory linked to the meat paradox. Rather, it is focal because there is indication that veterinary students employ cognitive dissonance to deal with the meat paradox (Mariti et al., 2018) as well as other ethical dilemmas they face in the workplace (Hernandez et al., 2018) and because VVPs, when interviewed, frequently mentioned it.

The theory of cognitive dissonance derives from social psychologist, Leon Festinger, who observed that human beings strive for inner consistency; yet inconsistencies between what we think and how we act do arise (Festinger, 1985). Festinger argues that when attempts to rationalise such inconsistencies fail, individuals may experience psychological discomfort and will feel motivated to try and reduce the dissonance (discomfort/inconsistency) and achieve consonance (comfort/consistency). Those who harbour inconsistency between their beliefs and actions may employ various strategies to reduce discomfort. They may change their belief or their behaviour, justify either the behaviour or belief, ignore or dismiss any information that conflicts with the belief or behaviour (Festinger, 1985). In addition, when attempting to reduce dissonance associated with conflicting beliefs and behaviours, a person may “actively avoid situations and information which would likely increase the dissonance” (Festinger, 1985: 3). Aaltola (2019: 3) writes: “Cognitive dissonance often implies dissociation, whereby one omits to acknowledge the animal behind the meat—the origin of meat is dissociated from living animals, as ‘meat’ and ‘animals’ become two unrelated categories”. Regarding vegan and non-vegan relationships, the re-relating of these categories either implicitly (merely by being vegan) or overtly (by speaking out)
may cause non-vegans to react defensively towards vegans, to feel negatively about them, and or to avoid them altogether (Vandermoere, et al., 2019). VVPs seemed aware of the mechanism of cognitive dissonance and perceived it in their colleagues who considered themselves ‘animal lovers’ while consuming animals in various ways. Importantly, it is not the individuals who employ cognitive dissonance who are being critiqued here, but rather the system that forces them to. While cognitive dissonance appears as a psychological concept, it is equally, if not more so, a socio-cultural one. In speaking about the more historically embedded concept of ‘omnivore akrasia’, which involves having a belief yet acting against it, Aaltola (2019: no page) writes: …it can be argued that akrasia ought to be approached also and even primarily as a social phenomenon, sparked by the confusing messages we get from the social institutions surrounding us. This would mean that also omnivore’s akrasia stems largely from social contradictions (we are told to both love animal wellbeing and lives, and eat dead animals, who suffered), which underlines the power of social causes behind one’s desires and lack of moral resolution.

Just as western institutions (law, science, education) project and reinforce mixed messages about non-human animals, the veterinary industry also exhibits mixed messages about nonhuman animals. The blurring of lines between animals as ‘friends’ and as ‘food’ (Cole and Morgan, 2016), and sometimes both, exists in society as well as in the veterinary profession broadly. VVPs notice this and are positioned to navigate it as vegans working in a profession that manifests the meat paradox and speciesism through being simultaneously dedicated to animal welfare/wellbeing while enmeshed in the AIC.

**The meat paradox in veterinary practice**

Apart from the ubiquity of meat and animal products in the veterinary practice, as discussed in Chapter Five: Consumption, the meat paradox is reflected in certain events, such as the celebratory opening of a veterinary practice featuring the roasting of a pig (hog roast). While pigs are not typically seen as patients in small
animal veterinary practice (unless the pig is a pet), there is an apparent irony observed in the pageanting of a pig's body for consumption at an event such as a veterinary open day or the opening of a veterinary practice, since such as event is held by and for a profession dedicated to promoting and delivering animal health and wellbeing. Thus, in such a case, veterinary practice is a specific social site where the meat paradox comes into view. Other sites where this paradox may come into view are animal rescue centres or sanctuaries (see Wood, 2019) and zoos (Brando and Lynning Harfeld, 2014) that serve meat and other animal products to visitors.

Hog roasts are not unusual at veterinary industry events, and in 2019, an event for the opening of a new veterinary clinic at Hong Kong City University was criticised by activists for including a hog roast in its festivities and, thus, killing animals before helping any (Mok, 2019). In Chapter Five: Consumption, several participants said they would decline to attend a workplace event that involved a hog roast because of their aversion to the sight and smell of the pig being cooked and consumed. Some noted a perceived paradox in relation to pig roasting at a veterinary-related event:

“If it's an invitation to a hog-roast, nah. That’s an absolute no, sorry. As much as I love to spend time with you [colleagues], a hog roast? At that point I will say really guys, that’s hypocritical. You wanna eat meat, that’s fine, but that's Mrs [Jones'] fluffy cat on that stake. That’s Mr [Roger's] Labrador on that stake just as easily, and to say it’s not, is pure conditioning. So you all sit around there and slice up a pig, Pavlov one, Pavlov two, nah, not for me thanks” (Paige, VS).

Paige connects the meat paradox to social conditioning (in this case, people being conditioned to adopt carnism). In contrast, Christopher (VS) offered an explanation as to why it shouldn’t seem paradoxical that animals are consumed at veterinary events:

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“The veterinary profession as I mentioned with my experiences in veterinary school is quite heavily invested in the current dominant paradigm that there are various sectors of animal use across society. There is companion animal ownership, there’s wild and zoological animal keeping, and there is very much food animals and animal slaughtering and that’s all part of animal use and the veterinary profession being there to support all of it. So, I don’t see it [meat-eating at veterinary events] being in conflict with the dominant ethos and paradigm of the veterinary profession at large. I think it is consistent with that”.

While most participants viewed the veterinary profession’s relationships to various facets of meat culture as strange, Christopher seems to recognise the anthropocentric framework of veterinary medicine and how the veterinary profession fulfils the social contract in serving the public at large by proving expertise in animal medicine to the various realms of the AIC, which benefits society by making animals fit for public consumption.

Like Michael (VS) in Chapter Five: Consumption, who refused to support or attend fundraising events for charities who support animal exploitation, Aisha (VS) observed the meat paradox in animal charities hosting barbeques to fundraise:

“If someone said they’re having a barbeque to raise money for whatever, I’d probably be like, that seems ridiculous. Killing animals to raise money for animals. So, I wouldn’t be part of that, or I’d be like, let’s have a vegan barbeque instead … if someone’s having a barbeque to raise funds or something, I would probably be like, you know what, I don’t really feel comfortable coming. I think it’s crazy we’re killing animals to raise money”.

The meat paradox thrives on non-reflection and VVPs can puncture the invisibility of the paradox. While Aisha provides a hypothetical situation, her refusal to participate in such an event, and through exposing the meat paradox, Aisha invokes the figure of the vegan killjoy (Twine, 2014) and visibilises the cultural paradox in the simultaneous ‘saving’ and ‘selling’ of animal bodies.
While some participants were critical of the meat paradox, all had been non-vegan themselves at some point in time. Hence, several VVPs expressed an understanding of the mechanisms of social and cultural conditioning and of ‘cognitive dissonance’ as a response to the misalignment of one’s values (loving animals) and one’s actions (eating them). As Aisha (VS) explained:

“Most people have a narrative already. It’s like I love animals doesn’t mean I love animals. It means I love some animals … but you can still love something and be OK with what you think is necessary for normalised usage of them, you know. So, it’s also that society allows it in general, not just the veterinary field but within the veterinary field it’s more compartmentalised, and more made the norm. It’s just the norm, you know, and people don’t question the norm and it’s more comfortable not to question the norm. They’ve gone their entire lives like this”.

Aisha’s comment is a reminder that the veterinary industry does not exist in a vacuum and its relationship to meat culture likely functions as a microcosm of wider society whereby meat-eating is hegemonic and the utility-based categorisation of nonhuman animals and their instrumentalisation is social sanctioned, normalised and thus goes largely unquestioned.

Aisha (VS) also expressed how she felt about the veterinary profession’s paradoxical relationship to animals and the normalisation and ubiquity of animal consumption within the profession:

“Sad. Like frustrating. Yeah, it’s frustrating and just, I don’t know, it just kinda devalues the entire profession. Yeah, and unnecessary. It’s unnecessary because all these people [veterinary professionals] have the complete capacity to be just, it’s purely just social conditioning, which is maybe a good thing because that means it can change, you know. So, there is actually the positive in that, but it is just out of social conditioning. And generally, people do care, you know, so it’s frustrating…”
Aisha’s use of the words ‘sad’ and ‘frustrating’ echoes Hirschler’s (2011) study of vegans and his finding that vegans often felt disappointed in and developed an altered view of informed people who continue to use and consume animals.

Like Paige and Aisha, Ruth (RVN) also saw social conditioning as the issue:

“I always find it a shame that not more veterinary nurses and vets are going down that road [becoming vegan] … but it’s what they’re conditioned into, isn't it really, eating meat. And it would just be so nice if they looked into it and realised what they could do, you know, but whether they will or not, it's sort of something to be seen. But I have noticed over the last few years there are more [veterinary professionals] turning vegan, definitely, you know”.

Notably, Ruth observes veganism to be increasing in the veterinary profession and she implies that an increase in VVPs may result in the profession undergoing some kind of resultant transformation.

While some VVPs saw meat culture in the veterinary profession as underpinned by social conditioning, Christopher (VS), seemed less hopeful about transformation taking place within the profession:

“It would be a major change for the profession to stop being invested in the food animal industry, the mass farming of animals, sometimes intensively, and the slaughtering of those animals. So, vegan ideology would mean giving that up … and the veterinary profession is not going to make those changes anytime soon because that would be a major, major paradigm shift. There would need to be an awful lot more support and pressure for those changes before anything like that was contemplated”.

These perspectives perhaps forge a false dichotomy between social conditioning and a major shift in investment and ideology but what is clear is that VVPs reflect on the current values and practices of the veterinary profession and consider the possibility and improbability of change.
Speciesism in veterinary practice

As established, speciesism is prejudice against nonhuman animals and involves humans viewing and treating other animals differently because of their species membership, despite members of various species sharing similar capacities and interests. Speciesism is inherently anthropocentric since it either a) privileges humans’ interests over the interests of all other animals and or it, b) presumes that humans have a legitimate claim to determine which kinds of nonhuman animals deserve moral consideration and if so, how much. Thus, through material and discursive categorisation of some animals as ‘food’ and others as ‘companions’ (Stewart and Cole, 2009), speciesism, and therefore anthropocentrism, underlie the meat paradox because without the socially constructed categories into which nonhuman animals are consigned, individuals may not come to find themselves simultaneously caring for and consuming animals.

Speciesism is so ingrained in western culture that is hard to avoid. As Greenebaum (2017: 363) writes, “vegans are still capable of speciesism and some may value certain animals over others” and this was evident in Chapter Five: Consumption in the way VVPs prioritise certain animals (their patients) over others (those consumed as food). Although, of course, they seem to do this as a way to negotiate their discomfort with ‘complying’ with speciesist categorisation, and to navigate an aspect of their role (feeding meat) about which they feel uneasy. Nevertheless, VVPs seemed to struggle to accept that animals can be simultaneously loved and consumed in the veterinary setting and they further struggled with how differently animals are considered and thus treated based on their species. They observed speciesism manifesting frequently in small animal veterinary practice and for some, this was challenging. Consider Fleur (RVN):

“Whenever we have cases like chickens or ducks or things that kind of involve animals that people eat, I find that difficult because we’re all treating an animal and putting a lot of care and sometimes critical care into an animal that people will then at lunch time eat. Which is a very, 64 Of course, for some species (i.e. rabbits) and some individual animals (i.e. a pet pig who will eventually be eaten), there is overlap in that are simultaneously in both categories. Stewart and Cole (2009) discuss the social construction of animals and use rabbits as an excellent example of how the way in which how an animal is categorised and defined affects that animal’s fate.
very touchy subject … I would say the exotics side of it that I find very, very challenging. Treating like I said ducks and chickens and knowing openly everyone else providing care and treating that animal is eating chicken for dinner or eating duck when they go out or whatever and I find that very, very hard, and very difficult to say anything because you just kind of think we’re putting all this care into an animal that’s really sick, sometimes even weeks, and then, you know, we don’t advocate for the other chickens that you’re eating. So yeah, I find it hard”.

She elaborated:

“Yeah, so if they [colleagues] say, oh, you know, I’ve tried rabbit or whatever, and you think, that’s not really appropriate when we’ve got an animal that we’re assessing, or we’ve got an animal, we’ve got rabbits downstairs in the wards so, that again, I struggle with that kind of borderline kind of crossover” (Fleur, RVN).

Indeed, Fleur’s comment invokes the memes that often circulate on the internet highlighting (or rather mocking) a perceived irony in veterinarians eating their patients (see Appendix A6).

When asked if she felt able to express her feelings about speciesism and the meat paradox with her colleagues, Fleur replied:

“I often keep it to myself, as again, so as to not upset anyone because I know the care that we all do provide is very, a really, really high standard. So I don’t want to put anyone in that awkward position or put anyone down. But yeah, often I just keep it to myself … It doesn’t get raised as a whole team thing, but the people that I’m closest to who aren’t actually vegan at work, I’ll kind of say look, do you not find this a little bit strange and a little bit weird, and I think their argument is yes, but the food I eat, again, is free range and I know where it’s come from and I, you know, I know that it’s looked after, and all that jazz”.

Fleur self-censors as a strategy to maintain positive relationships with her colleagues even though she cannot reconcile the effort they make to save and help individuals of a certain species while consuming as food other individuals belonging to the same species. It is only those with whom she has a close
relationship that she raises the issue; yet her use of the phrase ‘and all that jazz’ suggests that although her colleagues acknowledge the paradox, their attempts to justify their consumption of animals are responses that Fleur perhaps encounters frequently and or finds unsatisfactory.

Ruth (RVN) also mentioned encountering speciesism and the meat paradox:

“There's a lot of nurses and they'll go out of their way to make a cat comfortable and they'll have them in the kennel and they'll have beds for them and heaters on them and can't do enough for them and then go upstairs and eat a ham sandwich or something and I just find it strange that they can't see what they're doing, you know. That that's an animal as well. I just think it would help in the overall caring part of it that they'd realise you care for all animals not just the companion ones”.

This example illustrates how psychocultural mechanisms work; animals of different species who are both sentient with the capacity to suffer and share similar interests, can come to be considered either a ‘friend in the kennel’ or ‘food in the lunchroom’. As vegan, Ruth struggles to understand how her colleagues can be oblivious to a paradox that she considers to be so obvious.

Jeremy (VS) also mentioned noticing his colleagues’ apparent obliviousness to speciesism and the meat paradox:

“[Some nurses] will refuse to work and help the vet to spay [sterilise] a cat that’s two-years-of-age having her sixth litter and there’s four foetuses and they’ll refuse that, then they’ll go off to lunch and eat pork and chicken and meat, and beef sandwiches and they don’t really see there’s a bit of a, like yeah, a conflict there. A bit of hypocrisy there”.

Indeed, many participants seemed to struggle with encountering speciesism and the meat paradox in their workplaces as well as cognitive dissonance:

“I always have this conflict in my head like how vets are so supportive and so loving of dogs and cats but still carry on eating other animals. So that’s just a basic question for me. How can someone say that they love animals if they only love two or three species?” (Hayley, VS).
“I’m not uncomfortable but it’s more and more clear to me, well, almost how ridiculous the profession can be. When the job was saving animals … and then you go and get a pepperoni pizza or something, you know. I see this a lot more. I’m more cognisant of it much more …” (Aisha, VS).

“When I eat lunch with my colleagues at work sometimes, for me, again it’s a paradox that after we’ve worked two, three hours to save a dog or a cat and we just sit in the staff room and just between us, maybe my colleagues are eating three, four or five animals, so for me, the equation doesn’t make sense … So it’s quite difficult” (Clinton, VS).

“I sometimes feel, well, it’s frustration most of the time because these are generally educated people and they work hard to look after cats and dogs but then, yeah, I think it’s just that whole frustration, like, why do you go up and eat animals when you’re (laughs), you’re loving cats and dogs? It’s that kind of speciesist kind of idea, I ‘spose … people are like, oh, we’re looking after cats and dogs but they’re going up and eating meat at lunchtime, so” (Lucie, RVN).

One final example is Rebecca (VS) who explained:

“We had a baby lamb come in at one point at work that had been picked up by a member of the public from the side of the road because it had been emaciated and really unwell. So I was treating it and it had eye problems and this sort of stuff and all the girls, the nurses and the receptionists and who I worked with, they were like, oh, he’s so cute and I really hope – can we make sure he doesn’t get eaten? … And I was like, interesting you say that but what about all the other sheep who also are like this and who also don’t deserve to get eaten? And they were like, oh, well, I don’t really eat lamb that much and (laughs). This sort of thing … [When my colleagues say] oh, he’s really cute. I hope it doesn’t get eaten, and I’m just thinking of the many hundreds of thousands of lambs all in that similar situation who weren’t lucky enough to get picked up by someone, and a lot of it just comes down to
people just not being around them enough and just like, being closed, their eyes are closed to it all and so I sometimes find that frustrating".

By pointing out the lack of concern for all the other lambs who get eaten Rebecca visibilises the meat paradox. While other participants felt that social conditioning and or hegemonic cultural norms underpinned speciesism and the meat paradox, Rebecca suggests it is a lack of familiarity (and thus a lack of empathy) for animals categorised as food species that fosters obliviousness.

Paige (VS) spoke about speciesism and the meat paradox at veterinary industry events:

“It’s absolute hypocrisy if you are there for a weekend of studying about surgery or behaviour or any aspect of veterinary medicine and they’re serving up ham sandwiches and chicken salad. That really, really bothers me … I’ve been away to a behaviour conference, and did a behaviour certificate and the woman that was lecturing talking about nurturing these pets, these patients and caring for these patients, then went off and loaded a plate with ham and chicken and (sighs) yeah, that I really, really struggle with … because it’s walking talking hypocrisy. If you’re gonna care for animals, do it”.

Contrary to people being oblivious to the meat paradox, here, as with Jeremy previously when talking about aborting kitten foetuses, ‘hypocrisy’ is the word used, which perhaps indicates a more critical perspective that these VVPs have towards their colleagues’ paradoxical relationships with animals in the veterinary setting.

Jeremy (VS) commented upon colleagues’ reaction to being confronted by the meat paradox:

“With one particular colleague, I get a lot of what-about-ism, you know. What about that time you ate chicken or you sniffed that or you ate something with palm oil and stuff like this. Kind of stupid arguments to try and divert from like why they eat [animals], [why they] say they love animals and yet devour them at every lunch-time”.

This interaction reflects how vegans can be questioned about the ‘purity’ of their practice and how non-vegans may divert attention away from their own practices
being questioned, which may cause them to feel defensive. There was another example of a VVP being questioned about the authenticity of her vegan praxis. Ruth (RVN) explained how she was offered a milk chocolate by a child while at work and accepted it so as not to seem impolite or make an issue of it but she returned it to the chocolate box later. She said:

“[A few days later, a colleague said] I heard you had a bar of milk chocolate the other day. So, they’d obviously discussed it between them and I just pointed out, well, I’d only be cheating myself but actually, I just didn’t want to offend the little girl so I just put it back. But I think people tend to sort of keep an eye on you, as if they think you’re gonna cheat yourself” (Ruth, RVN).

Jeremy (VS) provided an example of a colleague justifying their meat eating when faced with the meat paradox:

“I had a colleague …brilliant, fantastic vet, really loved animals and stuff and at times she had nine, ten cats [as pets] and I was like, don’t you see the conflict? Like, don’t you? I know you love animals but don’t you see a problem with you eating meat and stuff? And she said, I just love the taste of it and, ah (laughs)”.

Piazza et al (2015: 114) explain, “the belief that eating meat is natural, normal, necessary, and nice – are common rationalizations people use to defend their choice of eating meat”. Citing a love for the taste of meat reflects hedonism, which has been identified as one factor that causes and maintains the meat paradox (Aaltola, 2019); that is, people who love animals still eat them because meat tastes nice, or in other words, they prioritise palate pleasure. Jeremy’s narrative reflects how vegans may encounter this common justification (as one of the 4N’s) from non-vegans who express love for or concern for the wellbeing of animals and yet eat them.

Aisha (VS) had also encountered the meat paradox and hedonic factors behind a colleague’s consumption of animals:

“Or if there’s someone [a colleague] telling me about the food they’re going to eat that evening; they’re going home to a big turkey or something… and they’re so proud of it. It’s not even like, oh, I’m gonna
go home and eat this turkey and I feel shit about it but, hey, I like turkey. So, yeah, I get that, and I also struggle with cheese, you know, so it’s just the glee about going home and eating a dead animal or something after you’ve just spent the whole day trying to save other animals and crying over them. I do find that quite hard”.

While there were examples of VVPs navigating speciesism and the meat paradox in their workplaces, some also commented on the irony of the veterinary profession more broadly since it is a profession dedicated to animal health and wellbeing yet entwined in the AIC:

“I have people saying even outside my work, that all vets should be vegan or it’s so strange that vets are not vegan or not vegetarian. So, yes, people, not for themselves because they’re not vets, they expect a vet to love animals, so they shouldn’t actually be eating them” (Bridget, VS).

“A lot of people say that they would think that we all [vets] were vegans. So, yeah. So, I think people are not surprised when I say that I – knowing that I’m a vet – that I’m vegan. They kind of take it like as a normal course of action because I love animals so much. I’m a vet. I try. I’m helping animals, so I don’t eat them, etcetera” (Hayley, VS).

“I guess you do feel a bit, like, how can you be so blind to this when you’re a veterinary professional, you know. It just, yeah, astounds me. Especially the vets as well, I think, because, as I said, nurses don’t have to do the farmy stuff. They don’t have to do dissection and things so you kind of get how they would be a bit masked from it but vets, they have to go and do farm placement. They have to do slaughterhouse placements and you think, you’ve seen it first-hand and you’re still OK with this? Like, seriously? And then you’re crying because you’ve lost a dog on the table but you’ll quite happily go and shoot a cow in the head (laughs)” (Laine, RVN).

Speciesism was also raised as a possible reason why more veterinary professionals are not vegan:
“I don’t think that the veterinary profession has any higher percentage of vegans than any other profession. I mean, I’d be very interested if anyone did a survey but I can’t see that it is, certainly from my own personal experience. I’ve never, you know, there’s no, there just seems to be no reason, yeah. You might think that we should [be vegan], you know, being animal advocates, supposedly, but there’s so much, you know, in practice, speciesism. We’re as liable to it as the next person” (Jeremy, VS).

The power and embeddedness of speciesism, which promotes and normalises paradoxical attitudes towards nonhuman animals, is reflected in Jeremy’s comment as even those individuals and institutions in society strenuously dedicated to animal wellbeing can come to simultaneously care for them and consume them.

The gender politics of the profession are also important here for understanding why veg*n veterinary professions remain a minority. As discussed in Chapter Two: Context and literature, critiques of the veterinary profession have noted the profession has been, until recently, male-dominated, promotes rationality and objectivity over emotion, empathy, sentimentality and compassion (Donald, 2018, Ware, 2018, Treanor and Marlow, 2019) and exists within a professional epistemological framework of technical rationality (Clarke and Knights, 2018a) with a masculine entrepreneurial structure (Clarke and Knights, 2018b; Treanor and Marlow, 2019). Thus, the prevalence and normality of speciesism in the veterinary profession broadly and among veterinary practitioners surely reflects a long history involving the veneration of norms of scientific dispassion, which are both anthropocentric and speciesist. Nevertheless, while there is evidence of an understanding as to why things are the way they are, some, like Camille (RVN), who stated, “I’m very aware there is that disconnection between species and the speciesism aspect, but it does surprise me in the veterinary profession”, seem to have higher expectations of the profession and those working within it.
Cognitive dissonance in veterinary practice

As illustrated, VVPs often expressed an understanding of the psychocultural mechanisms that underlie paradoxes involving nonhuman animals in the veterinary profession and often found them challenging to encounter in small animal veterinary practice. Some also observed cognitive dissonance in colleagues, which was another source of sadness and frustration. For example, Aisha (VS), when asked what aspects of her job as a veterinarian and vegan she finds challenging, replied:

“I guess for me the huge cognitive dissonance in my profession. I find very hard, increasingly so … Seriously, this is crazy, like … I do find that, you know, the fact that we spend all this time trying to save a dog or hamster or whatever, and talk about how people are so cruel to animals, to innocent animals, blah blah blah, and then you’re just not making that leap to the animals in the agriculture industry”.

Rebecca (VS) viewed cognitive dissonance as a strategy her colleagues might use to avoid having to acknowledge and act on the conflict between their values (animal lovers) and actions (consumers of animals):

“I found that they [non-vegan colleagues] almost double down on the sort of, not anti-vegan, but they double down on the not being vegan thing because I feel like if they had to really confront it, they probably would explode slightly like, the (laughs) cognitive dissonance that is required to keep them in that sort of position would be far too great for them to deal with if they didn’t double down on the whole, oh, but at least we like keep their welfare really good or at least we this that and the other”.

Some VVPs recognised their own use of cognitive dissonance as a coping strategy. When discussing the need to dispense pharmaceuticals, Michael (VS) was explicit in linking his capacity to perform this aspect of his professional role to employing cognitive dissonance:

“I think you have to almost develop a split personality. When I’m treating a patient that I have no choice but to use unethical products, I have to
almost just pretend that that I, I suppose, it’s some kind of dissonance really. Just pretend that it doesn’t apply or... that that animal is an exception”.

There were further examples of VVPs employing cognitive dissonance discussed in Chapter Five: Consumption, for example Camille (RVN), when considering her discomfort at feeding crickets to exotic species and Aisha (VS) when recommending feeding chickens’ flesh to unwell dogs in consultations. Similarly to Michael here, there were also numerous examples provided in Chapter Five: Consumption of participants explaining how they altered their mindset and practiced side-lining or not thinking about their discomfort when performing certain aspects of their professional role as a strategy to deal with personal-professional values conflict.

**Animal use for exhibition and entertainment**

It was established in Chapter Two: Context and literature that the veterinary profession is enmeshed with the AIC and is involved in practically every aspect of humans’ interactions with other animals, and this extends to the use of animals as entertainment and exhibition. As such, the profession broadly and individuals working within the veterinary profession may participate in or spectate at cultural events such as horseracing, greyhound racing and rodeos, work within or support institutions such as zoos, and partake in or sanction pastimes or activities such as hunting. Vegans tend to view such uses of nonhuman animals as unnecessary, unethical, exploitative and cruel, and, as reflected in this research, they may thus struggle to accept others’ participation in and support of such facets of meat culture. Difference of opinions about the various uses of nonhuman animals within meat culture, therefore, is something that VVPs likely encounter in the workplace and must navigate so as to maintain positive, professional relationships with employers, employees, colleagues and clients. Put more simply, anthropocentrism, speciesism and carnism facilitate animal (ab)use and veganism condemns it, and these mutually exclusive ideologies coexist in small animal veterinary practices where vegans are present. Thus, this discordance must be somehow negotiated.
In Chapter Five: Consumption, VVPs sometimes expressed a willingness to consider attending events involving the consumption of meat and dairy. When it came to attending workplace events involving the use of animals as entertainment or exhibition, however, participants were emphatically opposed. To begin with zoos, Calarco (2020: 140) explains:

Modern zoos are primarily run as businesses and, as such, must make a profit by providing entertainment for visitors. This business model has led to the criticism that zoos are, at bottom, exploitative institutions that care more for profit than for the welfare or rights of the animals they house.

As such, vegans may disapprove of zoos; yet a few participants said that they supported the conservation work done by zoos. Overall, however, VVPs did not support animals being kept in captivity for humans' pleasure or profit. Several VVPs said they had declined to attend a work-related event because it was being held at a zoo. Siobhan (RVN) said, “I think there was talk about having a [work] meeting in a zoo. When was that? I don’t remember. It was a while ago, but I was like, no, I don’t agree with zoos”. Similarly, Camille (RVN) explained, “Zoos, we had one [instance] a couple of weeks ago. They [colleagues] were all wanting to go to the zoo so I said I wouldn’t go”. Fleur’s (RVN) colleagues also enjoyed visiting the zoo: “A lot of [my colleagues] go to the zoo because obviously we live close [by a] zoo. So, a lot of them go to the zoo”.

Zoos being seen as unproblematic, as culturally normal and appropriate within the veterinary profession, was further reflected in Natasha’s (RVN) comment about the venue for her veterinary nursing graduation ceremony:

“So, one thing is my nursing graduation, which is in [month]. It’s taking place at a zoo so I’m just not gonna go because I just don’t agree with zoos ethically and I just don’t really wanna take part in it at a zoo. I don’t want any money to be going towards a zoo. I don’t want to support them, and it would make me sad seeing animals in the zoo, so I’m just not going to go. I know it won’t make much of a difference, but for me, I don’t want to see animals locked up like that…”. 
Further indicating the normalcy within the veterinary profession of events involving the consumption of animals as entertainment, Paige (VS) explained how incentives offered by drug company representatives (as discussed in Chapter Five: Consumption) often involve rewards like tickets to animal races:

“And we’ve had reps come in and sort of say, look, to say thank you for using our products, let’s organise a night out. Why don’t we go to the races, dog racing … [I say] na na na, no thanks … I’ll continue to promote your products but if that’s the thank you (laughs), I’m not using your products either. And hopefully it will get the message across. But that’s dead easy for me; that’s a flat no”.

Discussing the popularity among her colleagues of animal racing for workplace social events, Lucie (RVN) said, “I think there’s always been group things like, oh, we’re going to Ascot [horseracing], does anybody want to come? And I’ll be like, no”.

Some VVPs expressed their views about animal racing as involving cruelty. When asked how she would respond to invitations to workplace events involving the use of animals as entertainment or exhibition, Rebecca (VS) replied:

“I would decline, and they [colleagues] probably would ask me why and I probably would say it’s because I’m vegan (laughs) and I don’t pay for horses to get whipped across a field so, yeah, I think I would definitely decline those ones and I did get invited to flat-racing at some point and I was like, yeah, no thank you”.

Hayley (VS) also spoke about zoos and animal racing events and she further mentioned declining to attend dog shows:

“I would definitely not go to horseracing or a zoo etcetera, and actually, my colleague does work in many shows for kennel club so often he’s got some tickets etcetera and does invite us, and I don’t participate in those, and they know it, I guess, so I just wouldn’t feel comfortable”.

Clearly, many VVPs who participated in this study work with colleagues who enjoy attending events that use animals for exhibition and entertainment. This was evident in comments such as: “[At my practice], our nurses, most of them, they ride horses and they go to competitions” (Bridget, VS). Ruth (RVN) said
“occasionally they’ll go to some, it’s more a thing of like a social thing. They might go to the races at [city] or something like that”. Moreover, many participants were critical of colleagues’ participation in and support of such uses of nonhuman animals. For example, Laine (RVN) recounted an instance when she expressed her disapproval of a colleague’s engagement with horseracing in the workplace:

“I was sitting in the staff room and we were eating our lunch and one of the vets was watching the horseracing and one of the horses got hurt and she’s gone, oh, no! and I just went, you’re funding it (laughs). I just left it at that, like, you know. You can’t sit and get upset about it when you’re sitting there actively putting money on it and participating and things like that. She’s got horses herself. It just makes me laugh you know. I think, you’ve got this horse, and it’s your pet and you love it and you go every day to the yard and you groom it and you look after it and you feed it and you clean it and then you’re betting on a horse race, you know. It just makes no sense to me, but obviously to them they just have that disconnection really; [they] just don’t see that… actually …there’s a lot a lot of vets and vet nurses who will go to the [name] horse trials … But yeah, it's odd isn't it? Like I say, they just have that disassociation”.

Similarly to how VVPs can visibilise and force reflection on the meat paradox, vegans working in small animal veterinary practice can subvert normative cultural practices that involve the use of animals as entertainment and exhibition by refusing to attend events involving such uses of animals and telling others why. Notably, where the killjoy typically kills joy by being present, here, in the case in refusing to join colleagues at workplace events where animals are used and consumed for entertainment, VVPs can perhaps kill joy through their absence. This was most evident in Natasha’s account of declining to attend her own graduation. When asked if she had vocalised her opposition to the event being held at a zoo, Natasha said she told her colleagues why she would not attend, but not the organisers of the event:

“I probably should’ve said something to the lecturer just so that she was aware that’s why one of the students wouldn’t go (laughs). So, I probably, looking back, I probably would have wanted to say something
to someone who helped organise it or has to do with organising it that that's a reason one of the students doesn't want to go, just so they're aware that, you know, zoos aren't for everyone”.

By making the reason for one’s absence known, others’ joy in partaking in an event at a zoo may be altered.

Several examples have been provided here of VVPs being killjoys by vocalising their disapproval of animal use for exhibition and entertainment, such as Paige rejecting tickets offered as incentives by pharmaceutical company representatives, Laine pointing out the paradox of both caring for horses and enjoying watching their exploitation, and Rebecca who blatantly told her colleagues that the whipping of horses for ‘sport’ is cruel. It would have been useful to have asked VVPs how others responded when invitations to visit zoos and attend animal races were declined. This is not something that participants discussed nor a question that they were asked. Yet, it seems that VVPs can potentially kill others’ joy through their absence at certain events if they explain to others why it is they refuse to attend.

Further to their participation in and support of animal use for exhibition and entertainment, some veterinary professionals’ involvement in hunting was challenging for VVPs. For example, Paige (VS) adopted a somewhat sarcastic tone when she mentioned working with a veterinary nurse who goes fox hunting: “We’ve had interesting chats on that one”. Gabrielle (VS) recalled having worked at a practice where her employer was a hunter and she noted the paradox in regard to a veterinary professional killing animals for sport: “How can you during the day be helping animals and then hunting them for pleasure and like not even to eat? It’s for pleasure, it’s just, like, I can’t understand that”.

Michael (VS) spoke about how his colleagues’ involvement in hunting eroded interpersonal relationships in the workplace:

“[It is challenging] working with colleagues who participate in cruel sports outside of work. We unbelievably have people who participate in hunting and fishing. Unfortunately, I find myself disliking these people and find it hard to act professionally with them. My approach is governed by my status as an employer, and I feel that I am unable to comment on their out of work activities. One colleague did try to
circulate a pro-hunting petition at work, and I felt able to veto this as something totally opposed to our practice values. Another used to consistently describe his fishing activities. I told him about the research proving pain sensation in fish and how his activities were cruel and made me feel uncomfortable. He has stopped talking about fishing in front of me but still goes fishing”.

Professionalism arises again here; Michael implies that to risk causing discomfort to a colleague by pointing out that hunting is cruel is ‘unprofessional’ because hunting is socially and legally sanctioned by society at large and is considered normal within the veterinary profession. Thus, like in Chapter Five: Consumption, where VVPs subordinated their own interests in and commitment to veganism when required to feed meat to hospitalised patients, Michael suggests that the need to maintain professionalism is paramount. His comment also provides an example of how the presence of a vegan can act to stop discussions about normalised animal use and exploitation taking place in the veterinary setting. While Michael embodies a vegan killjoy in telling his colleague that fish feel pain, as evident in the previous two chapters, VVPs also gave numerous examples of times when they felt unable to speak to their colleagues about animal use and exploitation, typically to avoid causing others discomfort or creating tension. So here, rather than VVPs feeling pressure to self-censor, their presence, coinciding with their colleagues’ knowledge that certain topics will receive disapproval from VVPs, leads non-vegans to self-censor.

Professionalism and altering one’s mindset are strategies that emerged in the previous two chapters as ways VVPs negotiate various challenges, and they arose again when Laine (RVN) spoke about how knowledge of a colleague’s involvement in hunting activities affects her:

“I’ve got receptionists that participate in fox hunting65 and things like that, so it’s very difficult. To be honest, I just don’t engage because you’re sort of caught between, I want to educate them, I want to tell

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65 Hunting foxes using dogs is illegal under the Hunting Act 2004 in England and Wales but ‘drag’ or ‘trail’ hunting is allowed (Legislation UK, 2021e). This involves simulating hunting foxes with dogs using artificially laid scent. However, fox hunting may occur illegally (RSPCA, 2021b).
them, you know, this is what's actually happening but also I need to
work with you and I need to be professional so I don't want to get into a
massive debate where it might end up where we're just not really
getting along. So I must admit in my work environment, I do just tend to
put it aside. Let it go over my head and just, you know”.

Camille (RVN) also mentioned being affected by colleagues who talk about
hunting and farming:

“I guess it's mainly when they [colleagues] have conversations
sometimes. So one of the girls [a colleague] goes shooting and another
one is like a farmer. So she was saying about kind of selling her meat
and things like that and I'm a bit like (makes a disapproving sound). So I
guess it's more conversations sometimes that make me a bit
uncomfortable as opposed to actions really”.

These comments reflect both the commonness of hunting among some veterinary
professionals, as a socially and legally normalised cultural practice, and VVPs’
struggles with encountering this. Consider Lucie (RVN), who said: “I sometimes
think that I'm in the wrong industry really because I'm certainly like, you know,
some veterinary boards will be for the badger cull and things like that…”.
In this
case, the endorsement of killing badgers to control disease by culling has,
ironically, led Lucie to contemplate the appropriateness of her choice of career as
an animal healer.

**Negative perceptions of veganism and negative vegan stereotypes**

It was established in Chapter Two: Context and literature that research shows
vegans are targets of stigma. If cognitive dissonance is employed to reduce the
discomfort arising from conflicting beliefs and actions, then it follows that vegans
may be negatively perceived for interfering with this mechanism in others. This has
significance for VVPs who may become stigmatised and experience negativity in
relationships with non-vegans, including colleagues. While in the previous chapter
there was evidence of positive views of vegans and veganism and vegan allies in
veterinary workplaces, many VVPs also expressed concern about vegan stigma.
This concern often led them to alter their behaviour around colleagues to avert or avoid conflict, tension, discomfort and other negative repercussions that might impact on professional interpersonal relationships. For example, Fleur (RVN) explained:

“I think there's such a stigma with vegans anyway, especially in the job, I think the job we do. I think people kind of know that they're doing their bit by helping treating animals all day every day so I think they then don’t want to be confronted, you know, have a confrontation about actually, you're not caring about animal welfare if that's what you're eating and then it's like, whoa, OK. So yeah, I do, I, yeah, I do watch what I say and have to be careful, I think”.

Another example is Bridget (VS), who anticipated negative reactions, and said, “At work, I try not to be very annoying about veganism (laughs)…”

Another aspect to VVPs anticipating or feeling concern about vegan stigma related to employment. Horta (2018: 361) suggests that “vegans often try to conceal the fact that they are vegans when they are looking for a job, as managers biased against veganism can decide not to hire them for that reason”. This considered, participants were asked how they thought informing a potential employer that they are vegan prior to gaining employment in a veterinary role might affect them being employed. Importantly, employers deciding not to employ a person because he or she is vegan owing to “pre-conceived assumptions about the nature or characteristics of vegans” would likely constitute direct discrimination according to the 2010 Equality Act” (The Vegan Society, 2020: 4). While no evidence of discrimination was identified in their responses, there was evidence to suggest that VVPs manage disclosure of their veganism in interviews because they anticipate negative reactions, as the following quotes illustrate:

“So I wouldn’t want the work [employer] to be worried that I’m gonna judge clients and stick my nose in and try and like say anything about their choices or do that. I think I would just be worried [mentioning it to a potential employer] that there might be these perceptions to vegans being like that” (Natasha, RVN).
“I don’t think I would bring it up in an interview just because if they are the type that are going to think, Oh God, another vegan, you know (laughs), then it could, you know, it could lose you the job, so … I wouldn’t bring it up at an interview purely because there are still some people and, as I said, there is that sort of feeling that vegans can be a bit over the top and they can be preachy as we say, and I think that I would worry that they [potential employers] would think that” (Laine, RVN).

“I imagine some people [potential employers] would think does this mean he’s not gonna be able to neuter pets or something … I imagine some people might, it might make them wonder. But I would never, it wouldn’t be something you’d put on a CV …” (Jeremy, VS).

“I do suspect it would work against you most of the time because they just have an idea of what that means … it’s always constantly weird how someone in health care, animal health care profession could perceive it [veganism] negatively but they often do … so I suspect that would probably work against me (laughs)” (Rebecca, VS).

“Certainly like larger practices or more like in, you know, urban places it probably wouldn’t have as much of an effect but I think, yeah, I probably wouldn’t put it on my CV necessarily” (Lucie, RVN).

One final example is Aisha (VS), who said:

“I think the very fact that you were mentioning it might make the employer hesitant because they might think well maybe you’re gonna cause problems or make an issue out of it whereas you can be vegan and do what you want and go about your business. The fact that you’re mentioning it beforehand [during a job interview] would make them worry it is going to be an issue because you’re mentioning it, so I don’t think it would even be a problem if you’re vegan but if you mention it at the interview it might strike them as odd because then why would you mention it, unless you’re planning to make a big deal of it”.

However, it might be necessary to inform a potential employer that you hold personal values that prevent you from performing certain aspects of your
professional role. Aisha gave the example of a VVP’s potential unwillingness to use oxyglobin, a blood replacement product extracted from cows, and in Chapter Four: Power, Christopher (VS) mentioned how as a locum, he establishes during job interviews aspects of the role he refuses to perform, such as cosmetic mutilations and ‘convenience euthanasia’. Mentioning aspects of the role that one is not willing to perform as a veterinary professional could – indeed would likely – prompt questioning that may lead to forced disclosure of a VVP’s veganism to a potential employer.

Rowan (VS) mentioned a few different reasons why disclosing one’s veganism in a job interview may be detrimental:

“\[I\text{ think people are inherently suspicious of vegans especially with associated animal rights and activism and filming and documentaries and how does that influence your medicine. Are you going to be pushing vegetarian diets on dogs, on cats, on people, on whatever else? So unless I had a vegan boss, I can’t truly think of a benefit of bringing it up [in a job interview], for me].\]

Rowan’s concerns about being negatively perceived by potential employers seems relevant considering a conversation about veganism that Josie (RVN) recounted having with a senior colleague at her practice who learned she is vegan:

“\[The veterinary surgeon, as expected, was, well, I think you’re crazy you know. I hope this isn’t going to affect how your work. I hope this isn’t going to affect your day-to-day job and you’re not going to become one of those militant vegans]\.”

Josie’s example includes the mention of negative perceptions of veganism and negative vegan stereotypes, and suggests that alongside the concern that vegans may not be willing to fulfill the requirements of the job, there are assumptions they may possess specific character traits that are considered unappealing.

In addition to anticipating vegan stigma within the veterinary profession, participants expressed awareness of negative perceptions of veganism and negative vegan stereotypes. While there were several examples of veganism being seen positively (albeit ‘difficult to practice’), there were many examples of veganism and vegans being negatively typecast. For example, some participants
mentioned vegans being stereotyped as excessively vocal about their veganism, a perception that Ruth (RVN) felt she did not perpetuate:

“I don't really make a point of telling people unless I have to. It's not something that, I'm not one of these that, I know that old joke about, how do you know [that a person is vegan]; a vegan always tells you, well, I don't. I don't really make a point of it”.

Fleur (RVN) shared an awareness of vegans being viewed as proactive about informing others of their veganism: “I know that sometimes there’s a thing of, you know, vegans have to tell everyone they’re vegan all the time, but it’s made very known very quickly in conversation”. For Fleur, and other VVPs interviewed, the disclosure of their veganism to colleagues in small animal veterinary practice seemed inevitable and happens quite quickly. This is owing to the ubiquity of animal products and animal use in the veterinary environment and the frequency with which animal products are shared and offered (and are thus declined) but also owing to colleagues’ curiosity upon observing VVPs’ plant-based meals at mealtimes, prompting questions.

In the veterinary profession, some VVPs mentioned feeling that vegans and veganism is perceived as weird. In Chapter Five: Consumption, Rowan (VS) commented on catering at conferences and mentioned how the vegan section of conference buffets are ‘set up as the weirdo table’. Similarly, Aaron (VS) touched upon the perception of vegans as ‘weird’ when explaining his strategy to counter this negative stereotype:

“So that's my approach to how I'm doing my activism, which is to kind of get as good a reputation, as well-known as possible, and it so happens I'm a vegan because then that makes people stop and think well, it’s not just weirdos who are vegan then”.

When commenting on how it feels to be vegan among her non-vegan peers, Rebecca (VS) also mentioned being perceived as ‘weird’ by her colleagues:

“I just always find it frustrating that they usually think I’m weird; they’re like, I don’t understand why you’re vegan, or they just don’t see the other animals are deserving of a similar kind of approach”.

Clinton (VS) mentioned how he thinks public perceptions of vegans might influence colleagues’ feelings towards him:

“I think in England people are very politically correct so they will never tell you that this is the reason why they are, they don't like you or why they don't like working with you, but sometimes it just feels like that, you know, when you feel there is no reason for this and that person to be rude to you, then sometimes you have to make your own conclusion that it [veganism] might be the reason, and I'm not hiding it, again, I have a [visible vegan accessory] so everyone knows that I'm vegan and if someone hates vegans or hates all the things that we try to talk about and push, then yeah, it might be, might be the reason…”.

Clinton’s comment suggests that broader, negative socio-cultural attitudes towards vegans may infiltrate the veterinary workplace and cause those who ‘hate vegans’ to pre-judge him upon the basis of his veganism.

Greenebaum (2017: 364) explains “carnist ideology is embedded in our culture” and “because of their countercultural ideology, vegans are deemed deviant and threatening to mainstream carnist culture”. Indeed, in addition to an awareness of negative vegan stereotypes, many participants commented about vegans and veganism being perceived as a threat within small animal veterinary practice. For example, when asked how it feels to be vegan among her non-vegan peers, Fleur (RVN) replied:

“Um, (sighs) difficult and sometimes you feel that you understand the whole world that they don’t understand or know about. I think they’re very focused on, well, we are all focussed on animal welfare and things with our patients and I think the minute you then say, you know, oh, I'm vegan and they say, why? And you say, well, because of this this this this this this, and they say, oh, and they always get immediately offended even if you haven't said anything offensive. So it can be, yeah, it can be difficult and sometimes you feel like you're a little bit, I don't like to say higher than everyone else, but it's almost like you see a different world to the other people, that they aren’t aware of”.

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Fleur further explained how colleagues sometimes reacted defensively to her being vegan:

“It tends to just be people argue the fact that, you know, well if they challenge you and you say, look it's my choice, I don't want to eat this, that, whatever, and they will say, well what about free range, what about chickens that my mum owns, you know. You can’t say I’m a bad person. And then it sometimes gets a little bit heated so you kinda just have to throw a bit of water on it”.

In regard to her colleagues’ dedication to helping some kinds of animals while they unquestioningly consume others, Ruth (RVN), like Fleur, seemed to employ situation management strategies to avoid eliciting defensive reactions from colleagues in bringing the meat paradox to light:

“I might do the joking way. I wouldn't really make a point of getting into a big discussion over it because I just don't think it's, people get defensive then, but I might make a little joke, but other than that, I don't really get into it”.

While Fleur and Ruth took steps to avoid confrontation, Jeremy (VS) was more direct in highlighting the meat paradox to colleagues:

“One particular girl, she would get a bit rattled that she felt, you know … she wanted to continue with this blinkered way of eating and stuff and didn’t wanna get challenged and was getting disturbed that people were forcing her to look at the cognitive dissonance that she was experiencing. Getting her to really look, you know. Oh, you say you’re a veterinary nurse and you love animals yet you’re eating them. Don’t you see this as a bit of an ethical issue? And you could clearly see that she was getting a little bit rattled and rumbled by this and didn’t like that and it made her feel uncomfortable and so it’s interesting seeing people’s reactions to it. And she will happily sit on the carnist side of the fence”.

Aisha (VS) similarly noted defensiveness when highlighting speciesism and the meat paradox to colleagues:

“I think vets have become so used to [animals] becoming categorised, like this is what we do with these animals, this is what we do with these
animals, a focus on welfare in quotation marks, it’s OK. And they just
don’t tie the two together and even those who do tie it, they’ll be like, oh
yeah, it’s fine. And I’m like, would you eat dogs? Yeah, I’d eat dogs too
[they say], the kinda, those kind of things but [they say] we just don’t
because we live in this kind of country, but I would, or, you know, it’ll be
like this defensive kind of, yeah”.

Aisha’s comment about veterinarians becoming used to animals being categorised
is significant considering how socio-cultural labels put on non-human animals have
been found to influence veterinarians’ attitudes towards those animals and their
wellbeing (Mariti et al., 2018; Hernandez et al., 2018).

Rowan (VS) mentioned veganism as a potential threat to jobs and livelihoods:

“I’d like to think that in the future our profession would be entirely animal
focussed and we’re doing the best thing for our animal friends, which
would eventually be sort of an abolitionist point of view and getting rid of
animal agriculture which would mean a lot of jobs would go away or
change”.

Certainly through its position as counter to the dominant paradigm of meat culture
and carnism, and with its promotion of the abolition of animal agriculture,
veganism, if adopted more broadly, would change the current dynamics of
veterinary practice. There is much evidence arising in discussions with VVPs that
there is fear of and hostility towards veganism from within the veterinary
profession which surely hinders progress in terms of improving animal welfare and
responding to climate change. Moreover, it is arguably difficult to imagine how an
‘abolitionist veterinary profession’ might look when the entire veterinary profession
itself is predicated on a particular ethical view of nonhuman animals as resources
for humans to exploit. Indeed, there is a deeper and persistent paradox at the
heart of the veterinary profession reflected in the comment, “I’d like to think that in
the future our profession would be entirely animal focussed”, which raises the
question, is an ‘entirely animal focussed’ veterinary profession even possible?
The veterinary profession, vegans and activism

Animal ethics is important to many vegans although society tends to silence such ethics (Buttny and Kinefuchi, 2020). Activism can be thought of as a private, personal undertaking or a public, collective initiative. Regarding the former, vegans behave in ways contrary to the dominant institutional, market, and socio-cultural practices on a daily basis making veganism a private and individualised form of political behaviour (Kalte, 2020). Hence, ‘being vegan’ is a form of activism. Vegans may feel compelled to convince others to consider the merits and benefits of veganism and they may point out to others the ubiquity and extent of animal exploitation (be a vegan killjoy). Animal activists often employ logic and persuasion to change people’s beliefs about and, ultimately, their behaviour towards, nonhuman animals through education (Calarco, 2020). The imperative to educate others emerged in VVPs’ narratives when speaking about interacting with colleagues. They tried to educate others in various ways. Bridget (VS) said, “I explain [to colleagues] cheese is not really something healthy and I explain why you get addicted to the cheese because of the hormones to keep the calf together with the mother…”. Also, Lucie (RVN):

“I (laughs), sometimes I’ll just be a little bit punchy if somebody says, because even making tea they’ll ask, there’ll always be a question to anybody, ‘Do you want oat-milk or normal milk?’ And I’ll just shout, it’s never normal if it comes from a different species”.

Notably, unlike the examples in Chapter Five: Consumption whereby VVPs inadvertently ‘othered’ plant-based food using terms like ‘normal buffet’ and ‘normal pizza’, Lucie challenges her colleagues’ othering of plant-based milk. Jeremy (VS) took a more strategic approach to educating others by recommending documentaries:

“I have a series (laughs), it’s like, five steps (laughs). First step, I think the easiest thing to appeal to is a person’s health and awareness of themselves. The thing that people are most aware of is their own personal health and their own concerns, so Forks Over Knives is a really good one; an easy one to start with. Something like that, and
**Hungry for Change** and **What the Health**, and then **Cowspiracy** if they’re concerned for the environment, and then last ditch, **Earthlings”** … I used to … give them to colleagues and stuff”.

In terms of public, collective kinds of activism, there is a long history of people attempting to change nonhuman animals’ economic, legal, moral, and social status (Calarco, 2020). This remains the aim of much animal activism today, whether it be through marches, sit-ins, demonstrations, boycotts and or protests. Rather than targeting the individual, this kind of animal activism typically targets governments, corporations and institutions. In recent decades, organised animal activism has focused on exposing the suffering of animals in the agricultural sector and this has prompted industry and public backlash. Non-violent animal rights activism has even been labelled ‘terrorism’ (Sorenson, 2009). In some countries there are ‘ag gag’ laws targeting activists who partake in activism exposing animal abuse in the agriculture sector (Gelber and O’Sullivan, 2021) and preventing people working in the animal agricultural industry exposing criminal acts or objectionable practices (Ward, Oven and Bethencourt, 2020). Advocating for nonhuman animals or being an ‘activist’ and speaking out against animal exploitation threatens humanist values and so can engender negativity.

A notable finding arising from this research is that the VVPs interviewed rarely mentioned or shared experiences of personally engaging in organised, public activism. An exception was Lucie (RVN), who said:

“I did a piece of activism and I got brought into the office [at work] to discuss it because I was basically told I shouldn’t really have it on my Instagram and my stories and stuff so that was like the one thing that’s difficult but I can understand why they brought it up with me, but”.

As discussed in Chapter Two: Context and literature, there is tension at the vegan-veterinary nexus as members of the UK veterinary community openly express disapproval and dislike of vegan activists. VVPs are likely aware of the negative repercussions of partaking in or publicising their participation in public activism, thus, it is possible, and understandable, that they may conceal this aspect of their vegan praxis.
While no participants called themselves activists, several commented on how they felt veterinary professionals who do engage in activism are perceived within the veterinary profession. For example, Aisha (VS) said that she had observed hostile attitudes towards animal activists and vegans on social media:

“I personally think [a Sydney animal rights demonstration] was great, and then I remember there was a vet, that someone else had posted [on a social media site] saying oh, great, they now have laws about arresting these people if they enter [farms] or whatever, or like, crazy vegans trying to shut down lovely dairy farmers and shit like that. And I’m just like this is crazy, you know. You extend so much compassion to dogs, and these are people [veterinary professionals] who hate breeders for example, who are against puppy farms and I’m like, how is a puppy farm any different from a dairy farm, you know … And that I find very challenging”.

Rowan (VS) said: “I think vegan activism especially is very frowned upon by colleagues. Any form of activism they’re like, how could you? Like, that’s a betrayal, that’s a whatever, it’s wrong, it’s all lies, it’s all fabricated, it’s all edited”. Viewing the support of animal rights through activism as a betrayal highlights how the profession (or some within it) may see the profession’s allegiance to humans, the economy and the public as greater than to nonhuman animals.

Rebecca (VS) noted division within the veterinary community regarding whether veterinary professionals should partake in activism:

“There’s always been a little bit of a debate I’ve come across whether as veterinary, as part of our code of conduct with the RCVS, we have to always uphold the profession even in areas where we’re not working. So we should never bring the profession into disrepute, as it says, and there were a few cases where some vets on a Facebook group, there’s a Facebook group where a lot of vets go on, which is quite popular in the UK, and it had been found that some vegan vets had been engaging in the fox hunting saboteur stuff, non-violently from what I can see, because all the sabs are pretty non-violent and they’re just very disruptive, and a lot of the vets were at that point arguing to try and get
that vet involved [in activism] brought up before the [RCVS] Council for bringing the profession into disrepute because they were getting on the farmer’s case and that sort of stuff. So there was a definite negative perception of what those vets were doing from the rest of the veterinary profession at large”.

Rebecca’s comment can be linked to Donald’s (2018) critique of the RCVS’ CPC (see Chapter Two: Context and literature), whereby she observes the emotional and affective aspects of the profession are underacknowledged. As ‘animal lovers’ there may be a desire for some veterinary professionals to advocate for nonhuman animals outside of the clinic. It certainly seems problematic that a member of a profession dedicated to providing and promoting care for animals feels as if they are breaching the profession’s code of conduct by actively promoting compassion for animals in the wider community. Yet, as Lucie’s earlier comment about being spoken to by management suggested, there can be serious consequences for veterinary professions who do so.

There was further evidence of negative attitudes from within the profession towards veterinary professionals who participate in activism. Consider Josie (RVN), who explained:

“We have a locum vet who we started to use who [my employer has] discovered is an activist and he will make derogatory remarks about the gentleman, about him going out to, he’s an anti [fox hunting] sab, and he goes out on the anti [fox hunting] sab marches and he goes out on the weekends. And I know if he knows he’s done that, my boss is going to make comments about that, almost to try and get a rise out of me, and that is uncomfortable, but I almost expect it from him, I’m afraid”.

If her employer learns that the employee has been involved in an activist event, Josie said, “I know my boss is going to be derogatory about that and he is going to pass comment to try and start an argument because that’s what he likes to do”. Vegans, veganism and activism seem belittled and ridiculed by Josie’s employer and as employees, she and her colleague are disadvantaged likely with limited capacity to respond or defend themselves. This is implied in a comment Josie made later in the interview when she explained how she responds to her
employer's provocations: “it's just kind of, yeah, rock on mate. That's’ fine (laughs)” (Josie, RVN).

Notably, and somewhat different to the situation in Josie’s workplace, Fleur (RVN) said that in her practice, her non-vegan colleagues have altered their behaviour around vegan staff members and now avoid openly discussing hunting and farming:

“If people are having group discussions about things, someone will say, oh, you need to be careful because there’s vegetarians and vegans here so just maybe limit what you’re talking about. And it’s nothing obviously cruel or anything, but it is things about obviously farming or hunting or something like that, so … it doesn't happen every day, but I'd say maybe a couple of times a month it will. They'll kind of say look, you know, just be aware that there are vegans, vegetarians and stuff, so, just be careful a little bit”.

It was not clear whether this discretion was to avoid offending or upsetting VVPs, to prevent conflict, or for other reasons; nevertheless, similarly to Michael – who pointed out to his colleague who hunts fish that fish feel pain – the presence of vegans can stop discussions about normalised animal use and exploitation occurring in the veterinary setting. Vegans’ presence can serve to remind others that the topics they discuss and enjoy discussing relating to facets of meat culture, animal use and exploitation, are not benign. There have been many examples in this thesis of vegans feeling the need to alter or moderate their behaviour when around non-vegans to avoid tension and conflict. Here, it is the non-vegans who do this, illustrating that non-vegans are alert to the presence of vegans and are, thus, aware of vegans and vegan perspectives. This could be viewed as a form of passive activism, whereby vegans raise others' awareness of normalised animal exploitation without necessarily having to say or do anything specific.

Teasing

Hostility towards vegans, and vegan activists in and outside the workplace and on social media is a serious issue. Several VVPs had been teased by colleagues. For example, Siobhan (RVN), who explained:
“So, people [colleagues] are kind of really curious [about veganism] asking loads of questions about it. A little bit of scoffing and a bit of poking fun and that sorta thing … mostly, it’s a bit of banter in the workplace as well isn’t it, in veterinary. So there’s a bit of like joking here and there … I guess some people like to poke a little bit of fun. They’ll post a meme here and there, but it’s more, but I don’t think it's, it's not seen as bullying in any way”.

Lucie (RVN) also mentioned vegan-related teasing:

“I mean, sometimes people [colleagues] like, you know, joke and laugh, and like, oh, you can’t have this blah blah blah. Yeah, don’t poke the bear or anything like that but, yeah, I think there’s also certain, like, its being exposed to different kinds of people, different walks of life”.

Another example is Rebecca (VS):

“Yeah, just everyone every now and then [colleagues] makes comments, which most of the time are fine but sometimes are annoying if you’re not feeling particularly good that day. No one seems to understand what your (laughs) what your point is and why you wouldn’t eat them [animals], so. But generally, I tend to take it fairly in my stride, because it’s, yeah … I have had individual conversations with each of them but it’s also just become known, I am the grass eater (laughs). That’s what they call me at work”.

When asked how she feels about being called ‘the grass eater’, Rebecca replied:

“So (laughs) … I don’t really mind [being called the grass eater] because I know ultimately, they’re not, they don’t mean it in a negative way because they do like me a lot and they do respect me … but they ultimately do mean well. It’s just they haven’t actually been exposed to that many vegans for where they are. I think I’m – they’ve definitely not met any vegan vets before. Not really met that many vegans. Their sort of community and their bubble is not that way inclined, so they just haven’t had the exposure”.

Laine (RVN) had also encountered teasing:
“I don't feel discriminated because I'm vegan at all. I never really have done, to be fair. It's always, and you get the odd person that just pokes fun a bit, but, you know, it's all in good fun. I've never felt like they're being rude about [it] ... I can't think of any examples now, but yeah, probably if you're eating something, they're like, oh, it would be better with a bit of bacon in it, or something like that. You know, just little things. Yeah”.

As had Aisha (VS):

“There are a few guys [veterinarians] of vegan friends who are not vegan who send me, initially they were like kind of stupid, ho ho, ho, vegan, isn't that ridiculous. But now they're warming, they send stupid jokes, like weird-shaped vegetables that look like genitals and they'll be like ooh, vegan porn and it’s funny because a couple of years ago I would probably be like, oh well eat it, but now I’m like, that’s quite funny, ha ha”.

In these examples, teasing is framed as banter or good-natured in spirit, trivial, and harmless. These VVPs seemed unperturbed and unbothered by it. Not reacting to or downplaying teasing could be viewed as a strategy that some VVPs employ to deal with tension between their commitment to veganism and their colleagues’ negativity towards veganism.

VVPs downplaying being teased could reflect Horta’s (2018: 360) observation that vegans “rarely choose to denounce their own discrimination and typically focus on aiding nonhuman animals instead”. He explains that vegans seldom advocate against the discrimination they experience because they view it as a mere “consequence of another and more important discrimination; i.e. speciesist discrimination against nonhuman animals” (Horta, 2018: 359). Unlike other groups who are typically targets of stigma and first-order discrimination because of a personal trait or belief (i.e. homosexuality, disability, ethnicity, religion), vegans experience second-order discrimination because they advocate for another group of individuals (nonhuman animals). Thus, they may downplay or denounce their

66 It is necessary to emphasise again here that many vegans, particularly intersectional vegans, recognise the oppression and exploitation of nonhuman animals and particular groups of human
own discrimination so as to not take focus from or inadvertently harm (by reacting to teasing) the cause for which they advocate. Indeed, a comment Aisha (VS) made when discussing her response to being teased supports this:

“If you’re gonna beat people up, that’s not how you get people to come across, and I think if you take the piss, as long as you don’t let, I would never be like ooh, it’s so funny killing a dog, do you know what I mean. I would never be like laugh at the bacon joke, but on the other hand, I won’t be so serious and uptight about everything. I think it’s that kind of approach that helps the people being a bit more, ok well she’s quite cool, I can talk to this person, it’s fine, they’re actually funny or whatever. Do you know what I mean? That helps”.

While VVPs generally seemed unperturbed by vegan-related teasing in the veterinary profession, at times they did seem bothered by it. In thinking about the ways in which colleagues tend to react upon learning she is vegan, Aisha (VS) explained:

“So defensive is one [way]. Maybe quite like, slightly mocking … Yeah, like a bit like taking the piss … Yeah, joking about it, being quite defensive … No-one obviously never attacks you. I mean they won’t be able to attack me, but yeah, definitely defensive and I’d say mocking is the biggest way. Like, oh, you’re a hippie. It’ll be some kind of stupid thing like that. Say mocking is the first way, defensive probably the second way and the third way is making excuses. You know, like, well, as long as the pig has had a nice life or we can whatever, yeah, so those are the three ways I find a lot”.

Explaining how colleagues tended to react upon learning he is vegan, Michael (VS) said: “I think they [colleagues] tried teasing initially but they’ve given up on that, so”. When asked why he thinks they stopped teasing him, he replied: “Because I don’t rise to it”. Greenebaum and Dexter (2018) state that veganism is culturally feminised; and, significantly, Michael believed that his experiences of being teased for being vegan were exacerbated by his gender:

beings are linked. Thus, they advocate for nonhuman animals and humans too where they are subject to oppression and exploitation.
“I think I’m seeing it [teasing] even more than the average vegan because I’m male. Certainly, when I first went vegan one of my colleagues was doing the usual jokes about masculinity and the usual nonsense, but that’s not, it doesn’t happen anymore”.

Notably, Paige (VS) indicated that women may also be uniquely affected by teasing relating to being vegan and the feminisation of veganism because veganism is seen as ‘typical’ for women:

“If those people [who are anti-vegan] go on to make comments about my colleagues who are vegan or my colleagues who are female, that’s when I’ll step in. That’s when it would bother me a lot if I didn’t say anything. Oh you chicks are all the same. You’re all vegan. Women are all the same, da da da.”

Paige’s encounter with the patronising conflation of women and veganism as being ‘typical’ communicates with Aisha’s experience of being sent ‘comic vegan porn’ memes on social media by a group of male veterinarians, suggesting women may be teased about veganism in unique ways.

Michael (VS) recalled being teased by peers in veterinary school:

“I was vegetarian in vet school and copped a lot of nonsense through my vet school career as the only one of only, I think, one or two vegetarians in my year. So that was my experience of what some people are now going through being vegan in those environments”.  

Rowan (VS) suggested that encountering hostile or negative attitudes towards vegans outside of the workplace had enabled him to better deal with teasing and hostility in the veterinary setting:

“I think I’ve come across enough of the aggressive responses or the opposition or the whatever else, jokes, prior to qualifying [as a vet] so if it ever comes up in the workplace, I’m quite good at sidestepping that”.

Indeed, several participants suggested that they had developed a capacity for managing interpersonal relations with non-vegans. This reflects Hirscher’s finding

67 Indeed, consider the recent controversy around vegans at Harper Adams University outlined in Chapter Two: Context and literature.
when interviewing vegans that “challenges were greatest at the start of the vegans’ journeys. As the years passed, they became experts at navigating novel, even hostile, situations” (2011: 168).

Teasing reflects bias and discrimination against vegans and veganism and these accounts of VVPs’ workplace experiences suggest that they can, and indeed, do encounter teasing because of their veganism in the small animal veterinary setting. MacInnis and Hodson (2017: 736) explain that while attention has been given to protecting other groups within society from forms of discrimination like sexism and racism, vegan bias goes unchallenged in western society; they write: “negativity towards vegetarians and vegans is not widely considered a societal problem; rather …[it] is commonplace and largely accepted”. Thus, even should VVPs decide to denounce the teasing, they may encounter a lack of support from a professional and social perspective.68 Significantly, no VVPs mentioned the Equality Act 2010 or indicated an awareness that veganism is a protected belief, despite what they described as ‘good natured banter’ in the workplace potentially constituting bullying, discrimination and harassment.

On a more positive note, Siobhan (RVN) suggested that nascent social normalisation of veganism has improved her relationships with her non-vegan colleagues:

“I’m quite comfortable being a vegan with my colleagues, even the non-vegan colleagues because I think at first, I was a bit worried about what their reaction would be. Especially the heavy meat-eaters and they do like a bit of fun and a bit of joke, so they take the mick out of me quite a bit. But even in the recent years, now that veganism is much more well-known, there’s this, much more of a respect for veganism and more curiosity really …”.

Importantly, not only non-vegan veterinary professionals engage in teasing behaviour in the veterinary workplace and there were examples of VVPs teasing non-vegan colleagues:

68 As mentioned in Chapter Five: Consumption, there is now precedence to challenge vegan bias and discrimination in the UK owing to the recent legal ruling designating veganism a protected philosophical belief.
“So, I’ll tease my boss about, when he has a barbeque, and all the meat that’s on there. I’m like, balance it out with a bit of salad there, boss. You don’t want to get a herd of buffalo, bison extinct in one fell swoop. Yeah, I’ll chuck in a comment like that every now and then” (Paige, VS).

While there were other examples of vegans teasing their colleagues, these examples were infrequent and, in some cases, could be interpreted as vegans being killjoys, particularly when comments are made that draw attention to the problematic nature – from a vegan perspective – of nonhuman animal consumption as food, or use as exhibition or entertainment.

**Chapter summary**

Power, consumption and culture are connected; when what is considered normative in a society is challenged, the causes and consequences are of sociological interest. Many VVPs viewed psychocultural mechanisms as underlying dominant meat culture; thus, an understanding of how meat culture is predicated upon speciesism, involves ‘the meat paradox’, and is maintained by ‘cognitive dissonance’ is important to understanding VVPs’ accounts. It has been posited throughout this chapter (and thesis more broadly) that apparently incongruent ideologies underlie the vegan-veterinary nexus. Understanding the causes or cultural mechanisms (anthropocentrism, speciesism, carnism) that reinforce welfarism, and understanding the potential consequences for those who challenge the status quo (stigma, negative stereotyping, exclusion and ridicule), emphasises not only the profoundness of veganism as a sincerely held belief, but highlights what is at stake for vegans (personally and professionally) who counter cultural norms.

Opposing ideologies converge in small animal veterinary practice where vegans are employed and VVPs expressed feeling challenged when encountering psychocultural mechanisms like speciesism, cognitive dissonance, the meat paradox, and carnism in the workplace. Many felt perplexed by paradoxical views and treatment of different kinds of animals in veterinary practice while some were less surprised by the prevalence of meat culture in the veterinary profession and
saw veterinary practice as a microcosm reflecting paradoxical attitudes towards nonhumans animals in wider society.

VVPs use various strategies when encountering psychocultural mechanisms in the workplace. They may moderate their behaviour and self-censor when with colleagues to avoid causing discomfort or conflict. VVPs were aware of negative vegan stereotypes, which they encountered in the veterinary setting, and they anticipated vegan stigma, which was negotiated using strategies such as self-censorship and impression management when around others and during job interviews. Many VVPs observed veganism and activism as negatively perceived within the profession and this may be why no participants mentioned partaking in public activism. Some VVPs had been teased about their veganism by colleagues but teasing and its effects were typically downplayed.

As outlined in the previous chapter, VVPs generally seem resigned to seeing animals' bodies consumed as food in the veterinary workplace. However, they were less inclined to compromise when it came to animal use for exhibition or entertainment and often subverted these practices by refusing to participate in them and speaking out: being vegan killjoys. A significant finding was that the presence of VVPs in small animal veterinary practice can lead non-vegans to alter their behaviour and self-censor, which constitutes a kind of passive activism.
Chapter 7: Discussion and conclusion

Alongside exploring if and how VVPs encounter challenges working in small animal veterinary practice as vegan, this research aimed to explore how they negotiate the apparent irreconcilability between vegan values and veterinary practice. It sought to uncover if VVPs employ strategies to ease discomfort arising from working within a welfarist profession enmeshed with the AIC and, if so, what kinds of strategies. After speaking with VVPs it was found that they encounter numerous challenges as vegans working in small animal veterinary practice and, whether intentionally or not, they use various strategies to negotiate tension between veganism and aspects of their veterinary role. The challenges that participants identified, and the strategies they employ in response to these challenges, are summarised in what follows. Based upon research findings, some recommendations are then made for policy and practice. The chapter concludes with a reflection on this research, its limitations and implications.

Summary of findings

As mentioned in Chapter One: Introduction, one reason why this research included veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses is because their roles in small animal veterinary practice are similar in many ways. They work closely together and encounter many of the same things and share in most of the tasks performed in daily clinical practice. In speaking with VVPs, there was no significant difference noted in regard to the kinds of challenges they mentioned encountering working in small animal veterinary setting as vegan. Yet, there were occasional differences noted based on their roles, for example, veterinary surgeons may speak of performing caesareans while veterinary nurses may speak of assisting with them. Both use and promote meat-based pet food although veterinary nurses spoke more about purchasing meat and feeding hospitalised pets. Veterinary surgeons kill animals while veterinary nurses restrain patients who are being killed. Some experiences, such as with catering and commensality, did not seem to differ between veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses. Throughout data analysis, differences of significance between veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses
were sought, but none were found. Perhaps the lack of difference in the data between these two groups can be accounted for in that ‘being vegan’ acts as a somewhat unifying feature these individuals share. This does not mean that differences of significance between vegan veterinary surgeons and vegan veterinary nurses do not exist, but rather that none were reflected in this study. Additional research (and perhaps asking different questions) could certainly probe this further.

The first key research question asked how veterinary professionals in England who identify as vegan are affected in small animal veterinary practice as a result of their veganism and, further, what aspects of their role in small animal veterinary practice pose challenges for them as vegans and veterinary professionals. Interviews with VVPs revealed that they are affected when working in small animal veterinary practice in England as in several substantial ways. The kinds of challenges that VVPs mentioned as significant for them in navigating tension between their veganism and professional role often related to humans’ power-based relations with other animals. Thus, the aspects of their role that they identified as catalysts for discomfort have been analysed using Foucauldian conceptualisations of power: sovereign, disciplinary and biopower, which manifest in anthropocentric, speciesist and carnist views and influence humans’ relations towards other animals.

To begin, the breeding of animals as companions was identified as challenging for VVPs, primarily because of the surplus of unwanted animals. Disapproval of selective breeding and the commodification of ‘pedigree’ animals as status symbols was also expressed. The legal classification of pets as property enabling the breeding of pets for profit was seen as a cause for humans exploiting and discarding animals. VVPs strongly opposed to breeding experienced difficulty working with breeders as clients, and there was the suggestion that relationships with colleagues who breed animals for sale can be negatively affected. The second key research question asked how veterinary professionals in England who identify as vegan negotiate the apparent irreconcilability between veganism and veterinary practice and sought to uncover what strategies they employ to negotiate challenges they encounter in small animal practice as vegans and
veterinary professionals. It was found that VVPs may prioritise professionalism over their vegan values when feeling discomfort working with breeders. For example, to avoid tension or conflict with clients and colleagues, there were examples of VVPs moderating their behaviour by self-censoring, despite having strong opinions. For those who found it too challenging to work with breeders, deferring the task of consulting with breeders to other colleagues enabled them to avoid frustration and discomfort. It seems that because the breeding of animals as companions is significant for revenue generation and client/patient attainment, there appeared to be little that VVPs felt they could do about stopping or deterring breeding and breeders. The importance of breeding to the income generation of veterinary practice, and the consequences of appearing unprofessional, meant that in the case of discomfort about breeding and working with breeders, professionalism often emerged as trumping ethics. However, one VVP disincentivised breeders and pet breeding by not offering discounts to breeders for veterinary services, while others promoted animal adoption to their clients and discouraged the purchasing of pedigrees (or designer crossbred).

Another challenge that VVPs working in small animal veterinary practice identified was using and selling pharmaceuticals (medicines and other products) that have been tested on animals and those made with animal-derived ingredients. VVPs’ opinions about animal testing varied, encompassing acceptance, reluctance, resignation and condemnation. This was reflected in their opinions tending to align with the 3Rs. Although not outright agreeing with animal testing, nor being entirely comfortable with it, two VVPs saw it as a ‘necessary evil’. Others reluctantly accepted animal testing only because they felt there was no alternative to it available at this time or because they thought that current ways of producing and testing drugs were unlikely to change. Adopting a utilitarian view and rationalising emerged as a strategy for those who reluctantly accepted animal testing, incorporating the view that if animals are harmed and killed to help a larger proportion of animals (including humans), then this was justified. VVPs adopting a utilitarian view seemed less perturbed by animal testing because they felt the animals’ use served a greater good. Alternatively, there were VVPs who strongly condemned animal testing to produce pharmaceuticals viewing it as unnecessary and inefficient and thus they felt it should be stopped immediately and replaced
with alternative product testing and production methods that do not involve nonhuman animal death and suffering.

VVPs’ discomfort with using and promoting pharmaceuticals in small animal veterinary practice was sometimes negotiated through emphasising their duty to patients. To jeopardise patients’ welfare by boycotting products tested on or made with animal ingredients was considered unprofessional. Thus, similarly to the challenge that breeding and breeders posed, there was a sense among participants that little could be done to avoid using pharmaceuticals and, as before, the need for professionalism emerged as trumping ethics. In some cases where the use of products made from animals and with animal testing was disliked but felt unavoidable, VVPs employed psychocultural mechanisms such as compartmentalisation (i.e. not thinking about it) and cognitive dissonance to lessen their discomfort. While a sense of disempowerment imbued many VVPs’ thoughts about animal testing for pharmaceutical production, two participants seemed empowered through supporting and promoting organisations that conduct animal free research.

A third aspect of their role that VVPs identified as challenging for them in small animal veterinary practice is the killing of healthy or helpable animals. For many participants, their aversion to killing healthy or helpable animals (companions and wildlife) led them to conscientiously object, meaning they refused to perform or assist with the killing. Establishing boundaries with employers and colleagues emerged as a strategy some VVPs use to negotiate discomfort, meaning they made it clear to colleagues or employers up front that performing or partaking in the killing of healthy animals was not acceptable to them. Deferring the task of killing healthy or helpable animals to colleagues who were willing to perform the act was also mentioned as a way for VVPs to avoid being directly involved in the act.

There were examples of VVPs intervening to prevent what they considered to be unnecessary and unjustified killing with some VVPs saying that they often took personal responsibility for animals brought into their practice to prevent them being killed. A sense of resignation was expressed in regard to how clients, as legal
‘owners’ of animals, could request to have a healthy or helpable animal killed. One vegan veterinarian mentioned how a client’s request to kill a healthy pet if denied may simply divert the client elsewhere or result in the client killing the animal themselves. This led her to rationalise that veterinary professionals may have little or no option but to kill healthy animals in some cases, which for vegans may have severe detrimental emotional impacts.

A further challenge for VVPs to emerge from interviews was the legal requirement for the killing of animals labelled ‘invasive alien species’ who fall under legislation decreeing that they cannot be released. The situation with grey squirrels was frequently mentioned. If presented to veterinary practices by members of the public, grey squirrels cannot legally be released into the wild in the UK, even if healthy. Over-all, while displeased about having to kill healthy grey squirrels, VVPs seemed resigned to having to obey the law. One VVP mentioned having conscientiously objected to killing a healthy squirrel but it was a stance that resulted in the loss of his job. While many participants remarked on encountering positive views of wildlife among staff in their practices, several VVPs felt challenged by veterinary colleagues’ poor and unempathetic views towards injured and or orphaned wildlife. This was particularly evident with lowly-considered or culturally demonised animals like pigeons and parakeets, who were reportedly sometimes dispassionately killed in small animal veterinary practice, even when treatable or otherwise healthy.

Breeding, animal testing and animal killing emerged as key aspects of VVPs’ professional role working in small animal veterinary practice in England that they find challenging. It was found that VVPs employ numerous strategies to negotiate these aspects of their role. It was also found that VVPs find the ubiquity of meat and animal consumption in small animal veterinary practice challenging. While the consumption of animals as food is not the sole concern of veganism, it is a significant aspect of vegan ideology and praxis. Several VVPs found it difficult to eat with and around non-vegan colleagues who were eating animals (‘meat’) when at work and at workplace events. Indeed, an aversion to meat was common among VVPs, which posed a challenge in regard to both humans’ (colleagues) and nonhuman animals’ (patients) consumption.
When feeling uncomfortable about humans’ consumption of nonhuman animals in small animal veterinary practice, VVPs sometimes employed boundary maintenance as a way to avoid eating with or around others. For some, this meant strategically scheduling their lunchroom meals before or after non-vegan colleagues to avoid being around people consuming animal-based food products. Thus, there was evidence to suggest that VVPs’ aversion to meat and people eating meat negatively impacted commensality. Some VVPs said that they ate meals alone to avoid seeing animals being consumed and there was some evidence that having vegans and non-vegans sharing an eating space could lead to tension between colleagues. On the other hand, despite their discomfort being around meat and meat-eating, eating plant-based/vegan-friendly food alongside non-vegans was mentioned as a way to visibilise veganism and showcase the plant-based diet. Eating a plant-based diet in the presence of non-vegans enabled some VVPs to feel as if they were infiltrating and subverting meat culture and leading by example (i.e. rejecting anthropocentrism, speciesism and carnism).

Regarding workplace social events, VVPs seemed generally happy to share meals with colleagues at restaurants that offer vegan options, again, to showcase plant-based food but also to avoid perpetuating negative vegan stereotypes (i.e. vegans as extreme). Yet, VVPs drew a line, and most said that they would decline (or consider declining) attending workplace (social or formal) occasions held at venues that ‘spectacularised’ or pageant ‘meat’, such as steakhouses, meat-centric fast-food restaurants and perhaps barbeques.

Poor-quality plant-based catering and insufficient food provision at veterinary events and functions was another challenge for VVPs. However, their perception of plant-based catering at veterinary CPD events and conferences varied. There were many examples of VVPs having had negative experiences of plant-based catering in the veterinary environment. At times, participants seemed resigned to being provided with inadequate or uninspiring pant-based food options, since this is what they typically encountered. Where plant-based food options at events were poor or lacking, VVPs reported feeling frustration, disappointment and irritation. While many participants felt that plant-based catering in the workplace and industry-related events has somewhat improved – largely owing to increased
commercial options of plant-based food – the legacy of being overlooked or inadequately provided for as a vegan emerged in their comments about feeling lucky and grateful to be given anything to eat at all. In response to frequent inadequate provision of vegan-friendly food at workplace events, self-catering by bringing one’s own food either to work (i.e. plant-based milk for hot beverages), or to events (i.e. plant-based products for barbeques or snack bars for conferences) was a strategy that VVPs used to ensure they have something to eat and drink.

VVPs also mentioned feeling discomfort at having to sell and promote commercial meat-based pet food in small animal veterinary practice and some found the feeding of meat to hospitalised patients difficult. VVPs appeared to be resigned to the status quo in this regard, feeling like there was no option but to use and promote meat-based pet food because of a present lack of alternatives. While many participants knew about the existence of plant-based diets for dogs, and thought it was viable and preferable for dogs to eat plant-based pet food, they had encountered or anticipated resistance to ‘vegan diets’ for pets within their practices and the profession more broadly. While no participants expressed concern about plant-based pet food for dogs, twelve participants expressed concerns about plant-based pet food for cats. Two VVPs said that they themselves would not keep a carnivorous animal such as a cat as a pet because of their dietary requirements. For those VVPs in favour of plant-based pet foods in general, there was an expressed desire to stock, promote and sell it in their practices but they identified attitudinal barriers from within the veterinary profession (i.e. managers and colleagues) as a source of resistance. Feeling inadequately informed about plant-based foods for pets was common among VVPs. Some participants felt the need for more evidence-based research and better information provided to veterinary professionals about plant-based pet food as an alternative to commercial meat-based pet foods. One participant had self-educated as a strategy to gain more information about feeding nonhuman animals with plant-based food and this gave her confidence and legitimacy in promoting plant-based pet food in practice.

Owing to a lack of evidence-based research on plant-based pet food and few viable alternatives to commercial meat-based pet food at this present time, VVPs, as before, stressed the need for professionalism and prioritising their patients and
this subordinated their vegan values. If caring for a patient who was an obligate carnivore (i.e. cat, raptor, snake, ferret), or if meat-based food was the only option available for feeding a patient in order for them to heal and prosper (i.e. prescription diets), VVPs recommended and fed patients meat. Similarly to using and promoting pharmaceuticals, emphasising one’s duty of care for one’s patient was a strategy that VVPs employed to mitigate the discomfort of knowing that animals had suffered and died in the production of the meat-based pet food products they were expected to use and promote in small animal veterinary practice. There was undeniable recognition that to breed, raise, and kill certain kinds of animals (i.e. chickens, turkeys, ducks, fish, pigs, cows, sheep) to feed and sustain ‘companion animals’ (mostly dogs and cats) was speciesist, and this caused VVPs discomfort. Thus, as before, psychocultural mechanisms like compartmentalisation (not thinking about it) and cognitive dissonance (rationalisation) – the same mechanisms used to sustain carnism – were often employed by VVPs.

Although VVPs may use psychocultural mechanisms to abate or assuage their own discomfort with performing certain aspects of their professional role, encountering these mechanisms in others and in the profession more broadly emerged as challenging for them. Observing speciesism, the meat paradox, and cognitive dissonance in clients, colleagues, and the wider veterinary profession caused them sadness and frustration. VVPs mentioned several ways of negotiating perceived paradoxical views and behaviours encountered when interacting with others in the small animal veterinary setting. The need for maintaining professionalism was emphasised once again, which saw VVPs self-censoring and resisting commenting on issues about which they felt strongly to avoid tension and conflict and maintain positive relationships with employers, colleagues and clients.

On the other hand, in ‘picking their battles’, they often saw and seized opportunities to educate others about animal cruelty and exploitation. This sometimes involved initiating a friendly discussion or imparting facts, but participants also frequently embodied ‘vegan killjoys’ by highlighting perceived
paradoxes or hypocrisies in how humans think about and treat other animals. They further embodied killjoy figures when they declined invitations to attend workplace and social events that involved the use of animals as exhibition and or entertainment and explained their reason for not attending. In cases where VVPs’ colleagues supported and participated in activities involving the (ab)use of animals like hunting, breeding, and animal races, VVPs tended to give precedence to acting professionally rather than commenting, meaning they often suppressed their opinions by ‘letting it pass’ and ‘putting it aside’. However, this was not always successful as a strategy and there were some examples where VVPs expressed having developed negative feelings towards a colleague, potentially impacting on interpersonal workplace relationships.

VVPs expressed an awareness of vegan stigma and negative vegan stereotypes, and some had been teased by veterinary colleagues as a result of their veganism. Awareness and anticipation of vegan stigma and negative vegan stereotypes had various effects on participants. Most evident, was their reluctance to mention their veganism to a potential employer, indicating they fear judgment and potentially discrimination as vegans in the veterinary profession. Notable was the ways in which they used impression management, and modified their behaviour around colleagues so as not to be seen as ‘militant’, ‘extreme’, ‘pushy’ or ‘preachy’ vegans. They often mentioned waiting to be approached by others before talking about veganism and nonhuman animal cruelty, and they were sensitive to others’ reactions to being educated about animal exploitation, taking care not to overwhelm or push people away. Somewhat concerningly, VVPs downplayed the seriousness of being teased by colleagues about being vegan. Viewing teasing as ‘good-natured’ or ‘harmless banter’ could be considered a strategy they use to diffuse potential tension in the workplace and with nonvegan colleagues and to ensure they do not reflect badly on veganism by appearing to (over)react.

In sum, this study aimed to explore an apparent incongruity between veganism and the veterinary profession, and investigate this incongruity through speaking with VVPs, who are arguably best positioned to illuminate the perceived paradox between the values and praxis of veganism and of small animal veterinary practice. To this end, this research on the experiences of VVPs working in small
animal veterinary practice in England has yielded valuable insight into how vegans working in the veterinary profession encounter challenges when performing their role, and how they overcome – or succumb to – their struggles. While participants used various strategies in response to challenges, a finding of concern was that in some cases participants mentioned they were considering leaving the veterinary profession as a result of being unable to find ways to reconcile their vegan values with aspects of their professional role.

Importantly, while this research has focussed on VVPs’ thoughts and experiences, some of the challenges they face in small animal veterinary practice are not unique to them as vegan. For example, the killing of healthy animals is distressing for many veterinary professionals whether vegan or not. Also, a lack of plant-based catering at veterinary events likely impacts veterinary professionals who are vegetarian, or who have allergies to animal products (especially egg and dairy), environmentally conscious and health-conscious individuals. Thus, the proposed recommendations arising from the findings of this research, which are outlined in what follows, would likely benefit veterinary professionals broadly. Furthermore, the upcoming recommendations could improve alignment between veterinary professionals’ role as animal healers and the conducting of veterinary practice.

The research undertaken and presented in this thesis illustrates that VVPs are aware of and reflect deeply upon the paradoxes that they observe and encounter working in the veterinary profession; paradoxes that acutely reflect the contradictory ways in which humans relate to and treat other animals in capitalist western society. This research also shows how VVPs can prompt others to consider humans’ paradoxical relations with other animals. Rollin (2006: 51) asserts:

> Fundamentally, as in so many socioethical problems the root lies in the fact that most people have never thought about it. Herein lies an opportunity for veterinarians, the natural champions of companion animals in society – even as paediatricians have historically been the natural advocates for children – to lay the groundwork for meaningful social change.
Based on the findings of this research, some recommendations are advanced to help lay the groundwork for encouraging thought about enacting meaningful social change. Such change could lead to the improved workplace experiences of VVPs working in small animal veterinary practice and – as mentioned – veterinary professionals more broadly. Alignment between the veterinary professional’s role as animal protector and their day-to-day activities could also be improved. Lastly, enhancement of the BVA’s equality and diversity policy and sustainability agendas could, and should, be made.

**Recommendations**

As this study has shown, being a vegan working in the veterinary profession poses various and significant challenges. These challenges have prompted the following recommendations aimed at addressing some of the issues that VVPs raised. Perhaps more ambitiously, these recommendations can initiate conversation and incite change within the veterinary profession. This could lead to better alignment of its values as a powerful social institution dedicated to protecting nonhuman animals and promoting their optimal health and wellbeing, which is presently arguably problematised by its enmeshed in the AIC. To begin, the veterinary profession should interrogate the practicability of its triadic role and the consequences that arise from veterinary professionals serving multiple parties with often conflicting interests. Veganism aside, the veterinary professional’s duty to serve public health, clients as the legal owners of nonhuman animals and sources of revenue, and nonhuman animals as patients leads to conflicts of interest and ethical dilemmas (Rollin, 2006) that can cause stress (Batchelor and McKeegan, 2012), compassion fatigue, ethical conflict, moral distress and burnout (Moses, Malowney and Wesley Boyd, 2018).

Concerningly, at this time in several countries, the veterinary profession has been found to have an elevated occupational suicide rate (Plat et al., 2010). While the serious social issue of suicide among veterinary professionals is surely a complex issue with contributing factors complex and compound (i.e. student debt, long
hours, occupational stress, anxiety and feelings of inadequacy, cyberbullying, alongside access to potentially lethal medications), Coffey (2008: no page) sees the veterinary profession’s “confused and confusing social role” as a contributing factor to the high rate of suicides among veterinarians. He says the profession functions on two conflicting and paradoxical levels – tending to the animals that society uses and abuses (i.e. farmed and laboratory animals), and tending to the animals that society cares for and cherishes (companions, like dogs and cats).

Coffey posits that the anthropocentric foundations of the veterinary profession and its long held welfarist position are inadequate for changing attitudes towards animals and today’s veterinary practitioners. Many enter the profession, he says, only to encounter and struggle with what they thought the role would require them to do (presumably help animals) and the reality, which he describes as involving “unworthy acts and manipulations” such as selective breeding and sexual mutilation (Coffey, 2008: no page). If the triadic nature of the veterinary professional’s role is implicated as a cause of occupational stress and the ensuing consequences, then the role requires reconsideration and reform.

While there are ways in which the veterinary profession needs to change, there are ways in which it is already changing. The veterinary profession should recognise the existence of and anticipate a future rise in the number of vegans working as veterinary professionals. The RCVS Survey of the Veterinary Profession and Survey of the Veterinary Nursing Profession currently captures demographic information such as gender, age, and sexual orientation, and it would be useful to include in these surveys an estimate of vegans (and vegetarians). Better understanding of how many veg*ns work in the UK veterinary profession would help the governing bodies (RVCS and BVA) respond to the issues that VVPs have raised in this thesis. This research has already indicated that there are many VVPs working in small animal veterinary practice and that they struggle – in various ways and varying degrees – to reconcile their vegan values and praxis with certain aspects of their professional role.

Of course, as was pointed out earlier in this thesis, this is not a clear distinction since, for example, not all animal companions are well cared for and cherished. Plus, while pets aren’t consumed as in eaten in England, animals bred for companionship still represent a form of commodification and consumption.
As mentioned, the findings to emerge from this study would be beneficial for implementing change that could improve the workplace experiences of small animal practice veterinary professionals broadly. There is already ample evidence in existing scholarship that non-vegan veterinary professionals – similarly to VVPs – struggle ethically with various aspects of their role (Rollin, 2006), particularly, killing healthy animals (Morgan and McDonald, 2007; Batchelor and McKeegan, 2012). Thus, recognition of the root causes of such struggles (anthropocentrism, speciesism and carnism) and considering initiatives to avoid or lessen VVPs’ feelings of distress and discomfort (and also that of non-vegan veterinary professionals) when performing their role, is paramount. Indeed, much can be done at a practice and policy level in response to some of the findings of this research, which – in responding to the challenges that VVPs identified – would help veterinary professionals more broadly in their important societal role as nonhuman animal healers and protectors.

Before presenting recommendations based on findings from each chapter, two points should be made; firstly, about the value of vegan perspective and knowledge and, secondly, vegans’ rights in the workplace. In terms of the former, The Vegan Society considers it an employer’s responsibility to make use of vegan knowledge, which means considering “the ways in which vegans can help contribute to workplace policies and practices”, and they offer the Vegan Staff Network established by Suffolk County Council70 as an exemplar (The Vegan Society, 2020: 7). Based on the articulate and insightful perspectives shared by participants in this study, it is clear that vegans would make valuable additions to veterinary ethical boards and practice management committees. This research has shown the value of applying a vegan lens to examine humans’ relationships with other animals (and also the natural environment). The value of the vegan lens is that it exposes the paradoxical and problematical aspects of human-nonhuman animal relations and enmeshment in contemporary capitalist society, which allows them to be addressed. Veganism, when applied as an analytical lens, visibilises and challenges the outwardly, seemingly benign character of human-animal

70 See https://vegannetwork.co.uk/
relations, raises questions about the ethics of domestication and humans’ innumerable uses of other animals and, importantly, invites alternative ways of thinking about and relating to the nonhuman world (ways that resist and reject anthropocentrism, speciesism and carnism). One participant in this research commented on the unique perspective she brings to her veterinary practice’s internal ethics committee, who support and value her opinion as a vegan. This illustrates how – when embraced rather than feared or ridiculed – the unique perspective that VVPs offer make them valuable additions to veterinary ethical boards and practice management committees.

Considering the recent legal ruling in the UK determining ethical veganism a protected belief, the veterinary profession must recognise and be aware of vegans' rights. The Vegan Society (2020) has developed a booklet entitled ‘Supporting veganism in the workplace: A guide for employers’, which is a valuable resource that should be of great interest and importance to the veterinary profession. In the booklet, it is suggested that staff at veterinary practices be trained on the principles of the Equality Act 2010 and the organisation's specific Equality and Diversity policy (The Vegan Society, 2020). It is perhaps significant that none of the participants in this study mentioned vegans’ rights in the workplace, nor indicated awareness of or an understanding of their rights under the Equality Act. Hence, it is essential that VVPs and all those with whom they work are made aware of how equality legislation affects and protects vegans.

Recommendations based on findings from Chapter 4: Power

Participants disliked working with pet breeders for several reasons; primarily, because of the surplus unwanted animals and because they saw breeding as a commercial enterprise that commodified animals as property and cast them as disposable objects. One participant said she would like to see more done by veterinary practices in terms of discouraging people (clients) from purchasing purposely bred animals and do more to encourage pet rescue and adoption. She suggested veterinary practices offer incentives to clients who adopt animals rather than to those who obtain purpose-bred animals. Another participant suggested not
giving discounts on services to breeders. More broadly, the BVA could campaign to influence legislation to increase the regulation of pet breeding. A good model might be to increase taxes on store bought animals, or ban the deliberate breeding of animals such as dogs and cats until shelters and rescue centres are empty (see Sawbridge, 2021). Indeed, Rollin (2006: 136) suggests that changing views of animals as merely commodities and thus disposable is “an area in which veterinarians can exert a very positive force for change through education”. Of course, veterinary professionals would need to feel supported and empowered in taking a stance against breeding and not fear repercussions from employers or governing bodies should discouragement of breeders and education of clients lead to offence or complaint.

VVPs also mentioned the issue of animal testing for pharmaceuticals. The BVA and practices should promote the use of ‘cruelty free’ pharmaceuticals where available (i.e. such as plant-based alternatives to fish oil, gelatine free capsules) and veterinary practices should be more conscious of the histories of the pharmaceuticals they purchase, use and promote. As important clients of animal health companies, veterinary practice staff can ask drug company representatives about alternatives to products that have been tested on animals and request products that do not include animals’ bodies as ingredients. The BVA supports the 3Rs initiative, but it could more strongly advocate for the replacement approach to animal testing, as opposed to refine or reduce, since there is ample evidence of suitable alternatives to pharmaceuticals and products produced via animal testing (Knight, 2008). Furthermore, veterinary education and training should cease using animals as training tools and utilise the now many available and sufficient humane teaching methods (Knight, 2007). Where possible, veterinary practices should purchase vegan-friendly communal use products for their practices, such as hand creams and cleaning products, and provide plant-based milk for staff beverages. This change disadvantages no one since all veterinary professionals can (and may

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71 The term ‘cruelty free’ is somewhat a myth as the manufacture of all products inevitably causes some harm/death to nonhuman animals, but some products involve causing more harm than others.
prefer to) use vegan-friendly products, and using vegan-friendly products would benefit VVPs and, of course, nonhuman animals.\textsuperscript{72}

Employers should consider the importance of conscientious objection/refusal in the veterinary setting and when preparing employment contracts for new veterinary employees, especially vegans. The veterinary profession’s governing and regulating bodies (BVA and RCVS) should allow for conscientious objection and indeed support it and consider implementing an institutional framework for conscientious objection. Some veterinary schools have already implemented policies to allow for contentious objection to exempt veterinary students from participating in teaching and assessment activities involving animal harm or death by providing alternatives (Knight, 2007; Knight, 2014; Baldelli et al., 2017). It seems that this needs to be extended to and formalised for veterinary professionals seeking work and when working in practice.

Language serves as a tool of oppression that contributes to how a society and culture considers and treats nonhuman animals (Stibbe, 2001). The veterinary professions’ governing bodies (BVA, RCVS) veterinary practice owners, and veterinary professionals should consider the power of language in shaping human-animal relations. One participant’s account of how his practice employs language to inculcate a culture that resists deindividualizing animals and reinforcing nonhuman animals as owned, objects or property was an example of how language can be adapted. Thus, the veterinary profession broadly should be more aware of how the language and terminology used in veterinary practice and in the profession’s public documents and policies reinforces negative and reductive ways of viewing nonhuman animals and objectifies them. As a starting point, this might mean avoiding terms like ‘it’ when referring to nonhuman animals, and ‘owner’ when referring to those who care for animals.

\textsuperscript{72} Product choice should, of course, also extend to ensuring they are environmentally friendly.
Recommendations based on findings from Chapter 5: Consumption

Vegans not being provided for or being inadequately catered for in the workplace may lead to exclusion and could constitute discrimination. The Vegan Society (2020) recommends employers should be considerate of vegans in their employ by ensuring they have the opportunity to order or request plant-based food ahead of time for catered events and providing exemption for vegans from a requirement to attend events that centre on animal products such as a ‘hog roast’ or barbeque. As mentioned in Chapter Five: Consumption, it seems prudent to offer 100% plant-based catering at veterinary events since vegans, vegetarians and those who eat an omnivorous diet can all eat plant-based food. If a variety of nutritious and delicious plant-based food can be enjoyed by vegans and also non-vegans (including vegetarians and those with animal-product related food allergies), it begs the question as to why catering at such events should not be entirely plant-based. Indeed, this would also rectify a current under-acknowledgement within the veterinary profession of the harm that animal agriculture does to the environment. The BVA (2021d) advocates taking action to work towards a greener profession and has developed a ‘Greener Veterinary Practice Checklist’. Their recommendations focus on reducing water and energy use, recycling, travel, responsible drug use and wastage. While they do recommend supporting “sustainable welfare-friendly agriculture when advising farming clients” (BVA, 2021d: no page), they refer the reader to their position on sustainable animal agriculture in which they write “the veterinary profession should promote the benefits of sustainable consumption and the concept of ‘less and better’, which sees some citizens reduce consumption of animal derived products, whilst maintaining proportional spend on high animal health and welfare products” (BVA, 2019c: 4). Rather than promote ‘less and better’, the BVA and veterinary practices should do more to seriously consider the impacts of animal agriculture in their veterinary sustainability agendas. Indeed, recognition of veganism and its potential for informing a plant-based future to help mitigate the climate crisis is presently either absent or vastly under-acknowledged within the veterinary profession.
Ward, Oven and Bethencourt (2020) argue that a clean pet food revolution would contribute significantly to improving the health of the planet, improve the health of animals who eat commercial pet food, reduce the need to breed, confine and kill animals to make pet food, and remove the need for animal use to test pet food for safety. Thus, similarly to their influence as valuable clients of animal health companies, veterinary practices should ask pet food manufacturing companies for more research to be conducted into plant-based nutrition for pets. Most of the resistance from VVPs on this topic stemmed from feeling underinformed about the nutritional (in)adequacy of plant-based pet foods, especially for cats, and a lack of evidence that plant-based diets are nutritionally sound. Until more research is done, barriers to exploring plant-based diets for pets will remain, which has implications for those VVPs who cannot reconcile this aspect of their role, for animal ethics, and for the environment.

While many VVPs felt underinformed about plant-based pet food, others self-educated to empower themselves in discussing plant-based food options for pets with clients (and also presumably employers and colleagues). This is significant considering Aesculapian authority and how important veterinary endorsement or approval of plant-based pet food is to people who keep pets (Dodd, 2019).73 Offering plant-based nutrition courses for veterinary professionals, or at least incorporating training on plant-based nutrition in existing pet nutrition courses, would be valuable. Once satisfied of the suitability of plant-based pet foods (either through education or evidence-based research), small animal veterinary practices should stock and promote plant-based pet food, or, as it becomes available (see Harmless Hunt Mouse Cookies for Cats), stock and promote pet food made with cultured meat.74 Indeed, if successfully commercialised and widely adopted, cellular meat could have a transformative effect on veterinary practice and on VVPs in regard to this challenging aspect of their role.

73 Other stipulations included further evidence of nutritional sufficiency, greater availability, and cost.
74 Where, of course, concerns about animal cruelty in cultured meat production are overcome.
Recommendations based on findings from Chapter 6: Culture

Veterinary related events being held at places where animals are exhibited or used for entertainment should be reconsidered. The Vegan Society (2020) says that VVPs should not be forced or feel forced to attend such events and should be exempted from a requirement to attend corporate events that involve animal use for exhibition or entertainment (such as horseracing). While not forcing vegans to attend events that cause them discomfort is positive, it might be more prudent for such events to simply be held at venues that do not involve animal consumption, use and exploitation. For example, all veterinary professionals can attend a plant-based or vegan-friendly restaurant but as was clear in Chapter Five: Consumption, VVPs may not feel comfortable attending such events. Similarly, all veterinary professionals can attend an event at a conference centre, town hall or Botanic Garden, but vegans working as veterinary professionals may not feel comfortable attending events at zoos or visiting horseracing tracks.

According to The Vegan Society (2020), employers are responsible for creating a positive atmosphere in workplaces and must take action if made aware of staff who are vegan being subject to unfair treatment. Thus, the veterinary profession broadly and management within veterinary practices need to be aware of the prevalence of vegan stigma and negative stereotyping of vegans. While often socially invisible, vegaphobia and vegan stigma and bias manifest in the workplace. Vegan bias, stigma and discrimination should be considered in the BVA’s equality and diversity policy and those working in the profession should work to mitigate bias against vegans. While the BVA’s equality and diversity agenda implicitly includes vegans through veganism being classed as a ‘belief’, the rights and plights of vegans working in the veterinary profession are perhaps issues worthy of a distinct campaign to provide support and raise awareness.

As with the advent of cellular meat, mass vegan transition in society would have a transformative effect on the veterinary professional and western culture but that is arguably mitigated against by all the dimensions discussed in Chapter Six: Culture and also in other chapters in this thesis. Changing meat culture, which is
predicated on the view that nonhuman animals are legitimately for humans to use and consume is an enormous and overwhelming task, and not one that should be the responsibility of any one profession. Yet, the veterinary profession undeniably has socio-cultural power and is uniquely positioned to influence how society views and thus treats nonhuman animals. Importantly, institutionalised anthropocentrism, speciesism and carnism is a structural issue. While much of the research conducted for this thesis has appeared to focus on the thoughts and experiences of individuals, or ‘the personal’, people live in societies and societies have cultures. Presently, western society is a meat culture, evident in the power and pervasiveness of the AIC and in the innumerable ways that humans consume other animals. Nevertheless, as culture influences people, people influence culture. Culture can be changed, or be shifted, in often subtle ways, such as the steady increase of veganism seen over the past decade, or in more overt ways, such as the dramatic increase in women entering the veterinary profession. All cultural changes are significant and present opportunities to reflect on the way things are and how they might otherwise be.

As evident at points throughout this thesis, there is the potential for VVPs to contribute to the disruption and perhaps even the dismantling of the AIC. This potential is of great interest to CAS. CAS, as explained in Chapter One: Introduction, examines and critiques socio-cultural beliefs, practices, values, institutions, and systems that enable oppression, seeks to expose the social, cultural, legal, political, and economic mechanisms that mask that oppression and is concerned with and dedicated to critiquing society, culture, institutions, power and the instrumental and exploitative mechanisms of capitalism. Hence, even seemingly small gestures like seeing and seizing opportunities to educate others, promoting plant-based food, and countering negative vegan stereotypes are highly significant acts, as are more overt actions, such as VVPs’ embodiment of killjoy figures, their refusal to participate in certain activities and events. Such actions see them challenge the normalisation of ubiquitous animal use and exploitation within the extensive and infiltrative AIC. If the number of vegans continues to increase in society and within the veterinary profession, then the way in which VVPs agitate and boycott to expose the otherwise unquestioned paradoxes that emerge through
the profession’s enmeshment with the AIC represents a latent power that is highly socially significant.

Rollin (2006) observes that social changes and changes in social ethics (consensus about what is right and wrong) have been reflected in the veterinary profession in past decades, highlighting the need for the profession to respond to changing societal views. The UK veterinary profession’s response to changes in social ethics is a process that has already begun with the recent sustainability (a response to concerns about climate change) and diversity (response to concerns about prejudice and discrimination) agendas and the profession’s many campaigns against controversial practices such as mutations (tail docking and ear cropping) and breeding deformities (brachycephaly) (response to concerns about animal welfare). If we do indeed see the veterinary profession as having reached a pivotal moment in its history, then now is a moment of great opportunity. The masculinist, anthropocentric, scientism familiar to the traditional veterinary model is arguably under pressure to become a thing of the past. As the growth of veganism forces scrutiny upon dominant socio-cultural ways of being exposing them as problematically anthropocentric, speciesist and carnist, and as the veterinary profession becomes increasingly feminised, transformation of the veterinary profession may be forced if not initiated. Importantly, most veterinary professionals surely want to help and not harm animals and many pursue a career in veterinary medicine to improve animals’ lives. The present social, cultural, political, and economic system within which they perform this role corrupts this aim through normalising and legitimising animal (ab)use and exploitation within the AIC.

The way in which humans exert power over other animals, the degree to which they consume other animals, and inculcate a culture that legitimises nonhuman animals as inferior and as consumable is reflected in small animal veterinary practice. Speaking with VVPs and identifying the challenges they face, and uncovering the plethora of strategies that they employ to negotiate their discomfort when their vegan values and veterinary role come into conflict, suggests that there is indeed irreconcilability between veganism and the veterinary profession. And since both veganism and the veterinary profession share the aim of promoting
nonhuman animal wellbeing and protecting nonhuman animals from harm, the peculiarity of this incongruity speaks volumes.

**Reflection on contributions, limitations, and implications**

Engagement with various theories and theoretical work has enhanced the analysis undertaken in this thesis; however, the research that has been conducted has, in turn, contributed to the enhancement and extension of theory. To begin, Foucauldian analysis within CAS – and beyond – has not previously been directly applied to a critique of the veterinary profession as a primary facilitator of the AIC. Thus, the research conducted in this thesis builds upon theoretical and empirical Foucauldian analysis within AS and CAS and broader scholarship.

Consumption as a daily event has been recognised as socially significant but sociologists who research food and consumption practices have neglected to examine consumption practices within the veterinary setting and among vegans who may work there. Further, while sociological research has shown an interest in personal-professional values conflict, sociology of the professions has to date paid no attention to personal-professional values conflict affecting vegans who work in the veterinary profession.

This exploration of vegans and veganism in the veterinary profession also sheds new light on the veterinary profession and on veganism through its focus on culture and ideology. Regarding the former, this thesis offers a critique of the veterinary profession’s paradoxical views and treatment of animals, has problematised the welfarist position the profession adopts and its enmeshment in the AIC. Rather than the veterinary profession being a purely benevolent socio-cultural institution dedicated to animal wellbeing, this research reveals it to be a microcosm of wider western society and meat culture, rife with inconsistencies relating to how humans view and treat other animals. Thus as a cultural critique, this research on vegan veterinary professionals offers new and valuable insights to studies of western culture through the lens of a significant and unique counter-cultural group.
As discussed in Chapter Three: Methodology, the sampling size of this qualitative interview-based study might be considered a limitation although the eventual number of interviews conducted was guided by sufficiency and saturation. Nevertheless, more research needs to be conducted on veganism and the veterinary profession and on VVPs more broadly, and this includes VVPs in England, in the wider UK, outside of the UK (i.e. Eastern Europe, Asia, Australasia, North and South America), employed in large animal practice, or who work for sanctuaries, zoos and in laboratories, Named Veterinary Surgeons, Slaughterhouse veterinarians, VVPs employed in other non-therapeutic roles, student VVPs and VVPs working in para-veterinary roles. Research in all these realms would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the workplace experiences of VVPs since this study involving 20 VVPs precludes generalisability beyond these participants.

A further limitation of this research that needs acknowledgment is related to the issue of self-selection, meaning that the individuals who took part in this research volunteered and, thus, represent people who wanted to speak to me. VVPs who may be less inclined to participate in research as an interviewee are not captured or represented here. Also left unrepresented are the views and accounts of VVPs who have left the profession (potentially because of personal/professional values conflict). The participants who volunteered to be interviewed could be people who are more open, more sociable, less concerned about speaking out, or who have stronger opinions they want to share. Research ethics requires participants to give informed consent to participate in research and thus self-selection bias is unavoidable; nevertheless, it must be recognised, acknowledged and considered to have potential effects on findings and generalisability (Robinson, 2014).

There is also the issue of social desirability bias (also called response bias) in interview-based research. It is always possible that interviewees give responses to questions that they think the interviewer wants. They may also give responses that they believe will give the interviewer or others a particular impression of themselves (impression management techniques). While difficult to identify or eradicate, the potential for social desirability bias in this research was managed
through not interviewing friends or acquaintances, asking open questions, avoiding leading or judgmental responses or overt reactions, and though affording participants confidentiality.

As mentioned in Chapter Three: Methodology, participants knowing that I am a veterinary professional (information provided on the participant information sheet) and being presumed vegan was considered positive. It likely helped to establish rapport and trust, and facilitated the interview process through my understanding of veterinary practice and its terminology, and veganism as a sincerely held (and devotedly practiced) belief. However, my positionality as vegan and as a veterinary professional has undoubtably shaped the choices made in the design and conducting of this research, including the formulation of the data collection questions, the interpretation of participants’ accounts, and the analysis of data. Data can be analysed in a multitude of ways and the decision to conduct thematic analysis within a CAS framework is indelibly linked to my standpoint as a researcher and guided by my training (veterinary and academic) and my interest in veganism and what it means to ‘be vegan’.

The research conducted in this thesis has highlighted the importance of researching vegans and veganism in various socio-cultural contexts and the importance of examining the veterinary profession as a significant social site where the innumerable paradoxes involving humans’ relations with other animals, especially when viewed through a vegan lens, come starkly into view. Indeed, there are several wider implications of this research for academia. To begin, this research contributes to the field of critical animal studies and it also constitutes a critique of critical animal studies, which to date has paid little attention to human-animal relationships in the veterinary context. It further contributes to vegan studies, which to date has not focused on veterinary professionals.

This research also contributes to examination and interrogation of the AIC and the significance of the veterinary profession to the AIC’s functioning and maintenance. Another significant contribution arising from this research is to the sociology of human-animal relations. As mentioned, one of its perceived strengths is that this research encompasses various domains of human-animal relations and ways in
which humans use other animals, in laboratories, animal agriculture, as companions, as entertainment, and wild living animals.

Also, this study contributes to research within the social sciences focusing on the veterinary profession. More broadly, it contributes to the sociology of professions; in particular, professions and power, and personal-professional values conflict. This research also contributes to discussions on issues around veterinary ethics and includes a somewhat unique critique of the widely venerated One Health paradigm. This research presents an examination of small animal veterinary practice, a site that is a central part of the veterinary profession. Of paramount importance, through the conducting of this research, VVPs as a minority community have been empowered and given voice.

This research and its findings should be of interest to various stakeholders. To begin, it will be of interest to critical animal studies scholars, animal studies scholars, and those who study human animal relations. However, this research would prove useful to those who teach animal studies, topics relating to veganism, veganism and professions, veterinary medicine and ethics, cultural studies and sociology. This research would also contribute to curricula taught at veterinary schools and courses relating to animal welfare and welfare science degrees. This research should also be of interest to the governing bodies of the UK veterinary profession; the BVA and the RCVS, as well as individual small animal veterinary practices. It is anticipated that this research will also be of great interest to vegan veterinary professionals everywhere for whom support is crucial.
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Appendices

A1: Participant demographic information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Sex</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aaron</td>
<td>Veterinary Surgeon</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aisha</td>
<td>Veterinary Surgeon</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridget</td>
<td>Veterinary Surgeon</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camille</td>
<td>Registered Veterinary Nurse</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christopher</td>
<td>Veterinary Surgeon</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>Veterinary Surgeon</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fleur</td>
<td>Registered Veterinary Nurse</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabrielle</td>
<td>Veterinary Surgeon</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hayley</td>
<td>Veterinary Surgeon</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeremy</td>
<td>Veterinary Surgeon</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josie</td>
<td>Registered Veterinary Nurse</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laine</td>
<td>Registered Veterinary Nurse</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucie</td>
<td>Registered Veterinary Nurse</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Veterinary Surgeon</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natasha</td>
<td>Registered Veterinary Nurse</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paige</td>
<td>Veterinary Surgeon</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>Veterinary Surgeon</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rowan</td>
<td>Veterinary Surgeon</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth</td>
<td>Registered Veterinary Nurse</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siobhan</td>
<td>Registered Veterinary Nurse</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further demographic information was collected including age, ethnicity, whether vegan before or after becoming a veterinary professional, length of time spent as vegan veterinary professional, and specific role/position held in small animal veterinary practice. This information is not included here to maintain confidentiality of participants.
A2: Semi-structured interview questions (veterinary surgeons)

What is your current position or role in veterinary practice?

How long have you been a veterinarian?

For how long have you been vegan?

How do your veterinary colleagues tend to find out that you are vegan?

How have veterinary colleagues tended to react upon learning you are vegan?

How have you felt uncomfortable in your workplace as a result of being vegan?

How have you felt welcomed in your workplace as a result of being vegan?

How do you think informing a potential employer that you are vegan prior to gaining employment in a veterinary role might affect you being employed?

What aspects of your job as a veterinarian and vegan do you find challenging?

How did you feel about participating in animal dissection or practicing skills on live animals as part of gaining qualification or training?

How did you feel about visiting a farm or slaughterhouse as part of gaining veterinary qualification or training?

How does being vegan affect your ability to perform your job as a veterinarian?

How does being a veterinarian affect your ability to identify and function as an ethical vegan?

How would you express discomfort at participating in or witnessing activities in the workplace that challenge your vegan values?

How are you catered for as vegan at workplace meetings, functions, conferences and events?

How do you respond to invitations to participate in work-based practices, activities or events that involve the consumption meat and dairy?

How do you respond to work-based invitations to participate in or spectate social events where animals are used as exhibition or entertainment? Like horseracing, greyhound racing or rodeos or visiting zoos.

How does being vegan affect you attending workplace and industry events?

How do you feel about approaching colleagues if issues arise in the workplace as a result of your veganism?
How might you approach your employers to discuss issues you encounter in the workplace as a result of your veganism?

How does it feel to be a vegan among your non-vegan peers?

What role do you think vegan ideology could play in the veterinary profession in terms of the profession’s current values, actions and practices?

How do you feel about the use of devices like muzzles and physical restraint in veterinary practice?

How do you feel about animal testing to produce pharmaceuticals?

How do you feel about the breeding of animals for human use? Including companionship?

How do you feel about meat-based and plant-based pet foods?
A3: Semi-structured interview questions (registered veterinary nurses)

What is your current position or role in veterinary practice?
For how long have you been a vet nurse?
For how long have you been vegan?
How do your veterinary colleagues tend to find out that you are vegan?
How have veterinary colleagues tended to react upon learning you are vegan?
How have you felt uncomfortable in your workplace as a result of being vegan?
How have you felt welcomed in your workplace as a result of being vegan?
How do you think informing a potential employer that you are vegan prior to gaining employment in a veterinary role might affect you being employed?
What aspects of your job as a vet nurse and vegan do you find most challenging?
How did you feel about participating in animal dissection or practicing skills on live animals as part of gaining qualification or training?
How did you feel about visiting a farm or slaughterhouse as part of gaining veterinary qualification or training?
How does being vegan affect your ability to perform your job as a vet nurse?
How does being a vet nurse affect your ability to identify and function as an ethical vegan?
How would you express discomfort at participating in or witnessing activities in the workplace that challenge your vegan values?
How are you catered for as vegan at workplace meetings, functions, conferences and events?
How do you respond to invitations to participate in work-based practices, activities or events that involve the consumption meat and dairy?
How do you respond to work-based invitations to participate in or spectate social events where animals are used as exhibition or entertainment? Like horseracing, greyhound racing or rodeos or visiting zoos.
How does being vegan affect you attending workplace and industry events?
How do you feel about approaching colleagues if issues arise in the workplace as a result of your veganism?
How might you approach your employers to discuss issues you encounter in the workplace as a result of your veganism?

How does it feel to be a vegan among your non-vegan peers?

What role do you think vegan ideology could play in the veterinary profession in terms of the profession’s current values, actions and practices?

How do you feel about the use of devices like muzzles and physical restraint in veterinary practice?

How do you feel about animal testing to produce pharmaceuticals?

How do you feel about the breeding of animals for human use? Including companionship?

How do you feel about meat-based and plant-based pet foods?
Participant Information Sheet

Date: January 2020

Full Project Title: The Workplace Experiences of Qualified Veterinary Professionals in the UK who Identify as Ethical Vegans

Principal Researcher: Donelle Gadenne, Advanced Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing, BA(Hons) MA, PhD candidate.
Supervision team: Dr. Richard Twine; Professor Claire Parkinson

About this Study

The aim of this research is to gain insight into the workplace experiences of vegan veterinary professionals in the UK to better understand the effects of being an ethical vegan working in veterinary practice in the UK. It is focussed on the socio-professional impacts of ethical veganism in the veterinary profession and in how ethical vegan values are adopted or resisted in practice.

Eligibility

To be eligible to participate in this study you must be a qualified veterinarian, veterinary nurse or veterinary technician over the age of 18 who trained, works, or has worked as a veterinary professional in private practice in the UK. You must also identify as ethical vegan in some capacity, which means that your motivation for being vegan partly, although not necessarily entirely, stems from concern for animals.

Informed Consent

If you indicate your interest in taking part in this research, it is important you are informed, understand why the research is being undertaken and what is involved. Please read this participant information sheet carefully and discuss your involvement with others if you wish. You will be required to read and sign a consent form to participate.
**Interview Process**

Interviews will be conducted one-to-one (preferred) or via video/telephone and are expected to last approximately an hour. Face-to-face interviews will take place at a mutually agreed upon, convenient, public location during the day. There will be some set questions, but the interview will be relaxed and conversational allowing you to express yourself freely. You can request to view the set questions ahead of time if you wish. Once your consent form is signed and collected, I will liaise with you to arrange an interview.

No information that is collected and could identify you will be disclosed beyond the research team and your responses to questions will be confidential and your identity anonymised in the published thesis.

**Withdrawal**

Participation in this study is voluntary and you can withdraw participation anytime without providing a reason. You can withdraw your data up until 30 days post-interview if you no longer wish to participate.

**Risks**

There are no anticipated risks with your participation in this study as steps will be taken to ensure your identity is kept confidential and anonymous. Should you feel the need for support after sharing your experiences in the interview, you might like to contact the Vetlife helpline on 0303 040 2551 or visit https://helpline.vetlife.org.uk/

This study has been reviewed by the relevant research ethics committee at Edge Hill University.

**Benefits**

The key benefit arising from this study is that through you sharing your thoughts, opinions and feelings, the experiences of vegan veterinary professionals and the relationship between veganism and the veterinary industry can be better understood.
Communication of Results and Data

This doctoral research is being undertaken to fulfil the requirements of a PhD at Edge Hill University; therefore, results of this study will be published in the form of an academic doctoral thesis. Parts of the research may also be presented at academic conferences and used for articles that appear in academic journals.

Data Storage

Data (written transcripts) collected in undertaking this research will be kept password protected and securely stored for 5 years post-completion. Audio recording of interviews will not be retained once transcribed. Data may only be accessed and reused by the primary researcher during this time. Data will be collected, managed, stored and used in accordance with Edge Hill University’s Research Data Management Policy and Guidelines and the research and data collected will be compliant with GDPR requirements.

Contact

Any questions of concerns about the research or participating can be directed to Donelle Gadenne: Gadenned@edgehill.ac.uk

If you would like to discuss any concerns you have about the project with a member of staff independent to the project, please contact Professor Mark McGovern, Chair of The Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC), on 01695 584621 or by email at Mark.McGovern@edgehill.ac.uk
A5: Participant consent form

Participant Consent Form

Study: The Workplace Experiences of Qualified Vegan Veterinary Professionals in the UK who Identify as Ethical Vegans - Interviews

Researcher: Donelle Gadenne, PhD candidate at Edge Hill University

☐ I confirm that I have read and understand the Participant Information Sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

☐ I consent to my interview being audio-recorded and to written transcripts being made of the interview.

☐ I understand that my identity will not be disclosed in the publication of this research but that statements I make (quotes) may be accompanied by demographic details such as my age, gender, professional role and country.

☐ I understand that my participation is voluntary, I am free to withdraw from being interviewed at any time without reason and my data can be withdrawn from this project for up to 30 days after I am interviewed.

☐ I understand that data collected in undertaking this research (written transcripts) will be kept password protected and securely stored for 5 years post-completion, may only be accessed and reused by the primary researcher during this time. Audio recording of interviews will not be retained once transcribed.

☐ I understand that data will be collected, managed, stored and used in accordance with Edge Hill University’s Research Data Management Policy and Guidelines, and that research and data collected will be compliant with GDPR requirements.

I agree/ decline (delete as applicable) to take part in the above study.

Name of participant: ___________________________

Signature: ______________ Date: ______________
A6: Veterinary memes

Source: https://imgur.com/gallery/nghotSs [Accessed 16 August 2021]

vets are the only doctors
who eats their patients

Source: https://9gag.com/gag/an4x22E [Accessed 16 August 2021]

SO YOU’RE A VET THAT EATS ANIMALS
THAT’S TOTALLY DIFFERENT TO A DOCTOR THAT EATS HUMANS

Totally Different

Source: https://me.me/i/so-youre-a-vet-that-eats-animals-ig-boloto-veg-18604640
[Accessed 16 August 2021]

Veterinarians are doctors that eat their patients