

Vegan Education in Schools

Ethics course

Years 7 to 12

Lesson 11: Australia's vanishing wildlife: Kangaroos, land clearing, and the cost of human expansion

Overview: This lesson explores the devastating impact of land clearing, animal agriculture, urban sprawl, commercial exploitation, and waterway diversion on Australia's native wildlife, with a strong focus on the commercial kangaroo slaughter - the largest land-based killing of wildlife on Earth. Students will learn about the threats facing iconic species like kangaroos, koalas, wombats, and platypuses, and investigate the links between animal agriculture, habitat loss, species extinction, water scarcity, and ethical veganism. This lesson challenges the myth of coexistence and exposes the political and commercial forces enabling ecological destruction.

Objectives:

- To examine the causes and consequences of land clearing in Australia
- To investigate the scale and methods of the kangaroo slaughter
- To explore the broader impact of human expansion on native species like koalas, wombats, and platypuses
- To link habitat destruction, water exploitation, and wildlife loss to animal agriculture and the normalisation of using animals for food
- To encourage students to think critically about conservation, ethics, and human responsibility

Outcomes: By the end of the lesson, students will:

- Understand the scale of wildlife destruction in Australia
- Be able to explain why kangaroo killing is the largest wildlife slaughter in the world
- Make connections between meat and dairy consumption, land clearing, reduced waterways, and biodiversity loss
- Reflect on ethical veganism as a solution to protect wildlife
- Be able to articulate informed viewpoints on wildlife protection

Materials:

- Projector or screen for videos
- Whiteboard or poster paper

- Student handouts (fact sheets, reflection prompts)
- Access to internet-enabled devices for research activity

Part 1: The kangaroo slaughter (15 minutes)

- Present key facts:
 - Australia kills over **1.5 million kangaroos annually** for commercial purposes
 - This is the **largest land-based slaughter of wildlife in the world**
 - Most kangaroos are shot at night in remote areas, and many are not killed instantly
 - **Joeys** (baby kangaroos) are either bludgeoned to death or left to die when their mothers are killed
 - Skins are sold to companies like Adidas; meat is used for pet food and export
 - Farmers and landholders can obtain **licences to kill kangaroos** based on **flawed science, outdated population modelling, and biased industry influence**, further entrenching the violence
- Video: [Kangaroo: A Love-Hate Story](#) (trailer)
- Additional video: [Kangaroo killing is cruel](#)
- Student reflection: Write 3 points of concern or shock from the videos

Part 2: Land clearing, animal agriculture, and water theft (15 minutes)

- Present data:
 - **60-70% of land clearing in Australia is driven by animal agriculture**
 - Vast tracts of bushland are bulldozed for land to raise farmed animals
 - This leads to **mass displacement and death of native animals**
 - **Waterways are diverted for farming animals**, drastically reducing natural river flow and endangering aquatic and semi-aquatic animals like the **platypus**
 - In Queensland alone, over **400,000 hectares** of threatened species habitat were cleared in one year - primarily for animal agriculture, and **none of it was assessed under national environmental law**
- Video: [Land Clearing and Species Loss](#)
- Resource: [Data reveals Queensland habitat destruction out of control](#) - Australian Conservation Foundation

- Activity: In groups, students create a visual infographic linking animal agriculture, land clearing, water use, extinction, and ethics

Part 3: Threats to koalas, wombats, platypuses and others (10 minutes)

- Brief overviews:
 - **Koalas** are being wiped out in areas like SE QLD and NSW due to habitat loss
 - Urban sprawl and freeways are cutting through wildlife corridors
 - **Wombats** are often buried alive during land clearing, or targeted by landholders
 - **Platypuses** suffer from dry waterways, pollution, and habitat destruction caused by hooved farmed animals eroding riverbanks and water diversion
- Video: [Koalas face extinction within 50 years](#) - ABC News
- Video (optional extension): [The Rewilders](#)

Conclusion and discussion (5 minutes):

- Ask: "What kind of future do we want for Australia's wildlife?"
- Link back to ethics and how veganism rejects the violation of the rights of both farmed and wild animals
- Encourage students to think about what influences their daily 'choices' (food, clothing, activism)

Homework: Write a short persuasive letter to your local MP urging them to take action to stop the commercial killing of kangaroos and protect Australian wildlife from land clearing and water exploitation. Include three key facts from today's lesson.

Differentiation:

- Provide visual learners with charts and infographics
- Use subtitles and transcripts for all videos
- Allow written, visual, or oral format for infographic and homework letter

Assessment criteria:

- **Understanding of content:** Student shows awareness of the issues impacting Australian wildlife
- **Critical thinking:** Student makes connections between industry, ethics, and the environment
- **Communication:** Student clearly presents ideas in group work and written tasks
- **Engagement:** Student participates in discussion and reflects meaningfully on content