

Vegan Education in Schools

Ethics course

Years 7 to 12

Lesson 14: Speciesism and moral consistency - Challenging prejudice and defending justice for all animals

Overview:

This lesson explores the concept of speciesism - the unjust discrimination against beings based on their species - and how it mirrors other forms of prejudice. Students will reflect on their own values, examine why society protects some animals but harms others, and learn the importance of moral consistency when applying ethical principles. The lesson encourages critical thought, empathy, and personal reflection, justice and consistency.

Lesson objectives:

- To define speciesism and identify how it operates in society
- To explore how speciesism parallels other forms of discrimination such as racism, sexism, and ableism
- To challenge students to apply ethical principles consistently across all sentient beings
- To examine contradictions in human treatment of different animals
- To foster ethical awareness and self-reflection

Learning outcomes:

Students will be able to:

- Explain what speciesism is and how it relates to other forms of prejudice
- Identify moral inconsistencies in the treatment of animals
- Critically analyse cultural and personal justifications for animal exploitation
- Apply the principle of moral consistency to ethical decision-making
- Reflect on their own values in relation to justice and empathy

Materials required:

- Projector or screen
- Internet-enabled devices
- Speakers or headphones
- Poster paper or whiteboard
- Student worksheets or notebooks

Lesson structure and timings (45 minutes):

1. Introduction and provocation (5 minutes):

Write this question on the board:

“Why do we love some animals and eat or exploit others?”

Show images of a dog, a piglet, a cow, a cat, a chicken, and a lamb. Ask:

- Which animals do we protect and which do we harm?
- Why? Is it logical or cultural?

Introduce the concept of **speciesism** - a form of prejudice that assigns different value or rights based on species.

2. Video and reaction (10 minutes):

Choose from the following videos. Students write:

- 1 thing that surprised or moved them
- 2 examples of moral inconsistency in the way animals are treated
- [Speciesism: The Prejudice You've Never Questioned](#) - Vegan Australia
- [Why love one but eat the other?](#) - Joey Carbstrong
- [What Is SPECIESISM?](#) - LIVEKINDLY
- [Every Argument Against Veganism \(debunked\)](#) - Earthling Ed

3. Group task: Injustice comparison (10 minutes):

In groups, students compare speciesism to another form of social prejudice (e.g., racism, sexism, ableism).

Each group must write:

- A short definition of both prejudices
- 2 things they have in common (e.g., arbitrary categorisation, domination, social conditioning)
- Why consistency in opposing all discrimination matters

Groups present key ideas briefly.

4. Examining contradictions (10 minutes):

Present real-life contradictions, such as:

- We protect dogs from abuse but slaughter pigs for food
- We admire dolphins but kill fish by the billions
- We condemn violence yet support industries based on it

Ask:

- Why do these contradictions persist?
- What justifications are used?
- What would a morally consistent approach to all animals look like?

Allow students to discuss in pairs or share with the class.

5. Ethical reflection and values alignment (5 minutes):

Ask students to reflect privately in writing:

- “Do my current actions align with my values?”
- “If I believe in justice, equality and empathy - what does that mean for how I treat animals?”

Invite a few students to share aloud (optional).

6. Call to action (5 minutes):

Encourage students to take one action this week toward moral consistency:

- Reflect on what influences their food 'choices'
- Talk to family or friends about animal rights, and that every sentient animal has inherent rights to their own body, their own life and their freedom.
- Share a short post or video that challenges speciesism
- Stop using speciesist language (e.g., "kill two birds with one stone")

End the lesson with the statement, “Violations of the rights of an animal to their own body, life and freedom is a consequence of the normalisation of speciesism in society.”

Assessment criteria:

- **Understanding:** Can define speciesism and explain its impact
- **Critical thinking:** Identifies and challenges inconsistent logic
- **Empathy and values:** Reflects honestly on personal ethics
- **Collaboration:** Participates in group analysis and discussion
- **Communication:** Expresses ideas clearly in verbal or written form

Differentiation:

- Sentence starters and simplified resources for EAL learners
- Extension activity: Create a presentation analysing speciesism in advertising or culture
- Creative option: Write a monologue or poem from the viewpoint of an animal affected by speciesism

Homework (required):

Choose one of the following to complete and submit:

1. **300-word reflection:**

“What does moral consistency mean to me, and how will I live it?”

2. **Creative campaign piece:**

- Design a poster or digital graphic calling out speciesism
- Include a contradiction (e.g., pet vs. farmed animal) and a strong call to action

Persuasive writing task:

- Write a letter to a local MP, councillor, or school principal explaining why we must address speciesism
- Include a definition, two real-world examples, and one recommended change