

Vegan Education in Schools

Case study of speciesism

Questioning pork - ethics, justice and the future

Years 7 to 12

Lesson 2: Birth into brutality - The hidden horror of piglet mutilation

Overview: This lesson exposes students to the hidden and routine violence inflicted on piglets within the pig industry. It focuses on common practices such as farrowing crates, tail docking, teeth clipping and castration, all performed without anaesthetic. Students will critically examine these procedures using evidence from investigations and learn to apply an abolitionist vegan framework to these issues.

Objectives:

- To reveal the reality of mutilation practices inflicted on piglets in the pig industry
- To critically analyse the ethical implications of these procedures
- To understand the connection between these practices and speciesism
- To continue building a consistent abolitionist vegan perspective

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

- Describe the common mutilation procedures inflicted on piglets
- Analyse the reasons given by industry for these procedures and identify their flaws
- Understand the emotional and physical suffering endured by piglets
- Apply an abolitionist vegan lens to these practices

Materials:

- Video: "[Surgical mutilations of piglets](#)" (Farm Transparency Project) 18 mins)
- Article: "[Standard pig industry practices](#)"
- Fact sheet: "[Piglet mutilation in Australia](#)" (Farm Transparency Project)
- Whiteboard or digital board
- Student notebooks or digital devices

Lesson steps:

Introduction (10 minutes):

1. Recap from Lesson 1: Who are pigs and what are their needs?
2. Introduce today's topic by asking: "What do you think happens to piglets on farms?"
3. Record responses on the board.

Activity 1: The reality of mutilations (20 minutes):

1. Show the "[Surgical mutilations of piglets](#)"
2. Pause after major scenes to allow breathing room and emotional processing.
3. Brief discussion:
 - What did you see?
 - How did it make you feel?

Activity 2: Why does the industry do this? (20 minutes):

1. Read sections from "[Standard pig industry practices](#)".
2. Students work in pairs to identify each mutilation, why it's done according to the industry, and what the real consequences are.
3. Pairs summarise their findings in a three-column table:
 - Mutilation procedure
 - Industry justification
 - Reality for the piglet

Activity 3: Critical ethical analysis (20 minutes):

1. Whole-class discussion:
 - Why are the justifications given by the industry for harming piglets fundamentally flawed and unacceptable??
 - How does speciesism play a role in allowing this to happen?
1. Students write a short paragraph answering: "Why are these practices inherently unethical, regardless of industry claims?"

Activity 4: Abolitionist reflection (15 minutes):

2. Introduce the abolitionist vegan position: no use, no harm.
3. Students reflect on the question: "What would a truly ethical world look like for pigs?"
4. Students draw or describe their vision for pigs in a vegan world.

Conclusion (5 minutes):

1. Recap the key learning points.
2. Preview next lesson: growing up in confinement.

Homework: Students write a 200-word response to the prompt: "Why must we reject mutilation practices, even those framed as 'necessary' by the industry?"

Differentiation:

- Offer transcripts or still image alternatives for students sensitive to video content.
- Allow creative/artistic responses instead of written work for students who prefer drawing.
- Provide additional reading for advanced learners seeking further analysis.

Assessment criteria:

- Thoughtful participation in discussions
- Completion and accuracy of the three-column table
- Depth of ethical analysis in written or creative work
- Ability to apply an abolitionist vegan perspective to the issue