

Vegan Education in Schools

Creating a Vegan Club at school with Vegan Australia

Years 7 to 12

Starting a vegan club at your school can be an incredibly powerful way for students to get involved in making a difference for animals. It not only builds awareness around animal rights issues but also fosters a community of empathy and activism. In Australia, starting a vegan club can be part of a broader educational movement that emphasises veganism, environmental consciousness and animal rights. Below is a comprehensive guide on how you can establish a vegan club at your school, inspired by Vegan Australia's vision for a vegan world.

Why start a vegan club?

A vegan club can empower students to take an active role in promoting a society that respects all animals right to life. Such a club provides a platform for students to explore and address the many ethical issues concerning animals, from animal farming to habitat destruction. Here are some reasons why starting a vegan club can make a meaningful impact:

- **Raise awareness:** Educate the school community about issues like animal farming, animal experimentation and the destruction of wildlife habitats. Through education, students can challenge the misinformation and normalisation of animal exploitation.
- **Promote vegan living:** Advocate for vegan diets and vegan products by organising cooking demos, vegan taste tests and workshops. These activities can help to debunk myths about veganism and encourage others to adopt ethical, healthier decisions.
- **Drive institutional change:** Work towards creating policies that reflect ethical values, such as adding vegan products in the canteen, banning dissection in biology classes, or holding vegan events.
- **Engage in activism:** Provide opportunities for students to participate in outreach campaigns, organise stalls to promote veganism to other students, protests, or events like National Threatened Species Day, World Farmed Animals Day, World Vegan Day, World Ocean Day, World Kangaroo Day, or Clean Up Australia Day, etc to support local wildlife and spread awareness about animal rights concerns in Australia and across the world.

Steps to establish a vegan club

Creating a vegan club requires organisation, planning and passion. This will be a teacher-led initiative aimed at empowering students to become empathetic leaders in their community. Below are step-by-step instructions to help you start an impactful club:

- **Teachers Leading the Initiative**
 - Teachers will take the lead in establishing a vegan club by identifying interested students and providing ongoing support and guidance. They can introduce the idea during class or after-school activities to gauge interest and create a supportive environment for students to come together.

- Teachers will draft proposals to the school administration, handle logistical requirements and act as advisors, helping students organise and execute events effectively.
- **Gather a core group of interested students**
 - Teachers will help gather students who share a concern for animal rights by speaking to them individually, making announcements in class and putting up posters to gauge interest.
 - Forming a small, passionate group is the first step towards building a larger community within the school.
- **Seek school approval**
 - Teachers will present the idea to school administrators and/or the student council to gain recognition and approval for the club. Emphasise how the club aligns with the school's goals of fostering critical thinking, environmental awareness and ethical consideration.
 - Prepare a written proposal outlining the club's mission, objectives and planned activities.
- **Define the club's objectives**
 - **Clearly define the goals of the club.** This might include promoting veganism, advocating for animal rights, raising awareness about environmental issues and organising fundraising events for local animal sanctuaries.
 - **Promote ethical awareness:** Encourage students to critically examine the ethical implications of human interactions with animals, including industries such as agriculture, fashion and entertainment.
 - **Foster empathetic values:** Create a school culture that prioritizes empathy and respect for all living beings.
 - **Support sustainability goals:** Highlight the environmental benefits of a veganism and ending animal exploitation, contributing to broader climate and sustainability initiatives.
 - **Educate about animal rights:** Raise awareness about the challenges faced by animals in farming, wildlife and companion settings and explore the idea that animals have rights and investigate what it means to respect them.
 - **Advocate for vegan food:** Promote vegan options in the school canteen and encourage students to consider veganism to support animal rights and environmental protection.
 - **Provide a safe space for dialogue:** Offer a welcoming environment where students can discuss animal rights, ask questions and explore veganism without judgement.

- **Encourage active citizenship:** Empower students to take informed action on animal rights issues through petitions, campaigns and direct advocacy efforts.
 - **Strengthen community connections:** Collaborate with local animal sanctuaries, vegan organisations and environmental groups to extend the club's impact beyond the school.
 - **Integrate humane education:** Advocate for the inclusion of humane education principles in the broader school curriculum, ensuring students gain an understanding of animal rights and ethics.
 - **Inspire leadership:** Develop leadership skills by giving students opportunities to plan, execute and lead animal rights initiatives within and outside the school.
- **Identify and connect with allies**
 - Seek the support of other teachers or staff members who are sympathetic to animal rights. Supportive teachers can help navigate school policies and serve as another advisor to the club.
 - Collaborate with local and national organisations such as Vegan Australia, Animal Liberation, Animal Justice Party, Animals Australia, Kangaroos Alive and Voiceless to gain resources, expertise and guidance.
 - **Plan a range of activities for your animal rights club:**

Once you have established your club, it's time to put your plans into action! Below are some ideas for activities that can keep members engaged and help spread awareness:

 - **Creating videos, art, music/songs, poetry and short stories:** Encourage members to create and share their own content to raise awareness about animal rights. Videos, music, art installations, poetry and short stories can be powerful tools for inspiring empathy and understanding in others.
 - **Educational workshops:** Invite speakers from Vegan Australia or local animal sanctuaries and animal organisations to give presentations on animal rights issues.
 - **Movie screenings:** *This Is Veganism, A Life on Our Planet* by David Attenborough, *Food Choices - How Your Diet Affects Your Health, The Animal People, Blackfish, The Cove, Earthlings, Vegan - Everyday Stories*. Some films may be too confrontational, so discretion is advised.
 - **Awareness campaigns:** Create posters, flyers, or social media posts to educate the school about animal rights issues, such as the impacts of the animal agriculture industries (meat, dairy and eggs), marine conservation, wildlife conservation or the cruelty of live export. Plan school-wide campaigns such as "Vegan Education Days" or "Animal Awareness Week" to educate peers about animal rights and veganism.
 - **Collaborative initiatives with other clubs:**

Partner with environmental or sustainability clubs to address shared goals like reducing waste, promoting vegan eating, or organising events focused on biodiversity.

- **Workshops and guest speakers:**
Organise workshops on vegan cooking, ethical consumerism, or wildlife conservation. Invite local activists, sanctuary representatives, or vegan chefs to share their expertise.
- **Hands-on volunteering opportunities:**
Arrange visits to animal sanctuaries or coordinate participation in community clean-ups to foster direct engagement with animal and environmental protection.
- **School policy advocacy:**
Campaign for long-term policy changes, such as implementing more vegan meal options in the canteen or banning the use of animal-derived materials in art and science classes.
- **Student-led vegan challenges:**
Organise fun challenges, like "Take the Vegan Challenge," where participants commit to veganism and share their experiences with the group.
- **Research and awareness projects:**
Assign club members to research specific issues, such as the impact of land clearing or the benefits of rewilding and present their findings to the school community.
- **Recognition programs:**
Develop initiatives to celebrate and reward student and staff contributions to animal rights, such as "Voice for the Silenced Award."
- **Parent-teacher night events:**
Host events like bake sales featuring vegan treats, information booths at parent-teacher nights, fundraisers for animal rescue organisations.
- **Organise fundraisers for animal sanctuaries:** Host events like bake sales, car washes, or fun runs to raise money for animal rescue organisations and sanctuaries.
- **Animal rights awareness week:** Dedicate a week to raising awareness on different animal rights issues each day - animal farming, animal testing, wildlife conservation, marine conservation, etc.
- **Volunteer at local sanctuaries:** Organise group visits to volunteer at local animal sanctuaries and animal rescues. This not only helps animals but also provides hands-on experience and strengthens the club's community spirit.
- **Letter-writing campaigns:** Encourage students to write letters to local government officials or corporations, advocating for better animal rights policies, end all animal killing, ending the exploitation of all animals, or ending animal agriculture and supporting the growth of vegan alternatives.
- **Raise awareness and promote your club**
 - Use school newsletters, social media platforms, posters and morning announcements to promote the club and its activities.

- Organise an event, such as a vegan bake sale, to generate interest and attract new members.
- Ensure that everyone feels welcome by emphasising that the club is open to anyone who wants to learn more about animal rights.

Resources and support from Vegan Australia

Vegan Australia is committed to supporting teachers and students who want to advocate for animal rights. Here are some resources and ways Vegan Australia can help:

- **Educational materials:** Access a wide range of educational resources, including downloadable pamphlets, posters and lesson plans to educate your school community about veganism and animal rights.
- **Guest speakers:** Arrange for guest speakers from Vegan Australia or partner organisations to talk about pressing issues such as the impacts of meat, dairy and eggs industries, wildlife conservation, marine conservation and the benefits of vegan diets.
- **Guidance for events:** Get assistance in organising impactful events, such as vegan cooking demonstrations, protests, or debates on animal rights issues.

Impact of a vegan club

The impact of a vegan club extends far beyond the school grounds. Here are some of the potential benefits:

- **Educated and empathetic students:** Club members and other students will gain knowledge about ethical issues affecting animals, which can lead to more ethical decisions in their everyday lives.
- **Positive school culture:** A vegan club can help foster a culture of empathy and ethical responsibility. By raising awareness about the impacts of animal agriculture on the environment and public health, the club can also contribute to the school's sustainability initiatives.
- **Community engagement:** The club can expand its influence by engaging with the local community through events like vegan markets or community clean-up days, thereby spreading the message of compassion and sustainability beyond the school.
- **Developing leadership skills:** Running a vegan club offers students valuable leadership opportunities, from planning events and leading discussions to managing campaigns and communicating with school administrators.

Next steps

Starting a vegan club at your school is a fantastic way to inspire change, create awareness and advocate for the rights of animals. With passion, commitment and the right resources, students can lead the movement towards a more empathetic, sustainable world. Vegan Australia is here to support you every step of the way, whether you need guidance, resources, or just some extra encouragement. Together, we can make a difference for animals.

If you're ready to start your journey, reach out to Vegan Australia for support, resources and guidance to get your club up and running. Remember, every movement begins with a small step. Start yours today and help make animal rights the norm.