

...the vegetarian-issues magazine



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The VivaVine is a publication of the **VivaVeggie Society**, New York City's premier vegetarian-outreach organization.



A Place of Our Own:
THE
Vegetarian Center
 of New York City
is now open!
 SEE PAGE 2



Vegetarian Center: Finally, a place of our own



photo by Leandro Soares

We're wired. *The center is equipped with two Macintosh computers, one printer and one scanner. It has two phone lines—one designated for the fax. The center is also hooked up to the Internet for surfing the Web, sending and receiving E-mail and uploading to the VivaVeggie Web site.*

VivaVeggie's Vegetarian Center of New York City is now open!

With the aid of federal 501(c)3, nonprofit status, obtained last year, the VivaVeggie Society received a substantial donation that allowed it to open an office in March in Manhattan's bustling Flatiron District. VivaVeggie has named this new space the **Vegetarian Center of New York City**. It's just a start. The office is 120 square feet, plus access to a conference room that seats eight. The goal is to establish a much larger facility in a Manhattan storefront sometime in the year 2000, one that will offer a full range of services and help us in our mission of reaching out to the general public with our message of healthfulness, environmental consciousness and compassion.

For now, the center serves as a research room, a news bureau and a home base for vegetarian outreach. It also functions as a meeting place, an archive and a general clearinghouse for information on vegan products, local restaurants and vegetarian organizations.

A foundation to build on

Today vegetarians have a place they can call home—a facility that doesn't have to close up after a certain hour, a place that is there solely for us.

But much work remains to be done. Ultimately, the center will grow into whatever the vegetarian community of New York City decides it should be. VivaVeggie has laid a foundation. The challenge for us as a community is to come together and build this center into a place vegetari-

ans can be proud of, one that represents a large, active and influential constituency.

At the center, vegetarians will be able to meet, form groups, find one another and learn. It can be a powerful vehicle for getting our point of view into the mainstream.

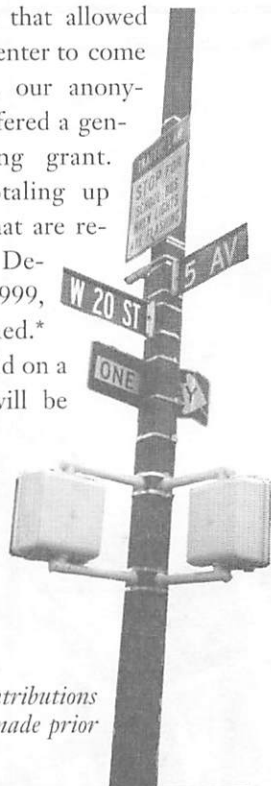
Donations to be doubled

Beyond the initial grant that allowed the center to come into existence, our anonymous donor offered a generous matching grant. Donations—totaling up to \$10,000—that are received before December 31, 1999, will be matched.*

Because matching funds will be paid on a monthly basis, your donations will be doubled immediately.

All donors will be honored on our "Wall of Benefactors" at the center. Donations not in exchange for merchandise are tax-deductible.

** Matching grant does not apply to contributions made by foundations or to pledges made prior to March 1, 1999.*

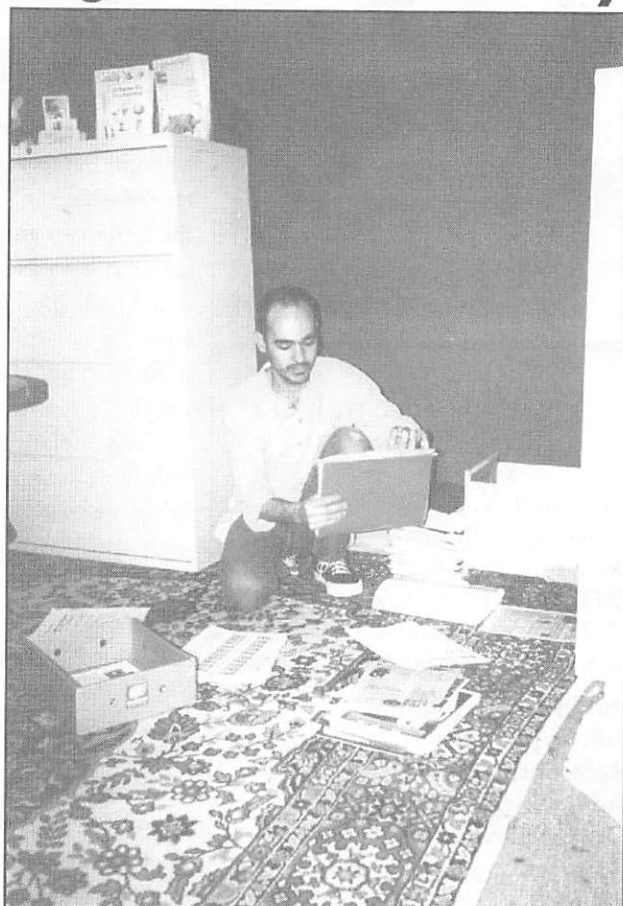


The Vegetarian Center has a conference room for meetings. *Here in the conference room that VivaVeggie has access to, Pamela Rice (center) of the VivaVeggie Society is shown with Jean Thaler (left) of Big Apple Vegetarians, a New York City-based social group, and Jenny Hung (right), manager of Dafanet—the company from which VivaVeggie rents its space. Big Apple Vegetarians will use the conference room for its monthly planning meetings. The conference room seats eight.*

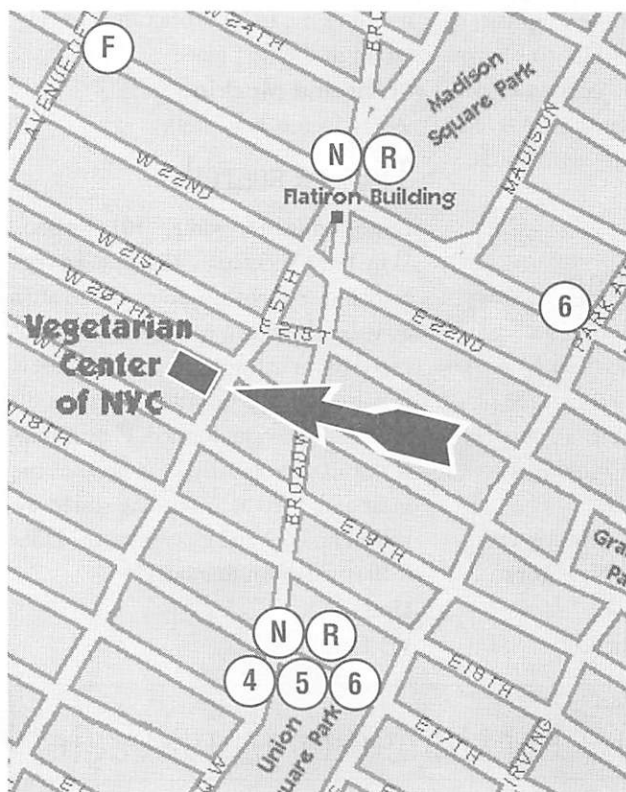
New center serves the vegetarian community

The Vegetarian Center:

- offers a referral service for restaurants, stores, vegan products and vegetarian organizations.
- houses an archive of books, pamphlets, magazines and catalogued news reports of interest to vegetarians; visitors are free to use the archive on-site.
- functions on a limited scale as a meeting place for groups.
- serves as a drop-in space for passers-by to pick up a restaurant guide or other vegetarian information.
- will soon serve as a news bureau, issuing press releases in answer to government policy and world events.
- will be a place to purchase a limited line of pro-vegetarian T-shirts and vegan products, such as nonleather belts and purses.
- is a place for visitors to speak one-on-one with a real, live vegetarian!



Leandro Soares of Hoboken, New Jersey, is a regular volunteer at the new Vegetarian Center. *He is shown here organizing files on vegetarian groups from around the country. Visitors to the center can use such information to get ideas on how they can start their own groups. Leandro, along with numerous other dedicated volunteers, has helped with mailings, filing, Web site updating and order fulfillment.*



The Vegetarian Center of NYC

150 Fifth Avenue, Suite 510
(at 20th Street, in Manhattan)
212-414-9100 • vivavegie@tiroc.com

OFFICE HOURS ARE GENERALLY:

4 p.m. to 7 p.m., Mon.-Fri.
However, other hours can be
made available upon request.
Always call to confirm your visit.

MAILING ADDRESS REMAINS:

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JOIN VivaVeggie

To become a member of the VivaVeggie Society for one year, send \$15 to the above address. Membership entitles you to a membership card, five issues of *The VivaVine*, a copy of "101 Reasons Why I'm a Vegetarian" and VivaVeggie's "Easy Guide to Veganism."

Veg'n Center: A vision realized

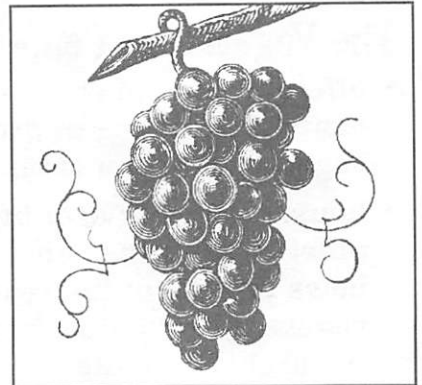
Kudos from a vegan doc

I happened to be reviewing the October 1998 issue of *The VivaVine*, wherein Pamela Rice shared her fantasy of what she would do if she won the lottery—namely, open a vegetarian center in New York City. I see that VivaVeggie has made this dream come true—quite an example of what working toward a pure vision can do.

Congratulations, and I hope to visit the center when my travels next bring me to New York. To say that I wish you good luck in your efforts might be the understatement of the decade.

Michael Klaper, M.D.

Via E-mail



The VivaVine welcomes your letters. Send them to:

VivaVeggie Society

P.O. Box 294

Prince Street Station

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Or E-mail them to:

vivavegie@triroc.com

From an acorn

You deserve a standing ovation, Pamela. From a tiny acorn grows the mighty oak. Your efforts have produced a serious force for social change and education. You have alerted so many people to this aspect of the Great Chain of Being. I'm proud that I was there to help you in those early years in SoHo, to see you first emerge from the cocoon of private citizen and don the "Ask Me Why I'm a Vegetarian" signboards.

Danny Procopio

Stormville, New York

So darn inspiring

I hope you've got an extra March/April issue so that you can send me a copy. *The VivaVine* is so darn inspiring! As long as you continue to publish *The VivaVine*, I will subscribe.

Of course we'll visit the vegetarian center when we're in New York.

Scott Walker

East Hampton, Connecticut

Veggie environmentalist

I have been a vegetarian for five years, and nobody in my family accepts it. Now I'm studying to be an environmental lawyer. I find it impossible to be one without being a vegetarian. I am constantly criticized for my views, and I just wanted to thank you for reminding me of why I became a vegetarian in the first place.

Catherine Mackin

White Plains, New York

They're scared

I just finished reading "101 Reasons Why I'm a Vegetarian." I adopted a vegetarian diet about two months ago after 30 years of eating meat and other animal products. What surprises me the most is that I could live in this country for 30 years yet be so uninformed. Why is this? It disturbs me greatly. Is it because the meat and dairy industries are scared we will all find out and go vegetarian? Does it all come down to money?

Lisa

Via E-mail

Visit our Web site:

<http://www.earthbase.org/vivavegie/>

Veg-evangelists: Many ways to make a difference

Do they have no heart?

I just read your "101 Reasons." I don't understand how a person can push a cow into a slaughterhouse or watch a pig suffer. I don't understand the people who do the slaughtering. Do they have no heart? I want to do something about this cruelty, but what can one person do?

Karen Cooper

Manassas, Virginia

The editors respond: *First, you can set a powerful example by going vegetarian. With all the ad money and political influence commanded by the meat industry, many people are unaware that vegetarianism is even an option. (See the previous letter.) As a vegetarian, you can influence friends, family and acquaintances, as well as restaurants and supermarkets (they want your business). When people question you or simply show curiosity, we suggest you hand them a copy of the "101 Reasons." For a more active approach, there's letter writing, leafleting and even demonstrating. Don't feel helpless: You can make a difference.*

A missed opportunity?

The commentary in your March/April issue ["Who's a Vegetarian? Just Check the Dictionary," by Xiao Jia] was a missed opportunity. It is much more common to hear things like "My father-in-law's a vegetarian, and he eats fish" than "My father-in-law's a vegetarian, and he eats chicken."

Kevin O'Connor

New York, New York

The editors respond: *Your point is well-taken. To reiterate, a vegetarian, according to all the major vegetarian organizations and the dictionary, is someone who eats no flesh foods, whether beef, pork, poultry or fish.*

Looking for recipes

I was not a vegetarian when I wandered onto your Web site, but I am

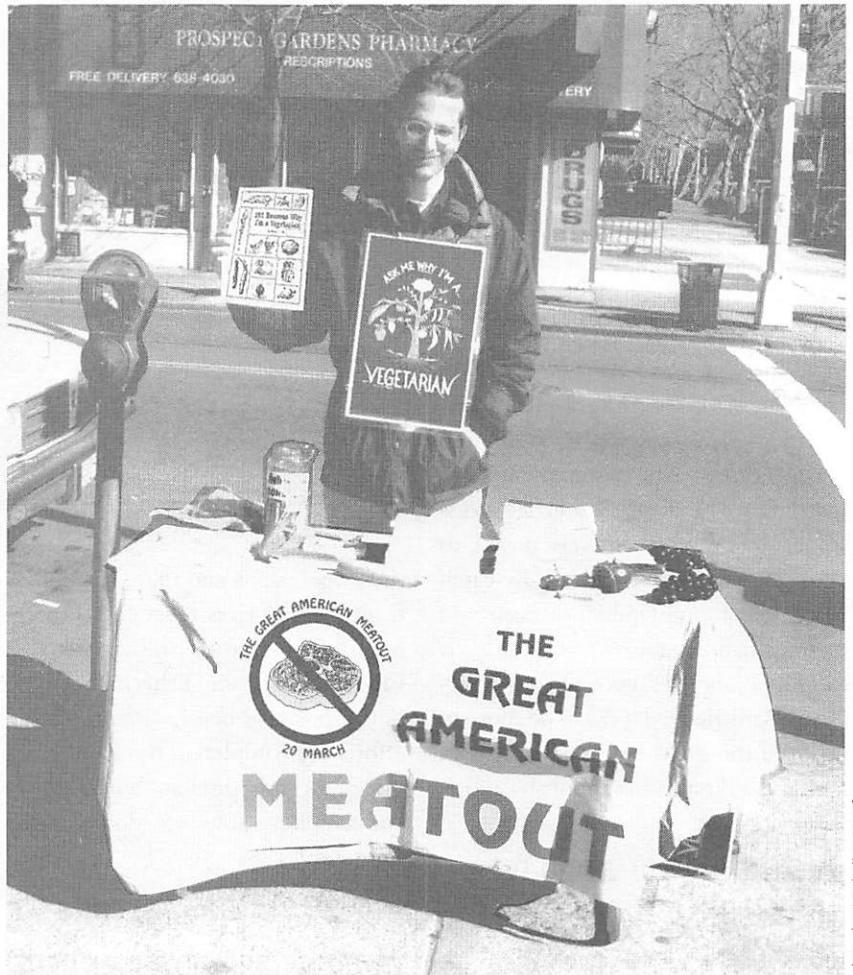


photo by Michelle Fornof

Veg-evangelists Alex Press (above) and Michelle Fornof manned the VivaVeggie outreach table in Park Slope, Brooklyn, on March 20 for the Great American Meatout, sponsored nationally by the Farm Animal Reform Movement. Plenty of copies of The VivaVine and "101 Reasons Why I'm a Vegetarian" were distributed.

now more seriously considering it after reading about disease-ridden chicken being "rinsed" in a bacterial soup. My problem is, I have a difficult time finding good vegetarian recipes. My husband is a meat-and-potatoes kind of guy, but I've steered him away from beef and pork because I refuse to cook them. Any suggestions?

Jennifer

Phoenix, Arizona

The editors respond: *You might want to start with some Web sites, such as the Recipe Directory (www.vegweb.com/food) and the Small Household Recipe Index (www.boutell.com/vegetarian). Or just*

visit your local bookstore. On a recent outing, we found so many vegetarian cook-books that to list them all would more than fill out this page. If you have any specific questions, don't hesitate to contact our vegan answer man at apress@nycbiz.com or (212) 229-1506.

Stop the butchering

I just want to say your Web site is awesome, a site for all of us vegetarians to realize what is going on in this world. The world needs leaders like you to restore peace and tranquility and stop the butchering.

Jonathan Phillips

Via E-mail

Malaysian Pig Virus: It's contagious for people

Environmental groups say the U.S. is moving too slowly on overfishing

The Sustainable Fisheries Act of 1996 is not being complied with fast enough or fully enough, according to a coalition of 88 environmental groups. The Marine Fish Conservation Network accused eight fishery management councils charged with creating and rewriting fishery management plans of doing the minimum to meet the law's requirements, according to a January Associated Press report. The 1996 act was meant to stop overfishing, diminish by-catch (harvest of unintended species) and protect fish habitats.

The National Marine Fishery Service acknowledged it could do more to achieve the goals of the law but said that federal funds to support its efforts have not been adequate.

A glimmer of hope for the world's fish

Past efforts by the nations of the world to "manage" fisheries have ended in failure. Still, a tiny light at the end of the fish-extinction tunnel might be in the offing, as nations are finally beginning to think more comprehensively about how to protect fish from annihilation. Their plan is to abandon the Band-Aid measures that have merely regulated the harvest of individual species in favor of crisis management.

The new international ethic was on display at a meeting in Rome in February when virtually every fishing nation "agreed on a plan to reduce fishing capacity, starting within six years," according to a March 9 story in *The New York Times*. The nations overwhelmingly agreed that overcapacity in the world's fishing fleets is the single greatest threat to marine life.

Delegates to the Rome meeting also agreed that governments will need to pay fleet owners to shut down



photo by Pamela Rice

"God Bless America (for subsidized) Meats" would be more accurate.

their operations and that subsidies to fishing enterprises must end. Powerful fishing interests will need to be subdued, and many fishermen will go out of business before the protection efforts are completed. But in the end, prices for fish dinners should go up and supplies should go down. None too soon for us.

Pig virus that spreads to humans triggers mayhem, brutal eradication

Malaysian pig farmers took to brutally exterminating their own animals in late March when they lost patience with government efforts to destroy herds suspected of carrying a deadly disease transmittable to humans. "The government ordered local newspapers to stop publishing gruesome photographs of pigs being shot to death in their pens or in mass graves," the Associated Press reported. Some farmers simply buried suspect animals alive, it was also revealed.

The precise cause of the outbreak is still unknown. The disease attacks the brain, causing shivers, drowsiness, high fever, vomiting and coma. At press time, 111 people—mostly farm and abattoir workers, but also people who lived near pig farms—had died. By April 8, according to the Associated Press, Malaysian soldiers

were in the process of exterminating a million pigs. In sheer pounds of animal flesh, this crisis far exceeds the disposal and sanitation problems created in January 1998 when 1.4 million chickens were slaughtered in Hong Kong for similar reasons. Despite government assurances that there was no risk from eating meat from infected animals, local pork consumption fell to half of normal levels by the end of March, according to a Bloomberg report.

Fight contamination or fight pollution: What's it going to be?

Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) is the government-monitored food-safety system that every company involved in handling food—animal foods especially—must comply with now or in the next few years. It has many aspects; one in particular conflicts with rules developed by other regulatory agencies.

According to a Perdue Farms expert in environmental issues in the poultry industry who spoke at the National Poultry Waste Management Symposium in Arkansas in October, HACCP regulations have caused poultry-processing water usage to increase an average of two gallons per bird. John Chlada was

Cheep Labor: Reps told of "human cost" of chicken

quoted in an article in a trade publication as saying, "You transport what bacteria was there to somewhere else. Someone has to catch it and do something with it." That "someone" is usually the local, overburdened municipal water-treatment plant, the article explained.

With over 9 billion livestock animals being slaughtered and processed every year in the United States, water usage already has soared because of HACCP regulations. Ultimately, as processing plants comply with stricter sanitation procedures required by the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service, the outcome will conflict with environmental controls set by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Beware the egg-white menace

Egg whites are a known allergen. For this reason, companies that make products with them are required by law to list the ingredient on the label. One California-based egg-roll maker that neglected to do this was caught in February during a routine inspection by the Food and Drug Administration. According to Reuters, the company

voluntarily recalled 190,000 pounds of egg rolls because of the oversight.

The lesson for all companies that venture to include animal products in their processed foods? It's not nice to fool allergic people, not to mention us vegans. Please proceed cautiously. As if you were walking on eggs will do fine.

Meatpackers to test one out of 300 carcasses for deadly pathogen

In an effort to further combat the spread of *E.coli* 0157:H7, the deadly strain of bacteria implicated in at least 200 agonizing food-poisoning deaths per year in the United States, the U.S. Department of Agriculture threatened in January to augment its rules regarding beef safety. Meatpackers instantly hustled to forestall the crackdown with their own voluntarily instituted procedures. Early in March, they unveiled their plan, promising to begin testing one out of every 300 cattle carcasses that go through their plants, according to a Reuters news report.

Could this be enough? The Reuters story explained the

logic through industry eyes: "Dell Allen, an executive with an Excel plant in Texas, said the pilot program would generate about 94,000 *E. coli* 0157:H7 tests on the 35 million head of cattle slaughtered annually."

If one carcass is missed, however, according to the Reuters story, it will be "combined with 4,000 other carcasses for processing. A single day's production totals more than 2.6 million pounds of beef, which is sent to dozens of distributors, processors and international customers."

Congressmen get an earful from poultry-conglomerate opponents

Following on the heels of a lawsuit initiated in February against Perdue Farms charging systematic denial of benefits and overtime pay to chicken catchers, five U.S. congressional representatives granted a roomful of angry poultry workers of all stripes a hearing on March 15, according to *The Washington Post*. The workers were joined by environmental advocates who had complaints of their own.

The representatives heard from
continued on page 8

So, what is the VivaVeggie Society?

The VivaVeggie Society takes vegetarian advocacy to the streets. VivaVeggie advocates approach Mr. and Ms. Pedestrian to get the facts out about their healthful, ethical and environmentally conscious vegetarian diet.

Advocates assemble where there is plenty of pedestrian traffic. They come equipped with brightly colored sandwich boards (shown at left on Mayra Ortiz) and plenty of fact-filled literature. The mission? To distribute, for donations, the flyer "101 Reasons Why I'm a Vegetarian," written by Pamela Rice and inspired by John Robbins's book *Diet for a New America*.

DONATIONS ARE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE.



Mayra Ortiz

GET VITAL EXPOSURE

Advertise in *The VivaVine*

Readers of *The VivaVine* often learn of it when they pick up a copy at a vegetarian restaurant or a health-food store or when they order our ever popular manifesto, "101 Reasons Why I'm a Vegetarian." With a press run of 4,000, *The VivaVine* will bring your ad to a focused audience of avid vegetarians and vegans. Our loyal and enthusiastic readers will take a keen interest in your vegan product or service. Call (212) 414-9100 for information.

continued from page 7

over 100 victims of the poultry industry—contract growers, poultry line workers and chicken catchers—at a church in Berlin, Maryland, a town on the Delmarva Peninsula where chicken is considered king.

Verbal salvos, each in response to corporate-poultry-conglomerate misdeeds, came in relentless succession and added up to quite an earful for the representatives, according to the *Post*. Accounts of labor abuses—low pay for long hours and hard work in unsafe conditions—were added to revelations of environmental irresponsibility. The giant chicken companies were accused of passing pollution problems caused by the industry on to contract growers—independent adjuncts to the poultry conglomerates—who are in no position to take on the cost of new federal regulations regarding manure.

As the *Post* put it, the critics urged the five congressional representatives “to probe the human costs of chicken production.”

New Zealand opens door to rights for primates

An amendment to an animal welfare law that would give rights to primates is being considered by a parliament subcommittee in New Zealand, according to a February story in *The Boston Globe*. Although the law would affect only 36 animals there, it could be a historic first step toward legal rights for animals in general.

The law being proposed by the international Great Ape Project would prohibit research on primates that is not in the interest of the animals themselves. A New Zealand biologist who authored a brief signed by 38 academics in favor of the precedent-setting legislation was quoted in the *Globe* story as saying that chimps have the capacity for complex communication. “We have to change our laws to take this into account,” he said.

Vegetarian News is a joint effort by the staff of The VivaVine.



BY PAMELA RICE

New York City's poor, the children especially, will have to go without cows' milk (God forbid), that is if a New England-based dairy cartel on the political agenda these days is approved—or so say the cartel's detractors. It seems that if I listen long enough to this coalition of opponents, I can just picture some fat corporate arm reaching into inner-city windows, stealing glasses of the white stuff right out of the mouths of babes.

If the Northeast Interstate Dairy Compact, as it is officially called, is approved, the price of cows' milk could go up by 15 cents a gallon, according to some predictions. The result of this, which no one else seems to have foreseen, will be a glut in milk supplies, which will inevitably have to be bought up by the government and later dumped on schools, prisons and homeless shelters. So, in fact, some poor people will have more milk than they might have had before.

On the other side of the debate is a coalition of politicians and even environmentalists who support the cartel. They present images of wholesome folks milking Bessie the Cow, protecting themselves against developers who are standing by with truckloads of as-

Proponents, opponents of milk cartel in the Northeast: Just two sides of the same animal-food coin

phalt and blueprints for shopping malls. This group of advocates wants to institutionalize public backing of the dairies through systematic price supports.

One view we never hear is that of vegans. First of all, it's simply assumed that everyone in our culture drinks milk and sees the practice as no less than a vital part of human existence. The jousting parties in this debate, as far as vegans are concerned, are two sides of the same coin—each wants to support milk, either its consumption or its production.

Vegans want to do neither. We oppose handouts, bailouts, subsidies, price supports and all assistance whatsoever to animal agriculture. Unfortunately, if anyone hears this point of view, we the bearers of it are likely to be pegged as coldhearted villains, since we apparently don't want to support those wonderful people who bring food to our plates. Problem is, no one seems to understand that we don't consider what those wonderful people produce to be food.

Ultimately, we just want to save people's arteries from clogging, rivers and oceans from agricultural runoff and animals from torturous lives in factory-like confinement. And, while we're at it, we don't mind if we save the taxpayer a little money too. That's all.



Pig Politics: It's the USDA versus the vegetarians

PETA SPEAR- HEADING ECONOMIC JUSTICE FOR VEGETARIANS

Vegetarian freedom fighters occupy USDA lobby; demand end to pork bailout

It was nothing short of heroic. Six animal-rights activists from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, in typically noisy fashion, called for the government to stop subsidizing pork producers. In February, they commandeered the usually quiet lobby of the U.S. Department of Agriculture building with a lockdown—all six were hooked together at the neck with bike locks.

The Clinton administration recently diverted \$130 million from the USDA budget to bail out pork farmers, who have been suffering from devastatingly low prices. Hog farmers have been forced out of the business in droves. The bailout money is unlikely to make much difference them; they've in fact lost billions of dollars in revenues over the past year because of oversupplies. Still, to vegetarians, it's \$130 million too much.

PETA had protested the bailout a month earlier by setting fire to bales of hay on the Capitol steps.

None of this has stopped hog farmers from begging for even more money from weary taxpayers. In mid February, the National Pork Producers Council requested a gigantic one-time subsidy that would amount to as much as \$50,000 per hog farmer (the \$130 million Clinton subsidy wouldn't exceed \$2,500 per farmer). The NPPC said that the direct-payment



Six animal rights activists from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals sit in the lobby of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, connected by their necks with U-locks normally used on bicycles.

program would help hog producers stay in business.

PETA cofounder Ingrid Newkirk was quoted in national news stories that came out after both protests. "The pork industry is a violent and bloody industry. It should be outlawed, not subsidized," she said. "Jail Not Bail for Pig Farmers" is the slogan for the campaign, which has continued in other cities. A number of the charges brought against the activists are classified as felonies.

House restaurant no longer pork-free

The dining room at the U.S. House of Representatives in Washington, D.C., was pork-free up until a short time ago—hard to believe as that may seem, since legislators are always bending over backwards to support hog farmers.

Things changed for the worse late last year, according to an Associated Press story published in February.

The transformation happened when Missouri representative Ike Skelton shared a meal in the dining hall with a constituent who happened to be a hog farmer. After the hog farmer pointed out what he considered the shortcomings of the menu, Skelton apparently went ballistic on the chef. The rest is history. Now, it seems, pork is in everything at the restaurant.

Porklift for Mitch victims

With devastation in Central America due to Hurricane Mitch and economic devastation in the Midwest due to a meltdown in hog prices, the USDA thought it could conquer two problems with one military cargo plane, at least politically. Shipping 5,000 government-paid-for pigs to Honduras or Nicaragua was not going to make much difference to the hurricane victims or to pig farmers. But no one can say the USDA didn't try; and did anyone ask the pigs what they thought?

photo © 1999 by Robert Visser

U.S. GOVERNMENT BREAKING DOWN TRADE BARRIERS FOR PORK MONGERS

China Agreement: Meat producers ecstatic

Hey, the guy is happy. Can you blame him? He's got the U.S. government wrapped around his little finger.

A day after China agreed to lower tariffs dramatically and to soften on sanitation issues, the president of the National Pork Producers Council, John McNutt, called the agreement "a grand slam home run" for pork producers. And giving credit where it was due, he said, "Our trade negotiators," meaning our U.S. government officials, "didn't just crack open the door to China, they have knocked it down. While this agreement may not have an immediate impact on hog prices, the long-term benefits to U.S. pork producers will be phenomenal. This will give producers real hope for long-term profitability."

After the early April deal was signed, an NPPC press release said that with this agreement a vast and growing Chinese market for pork in the coming years would at last be accessible to American producers.

According to the press release:

McNutt noted that the deal would not have been possible without the stellar work of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Ambassador Charlene Barshefsky, USTR Special Ambassador for Agriculture Peter Scher and U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman and their respective staffmembers. "We deeply appreciate the fantastic job they have done," McNutt said, adding that "pork producers were also very appreciative of the support they received from many members of the U.S. Congress."

Analysts agreed that the lowering of tariffs would not have been enough to open up the Chinese market. With the new agreement, China will allow the importation of animal foods that have been certified by the United States as safe for export—a major change in Chinese policy. According to the NPPC press release, "Previously, China blocked U.S. pork imports through...complicated and arbitrary sanitary requirements."

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Veggie Nubbets

Labels on meat to indicate killing method could be next

If you're thinking of buying a fur in Beverly Hills after May 11, you may be confronted with a label indicating how the animals used to make the coat were killed—that is, if citizens of the town vote to require it.

The label that Beverly Hills residents are scheduled to approve or reject would state: "Consumer notice: This product is made from fur from animals that may have been killed by electrocution, gassing, neck breaking, poisoning, clubbing, stomping or drowning and may have been trapped in steel-jaw leghold traps." In an ironic twist, the president of a fur association that serves Southern California was quoted by the Associated Press as saying, "Is the waiter in the restaurant able to give you the information about what bait was used to catch the fish you're eating?"

Eat fish, have smaller testicles

The Experimental Toxicology Division of the Environmental Protection Agency says that dioxin is linked to smaller testicle size, among other maladies, according to a February 2 article in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. A byproduct of burning plastics, refining oil, bleaching paper and driving diesel-powered vehicles, among other activities, dioxin accumulates in sediment, eventually working its way up the food chain into the fatty tissue of fish and later the fatty tissue of people who eat fish. The carcinogen promises to affect the testicle size of fish-eating men for a long time, as dioxin is known to linger in ecosystems for generations.

Judge finds no problem in vegetarian research as pastime

Jury duty at New York's criminal court. The questions were standard: What do you do for a living? Where do you live? Where have you lived previously? But when *VivaVine* reference editor Alan Rice was asked by the judge during jury selection what he did in his spare time, his answer was one that might be perceived as a little out of the ordinary: He does research for a vegetarian-advocacy publication. Apparently, his answer didn't raise any eyebrows. It didn't get him excused from the panel either.

PulseNet: Determining the source of food poisoning

Earlier this year, stories of *Listeria* outbreaks seemed to be emanating out of newsrooms daily. Repeated recalls totaling over 60 million pounds of meat over a two-month period began to boggle the mind. Curiously, the words "traced to" were part of every report. Over and over, *Listeria monocytogenes* was identified as the culprit in the contaminations, and in every case the pathogen was traced to a specific product made at a specific production plant (see box at right).

How are these traces made? Simply put, they're done with DNA fingerprinting, which is able to point exacting fingers at the generators of killer food pathogens. Already the new science has financially crippled several meat processors and put one (Hudson Foods) out of business.

PulseNet, the computer network under which this sleuthing has been taking place is a database tracking system launched in earnest about a year ago. It is a joint effort of the Centers for Disease Control, the Food and Drug Administration and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Its creation has been the perfect answer to the problems created by the far-ranging distribution of food products.

The system operates with a two-pronged approach. First, it collects DNA fingerprints of tainted food samples. Next, it links databases from 55 laboratories around the country through the Internet. If a pattern is established that indicates an outbreak, the origin of the contamination is likely to be pinned down within 48 hours. Just six years ago, when the Pacific Northwest was plagued by a widespread *E.coli* 0157:H7 outbreak caused by hamburgers from Jack-in-the-Box, a more primitive version of PulseNet took three weeks to determine the source.

PulseNet has put meat purveyors on constant red alert. When the system determined that Sara Lee hot dogs were killing people at the end of last year, the resultant recall cost that company \$76 million. Seems there's nowhere for these companies to hide anymore. It's becoming a lot harder for meat processors to pump out filthy products and think they can get away with it. There's even a law firm, Marler Clark of Seattle, that specializes in foodborne-illness cases. It was able to obtain millions of dollars in damages for the 1993 victims of the Jack-in-the-Box hamburger poisonings. With the new technology, this firm has the cold, hard evidence to build its cases on.

Where is the farm in all of this? So far, no pathogen tracing system extends there. Five years ago, Mike Espy, the agriculture secretary at the time, asked for legislation that would give the government the authority to trace pathogens to the farm. His proposal was never pursued. Current agriculture secretary Dan Glickman has since claimed that the science to substantiate government

tracebacks to farms is not developed enough.

Some sectors of the meat industry, beef in particular, don't want to wait for the government to implement traceback to the farm. They're already employing ear tags and even electronic implants for livestock. Other sectors are more wary. As an official from the National Pork Producers' Council told the Associated Press, "We really don't think it's appropriate to trace back, because we don't know what we would do at the farm level." Regardless, the trend toward development and implementation of tracing methods is on its way. It's just a matter of time before the microscopic meanderings of any pathogen will instantly become a matter of public record. It's a trend that vegetarians should watch closely.

- In late December, *Listeria monocytogenes* was traced to hot dogs and luncheon meat produced by Sara Lee.
- In late January, the pathogen was traced to deli meat from Oscar Mayer and lunch products from Thorn Apple Valley.
- In early February, the pathogen was traced to franks and knockwurst from B.B. Meat & Sausage.
- In mid February, the pathogen was traced to head-cheese from Ba Le Meat Processing.

Source: *Business Week*, March 1, 1999



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Bronson Alcott: A glimpse at our vegetarian heritage

This early vegetarian thinker was dedicated to values many modern vegetarians hold sacred, including “ahimsa,” which means nonviolence and harmlessness

BY KAREN IACOBBO

He was a vegetarian because he believed that animals should not be oppressed, and that killing them for any purpose is an act of violence. Like his friend, health crusader Sylvester Graham—after whom the cracker is named—he knew that the flesh of dead animals is not fit food for human beings. Vegan foods, especially fruits, were human beings’ first food, as established in Genesis, the first book of the Bible, he believed.

Almost 150 years before the appearance of *E. coli*, he believed that manure was “filth” that spoiled the soil and should not be used in the garden. And as an advocate of women’s rights, he believed that simple, often uncooked vegetarian meals were one way to free women from the drudgery involved in the preparation and cooking of meat. Not least among his reasons

was his belief that for human beings to be perfected, as he



thought they could be, they had to cease eating meat.

His name was Bronson Alcott, and this year is the bicentennial of his birth. His life is one that vegetarians should know about because he dedicated it to values many modern vegetarians hold sacred, including “ahimsa,” which means nonviolence and harmlessness.

Bronson Alcott was born on a Connecticut farm. His parents, and especially his mother, encouraged his intellectual curiosity and permitted him to explore religions.

Explore he did. Alcott read the works of numerous philosophers, such as Plato and Plotinus, and of religious leaders like those of his friend Reverend William Ellery Channing, the great Unitarian opponent of slavery. Most influential to Alcott was the life of Pythagoras, the ancient Greek philosopher who founded a vegetarian spiritual community in Sicily and might possibly have been an Essene.

The answers Alcott sought about life, about nature and

about God he found within himself. Wisdom, unlike knowledge, cannot be learned from a book or a teacher, Alcott thought. It comes from God, who lives in every human being. That wisdom comes in the form of intuition, or what would today also be called a flash of insight and the conscience.

This belief was known as

Transcendentalism and was shared in varying degrees by others, including Alcott’s two closest friends, writers Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Obedying the wisdom that he felt was innate, since all people existed as souls before they entered a body, was Alcott’s lifelong journey—one that he traveled in many remarkable ways.

One was in the schools he started in Connecticut and Boston for young children. His objective was to teach children that they, too, possessed this inner wisdom. Alcott believed that it was probably too late for most adults hardened by society and unable to change, but he thought that if taught early enough, children would remain innocent or pure human beings, as was God’s intent. Perfected human beings would not accept slavery, women’s inequality or violence of any type, including against animals, he believed.

But people in Connecticut and later Boston strongly objected to Alcott’s radical notion that children were born pure and not in sin.

Alcott’s act of civil disobedience doubtless had an effect on Henry David Thoreau, whose essay on the topic later influenced Gandhi and Martin Luther King.

VEGETARIAN ROOTS

The doorway to Alcott's Boston school was bolted shut for good after he enrolled a black child. This was in 1837, and the city was not sympathetic to abolitionism. Many people might have disagreed with slavery, but few at that time wanted the slaves freed to live alongside white people in equality.

In 1843, Alcott met Englishman Charles Lane during a visit to the United Kingdom, where he was invited by the founders of Alcott House, a school and community named for him. Together they would found a vegan community in Harvard, Massachusetts.

England's Alcott House was a vegetarian community and boarding school based primarily on Alcott's Transcendental notions. At Alcott House, Bronson Alcott lectured on the topic of nonviolence, specifically noting the link between violence against people and violence against animals.

Charles Lane and Alcott founded Fruitlands in Massachusetts to prove that it was possible for people to live harmoniously with each other, with animals and the earth, and as vegans. Alcott and his wife and daughters, including little Louisa May—later the author of *Little Women*, moved into a farmhouse with Lane and his young son and a handful of like-minded individuals.

In the same year that he cofounded Fruitlands, Alcott was arrested for refusing to pay the poll tax that supported war and a nation that accepted slavery. God's laws, particularly as taught by Jesus, including nonviolence, were higher than man's laws, and Alcott set out to demonstrate his point of view.

He didn't go to prison. A neighbor, against Alcott's preference, paid the tax. But the impact of Alcott's action in Concord, Massachusetts, in the first half of the 19th century has been felt around the world and to this day. For this happened three years before Thoreau, who was 18 years Alcott's junior, went to jail for his civil disobedience. The essay Thoreau wrote on that topic influenced Gandhi, and later Dr. Martin Luther King. No doubt that Alcott, the vegetarian, was an influence on Thoreau, who, while not a vegetarian, espoused a meat-free diet eloquently in the pages of his masterpiece *Walden*, a book in which he also praised Mr. Alcott, though not by name.

Karen Iacobbo is a historian, writer and lecturer. She is the author of a booklet, "A. Bronson Alcott's Vegetarianism," and is the president of the A. Bronson Alcott Society. She teaches a course, "Meet the American Transcendentalists," on America Online at keyword "courses" and hosts the weekly "Vegetarian Issues/Earth-Friendly Living" chat at keywords "vegan" and "cook club." For information about the booklet, course, chat or A.B. Alcott Society, contact Iacobbo at arkangel110@aol.com or <http://members.aol.com/arkangel110/aba.html>. Or write: Alcott Society/Iacobbo, Box 552 N. Scituate, RI 02857. And don't forget to ask about scheduled events marking the bicentennial of Alcott's birth.

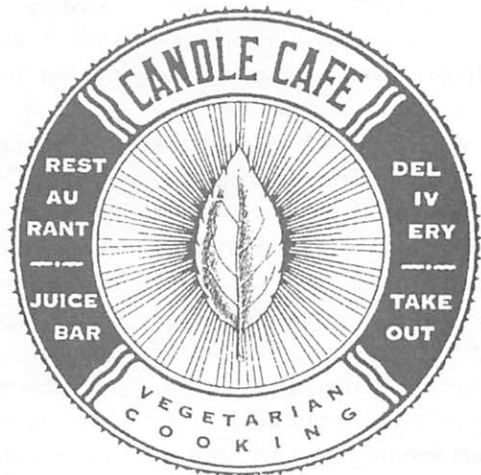
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Pharm Phantoms: Making miracle drugs ineffectual

FDA reevaluates use of antibiotics in agriculture

Antibiotic use on the farm is grabbing the headlines. In a March 8 front-page story in *The New York Times*, it was reported that the Food and Drug Administration intends to begin monitoring the effects of the practice. The agency also plans to revise its guidelines for the approval of new drug varieties.

It's been a long time since scientists began warning that antibiotic use on the farm facilitates the emergence of deadly strains of drug-resistant bacteria. The primary concern of the FDA now pertains to antibiotics that are similar to those used by people. Through overuse, these drugs are losing their effectiveness on the farm and, in turn, their power to help people with life-threatening illnesses. Exposure to the drug-resistant bacteria occurs when people eat the meat of animals whose bodies are infected with the resistant pathogens or when they come into direct contact with animal waste.

The use of antibiotics on farms has become a bad habit. Farmers administer these miracle drugs to animals routinely. In fact, about 40 percent of the 50 million pounds of antibiotics produced yearly in the United States is mixed into animal feed, according to the *Times* article. The animals aren't necessarily sick. The drugs make them grow faster.

The *Times* story explained that the drug and livestock industries defend antibiotic use, saying that it allows them to provide consumers with low-cost meat and poultry. They must be restricting their meaning of the word *cost* to that paid by consumers at the retail level. When deaths and grave illnesses are factored in, the cost becomes a lot higher.

Indeed, as the *Times* explained, re-

searchers at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said "they had detected increases in levels of drug-resistant bacteria in people with gastrointestinal illness from the microbes salmonella and campylobacter, which are most commonly contracted from meat or eggs."

Bacteria in chicken feed

Just a week before the above story broke, *The New York Times* reported that drug-resistant bacteria were found in a sample of animal feed. On a hunch, some physicians discovered the bacteria in a sealed sack opened under sterile conditions. They were investigating the cause of

Researchers at the CDC have detected increases in drug-resistant bacteria in people with gastrointestinal illness.

drug-resistant infections that brought about the deaths of some of their patients. The doctors were shocked to find that the bacteria encased in the sack were resistant to vancomycin, a drug considered to be the last line of defense against dangerous infections.

One of the doctors involved in the discovery, J. Glen Morris Jr., was quoted in the article as saying, "If it's in feed, it may subsequently show up in chickens and serve as another mode of introduction into human populations."

The article also noted that people who are exposed to deadly bacteria—either through eating or handling chickens who are infected by the feed—could pass the bacteria's genes for drug resistance on to other dangerous organisms and that this could eventually be detrimental to the increasing number of people in

our society with compromised immune systems.

Bovine growth hormone under scrutiny

Antibiotic resistance related to livestock made the news again in a report out of London. According to a March 18 Dow Jones story, a European Union veterinary committee said that the use of the Monsanto-developed synthetic hormone known as bovine somatotropin (BST) could foster the development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria. The bovine growth hormone increases the risk of cows' developing udder infections, the veterinary committee determined, and therefore increases the need for farmers to dispense antibiotics. This, it said, ultimately hastens the appearance of the drug-resistant strains.

The veterinary committee also determined that the bovine drug may be linked to cancer in humans. The report published by this key committee is likely to be influential when an EU ban on BST is reevaluated later this year.

EU finds shortcomings in how U.S. traces antibiotic residues

The European Union made it known late in January that it is skeptical of laboratory testing methods that the United States uses to detect antibiotic residues in meat, according to a Bloomberg wire story. In general, Europe believes that the United States is not screening out all potentially harmful substances. The EU made the announcement just as the two Atlantic trading partners were working to iron out a so-called "veterinary equivalency" accord that would coordinate health and safety standards for beef, pork, poultry and seafood, as well as other products.

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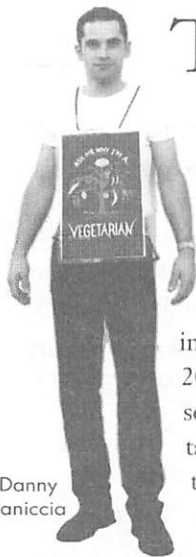
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Danny Paniccia

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Expanded outreach

With the arrival of warmer weather, VivaVegie’s outreach schedule picks up steam. This year, in addition to our traditional outreach venues such as Veal Ban Day and the Nathan’s hot-dog-eating contest, we will make an effort to be out tabling and leafletting every weekend. If you’d like to meet new people and help in the vital

work of spreading the vegetarian message, call (212) 229-1506 or E-mail apress@nycbiz.com.

VivaVegie wish list

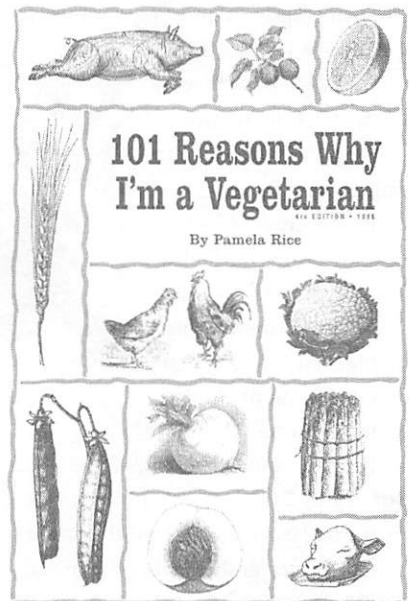
- Pro-bono tax accounting
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- Press run, VVS’s “Easy Guide to Veganism” (see below) ♦ \$400
- VivaVegie Web site ♦ \$1,000/year
- Spanish edition of “101 Reasons Why I’m a Vegetarian” ♦ \$250
- One year’s office rent (partial acceptable) ♦ \$4,200

Thank you for the help

Thank you, Glen Boisseau Becker, Helayne Gaither, Stephen Kaufman, Hal P. Glick, Stanley and Rhoda Sapon, Garland M. Jones, Pam Van Hart and Elliot Gang, for your generous contributions to the Vegetarian Center of New York City. All of your donations have already been doubled by the matching-fund grant designated by our anonymous donor in support of the center. (See page 2 for more information on the matching-fund grant.)

Our guide to veganism

Send an SASE to our post-office box (see page 4) to receive a free copy of VivaVegie’s “The Easy Guide to Veganism.” It’s the perfect directory of veg and veg-friendly restaurants and health-food stores in New York City.



The 1998 edition of “101 Reasons Why I’m a Vegetarian,” our “mighty convincer” by Pamela Rice, became available in April 1998. An order coupon appears at the top of this page.



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CALENDAR

Sun, May 23

■ VegOut vegan potluck, 5 p.m., at the Lesbian and Gay Community Center, One Little West 12th Street, NYC. Information: (212) 802-8655.

Sat, June 19

EarthSave Hudson Valley potluck and discussion on vegetarianism, animal rights and the environment, 6 p.m., in White Plains, NY. Information: (914) 472-7392.

Sat, June 26

■ EarthSave Long Island vegetarian dinner and lecture, 6 p.m., in Huntington, NY. Information: (516) 421-3791.

Sat, June 26-Sun, June 27

■ United Poultry Concerns

forum on direct action for animals, featuring Pamela Rice and other animal rights leaders, in Machipongo, VA. Information: (757) 678-7875.

Sun, July 4

■ VivaVegie's sixth annual protest at the Nathan's hot-dog-eating contest in Coney Island, Brooklyn. Information: (212) 591-2914.

Wed, July 7-Sun, July 11

■ North American Vegetarian Society Summerfest, in Johnstown, PA, featuring vegan meals, lectures, entertainment. Information: (518) 568-7970.

Wed, July 28-Sun, August 1

■ American Vegan Society convention in Boulder, CO, featuring vegan meals, lectures. Information: (609) 694-2887.

Sat, August 7-Sun, August 8

■ Farm Sanctuary country hoe-down, featuring speakers, vegan meals and dancing, Watkins Glen, NY. Information: (607) 583-2225.

For additional information on New York City-area vegetarian events, contact:

Big Apple Vegetarians: (212) 715-8642.

The Sierra Club NYC Vegetarian Outings Committee: (718) 789-3386.

Veggie Singles: (718) 437-0190.

VegOut: (212) 802-8655.

For cooking classes, contact:

The Natural Gourmet School: (212) 645-5170.

The Whole Foods Project: (718) 832-6628.

To add an event, receive calendar updates or learn about VivaVegie outreach activities, contact:
apress@nycbiz.com.

