

The Myth of “Free-Range”

Most vegans are all too familiar with the laundry list of cliched arguments meat-eaters whip out to justify their eating choices. We’re used to being bombarded with questions about why we choose kale over cheeseburgers, but as soon as we start to explain our reasoning (animal rights, environmental impact, etc.,) it’s a safe bet what the response will be. Omnivore’s defenses for their meat habits range from the misguided “where do you get your protein?!” to the irritating “but BACON though.” However, one of the most flawed of these arguments is “I only eat local/free range meat;” the notion that if the animal was free to roam the fields prior to slaughter, meat is somehow acceptable.

While the cruel conditions of factory farms are well-documented, many meat eaters rely heavily on the idea that free-range animals “lived a good life” and therefore can be consumed without moral question. Moreover, the exact terms of what “free range” entails are vaguely defined, [with no real system in place to check the legitimacy of the “cruelty-free” label](#) meat corporations can slap on their packages. There are plenty of ways to be cruel to farmed animals besides locking them in cages.

Moral implications aside, [“free range” meat is actually just as bad for the environment as factory farmed meat](#). In fact, some say it’s [even worse](#). Vegans may sound like a broken record with this one, but [meat production contributes more to global warming than cars](#). Short of a hundred-mile oil spill, it’s one of the worst things a person can do for the environment.

The health argument also still stands: while it may claim to lack the artificial ingredients of processed meat, organic meat is not a “health food.” According to the [Physician’s Committee, meat - any meat - causes cancer, heart disease, and other ailments.](#)

Basically, [there is no such thing as sustainable or “safe” meat](#). Whether a farmed animal was trapped in steel cage or roamed in the most idyllic of pastures, [meat is extremely detrimental to the environment, to animals, and to human health.](#)