



Shropshire-based producer and award-winning columnist Roger Evans admits defeat when it comes to reasoning with some vegans.

Indignation and ignorance

Never before do I remember there being so much criticism of livestock farming. The most critical are vegans. We have good reasoned arguments – and scientific facts – on our side. But they are of no interest to some vegans because they are not interested in reason. They have not thought things through, and don't intend to. They think that any grass field could grow trees, which is true. But they also think that any field or piece of grassland could grow crops for humans, which is not true. If grassland is taken out of animal production, more food will have to be imported.

We have a meal every month in the village. It's a sort of community get together. One day what I call a newcomer sits down beside me. 'Newcomer' sounds a bit derogatory, and it is. Anyway, she sits down and makes conversation. "What do you do for a living?" This surprises me for reasons you will see later, but I play along with it. "I'm a dairy farmer." "You should be ashamed of yourself," she says. "Why?," I reply. She goes on to tell me that she has read all about dairy farming and that it is cruel. "You keep those poor cows locked in dark, dirty sheds all the year round, they never go outside, they never see the sun, they never get to eat grass." This was all said aggressively and confrontationally. I didn't respond, I didn't see the point. And I could see that she took this to be a victory, as she turned to speak to the person on her other side. This encounter seems to illustrate the point I was making previously. I was surprised she had asked me what I did for a living and I was even more surprised at her perception of dairy farming. Why? Because when she and her husband had been house hunting in this area, they had stayed here in our B&B on three occasions. Our guest bedrooms are at the front of our house, they overlook a four-acre field. This field has plenty of trees in it, as well as a pond, and there are always cattle in there. If I was a cow then I think it would be an idyllic place to live. She would have seen those cows, but she didn't want to see them. If you are living a mundane sort of life, a life that doesn't have much going on in it, a bit of indignation goes a long way. If you can find an issue that fuels that indignation you hang on to it just as long as you can. And that's what we are up against, people who will pretend they are deaf or blind in order to give their lives some purpose. I didn't bother to speak to the lady again, except for at the end of the meal when I asked her if she wanted me to pass her the milk to put in her tea. "Yes, please."

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