



Raising funds for persecuted vervet monkeys whilst making a positive impact on the world – Josie Du Toit

The VMF Veggie / Vegan Challenge took place on 19th November – 19th December 2011. The purpose was two-fold; to raise funds for a release site for a group of vervet monkeys currently at the Vervet Monkey Foundation (VMF), Tzaneen, South Africa and to encourage people to partake in an ultimately vegan lifestyle. In doing so, we wanted to increase awareness about animal suffering, environmental issues and the connection between our lifestyles and the way in which they affect the world we live in.

Constantly working towards ending animal suffering and fighting against the destruction of the environment, the challenge came as a logical step to help fund a release site, after all you cannot release a troop of vervets without land to put them on! A vegan diet uses only a fraction of the land and saves a full acre of trees in one year (equal to over a million pieces of paper).

Vervet monkeys and other wildlife suffer greatly from deforestation and habitat loss. One of the biggest causes of habitat loss other than urbanisation is converting wild landscapes into a means of farming livestock, growing food to feed the livestock production industry to suit our appetites instead of eating this food directly. Worldwide livestock production occupies 70% of all land use for agriculture or 30% of the land surface of the Earth, this figure is growing as the human population increases. Looking after wildlife, the planet and the people you cannot ignore as Senior U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization official Henning Steinfeld reported that the meat industry is "one of the most significant contributors to today's most serious environmental problems." Science shows that going vegan is one of the most effective ways to help the planet and fight global warming.

The Challenge:

35 people took part in the challenge during the month of November / December 2011. Of these, 29 people returned questionnaires to enable an impact study to be done. 13 people chose to go from eating meat to going vegetarian, 8 people chose to go from eating meat to vegan and 8 people chose to go from vegetarian to vegan for one month and thereby asking for sponsorship from others to complete the Challenge.

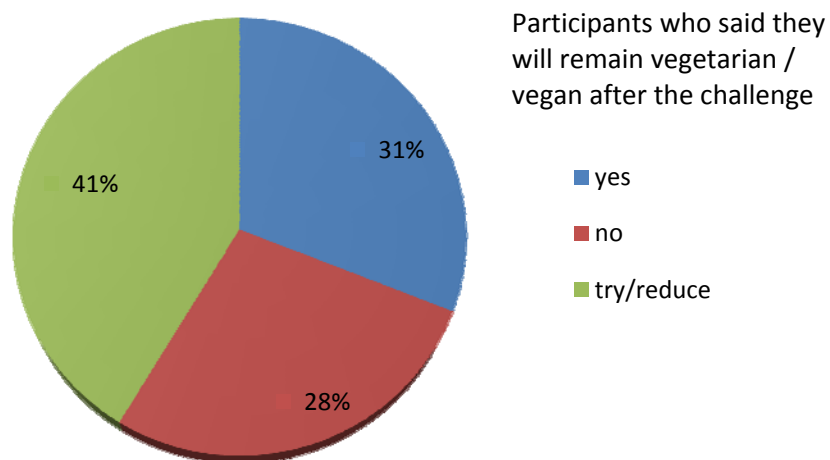
Participants needed:

- to be committed to raise a min of R500 for the VMF in the way of sponsorship
- to be prepared to share their experience with the VMF
- to advertise this event or write a story for their local media to help raise further funds and spread awareness for the monkeys
- to watch the suggested video (Gary Yourofsky's 'Best speech you will ever hear' or 'Earthlings') to understand why they are going veggie / vegan for a month

All participants who committed to raise a min of R500 received a free VMF Veggie / Vegan recipe book in advance of the challenge.

Results & Conclusion:

In conclusion the results show that 31% of all participants said they will continue to be veggie / vegan, while 41% said they will reduce their consumption of animal products, 28% said they wouldn't change their diet after the challenge. The most common reason for not changing their eating habits was simply due to inconvenience.



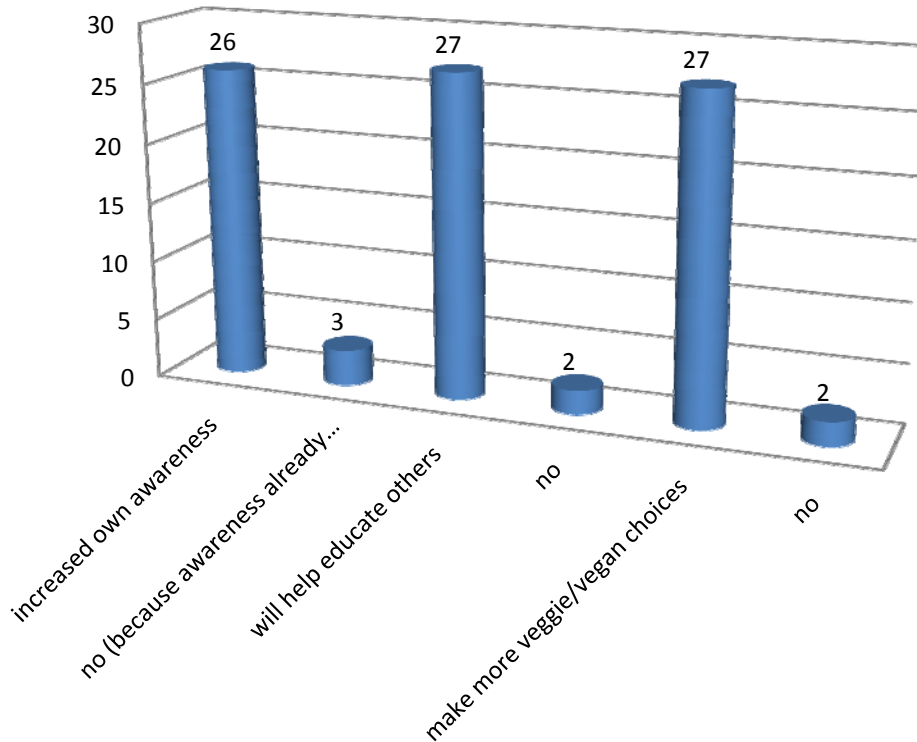
VMF Veggie/Vegan challenge 2011

The good news is by becoming vegan, you help to control the supply and demand of vegan products on the market therefore making it a lot less of an inconvenience and helps other people to make more vegan choices too.

The impact of the challenge was huge:

- 90% of participants said the challenge increased their awareness of animal and environmental issues. The 10% that said it didn't increase their awareness was because their awareness was already high.
- 93% of participants said they will help educate others after the challenge. The 7% that said they wouldn't help educate others was mainly due to the fact they didn't want to come across as preachy and forcing their views on others.
- 93% of participants said they would continue to make more vegetarian or vegan choices after the Challenge.

Impact of VMF veggie/vegan challenge 2011



The amount of money raised for a release site for the vervet monkeys was: R51,209 which will help a good way towards securing a release site for the monkeys.

We would like to say a big thank you to all participants and those who sponsored them to make this a success and hope it to be an even bigger and better event during 2012. Thank you also to Gabrielle Bertrand (vegan volunteer at the VMF) for helping with analysis of results.

Anyone wishing to take part in the VMF Veggie / Vegan Challenge 2012 from 1st November – 1st December 2012 (or outside of these dates) can contact Josie@vervet.za.org for more details.

For more info on the Vervet Monkey Foundation, please visit www.vervet.za.org

“The Earth supplies enough for everyone’s need not everyone’s greed.”