



# Evolving Together: Executive Summary of an 18-month Messaging Study on Animal Farming

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# Evolving Together: Executive Summary of an 18-month Messaging Study on Animal Farming

Prepared for Pax Fauna by Aidan Kankyoku

*This article summarizes key findings of a multi-phase messaging study for animal advocates. The individual reports are available at [paxfauna.org/reports](https://paxfauna.org/reports)*

## Purpose

Pax Fauna exists to design a new Social Movement Organization (SMO) meant to accelerate the end of animal farming in the United States. By using both primary and secondary research as well as careful reflection on our experience as animal rights social movement organizers, our mission is to improve on past efforts and catalyze a strategic nonviolent mass movement for animals.

This study is an integral part of that mission. Overall, it was designed primarily to inform the messaging and strategy of a new SMO. Additionally, we believe many of our findings will be helpful to other advocates. This report is intended for anybody engaged in advocacy to the general public on behalf of farmed animals, alone or on behalf of an organization. It may also help inform organizations choosing political or strategic demands for campaigns that involve public messaging.

Social movements (typically characterized by large-scale grassroots organizing, mass protest, and related activities) are a potent tool available to changemakers. The strength of social movement strategies does not, however, lie in their ability to enact specific, discrete policy reforms. Consider the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement between roughly 2013 and 2021. The policy demands of BLM involved reforming and restricting the powers of police, ultimately settling on a demand to move funding away from police departments.

As of summer 2022, the policy demand of defunding the police remains largely hypothetical, with the few cities that explored the idea now reversing course. Through only this lens, Black Lives Matter may seem like a flop. We think this view is sorely mistaken. Rather, it is obvious that the movement transformed American culture in profound ways. A Google News search for “canceled for decades-old tweets” reveals numerous high-profile stories, each an



exemplar of our society’s rapid evolution concerning racial mores. These phenomena demonstrate the **power of social movements** to shift norms and narratives.

We believe that a focus on changing norms and narratives is missing from the strategic ecosystem of the movement for farmed animals, and that social movement strategies are an appropriate tool to fill that gap. For Pax Fauna, the primary goal of creating an SMO is to seize the narrative around animals used for food. We believe the cultural shift created by a mass social movement would then open up space for policy-focused “Inside Game” organizations to pursue more ambitious policies than would otherwise be feasible.

This study was designed to deeply investigate the active, latent, and potential narratives which already exist in society’s relationship to farmed animals, and to identify vulnerabilities in the dominant narrative as well as promising new narratives with which to replace it. Various surveys from the previous decade suggested that such vulnerabilities exist, perhaps most notably **one by Sentience Institute** finding that as many as 48% of Americans would support a ban on slaughterhouses (while also affirming that eating meat is a personal choice). We hypothesized that there is **widespread but latent support among the public** for the goals of animal advocates and that **activating this support is a problem of framing**.

Framing refers to patterns of language that shape the way people interpret information. Frames exist primarily as different kinds of metaphors we use to make sense of the world, many of which are coded into the physical architecture of our brains in early childhood. Frames get their name from their ability to bring certain information into view while leaving other information out.

Framing can be much more subtle than the familiar *glass half empty/glass half full*. UC Berkeley cognitive scientist George Lakoff has been a leading thinker in applying the study of frames to political views. Lakoff has **theorized** that different metaphors of how a family should operate can explain a broad range of policy disagreements among American conservatives and liberals: conservatives subconsciously envision the government as a *strict, disciplinarian father*, while liberals (also subconsciously) see it as a *nurturant parent*. Each side favors policies befitting their metaphor. The strict father government’s role should be keeping the family safe from outside threats and enforcing discipline at home (corresponding to military spending and strict criminal punishment). Meanwhile, the nurturant government ought to keep the children happy and healthy, celebrate their individuality, and teach them tolerance (progressive social laws and a strong welfare state). According to Lakoff, each of these frames is present in the minds of most Americans, and when activated through political messaging, can lead people to support one set of policies or another.

Among animal advocates, discourse about framing has often centered around the relative efficacy of messages focused on *animal cruelty, environmental harm, or human health*. In the context of this study, we would refer to these as *subjects* or *topics* of a message rather



than frames. The frames we wished to investigate operate on a deeper, more subconscious level, much like Lakoff's family metaphors.

For instance, in the aforementioned survey, many people (almost half of the respondents) agreed with both of the following statements:

- I support a ban on slaughterhouses.
- Whether to eat meat or be vegetarian is a personal choice, and nobody has the right to tell me which one they think I should do.

To advocates, these statements seem obviously contradictory, as banning slaughterhouses would have the effect of imposing vegetarianism on the vast majority of people. Yet contradictions like this are commonplace in public opinion data on all kinds of topics. In his book *Merge Left*, UC Berkeley law professor Ian Haney-Lopez describes a similar contradiction in his research on public opinion on race issues. Most respondents expressed agreement with both of the following statements:

- Focusing on and talking about race doesn't fix anything and may even make things worse.
- Focusing on and talking about race is necessary to move forward towards greater equality.

The contradiction here is even more overt. What explains it? Response bias is one explanation, but Haney-Lopez's qualitative research in focus groups suggested that these responses were accurately capturing a real contradiction.

Framing provides an alternate explanation. Lakoff explains that like muscles, different frames have a *mutually inhibitive* relationship. That is, looking at an issue through one frame tends to turn off another that would draw our attention to conflicting information, much the same as how flexing your bicep deactivates your tricep. It's possible to flex both at the same time, but you have to fight against your brain to do so, and it is uncomfortable. Simultaneously looking through contradictory frames is likewise an uncomfortable reminder that the world is too complicated to be captured in simple statements, so we tend not to do it.

One of our starting hypotheses was that the survey result about banning slaughterhouses is evidence that pro-movement frames already exist in the minds of at least 48% of the public, waiting to be activated. Our goal was to identify those frames and find messages that can reliably draw them out. The frame in the "personal choice" question is relatively clear: it is what we call the *consumer frame* throughout these reports. The consumer frame focuses on the relationship between the individual consumer and their food retailers, conjuring strong values of *personal choice* and *autonomy* as well as images of shopping at a grocery store or dining at a restaurant. From this perspective, consumers have a hard time envisioning large-scale change.



What frames were respondents using to think about the issue when expressing support for a ban on slaughterhouses and other animal-friendly policies? Our research was designed to identify those frames and test whether messages based on them could broaden support for the movement to end animal farming.

Interestingly, just as we were preparing to release these reports, Rethink Priorities issued a paper by Neil Dullaghan casting doubt on the existence of high levels of support for banning slaughterhouses discussed above. We reached a similar conclusion: participants in our study were not nearly so warm to the idea of banning slaughterhouses as those earlier surveys led us to expect. We do, however, maintain a caveat: while those surveys do not appear to accurately reflect public support for a slaughterhouse ban as it exists right now, they do point to a deep ambivalence that can be tapped into with the right messaging strategies. We recommend such strategies below.



## Methods

This report summarizes a sequence of studies conducted over a period of 18 months, each involving several components leading sequentially one into the next. Each of these studies is discussed in a separate report detailing the methods, findings, and extensive messaging recommendations. The research was completed (and is intended to be read) in the following order:

- A review and discussion of a **foundational study on reframing food system change** published by the FrameWorks Institute in 2005. Our study draws on both the findings and methods of this earlier report.
- A **review of academic and gray literature** on public opinion of the slaughter industry, spanning 2015-2021.
- An original **analysis of the existing narrative landscape**, reviewing primary communication sources from animal advocates, industry advocates, and media coverage.
- A study using **individual interviews with meat eaters** from the general public to **draw out the views underpinning latent public support** for the animal movement's goals.
- A study using **focus groups of 2-6 participants to test specific advocate messages**, both those currently in use as well as new ones.
- Several **online survey experiments** testing recommendations developed during the qualitative research (a report is forthcoming).

**Altogether, these reports present findings from more than 100 hours of interviews with over 200 meat-eating Americans, along with analyses of hundreds of academic papers, opinion polls, news articles, advocate press releases, and industry advertisements.** Because they rely primarily on qualitative research methods, our findings generally do not include quantitative claims.



## Recommendations

This memo is a brief summary of our top recommendations. Further recommendations are included in the introductory section of each individual report.

### The Problem: Futility and the Consumer Frame

Animal advocates face several challenges in building support for their cause among the public. However, the thread described here, which runs through all of our reports, describes a critical challenge that is being widely neglected by current messaging strategies.

**Animal advocates focus our messaging energy on conveying the harms of animal agriculture.**

In press releases, videos, and social media posts, animal advocates focus on informing the public. We share information about the cognitive abilities of animals and argue that this makes them worthy of moral consideration. We also share information about common practices in modern animal farms, the environmental impact of farming animals, and the impact of animal products on human health.

**But much of the public is already aware of these harms.**

Participants in our study were aware of the ethical considerations of using and killing animals for food. Many remembered seeing disturbing footage of modern farms and slaughterhouses. Many had heard claims that animal products are not healthy, but they had also heard claims that animal products are necessary for complete nutrition, and they were skeptical of new information. Claims about environmental harms were the least salient; many vaguely remembered hearing that farming cows was an environmental issue but most did not understand how or why (hypothesizing, for instance, that factory-style slaughterhouses were the source of emissions). There is an opportunity for further education about the mechanisms by which farming animals contributes to climate and ecological harm, but spreading this information is an uphill battle: the public is so accustomed to hearing that fossil fuels are the cause of climate change that it can be difficult for them to grasp the importance of agricultural emissions. Even when they could, most participants found harm to animals to be the most compelling reason to consider a shift away from meat, though well-informed participants who had a prior understanding of the environmental link were sometimes notable exceptions.



**The public's resistance to change is not based on a lack of information. Instead, while troubled by what happens to animals used for food, most people remain deeply attached to animal meat. This attachment is rationalized using values like *culture, tradition, and naturalness*.**

Our participants described actively “trying not to think about” the ethical implications of their choice to buy animal meat. When they do think and talk about it, they experience moral discomfort. Most used one or more of these common rationalizations to alleviate that moral discomfort:

- Culture/tradition: meat is a vital part of many important cultural traditions that wouldn't be the same without it. Preserving these outweighs other moral considerations.
- Naturalness: humans evolved to eat meat and should continue to do so in order to respect the balance of nature, the food chain, and the circle of life.
- Price: meat is an affordable source of nutrition, while meat-free diets are an expensive luxury.
- Taste: meat simply tastes too good to give up.
- Personal choice: everyone should make their own choice without pressure from others.
- Futility: it doesn't matter whether I stop eating meat because everyone else will keep doing it.

**Of these rationalizations, the most pervasive is *futility*.**

Futility was often the most effective rationalization participants used to resolve their moral discomfort, and it was perhaps the most common. In our participants' view, the fact that society would certainly never stop farming animals absolved them of any responsibility in the situation.

**Futility is grounded in the consumer *frame*.**

To our participants, removing animals from the food system seems like an impossible change. Operating from the consumer frame, they cannot see any mechanism for such a transformation. They don't believe that consumers and businesses around them would change and they don't see a reason to do it alone. They see their consumer choices as the only impact they can have, and that impact seems negligible.

**Shifting people out of the consumer frame is the key to making a future without slaughterhouses seem possible.**

The consumer frame leaves out the role of government and corporate policy in shaping people's food choices. When thinking only of each individual consumer, change seems



impossible. Advocates must reframe the conversation away from the consumer frame and create a role for these key players to help people imagine a society-wide transition away from farming animals.

**The *consumer frame* is the default way that Americans think about food. Reframing our conversation about animals and food is easier said than done.**

The language that experts and advocates use amongst themselves to discuss a societal transition away from farming animals will not suffice for messaging to the public. Because the public is so accustomed to thinking of food through the consumer frame, a great deal of discipline is needed on the part of advocates. Advocates should be aware of the ways their messaging can inadvertently trigger counterproductive dominant narratives. *Critically, any ask of the public to change their food purchasing in the immediate term is, on some level, at odds with a message about government intervention into the food system.*



## Top 3 Recommendations

### 1. Shift from consumer-centric to citizen-centric narratives.

In as many ways as possible, animal advocates should seek to shift their relationship with the public. People play many different roles in their lives, and two roles that nearly everyone plays are a *consumer* of products, and a *citizen* of a society. (By citizen, we don't mean to focus on legal citizenship, but rather on an individual's status as a member of an interdependent society.) People look at the world differently depending on which role is primary at any given moment. The values people focus on in their roles as consumers (personal freedom, consumer choice, and autonomy) do not lead them to support the goals of animal advocates. We can gain broader support by engaging with the public in their role as *citizens*. This is where the interests of others are more greatly considered and the possibility of collective change, guided by the government, is possible.

This shift is a matter of both messaging and strategy. In messaging, advocates should diligently remove references to personal responsibility such as 'by eating vegan, you save x animals, y gallons of water, and z tons of methane.' (An alternative would be 'ending the farming of animals is one vital solution we need in order to limit warming to 1.5°C.')

Advocates should also think about how to create specific asks of the public which engage them as citizens, such as voting for ballot measures or animal-friendly political candidates.

### 2. Use the metaphor of evolution to overcome futility and describe a society-wide shift away from farming animals.

The consumer frame is the dominant, default way of thinking about food, including animals used for food. It is not enough to remove overt consumer language from our messaging; the audience will simply insert the frames they are accustomed to. Instead, advocates must actively work to create a more productive narrative to compete with the consumer frame.

The most promising reframe we identified in our research centers around the metaphor of *evolution*. Describing society *evolving together* away from farming animals helped our study participants imagine a gradual transition at the societal level, whereas previously they could only hear advocate messaging as a demand to go vegan immediately. The *evolution* metaphor also conjures *progress* and *modernity*, helping suppress counter-arguments based on nature and tradition. Crucially, once this metaphor was introduced, research participants would often incorporate it into their own statements, suggesting a narrative based on it would have the potential to spread independently of advocates.



We developed the outlines of a narrative we call *evolve together*, which we recommend incorporating into your messaging strategy. Here is an example:

*We're calling for an evolution away from meat at the societal level, where consumers, food producers, restaurants, and grocery stores work together to replace meat from animals and fishes with animal-free foods. We can protect animals and the environment using traditional staples like beans and vegetables along with innovative meat alternatives.*

The components of this message are broken down further in the report on individual interviews.

### **3. Elevate *meat-eating messengers* to highlight citizen action and expand the base of the movement.**

Discourse about who should deliver advocacy messages often focuses on the *authority* of the speaker. However, we found that for animal advocacy, *relatability* and *trustworthiness* were more important. This is largely connected to defensiveness on the part of the public. Participants in our research were primed to hear even the most gentle animal advocate messages as harshly judgemental. Many of the issues around using animals for food have less to do with facts and more to do with moral values. In such cases, authoritative messengers are not the most useful.

We found that messengers who explicitly mention that they still eat meat were perhaps the most effective strategy to overcome defensiveness. Meat-eating messengers make it clear that they are not condemning the listener because they themselves are still engaged in the same behavior. These messengers show that it is possible to be an active supporter of the goal of ending the use of animals for food regardless of your diet in the short term.

The power of the meat-eating messenger is enabling the audience to imagine themselves identifying with the cause. We found that the most effective meat-eating messengers belong to the demographics not typically associated (in the public imagination) with meat reduction and animal rights: older people, people of color, men, and working-class people. We recommend using meat-eaters from these demographics to deliver animal advocacy messages.



## Other Top Recommendations

### Target the humane deception with “It’s no secret.”

Members of the public broadly distinguish between two categories of farms: *small family farms* and *large industrial farms*. Their thinking about this categorical distinction is rife with contradictions. Small farms are romanticized but seen as unrealistic, while large farms are seen as a necessary evil. Even still, many people personally believe their meat is sourced from small farms. Labels such as “cage-free” and “free range” are controversial: some consumers have high confidence in them, others consider them meaningless, and still others are doubtful but feel they have little choice but to trust them.

The narrative of the *small family farm* is pervasive but vulnerable. We found that information about the ubiquity of industrial farming, paired with assertions that this information is widely known, was often able to change the course of conversations.

Advocates should not allow the opposition to sow confusion with a tale about *small family farmers* and a *better way* of farming animals. Instead, spread the word that it is “no secret” that 99% of animals are raised in factory farms and that “cage-free” conditions are inhumane. (When shown images and descriptions of conditions in a cage-free egg farm, most people found them repellent.)

### Actively target rationalizations based on culture, naturalness, and freedom of choice.

While there is a need to continue to spread information about the ethical and environmental harms of animal farming, advocates should make room in their messaging strategy for directly addressing common rationalizations. When we don’t engage with these objections, we risk being seen as out of touch.

Appendix 1 lists common rationalizations we observed and a suggested strategy to preempt each of them.

### Give empathy to the rationalizations of the meat-eating public.

Along with *meat-eating messengers*, empathy is an effective strategy for overcoming defensiveness. When advocates encounter common rationalizations such as those discussed above, rather than immediately jumping into a rebuttal, we have an opportunity to respond with curiosity and connection.

At the level of individual outreach, this is a time to ask questions and try to identify the values underpinning the objection. In a mass-messaging context, advocates can affirm the most



common values. For instance, a video advertisement could depict people observing a family tradition and explaining its importance to them while using animal-free food in place of meat. Affirming the importance of those values is a way to show the public that we are regular citizens sharing common values, and let them know what universal values underpin our position. In our research, participants would often talk themselves out of a rationalization if they were given empathy for the underlying values.

### **Pursue policy demands focused on making animal-free foods more *affordable and accessible.***

The affordability and accessibility of animal-free foods were among the public's top concerns. We were surprised how many of our research participants named food deserts as a reason to be wary of a societal transition towards animal-free food. Advocate messages that failed to address these issues were seen as out of touch.

This presents an opportunity for advocates. Policy demands that specifically address the affordability and accessibility of alternatives to animal meat sit at the intersection of advocate and public concerns. These demands can show the public that we care about their immediate economic reality as well as about animal suffering. These are ideal demands to focus public attention on.

### **Use non-exaggerated facts and provide citations.**

Participants in our research demonstrated ambivalence towards facts. One of the most common responses we heard to test messages was that advocates should use less emotion and instead "focus on facts and data." However, when facts were presented, people expressed skepticism, questioning the methods as well as the intentions and funding sources of the researchers producing them. These responses fit with the popular narrative of waning public trust in institutions and authority figures.

The strongest messages were those which included some kind of numerical fact, **along with a citation** where readers could investigate the data themselves. In our case, this usually didn't mean naming a specific study in the message we tested, but rather providing a link for optional further reading. Due to the format of the study, participants could not actually click the link. Nevertheless, they expressed feeling significantly greater confidence in the facts precisely because of these links. While we doubt most people would click through such a link if they could, simply offering the link greatly increases advocates' credibility.

The most effective numerical facts make an explicit comparison between how things are now and how they could be if society evolved beyond using animals for food. Instead of "animal



agriculture is responsible for x% of emissions,” consider “completely replacing animal agriculture with plants could eliminate y% of emissions.”

We also recommend erring on the conservative side of any range when making numerical claims. Higher numbers were more likely to be met with skepticism, while lower numbers were usually just as convincing. Because the public is wary of misinformation, using high numbers could cause people to feel deceived later and break trust in animal advocates. Advocates should resist the temptation to use the highest end of a possible range (e.g. for describing the very uncertain share of greenhouse gas emissions produced by farming animals).

### **Tone down emotional language without sacrificing emotional connections.**

Another very common objection to advocate messages was that emotionally elevated language is seen as manipulative or hysterical. At the same time, without creating some emotional connection to the issue, participants simply saw it as irrelevant. The challenge for advocates is to use messages that create an emotional connection between the listener and animal suffering without being seen as emotionally manipulative.

In all cases, advocates should start by pruning excessive emotional language from their messages. Make scant use of adverbs, avoid absolute statements, and opt for less emotionally charged synonyms to seem more credible. Trust that the plain facts of the situation are tragic enough.

### **Use questions, images, and explicit pro-emotion arguments to create an emotional connection.**

Once you have cooled down your language, we recommend three strategies for emotional appeals which were effective in our research:

- **Format messages as questions:** even obviously rhetorical questions were met more favorably by our participants than emotionally prescriptive statements. Questions leave room for the audience to make their own connections and reach their own conclusions. For instance, one strongly emotional message performed better when we replaced the sentence “We have no right to keep doing this to them” with “We focus on our freedom, but what about theirs?”
- **Let pictures do the talking:** images are a great way to make an emotional connection, but even images can be seen as emotionally manipulative. Our participants described animal advocates showing slaughter footage this way. Images of cute, thriving animals were often enough to help people start questioning the ethics of eating animals. Showing these images along with images of the same animals processed into food products functions as an *animal-meat reminder* and might be particularly effective.



Images of animals after slaughter but while their bodies are still identifiable were also an effective animal-meat reminder, evoking a strong visceral disgust response from our participants without being seen as manipulative. We recommend animal advocates make greater use of these images, such as the one below.

- **Explicitly argue for emotions as data.** The issue of animal suffering is inherently emotional. We tested messages like this one explicitly counteracting the anti-emotional argument and asking people to listen to their emotions: “If you have an emotional reaction to seeing footage of animals suffering inside slaughterhouses, that's a good sign that you're a human being. Feeling anguish about what these animals go through, that's useful information. We should listen to that.” These messages were effective and were not seen as manipulative. We recommend using this type of message to preempt the common anti-emotional reaction.



### **Meticulously avoid jargon and activist-speak.**

We recommend every advocacy organization bring even more attention to screening their messages for words and phrases that are unfamiliar to the general public. For instance, we tested one message from an advocacy organization that mentioned a “deadpile” inside a pig farm. While this seems obviously to refer to a pile of dead pigs, many participants tripped on this word, expressing confusion followed by frustration about the uncertain meaning of the word instead of engaging with the content of the message.



When possible, every single message should be focus-grouped with ordinary people to catch jargon before publishing.

## **Beware of health-centered messaging, which inadvertently triggers the consumer frame.**

Health remains one topic where the American public is highly resistant to applying systemic analysis. Instead, most people see health as almost exclusively a product of good or bad personal choices, while laws and regulations meant to promote healthy behavior are seen as government overreach. Advocates should be aware that health-based arguments are unlikely to build support for public policy campaigns and may even backfire.

Some research has found that most people report health as the most compelling reason to consider a vegetarian or vegan diet, compared with animals or the environment. However, a closer examination of this research shows that those who find health the *most* compelling reason find *all* three reasons unconvincing; these people still eat meat, after all. The smaller number who prefer animal- or environment-centered appeals find all three reasons more compelling than those who prefer health appeals. Furthermore, qualitative research (ours and others') suggests that many people who initially deny any concern for farmed animals are in fact burying their concern under a thin layer of avoidance.

More research is needed, but advocates should be cautious with health-based arguments. These arguments may suppress systemic thinking and erode support for policy interventions, and they may not even have broad appeal in consumer advocacy.

Advocates using health messaging to build support for policy interventions can focus their messages on public health, using statistics about collective rather than individual harm (such as the number of deaths per year associated with meat consumption). We also recommend discussing *food deserts* to remind people about systemic factors affecting health. We tested a message referring to food deserts that

## **Treat the base, persuadables, and opposition differently.**

The public, of course, is not monolithic in their views on farming animals. There are countless ways advocates can segment the public and think about targeting messages to different populations. This kind of segmentation was mostly outside the scope of our research. We applied only the simplest form of segmentation and found it to be useful: dividing the public into a relatively sympathetic *base*, a hostile *opposition*, and the *persuadable middle*.

We first imagined creating these segments based on responses to a standard animal rights survey question asking respondents to choose from three options:



- Animals deserve the exact same rights as people to be free from harm and exploitation.
- Animals deserve some protection from harm and exploitation, but it is still appropriate to use them for the benefit of humans.
- Animals don't need much protection from harm and exploitation since they are just animals.

However, our research cast serious doubt on the utility of this question to predict people's sympathy towards farmed animals.

Instead, we developed a simple predictive model based on political orientation, age, gender, and meat reduction intention, with meat reduction and politics each receiving triple weight relative to age and gender. This model is described in detail in a forthcoming report on survey experiments.

The most important thing to understand about these groups is that the base (roughly a quarter to a third of the public) is receptive to altruistic appeals, while the persuadable middle (well over half) is easier to motivate by activating disgust. The opposition, meanwhile, is unreachable any time in the near future.

For the base, animal- and environment-centered messages were seen as mutually reinforcing rather than contradictory. These people are willing to base both their consumer habits and their political views on the best interests of the many. Persuadables were unmoved by altruistic messages. For them, the key is to activate disgust. Fortunately, moral disgust is closely tied to other kinds of disgust, so images of the conditions in factory farms reduce meat appetite and increase approval for meat reduction policies.

In messaging strategies and in strategy more broadly, animal advocates should account for the different roles that these three segments will play. Appendix 2 shows a table describing them.

### **Use the *radical flank effect* to legitimize more ambitious policy objectives.**

Initially, almost any policy we presented was considered too much, too fast by our research participants. During focus groups, it was as if participants were trying to barter down to a more moderate proposal. However, the proposal they settled on was largely dependent on what proposal they saw initially: if they were initially presented with a ballot measure to ban slaughterhouses in 3 years, they said it should be slower. Presented with that proposal, they said meat should be taxed instead of banned. Presented with a meat tax, they favored only subsidizing meat alternatives. In response to a subsidy, they argued for a “public education program” (essentially non-intervention).



This was a clear demonstration of the radical flank effect. We clearly saw that the most radical proposal on the table shaped what people saw as reasonable. This is a great opportunity for animal advocates. Whatever policy objectives the movement wishes to enact in the short term, we should ensure that significantly more ambitious proposals are in the public's awareness and are even being actively pursued by a credible radical element. This element does not need to throw molotov cocktails (or even **cans of soup**) to make moderate demands seem reasonable. Using compassionate messages and working within the bounds of the law to advance a radical proposal (for instance, through a ballot measure) might suffice to create the desired effect, even if advocates privately doubt that the policy has any chance of being enacted soon.

### **Don't hold back when pitching the media.**

While all the recommendations above hold for making our case to the media, advocates should be aware that the media is much more sympathetic to our narrative than to that of our opponents. Broadly speaking, journalists and media outlets accept that farming animals is creating serious problems that need to be addressed. They do not yet accept that animal suffering alone should be a sufficient reason to completely end animal farming, but they aren't far from that conclusion.

Animal advocates can rely on the media to communicate the impact of animal farming on the climate. When giving quotes to the media, advocates' focus should be on animal suffering and the need to end animal farming completely. Some counterproductive narratives still exist in the media that can be addressed through education. When engaging with journalists, advocates should proactively educate them about the infeasibility of small-scale methods like "regenerative agriculture" and advocates' reasons for focusing on changes to law and policy rather than individual consumer change.



## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Common Rationalizations

| Values underlying meat eating rationalization | Common language  | Recommended strategies  |
|---|--|---|
| Freedom of choice                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Don't tell other people what to do</li><li>• Respect personal choice</li></ul>   | Provide information about extensive federal subsidies to show the government is heavily involved in food choices.                                   |
| Practical (taste, cost, convenience, health)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meat is an affordable source of nutrients; animal-free diets are an expensive luxury</li><li>• Food deserts</li><li>• Nutrients in meat</li></ul>                      | Political demands focused on making animal-free food more affordable and accessible show the public that we care about what they care about.        |
| Culture/Tradition                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I was raised that way</li><li>• Meat is important to cultural dishes</li><li>• It's necessary in some places</li><li>• Veganism is privileged</li></ul>                | Empathy: acknowledge the loss of one cultural tradition before reminding that cultures have always needed to evolve in order to survive.            |
| Naturalness                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Food chain/circle of life</li><li>• Ancestors and evolution</li><li>• Humans are omnivores</li><li>• Animals are <i>meant</i> to be eaten (by God or nature)</li></ul> | <i>Pull back the curtain:</i> merely state the frame in its simplest form to reveal the underlying illogic. Also an opportunity for mockery/satire. |



## Appendix 2: Base, Opposition, and Persuadable

|                            | Base (25-32%)  | Persuadables (62-75%)   | Opposition (3-10%)  |
|----------------------------|--|---|---|
| Values                     | Self-transcendence, equality, peace, beauty, open-mindedness, agreeableness, inner harmony | Not cohesive  | In-group dominance, tradition/conservatism, submission to authority, social conformity, human superiority |
| Feelings towards animal ag | Actively conflicted, intending to reduce consumption, avoidant                             | Primarily avoidant, concealing discomfort and dissonance                | Favorable   |
| Motivation                 | Altruistic (animals and environment more compelling)                                       | Indifferent (health most compelling, but not convincing)                | Preserving status quo, tradition, the familiar  |
| Strategy                   | Mobilize with ethical appeals, especially focused on animal suffering                      | Activate disgust towards animal ag, convey veg*nism as an emerging norm | Isolate and provoke in order to repel persuadables  |

