

Animal-free shopping

Amanda Atha on why kind men don't eat Jaffa cakes.

THE SECOND edition of the *Cruelty Free Shopper*, edited by 39-year-old vegan and mother of three Lis Howlett, describes itself as a 'practical guide for those who have made the decision to end, or at least join the swing towards ending, their dependence on animal products...'

It makes riveting reading. Did you know, for example, that Campari was a no-no? (It contains cochineal, alias additive E120, made from the crushed bodies of a Mexican insect.) Did you know that Snow-crest Snowhip Topping frozen cream replacer is cruelty-free, but Jaffa cakes are not? And did you know that 40 million boy chicks bite the dust annually in this country because they cannot lay eggs?

Grape-Nuts were listed as OK in the first edition (published somewhat obscurely by the Vegan Society, but still sold over 10,000 copies since 1987). This time they are not. The author was not sure why — could be that they didn't answer her enquiries, or because they had discovered that they included the vitamin D3. 'It is impossible,' she said, echoing editors of all books of this nature, 'to cover everything... We were going to have a sub-title: First Steps in Ethical Consumerism. It's meant to make you think and help you act.'

For vegans, well-versed in the 'cruelty-free ethic' ('cruelty' turns out to mean 'animal dependency', more cruel to some perceivers than to others), the guide might be very useful as it contains list upon list of things which they *may* eat, categorised by supermarket/manufacturer — though I notice my local one, Budgens, is not included.

There is also enough information on, for instance, additives to make a stab at working out what's what for yourself. The book has sections on make-up (of the big boys and girls, only Yardley and Innoxa

are listed at all), on remedies and supplements, 'homecare products' such as Goodebodies' environment-friendly range and Ark washing-up liquid, on pet foods and on alcoholic drinks. Non-alcoholic drinks are not listed as they are an 'absolute minefield'.

For non-vegans the book is of more questionable use because the reader is forced to follow the sometimes inscrutable vegan policy on where to draw the line. Modern arable farming, for example, 'relies heavily on agrochemicals, all of which are tested — to the death — on laboratory animals; and even chemical-free organic growing supports the exploitation of animals in making use of dried blood, bone meal, hoof and horn meal and the like'.

However, if the book were to limit arable products to those grown 'veganically' rather than organically, 'you'd have almost nothing left at this point in time'. Thus whole rafts of blood-nurtured farmhouse loaves, country baps, whole-meal party rolls, Big T White Extra Thick, etc, get through the net, as do some animal-tested products. The key is whether the manufacturer initiates the tests.

Plants' feelings are ignored because the author does not accept that plants *have* feelings. Cruelty to humans is also not included because 'the Vegan Society brief is not for humans'.

Some animals, I notice, are more equal than others. Page 133, for example, lists a humane mousetrap — the Trip-Trap mini and maxi by Wholistic Research. This does not exterminate the mice of course; it simply enables you to catch them for removal elsewhere.

Products can be listed as OK even though the parent company is doing dreadful things in other departments. The author is quick to point out that listing a product does not endorse it or its manufacturer/distributor: the vegan policy is to avoid products which involve 'gratuitous cruelty to animals' rather than to boycott the companies which produce them. Dozens of substitute foods are listed, in-

cluding tofu burgers, TVP Natural Mince, vegetarian haggis, egg white replacer (what price cruelty to stomachs?), but left out are teas, rice and tinned vegetables, on the grounds of 'sheer obviousness'.

It was not obvious to me. Indeed, by the time I had finished I found myself thinking, in the immortal words of Bertie Wooster, that a glass of water and a dog biscuit would about meet the case. Still, you must buy the book, to see for yourself. I cannot see it becoming quite the rave success of the *Green Consumer Guide* (complete with its own, albeit controversial, Green Shopping Day on Thursday), but Mrs Howlett has marshalled her findings competently, and her ethic reflects a growing trend.

Cruelty Free Shopper (Bloomsbury £3.99) is published tomorrow.