

Dr. Amanda Travis is a [#veganvet](#) and shares some incredible insights about her journey as a veterinarian and why she is most comfortable with a vegan lifestyle.

Where did you go to vet school and when did you graduate? I graduated from OSU 2008 and currently work in a small animal exclusive practice in Saginaw, MI. My areas of interest are pocket pets and internal medicine.

When did you consider becoming vegan? I had been vegetarian on and off all through high school, college and vet school. I am a big proponent of animal welfare and in my experience I found that animal welfare came second to food production and I wasn't comfortable with that. It actually really upset me. Within 1-2 years of graduating from vet school I made the decision to go vegan because I knew if I truly wanted to do whatever I could to help animals I needed to find alternatives in my diet, clothing and personal items. I decided there was no reason animals needed to be used for anything other than companions.

For me, part of the veterinarian oath, "...the protection of animal health and welfare, the prevention and relief of animal health and suffering...". How can you abide by this oath and not be vegan? Everything I have seen associated with food animal production relies on the suffering of animals. Calves taken away from their mothers so humans can use their milk. Sows kept in gestation crates. Hens kept in crowded cages, beaks trimmed and light cycles tampered with just so they can produce more eggs for human consumption. None of this is "protecting animal welfare" or "preventing animal suffering." This is why I chose companion animal medicine and a vegan lifestyle. I take animal welfare into consideration in all aspects of my life (diet, clothing, household items, personal care items) and choose animal welfare over convenience every time.

How has being vegan impacted your life? In addition to having a stronger sense of inner peace knowing I don't contribute to animal suffering, I have found tremendous health benefits associated with a vegan diet (low cholesterol, low blood pressure, increased energy) and I know I am also helping the environment.

Do you face any challenges? I don't typically face many challenges any more. The world has become much more vegan friendly compared to what it was 12 years ago when I first became vegan. There are so many vegan options at the grocery store and in restaurants. I can find vegan cosmetics and personal care items very easily now too. The only true challenge I face at times are vaccines and medications. Vaccines often incorporate egg products and have been tested on animals. I have to rationalize the pros and cons of vaccinations and in my opinion the pros far outweigh the cons. My hope is that one day egg

products or other animal derivatives won't be needed in the production of vaccinations and research can be done in such a way that animals have a good quality of life when being used for those purposes. For now I accept these things and understand that personal and public health must come first.

What recommendations would you have for anyone who wants to try a vegan lifestyle? Start slowly. It's too difficult if you try to do everything at once. Start with becoming vegetarian first. Most people say eliminating meat isn't hard. Then maybe move on to eliminating milk- find a good soy, almond or cashew milk alternative. In my opinion these options all taste better than cows milk. Most grocery stores carry milk alternative ice cream, butter and cream cheese. I hear from most people that cheese is the hardest thing for them to eliminate. I agree that the substitutes aren't as good as regular cheese. However, if animal welfare is your reason for wanting to become vegan, it's very easy to choose non-dairy cheese. You have to want to become vegan for the right reasons, otherwise you will revert back to consuming animal products. I can't eat something now without thinking about the poor animal that may have suffered to provide that food product. For me, that makes anything from an animal disgusting and the sheer guilt I would feel would be overwhelming.

As for other things in your life, there are alternatives for just about anything now. Vegan leather, vegan cosmetics, vegan cleaning products, etc. It's not hard to choose vegan. The next time you have to buy something just choose the vegan version and slowly start phasing out the non-vegan things in your life. Within 1-2 years you will find that you require very few animal products in your life other than your pets!