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Eat British veal with a clear conscience, says **RSPCA**

Animal welfare groups back sale of home-grown meat

BY RACHEL SHIELDS | SUNDAY 17 AUGUST 2008

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Animal-rights groups have been campaigning to get it off the menu for decades, but now, in an abrupt U-turn, they are clamouring for veal to come back to British dining tables.

The RSPCA and Compassion in World

Farming (CIWF) are trying to redeem the meat in the eyes of UK consumers - most of whom now view veal as the ultimate ethical no-no.

"Veal shouldn't be a dirty word," said Rowen West-Henzell, food business manager for CIWF. "There is a process of reeducation that needs to occur. British rose veal is something we are happy to endorse."

High-welfare veal is known as rose veal, as calves are not fed the restricted, low-iron diet that is needed to produce the

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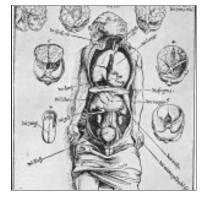


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traditional white veal meat.

Veal - which comes from the meat of calves between six and eight months old – is widely eaten in the Netherlands, Germany, France and Italy, but currently has a limited market in the UK.

"Over the next year we will be promoting the consumption of rose veal as a way of dealing with the problem of wasted bull calves," said Ms West- Henzell.

Last year around 260,000 young, male dairy calves were condemned as "waste products" in the UK, as they don't produce milk and are rarely used for beef due to their low muscle tone. These animals are either shot at birth or exported to the Continent.

"Eating British veal would be great for our farmers," said Gwyn Jones, the chairman of the National Farmers' Union Dairy Board. 'No farmers want to export bull calves, but there has to be a market for veal here."

Marks & Spencer has this month launched a range of roseveal steaks, ribs and burgers, with meat provided by bull calves from its existing dairy herd. CIWF and the RSPCA are trying to encourage retailers that don't stock veal – such as Asda, Morrisons and the Co-op – and restaurateurs to follow suit.

"At the moment the UK has a small market for yeal, but the more restaurants use it, the more people will eat it, and then farmers will rear the cattle," said Calie Woozley, a spokeswoman for the RSPCA.

"All those terrible pictures of calves being transported in veal crates are firmly etched on people's minds – it is hard to change that. Veal gets lumped in with foie gras as something untouchable, and we need to educate people that this isn't the case - British veal is OK," she added.

British veal was recently brought to the public attention on the Channel 4 show The F Word, in which the journalist Janet Street-Porter raised veal calves as part of her attempt to encourage people to eat more British veal.

However, the RSPCA and CIWF have been criticised by fellow animal-rights groups Peta (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) and Viva! (Vegetarians International Voice for Animals).

"While the plan is well-intentioned, the answer to saving calves from long-distance transport, confinement in cruel, tiny crates, and slaughter soon after birth doesn't lie in encouraging consumers to eat more British meat," said a Peta spokesperson. "Anyone who is concerned about the welfare of veal calves should dump dairy and go vegan."

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