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Which Narratives Most Effectively Motivate The Base?

Research Report

Animal Think Tank

March 2025

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Summary of findings

This research examined the effectiveness of different messages in encouraging support for a ban on factory farming among vegans and vegetarians in the UK. A total of 3,948 participants, recruited through Prolific, were presented with one of 19 messages and asked to rate their likelihood of joining a protest calling for a ban on factory farming. Participants were categorised into two main datasets: the 'base' dataset (2,665 participants highly concerned with animal rights) and the 'middle' dataset (1,283 participants less concerned with animal rights). Additionally, a subset of participants who identified strictly as vegan or vegetarian was analysed separately.

The most effective message overall focused on a 'Future Vision', increasing support by 12.32% relative to the control for the entire dataset and showing similarly strong effects within both the base and middle datasets. This message envisioned a future where animals are seen as individuals who matter, where their similarities to us are embraced, and their differences are celebrated. It painted a picture of a society that moves away from the confinement and suffering of factory farming towards one where farmed animals live freely and thrive as re-wilders in green spaces, or as friends and family members in our homes and communities.

While 'Future Vision' messages had the most consistent positive impact, messages themed around 'Social Movement Resilience,' 'Animal Resistance,' and 'Faith' also demonstrated effectiveness, albeit in a more variable manner.

The findings suggest that while certain messages can increase support for animal freedom efforts, the success of these messages is context-dependent and varies according to participants' pre-existing attitudes and concerns regarding animal rights.

This research highlights the importance of targeted messaging that resonates with specific audience segments to enhance advocacy efforts.

Method

Participants

3,948 participants from UK, recruited through Prolific. Participants were eligible if they had previously reported their diet as being either vegan or vegetarian on their Prolific profile.

Procedure

Participants first completed a series of demographics questions (Appendix one), followed by one of 19 messages (Appendix two). They then read: "If given the opportunity, how likely are you to join a protest outside of a factory farm calling for a ban to the factory farming of animals?" and responded on a seven-point scale ranging from "Very unlikely" to "Very likely".

They were next asked "Please rate how much you agree with the following statements." on a seven-point scale from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree".

1. Animals are a necessary resource for human benefit.
2. Killing animals for food is unnecessary.
3. We should all try to reduce our meat consumption.
4. Many animal species possess intelligence levels similar to humans.
5. Many animals are capable of feeling emotions similar to humans.
6. Many animals have conscious experiences.
7. Different species have different levels of worth.
8. Human life is more valuable than the life of other animals.

9. It's acceptable to prioritise the needs of humans over those of other animals.

Finally, they were given three open-ended response boxes to answer the questions:

1. Briefly, how would you describe the message you saw?
2. Were there any aspects of the message that you found particularly convincing? Is there anything you would change or improve about the message?
3. Do you support a ban on factory farming? Why or why not?
4. Do you have any final thoughts or feedback?

Results

We split the data set into a 'base' dataset (N = 2,665), and a 'middle' dataset (N = 1,283) based on whether they selected animal rights as an issue they are highly concerned about. We analysed the effect of the message on reported likelihood of joining the protest for the base dataset, the middle dataset, and the whole data set. For each analysis, we fitted a Bayesian logistic ordinal regression with the control condition as the referent. We used the default priors used in the BRMS package in R. We ran 500 burn-in samples and 10,000 posterior samples. The response distributions and posterior distributions, split by message are presented in figures 1-3.

The most reliably effective message was 'Future vision 1' which increase support by 12.32% relative to the control for the dataset as a whole (12.42% for the base, and 19.5% for the middle). Future vision 2 (+7.12%), and Social movement resilience 2 (+9.04%) also increased support for the whole dataset, but not for the split datasets. Animal resistance 2 increased support in the whole dataset (+9.19%) and the base dataset (+10.12%), but not the middle dataset. We also found significant effects of Faith

2 in the base dataset (+13.7%), and Animal resistance 2 (+5.41%), and Faith 1 (+17.05%) in the middle dataset.

Figure 1. *Data and results for the entire dataset. Left: Response distributions to the protest question, split by message. Right: Posterior distributions of the log-odds split by message.*
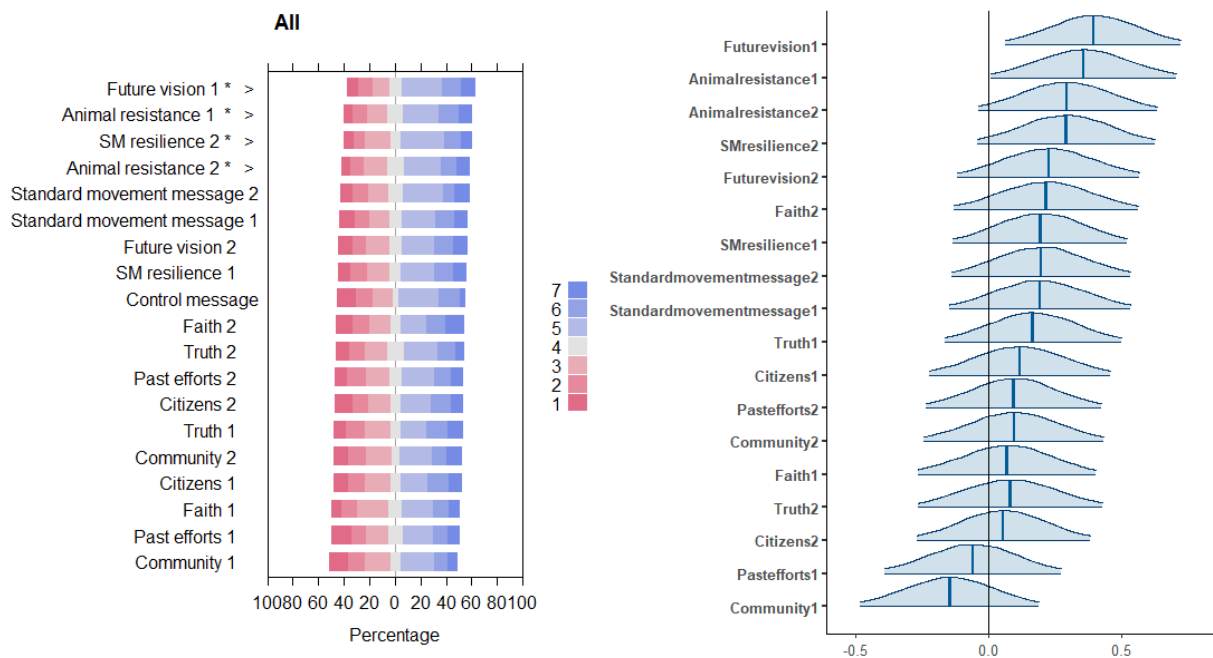
Figure 2. *Data and results for the 'base' dataset (i.e. those who selected Animal Rights as an issue they care most strongly about. Left: Response distributions to the protest question, split by message. Right: Posterior distributions of the log-odds split by message.*

Figure 3. *Data and results for the 'middle' dataset (i.e. those who did not select Animal Rights as an issue they care most strongly about. Left: Response distributions to the protest question, split by message. Right: Posterior distributions of the log-odds split by message.*
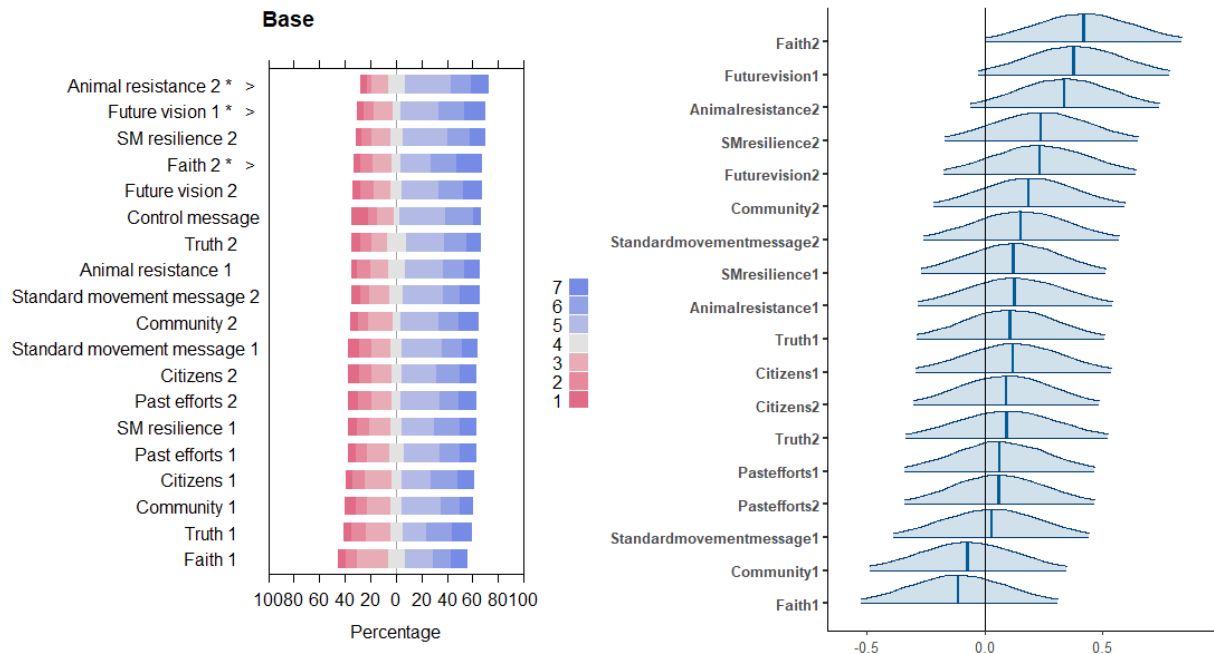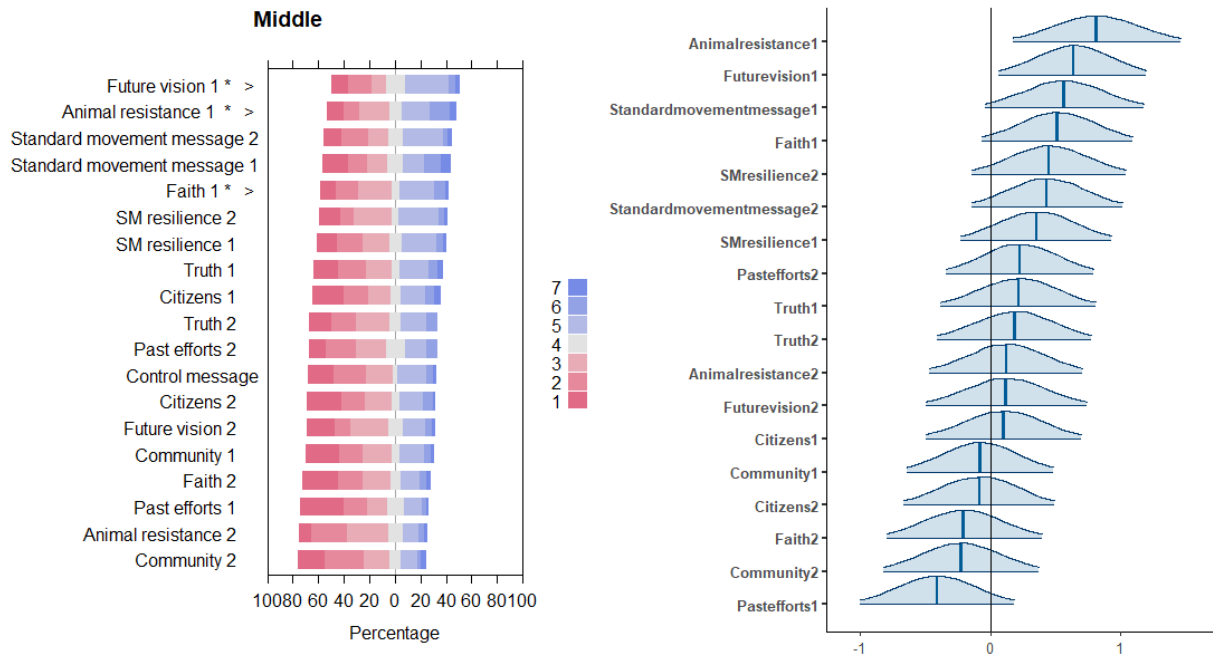

Next, we filtered participants who selected any option that wasn't Vegan or Vegetarian from the diet question. This removed 965 (24.5%) participants. Of the remaining participants, 71.98% selected animal rights as an issue they care most strongly about. The response distributions and posterior distributions, split by message are presented in figure 4. In this analysis, the only message which reliably increased the likelihood of joining the protest was Future Vision 1 (+12.58%).

Figure 4. *Data and results for the veg*n dataset (those who selected either 'Vegan' or 'Vegetarian' on the diet question). Left: Response distributions to the protest question, split by message. Right: Posterior distributions of the log-odds split by message.*
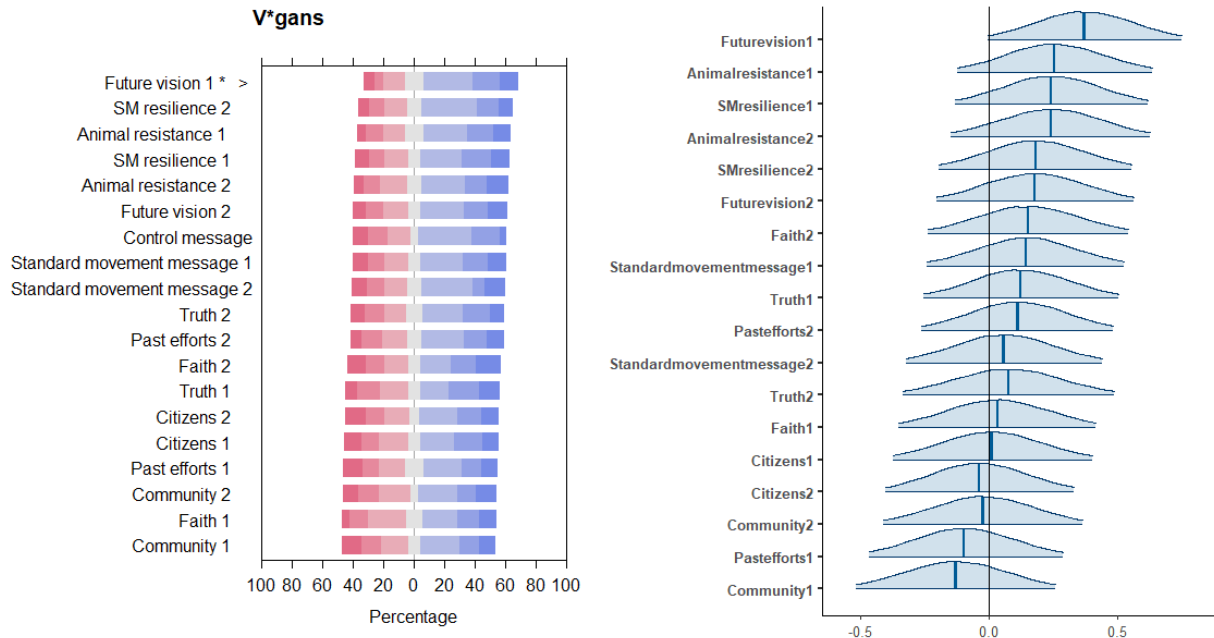

Overall, the effects appear to be sporadic (depending on how the data is split), and message specific (as opposed to narrative specific). Across all analysis, future vision appears to have had the most robust effect overall. Additionally, messages which tapped into the narratives of Social movement resilience, Animal resistance, or Faith appeared somewhat effective - albeit less reliably so.

Appendix one: Demographic questions

1. What is your highest level of education?
   a. Primary school
   b. Secondary school up to 16 years
   c. Further education (A-levels, BTEC, etc)
   d. Bachelor's degree
   e. Post-graduate degree
   f. Doctoral degree
   g. Prefer not to say
   h. Other (Please specify)
2. If you are currently employed, what is your work industry?
   a. N/A
   b. Accountancy, banking and finance
   c. Business, consulting and management
   d. Charity and voluntary work
   e. Creative arts and design
   f. Energy and utilities
   g. Engineering and manufacturing
   h. Environment and agriculture
   i. Healthcare
   j. Hospitality and events management
   k. Information technology
   l. Law
   m. Law enforcement and security
   n. Leisure, sport and tourism
   o. Marketing, advertising and PR
   p. Media and internet

q. Property and construction

r. Public services and administration

s. Recruitment and HR

t. Retail

u. Sales

v. Science and pharmaceuticals

w. Social care

x. Teacher training and education

y. Transport and logistics

z. Other (Please specify)

3. Which of the following best describes your personal income last year?

a. £0

b. £1 to £9999

c. £10,000 to £24,999

d. £25,000 to £49,999

e. £50,000 to £74,999

f. £75,000 to £99,999

g. £100,000 or more

h. Prefer not to answer

4. In which region of the UK are you located?

a. London

b. North East

c. North West

d. Yorkshire

e. East Midlands

f. West Midlands

g. South East

h. South West

i. East of England

    j.   Yorkshire and the Humber

    k. Wales

    l.   Northern Ireland

    m. Scotland

5. Do you consider yourself more liberal or conservative. 7-point scale
   a. Left: Extremely liberal
   b. Centre: Moderate
   c. Right: Extremely conservative

6. What is your current religion, if any?
   a. Christian/Protestant/Methodist/Lutheran/Baptist
   b. Catholic
   c. Mormon
   d. Greek or Russian Orthodox
   e. Jewish
   f. Muslim
   g. Buddhist
   h. Hindu
   i. Atheist or agnostic
   j. Prefer not to answer
   k. Other (please specify)

7. Which of the following best describes your current relationship status?
   a. Married
   b. Widowed
   c. Divorced
   d. Separated
   e. Cohabiting with a significant other or in a domestic partnership
   f. Single, never married
   g. Prefer not to answer

8. What is your sexual orientation?

a. Bisexual

b. Gay/lesbian

c. Heterosexual/straight

d. Don't know

e. Prefer not to say

f. None of the above, please specify

9. How many dependents do you have?

a. None

b. 1-2

c. 3-4

d. More than 4

e. Prefer not to say

10. Do you have any companion animals?

a. I do not currently have any companion animals.

b. I do not have any companion animals, but I used to have one.

c. I currently have a companion animal.

d. Other (please specify)

11. If you have a companion animal, what type of animal is it?

a. Dog

b. Cat

c. Fish

d. Bird

e. Reptile

f. N/A

g. Other (Please specify)

12. How would you describe your diet?

a. Vegan

b. Vegetarian

c. Flexitarian

    d. Pescetarian

    e. Omnivore

    f. Carnivore

    g. Paleo

    h. Prefer not to say

    i. Other (Please specify)

13. Which social issues do you care about the most?

    a. Animal Rights

    b. Racism

    c. Gender equality & reproductive rights

    d. Climate change

    e. Poverty

    f. Immigration

    g. Mental health

    h. LGBTI Rights

    i. Homelessness

Other (Please specify)

Appendix two

Messages

All messages began with:

Please read the following information carefully. You will be asked questions about the below text on the following pages:

Factory farming is a system of industrial agriculture that prioritises production and profit over the welfare of animals. It is a system of farming animals using highly intensive methods, by which chickens, turkeys, pigs, goats, ducks and cows are confined indoors under strictly controlled conditions.

Control message

We are asking people who care about animals to take part in a peaceful protest to call for an end to the factory farming of animals.

Standard movement message 1

No matter if we're a child, adult, chicken, or pig, we all dream of freedom. Freedom to thrive. Freedom to be ourselves. Freedom to explore the world around us. However, for animals in factory farms, this freedom is taken away. Every hour of every day, a cow will

endure the heartbreak of being torn away from their baby and made to listen to their screams. And pigs are imprisoned behind cold bars and forced to live in their own waste, with no space to stretch their legs or feel the sun on their back. To those of us who have the freedom to live our lives as we choose, the pain and anguish of having your personal freedom denied in this way is almost incomprehensible. And the truth is that as long as we stay silent, millions of animals will continue to suffer on factory farms in the UK. Will you raise your voice against this exploitation? Join us in protesting factory farming to demand justice for these sentient individuals.

Standard movement message 2

No matter if we're a child, adult, chicken, or pig, we all dream of freedom. Freedom to thrive. Freedom to be ourselves. Freedom to explore the world around us. However, for animals in factory farms, this freedom is taken away. Imagine, the excruciating pain that baby pigs endure as their teeth are ground down within days of their birth. Imagine the agony that a cow feels when they are separated from their babies, confined behind cold bars, and forced to live their lives in crowded filthy pens. How would you feel if it was your freedom being denied and your body controlled? The truth is that terrible things happen when people stand by and do nothing. Change only happens when we stand up and demand it. Will you join us in raising your voice against this exploitation?

Future vision 1

Imagine a world where everyone – animals included – are seen as someone who matters. Imagine a world where our similarities connect us, our differences are celebrated, and we are all recognised as unique individuals. Every minute of every day,

factory farms deny the freedom and control the bodies of animals, but a different reality is possible. Public outrage is growing about factory farms, and now is the time to build support and pressure to transition away from it for good. We can create a country where pigs, chickens, cows, and other farmed animals are free to thrive alongside us. A place where they can roam in green spaces as re-wilders and flourish in our homes and communities as friends and family members. Let's come together to end factory farming and create this better future for all of us. Will you join us?

Future vision 2

Imagine a world where everyone – of all races, classes, genders, and species – is seen as someone who matters. Imagine a world where, regardless of what we look like or where we come from, we're recognised as unique individuals with family and friends, likes and dislikes, desires, and fears. Every minute of every day, factory farms deny animals this basic recognition and rob them of their freedom and their lives. But a different reality is possible. Our society is becoming fairer and more inclusive, thanks to all those who have stood – and continue to stand - up for a kinder world. One day, farms will be replaced with sanctuaries, slaughterhouses with orchards, cruelty with kindness. It's time to come together to end factory farming and create this better future for all of us. Will you join us?

Citizens 1

Throughout history, there have always been those that tell us that our individual voice and participation don't matter and can't make a difference. They know that when we feel helpless and apathetic, they hold the power. It is through this control and deceit that the

animal industry can continue to oppress and exploit animals in factory farms. But when we recognise that we each have the power to make a difference and create change, we can see through their lies. When we're united and aware of our collective strength as citizens and individuals, we hold the power to decide the future. And we can make it better, together. Will you join us in protesting factory farming and speak up for animals?

Citizens 2

Throughout history, there have always been those that tell us that our individual voice and participation don't matter and that we can't make a difference. They know that when we feel helpless and apathetic, they hold the power. It is through this control and deceit that the animal industry continues to oppress and exploit animals in factory farms. But when we remember that it has always been up to us as citizens to bring about change, we can see through their lies. We remember that those in power are only granted that power by us, and it's always been us that holds agency and influence. And we remember that together we decide what is wrong and what is right. It's time to help others remember. Will you join us in protesting the factory farming of animals?

Animal resistance 1

We've always loved stories of animals who win freedom, against all the odds. Stories like Babe, Chicken Run, and Charlotte's Web tell the tales of unique and sensitive individuals who remake their destinies and evade slaughter. These may be fiction, but there are countless true stories of those who have freed themselves from factory farms. In 2016, a bull named Frank escaped from a slaughterhouse in New York and sought refuge in a college campus. In 2018, a large group of mother pigs regularly outsmarted

staff and broke out of their cages each night. And in 2021, a pregnant pig named Matilda made a dash for freedom to give birth to her ten piglets in the woods. We all want freedom, and animals are no exception. They resist their oppression every day, and they need our support. Will you be their ally and take a stand for animal freedom?

Animal resistance 2

In the face of exploitation, animals have always risen up to reach for their own freedom. Like the beloved characters in stories like Babe, Chicken Run, and Charlotte's Web, animals on factory farms have staged courageous rebellions to remake their destinies and evade slaughter. Whether by escaping from slaughter trucks, stowing away on supermarket lorries, or breaking out of their cages, these courageous individuals have freed themselves time and time again. Despite the odds stacked against them, animals' will to live and to be free cannot be extinguished. But they need our help to build a world where this freedom is secured. Will you join them in resisting exploitation and help bring an end to factory farming?

Truth 1

The truth matters. It allows us to thrive and make choices that promote fairness and integrity. In contrast, lies harm us and prevent society from living in line with its values. The animal industry profits on such lies. While animals in factory farms suffer, we are deceived into thinking that they are well cared for, content, and happy. We are fed images of green meadows and happy, smiling animals that make farms look like a storybook picture. But that's exactly what it is - a story. Now, more and more of us are waking up to the reality of what really happens in farms. We have seen the undercover

footage and we have heard the screams. And we know that when people stand up for what they believe in, knowledge becomes power. Ultimately, the truth will set us free and make a future of kindness, not cruelty, possible. Will you join us and stand up for truth and freedom?

Truth 2

The truth matters. It enables us to make decisions that promote fairness and, in doing so, creates the conditions for us to flourish. But lies breed injustice, endangering our wellbeing and our very lives. The animal industry profits on such lies. While animals in factory farms endure torture and death, we are deceived into thinking that they are well cared for and content. We are sold myths of laughing cows and happy eggs, which capitalise on our love of other animals. But these are just stories. Now, more and more of us are becoming wise to their lies. We have seen the undercover footage and we have heard the screams, and we know that our knowledge is power. Ultimately, the truth will set us free and make a future of kindness, not cruelty, possible. Let's stand against lies and for animal freedom. Will you join us?

SM resilience 1

Throughout history, everyday people have been standing up for what they believe in, even when the struggle seemed futile. They held on to hope that their efforts would come to fruition, because they knew that they stood on the right side of history. In the face of exploitation and indifference, it's easy to believe that change is beyond our reach. A single protest or petition can feel like a drop in the ocean. But when we look at social justice movements like women's liberation, we can see in hindsight that every

effort - every meeting, every conversation, every march, and every other small, repetitive action - was part of a symphony that grew so loud it could no longer be ignored. What feels impossible is always possible. It just takes those who care to take the next step towards freedom for all of us. Will you join us?

SM resilience 2

Gandhi. Rosa. Martin. Emmeline. Throughout history, everyday people have stood up for what they believe in, against all odds. In the face of exploitation and indifference, they held on to hope that their efforts would come to fruition, because they knew that they stood on the right side of history. When we witness the scale of animal suffering in factory farms, it's easy to believe that change is beyond our reach. A single protest can feel futile and insignificant. But when we look back at social movements like anti-slavery, we see that every small action – every petition, every leaflet, every meeting – played its part in creating change. What feels impossible is always possible. It just takes those who care enough to take the next step towards freedom for all of us. Will you join us?

Faith 1

Across the world, people come together to pray for freedom, peace, and love. In churches, temples, mosques, and synagogues, we dream of a future where all creatures are valued and recognised as equal. A world where all life is seen as sacred. Yet this dream is threatened by the industries that profit off animal exploitation. Each day, animals are killed in their millions and treated like objects, not individuals. Their bodies, their children, and their very lives are taken from them in the name of profit. But our

world religions are founded on a vision where animals are free. Across faiths, we are unified by values of compassion and care, and we already know how we should be living with others. It's time to live in line with our values and end factory farming. Will you join us?

Faith 2

Each day, millions of people gather together and pray for freedom, peace, and love. In churches, monasteries, and temples, we dream of a future where all life is valued and recognised as sacred. A world where all creatures live in harmony. However, factory farming stands in the way of this dream. Animals are killed in their millions and treated as disposable objects. Their bodies, their children, and their very lives are taken from them in the name of profit. But world religions are founded on the fundamental belief that all life is sacred. Christians look forward to a time of peace between all living beings. Buddhists meditate on nonviolence. And Judaism values life above all else. Across faiths, we are unified by values of compassion and care, and we understand that this should guide our treatment of other animals. It's time to pay attention to our spiritual awareness and end factory farming. Will you join us?

Community 1

As animal lovers, we recognise the importance of family and community. We know that our similarities connect us. We play, we love, we grieve - and we see ourselves in other selves. We know that change for the better is about a group of dedicated people supporting each other to stand up for what is right. For too long now, fellow animals have continued to be imprisoned, tortured, and killed in their billions. And because we're

connected, we feel this pain and torment as our own. But our connection also gives us strength. We learn from each other, we trust each other, and we cope with difficult challenges together. Because a kinder, fairer future that includes all of us is too important to give up on. It's time to end factory farming. Will you join us?

Community 2

As animal lovers, we know that our similarities connect us. And we celebrate our differences and diversity – how some of us can fly, some of us can swim to the depths of the ocean, and some of us can see in the dark. But most of all, we know that creating change is about supporting one another to stand up for what is right. For too long now, fellow animals have continued to be imprisoned, tortured, and killed in their billions. And because we're connected, we feel this pain and torment as our own. But our connection also gives us strength and solidarity. We learn from each other, we care for each other, we face difficult challenges as one, and this makes us a powerful force for good. Now, it's time to come together and create a future of kindness, not cruelty. Will you join us?

Past efforts 1

We know that we can create a better future because we've already done it. Together, throughout history, people who care about animals have changed the world. We've ended testing on animals for cosmetics. We made hunting foxes illegal. And we ended fur farms and wild animals in circuses. Yet, animal industries continue to take away the freedoms and control the bodies of animals in factory farms. And when animals are slaughtered in their billions, progress can seem impossible. But the truth is, we decide what's possible. We can be the generation that ends factory farming for good. It's time

to repeat history and stand together for animal freedom. Will you join us?

Past efforts 2

Together, we can change the world. And we know this is true because we've already done it. We came together and banned bullfighting in Spanish cities like Calonge. We ended testing on animals for cosmetics. And we ensured some animals are recognised as sentient beings in law. Yet, when we're faced with the immense suffering of animals in factory farms, progress can still feel impossible. But then we remember that we have challenged exploitation and cruelty and won time and time again. We know that we hold the power to decide what's possible. And we know that one day, factory farming will also be seen as cruel and outdated. It's time to repeat history and stand together for animal freedom. Will you join us?