

A-Z of hidden nasties

Alphabetical glossary of animal substances



A

A (vitamin) – can be derived from egg yolk or fish liver oils. Used in nutritional food supplements and cosmetics.

Albumen/albumin – egg white (or the protein contained within it). Used in food as a binder.

Alcohol – some alcoholic drinks are refined using animal-derived ingredients, such as isinglass. (Viva! runs a Vegan Wine Shop available online at vivashop.org.uk. You can also check the suitability of your favourite tippie using the free online resource barnivore.com).

Alpaca – clothing material derived from the alpaca, a mammal related to the llama with long shaggy hair.

Anchovy – a small fish of the herring family, often used as a flavour enhancer. Found in Worcester sauce and pizza toppings. You can buy vegan Worcester sauce that doesn't contain fish.

Angora – wool fibre obtained from rabbits or goats (called mohair) and used in clothing. The shearing/plucking process can be painful and traumatic. Angora rabbits are routinely strapped to boards for plucking which is very stressful and painful and males are killed at birth as they have lower wool yields.

Animal fat – fat derived from slaughtered animals. This is boiled off the skin and used in many processed foods (eg baked and pastry products, margarines, soups and stocks) and in some soaps.

Aspic – a savoury jelly used as a glazing or setting agent, derived from meat or fish.

Astrakhan – dark curly fleece regarded as a luxury clothing material derived from the skin of stillborn or very young karakul lambs from a breed of sheep originating from Astrakhan in Russia.

B

Beer – most real ales (cask-conditioned) are clarified (cleared) with animal-derived isinglass. Canned, keg and bottled beers are normally animal-free. Increasingly producers are labelling whether their products are suitable for vegetarians and vegans but if unsure you can check your favourite beer using the free online resource barnivore.com.

Beeswax (also listed as Cera alba or E901) – secreted by bees. Used in candles, polishes and cosmetics.

Beta-carotene – an antioxidant (disease-fighting) plant form of vitamin A, found in fruits and vegetables and often used as an orange colourant in soft drinks and foods. Foods containing beta-carotene sometimes include gelatine as the carrier for it. The use of gelatine will not necessarily be listed in the ingredients label.

Bone char – the ash of burned animal bones. Used in bone china crockery and ornaments. Major use is to produce charcoal.

Bone meal – ground or crushed animal bones. Used in garden and agricultural fertilisers. Also used in some nutritional food supplements as a source of calcium.

Brawn – boiled pig parts such as the meat, ears and tongue.

Bristle – animal hair used for brushes, mostly from pigs but also from sable, horse and badger. The hair may be from a slaughtered or living animal. Found in many 'natural' brushes eg shaving/hair/cosmetic makeup/paint (decorating, painting and artist) brushes.

Definition of a vegan

Vegans don't eat, wear or use anything from animals — whether from land animals (meat, dairy, eggs, honey, shellac, leather, fur etc) or from water animals (fish, prawns, crab, lobster etc). Vegans also exclude, as far as is practicable, all forms of animal exploitation and cruelty.

Vegetarian vs vegan

Vegetarians avoid any products from slaughtered animals so don't eat meat or fish or other water animals such as crabs, prawns and lobster but do eat eggs/dairy and honey.

There are three types of vegetarians – according to whether they eat eggs/dairy.

- **Lacto-vegetarians** eat dairy but not eggs
- **Ovo-vegetarians** eat eggs but not dairy
- **Lacto-ovo vegetarians** eat both eggs and dairy

Plant-based vs vegan

Plant-based and vegan are often used interchangeably, but there is a distinct difference.

The term 'plant-based' refers to diet alone – which is 100% vegan. However, veganism extends further than diet — it is a wider ethical choice that seeks to exclude the exploitation of animals as far as is practicable. This includes avoiding wearing animal products (eg fur, leather, wool), using products that are tested on animals and using animals for entertainment.

Pescatarian

A pescatarian avoids all meat (red and white) but eats fish and other animals from water habitats (crabs, prawns, lobsters etc). They may or may not choose to eat products taken from living animals such as dairy and eggs.

Flexitarian

Flexitarians, sometimes known as semi-vegetarians, refers to someone who eats a predominantly vegetarian diet but occasionally eats meat or fish. Meat-reducers also fall into this category.

BSE – Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (Mad Cow Disease). A degenerative brain disease in cattle. First known about in 1986. Responsible for fatal human form vCJD – new variant Creutzfeldt Jakob Disease.

C

Capsules – used in nutritional food supplements and medicines. Usually gelatine-based unless stated from a vegetarian source.

Carmine (E120) – red food and drink pigment obtained from cochineal (see below).

Casein – cow's milk-derived protein. Used in cheese production and as an additive. Also found in some condoms (many brands are now available without casein).

Castoreum (or castor – not to be confused with the oil of a castor bean) – an anal secretion beavers use to mark their territories. It is used in perfumes and incense (typically to provide a 'leathery' smell) and to a lesser degree as an enhancer of vanilla, strawberry and raspberry flavourings in sweets and desserts.

Cashmere – luxury wool made from the Cashmere goat and wild goat of Tibet. Up to 80 per cent of young goats may be killed if their coats are not of sufficient quality.

Catgut – dried and twisted intestines of horse or sheep. Used in surgical stitching, tennis rackets and musical instruments.

Caviar – fish eggs (roe) of slaughtered or live sturgeon or other fish, considered a delicacy.

Chamois – the skin of the chamois antelope, goats, sheep, deer etc used to make soft leather cleaning cloths eg chamois leather. Synthetic alternatives are available.

Charcoal – roasted (charred) animal bone or wood. Used in aquarium filters and in refining cane sugar (see sugar below).

Cheese – dairy product made primarily from cow's milk but also from the milk of goats, buffaloes, sheep and camels. Unless otherwise it says 'vegetarian' on the label it may have been made using animal-derived rennet.

Chewing gum – some contain animal-derived glycerine or gelatine. Wrigley's use a vegetable glycerine.

Chitin – derived from the hard parts of insects or crustaceans (eg shrimp and crab). Used in shampoos and moisturisers.

Civet coffee – Kopi luwak is a coffee that consists of partially digested coffee cherries, collected from the droppings of the common palm civet cat (*Paradoxurus hermaphroditus*).

Cochineal (E120) – red dye made from the dried bodies of crushed insects.

Cod liver oil – nutritional food supplement made from the liver of slaughtered cod. It is a source of omega-3 fats, as well as vitamin A and vitamin D. Nuts and seeds and their oils are alternative sources of omega-3 fats eg flaxseed oil and walnuts.

Collagen – constituent of animal connective tissue, which when boiled produces gelatine. Used in cosmetics.

Coral – coral reefs are made up of tiny animals called coral polyps; soft-bodied animals related to sea anemones. Reefs form when polyps attach to rocks on the seafloor, using calcium carbonate that they secrete, then multiply and connect with others to form a large colony that acts as a single living organism. Some coral reefs on the planet have been growing for over 50 million years. They are considered an endangered species as large areas of coral have been destroyed by industrial fishing and rising sea temperatures due to global warming.

D

D (vitamin) – vitamin supplement added to many processed foods especially cereals and margarines, as well as nutritional food supplements. Vitamin D is found in two different forms; D2 and D3. The D2 (ergocalciferol) form of vitamin D is commercially derived from yeasts and is therefore suitable for vegans. The D3 (cholecalciferol) form of vitamin D is generally derived from lanolin (the grease from sheep's wool). However, some commercially available vitamin D3 is now derived from lichen or mushrooms and is therefore suitable for vegans, check the packaging to be sure.

Down – specialised feathers from waterfowl (mostly ducks and geese) which are soft and have thermal insulating properties. Often plucked from live ducks and geese.

Dripping – animal fat that has melted and dripped from roasting meat (usually beef, sometimes pork). Used in cooking or eaten cold as a spread.

E

E numbers – European Union numbering system for food additives, found in most processed foods. Can be derived from animals, vegetables or minerals.

Eiderdown – very soft, small feathers from the rare large sea duck called an Eider duck.

Elastin – protein found in the muscles of meat. Used in cosmetics.

F

Feathers – bird plumage. Principally from chickens, ducks and geese, but also decorative feathers from ostriches, peacocks and birds killed by hunters. Wide variety of uses especially in hats, feather dusters, darts, arrows and fishing lures, mattresses, pillows and quilts.

Felt – cloth often made from wool or a combination of wool and fur, or wool and animal hair.

Fish oils – oils produced from fish or marine mammals. Used in soaps, nutritional food supplements and cosmetics. Plant-derived oils from seeds, nuts and vegetables are alternatives to fish oils eg flaxseed, walnut and rapeseed oil.

Flavourings – broad term often stated on food labels. May or may not be animal-derived.

Free range meats – meat from animals supposedly kept in the open as opposed to inside factory farms (though these would be kept inside for some parts of the year). Many so-called free range types of meat fail good animal welfare needs – eg free range pigs are often kept in barren muddy fields instead of their natural home of woodland. The animals from these systems are still sent for slaughter at a fraction of their natural lifespans, they are not left to die naturally of old age.

Fur – clothing material from slaughtered animals. Millions of caged (especially mink and fox) and wild-caught animals are killed every year for their fur. Whilst the UK market for coats made from fur has declined, the fur industry often incorporates real fur into faux fur trims on coat/jacket hoods and cuffs.

G

Gelatine – protein jelly obtained by boiling animal tissues, such as hooves, bones, horns, skin etc. One of the most widely used animal-derived ingredients in processed foods and many other products. Used as a gel in most sweets, jellies, capsules (eg for nutritional food supplements and drugs), confectionary and all non-digital photographic film.

Glycerine or glycerol (E422) – a colourless liquid which can be obtained from animal fats, sugar fermentation or propylene. Used as a solvent for flavours, also found in toothpastes.

GMOs – genetically modified organisms. Genetic engineering is a common term for altering the genetic information in an organism (animal, plant, fungi or bacteria) in order to create a specimen with new qualities. The genetically modified organism – GMO – will then pass these qualities on when it reproduces. In general, GM foods must be labelled but meat and dairy from animals fed with GM feed are not required to be labelled. In fact, the vast majority of commercial livestock feed is made with GM crops and a high demand for animal products is driving the high demand for GM crops. In the UK, GM crops can be imported but are not commercially grown (yet); however, there have been experiments with GM wheat and potatoes.

H

Hide – animal skin used in the clothing, footwear and upholstery industries.

Honey – made from flower nectar that is collected by honeybees and then regurgitated and dried as a food supply for the winter. A bee makes just a twelfth of a teaspoon in her lifetime. Used as a spread and a flavouring in food and also used in cosmetics. (See also bees, beeswax, and royal jelly)

Horse hair – hair from horse tails. Used in some furniture, musical instruments (eg violin bows), brushes etc. Mostly derived from slaughtered horses, though some may come from live animals.

HRT – hormone replacement therapy – some hormonal preparations such as Premarin are made from the urine of pregnant mares. These horses are kept continually pregnant in order to produce the hormone, are often kept in intensive stabling conditions to keep the urine concentrated and the foals are considered a waste by-product of the industry and are slaughtered. Non-animal HRT is available and most of the HRT formulations available in the UK and Europe use this.

I

Insulin – hormone derived from the pancreas of sheep or pigs. Used to treat diabetes. Synthetic versions are now available.

Isinglass – a kind of gelatine, obtained from the swim (air) bladders of slaughtered freshwater fish, especially sturgeon. Used to clarify (refine) alcoholic drinks, especially ale.

J

Jelly – fruit-flavoured gel-like dessert. Most jellies are made using animal-derived gelatine.

K

Karakul – unborn Persian lamb pelt produced in Afghanistan. Derived by killing mother sheep just before she gives birth. Used to make luxury coats and hats.

Keratin – protein found in hair, horns, hooves and feathers. Used in shampoos and conditioners.

Kobe – ‘luxury’ beef meat from the Wagyu breed of cattle raised on a specialised diet. Heavily marbled throughout with streaks of saturated (unhealthy) fat.

L

L’cysteine hydrochloride (E920) – obtained from animal hair or chicken feathers. Used in shampoos, and as an improving agent in white flour. Can be produced synthetically.

Lactic acid (E270) – acid produced by fermenting cows’ milk sugar. It can also be obtained from non-dairy sources and is often commercially produced by bacterial fermentation on starch and molasses. Check labelling to be sure.

Lactose – milk sugar from milk of mammals (mainly cows). Used as a carrier for flavouring agents in many processed foods. Also used in cosmetics and medicines.

Lanolin – grease extracted from sheep’s wool, used in cosmetics. Can be derived from living or slaughtered sheep.

Lard – a hard fat surrounding stomach and kidneys in cattle, pigs and sheep. Found in many processed foods.

Leather – tanned hide (skin of animals eg cows, pigs, alligators, snakes) used widely in footwear, upholstery and clothing accessories (eg watch and bag straps). Production is not simply a by-product of the meat industry – it contributes significantly to the profitability of the meat industry.

Lecithin (E322) – a fatty substance found in nerve tissues, egg yolk and blood. It can also be obtained from vegetable sources, particularly soya. Used in many processed foods eg confectionary and baked products.

Lutein (E161(b)) – dye obtained from egg yolk. May also be obtained from marigolds.

M

Milk – mammary gland secretions of lactating (milk-producing) dairy cows, goats or sheep (or other mammals).

Milk fat – fat found in milk (see above)

Mohair – clothing material made from the shorn hair of the Angora goat.

Musk – oil secreted in an abdominal gland of the male musk deer (obtained via slaughter), as well as from trapped beavers and captive civet cats. Used in perfumes.

O

Oleic acid – fatty acid found in animal and vegetable fats. Used in soaps and cosmetics.

Oleostearin – solid derived from tallow (see below) and used in soaps and candles.

Organic – has a legal definition. British farms using the label must be registered and approved by one of several certification bodies eg the Soil Association. Pesticide and fungicide use is hugely reduced, compared to that of intensive farms; GMOs are banned; farmed animals are reared less intensively and drug use on organic farms is greatly restricted. Unlike conventional farms an annual inspection is required. About 75 per cent of Britain’s organic consumption is imported. Viva! recommends that organic fruit and vegetables are consumed as much as possible.

Oestrogen – female sex hormone obtained from cow ovaries and horse urine (eg HRT). Used in cosmetics, hormone medicines and creams as well as bodybuilding supplements.

Ostrich – see volaïse

Oysters – shellfish which live on sea beds, now increasingly intensively farmed (see pearl below).

P

Parchment – skin of sheep or goat, prepared for writing on.

Pashmina – fibre gathered from Himalayan goats, used to make luxury shawls. Goats are generally combed or sheared for this very fine wool.

Pâté de foie gras – pâté made from goose or duck liver where the bird has been deliberately force-fed (known as gavage) so that the liver grows abnormally large.

Pearl – mother of pearl – formed mainly by oysters (molluscs) and to a lesser degree by mussels and clams. The formation begins when a foreign substance slips between the oyster mantle (the organ which makes the shell) and the shell. It’s like getting a splinter – the oyster covers the irritant with layers of nacre substance which eventually forms a pearl. Used in clothing and jewellery.

Pepsin – enzyme found in gastric juices and sourced from slaughtered farmed animals. Used in cheese making.

Pet foods – animal tissues and parts not used in the human food chain are used in pet foods. Dogs can be fed a completely vegan diet and there are a number of vegan dog foods available. Cats require a special supplement if they are fed a non-meat diet to provide compounds such as taurine. Viva! have campaigned against the use of kangaroo meat in dog treats due to the increased risk of salmonella and E. coli.

Progesterone – sex hormone used in hormone creams, derived from animal tissues.

Propolis – a waxy resinous substance collected by bees from the buds of various conifers and used to repair the cracks and openings in the hive. Used in toiletries and cosmetics.

R

Rennet – enzyme extracted from calves' stomachs after they have been slaughtered, used in cheese-making. Non-animal rennets made from microbial or fungal enzymes are available to make vegetarian cheeses.

Roe – eggs obtained from slaughtered female fish. See also caviar.

Royal jelly – a substance secreted by worker bees and fed to future queen bees, for which extravagant health claims are made. Used as a nutritional food supplement and in cosmetics.

S

Sable – fur from a small mammal, the sable marten. Used in artists' paint brushes and make-up brushes.

Shahtoosh – fabric made from the Tibetan antelope which is killed to obtain the fine under-fleece used to weave shahtoosh shawls. Trade in these antelopes is illegal due to their endangered status.

Shearling – the skin of lambs with wool attached.

Sheepskin – sheep leather used in clothing, and rugs made from slaughtered lambs and sheep.

Shellac (E904) – insect secretion. Used as a candied sweet glaze and also added to hair spray, lip sealer and polishes.

Silk – cloth derived from the fibre produced by certain silkworm moth larvae. Larvae are killed by boiling in order to obtain the silk. Over 6,500 silkworms are killed to make just one kilogram of silk. The eri silkworm, *bombyx mori* and tussah moths are most commonly used to create commercial silk.

Smokies – the meat of exotic (and often endangered) animals, as well as sheep and goats, that have been slaughtered without pre-stunning and had their skins blowtorched. This practice is illegal in the UK but a growing black market exists, supplying West African communities throughout Britain.

Soil Association – considered to be the most stringent of the farm assurance schemes, guaranteeing the products they certify are organic.

Sponge – bathing product made from skeletons of 'primitive' aquatic animals.

Squalene – extracted from shark liver oil. Used in toiletries and cosmetics. Vegan versions (squalane) derived from plants are also available.

Stearic acid (E570) – fat from slaughtered cows, sheep and pigs. Used in medicines, toiletries and cosmetics. Synthetic vegan alternatives are available.

Spermaceti wax – waxy oil derived from the head of sperm whales and also from dolphins. Used in cosmetics and toiletries.

Suede – very soft kid, pig or calf skin, made into luxury clothes and footwear.

Suet – hard fat used in cooking made from the kidneys of cattle and sheep. Vegetable suet is widely available.

Sugar – In the UK, most regular sugar brands are vegan. Watch out for royal icing sugar though, which may contain egg. Some cane sugars in the US are processed (refined) using charcoal (charred animal bones).

Supplements – nutritional food supplements (vitamins, minerals, protein powders etc) can contain either animal or plant-derived substances. Many use animal-derived gelatine capsules.

T

Tallow – hard animal fat, obtained from around the kidneys of slaughtered cattle or slaughtered sheep. Tallow is used in soaps, cosmetics and candles.

Testosterone – male hormone. Sourced from farmed animals and used in bodybuilding supplements.

U

Urea – waste nitrogen formed in the liver. Sourced from farmed animals and used in toiletries and cosmetics.

V

Veal – meat from baby male calves aged eight months or less, fed a low-iron, milk-based diet designed to keep them anaemic so their flesh is pale in colour.

Venison – deer meat. Much venison now comes from farmed deer. Annual slaughter figures of farmed deer are not recorded by the government so the numbers are difficult to measure.

Vellum – fine skin derived from calves, kids or lambs. Used in luxury paper.

Velvet – clothing fabric usually made from silk (see above), but can also be made synthetically.

Volaise – ostrich meat. Ostriches are now farmed in the UK and are subjected to similar cruelties as other farmed animals. They are killed at one year old for meat – their natural lifespan is 70 years.

W

Wax – glossy, hard substance used to make foods look more visually appealing, especially fruit and vegetables. Also used in some cosmetics. Can be animal or plant-derived. Non-animal waxes include carnauba, paraffin, candelilla and polyethylene.

Whey – cows' milk-derived substance left after most of the fat and casein has been removed in the cheese-making process. Used in many processed foods such as margarines, biscuits and crisps, as well as in some cleaning products.

Wine – can be clarified (cleared) using animal products such as isinglass (see above) or eggs. Viva! runs a Vegan Wine Shop available online at vivashop.org.uk. You can also check the suitability of your favourite wine using the free online resource barnivore.com.

Wool – fleecy hair of sheep, goat, antelope, rabbit (and other animals eg alpaca). Used in clothing, blankets, mattresses and carpets.

Viva!
H E A L T H