

## “Be Kind, It’s Easy”

From Billy Thompson, Founder and Project Director at [The Retreat Animal Rescue Sanctuary](#), as posted on [SARX: For All God’s Creatures](#) October 2021

*Billy reflects upon the concept of kindness and his lifelong commitment towards animal advocacy.*

### **Tell us about yourself and why you became concerned with animal issues.**

I’ve always been deeply concerned with the wellbeing all creatures and felt they needed someone to fight their corner; someone who could see their plight. Thankfully I am not alone and throughout my live have encountered a growing number of passionate animal lovers who are keen to take action.

I’m a firm believer in justice and compassion for all and, as someone who has lived with rescue animals my whole live, could not imagine excluding those who need it the most.



### **What inspired you to establish an animal sanctuary?**

The [Retreat](#) was born in 1989 out of frustration at the way we humans treats animals. We can do better, therefore we *should* do better.

I did not originally have any grand plan to found an animal rescue centre. It simply just grew into what it is today with kindness being the foundation. Making room and creating the areas to accommodate the individual needs of each new resident was the driving force behind our work.

Today, our incredibly dedicated volunteers care for over 1,000 animals at any one time. Most of these animals have been victims of abuse, neglect, malnourishment and all manner of mistreatment in and around the meat and dairy industries. I am so proud of my team and the amazing work they do for these animals.

As well as animal rescue work, our site is a hub of social engagement. We give people the opportunity to connect and spend time with the rescue animals and offer education on various animal issues including the benefits of veganism.



**How have people been affected by visiting or serving with the animals at the sanctuary?**

Every day we are open to the public, I see a joyful moment or encounter between our animals and a visitor. I feel we are witnessing a great awakening towards a better world including all creatures. The last five years have been epic. I see people making kind choices starting with what's on their plate, to the shoes on their feet and adoption of rescued companion animals rather than buying from breeders. Every week I meet new vegans and vegetarians and they are getting younger all time! I've met children as young as three becoming vegans. There are a great number of people wanting to get involved in rescuing animals too.

**Do people ever not take kindly to your veganism and animal advocacy?**



There's always going to be resistance to every movement. For example, I have met people who blame vegans for the soya bean farming that is causing the destruction of the rainforest. What they don't realise is that only 6% of rainforest soya is used feed to humans. In fact, the very beef they eat will have been fed on the other 94% of rainforest soya. Yes UK cattle eat rainforest soya!

Most people want to be kind and so it only needs a gentle pointing out how eating animals is the opposite of this. It is incredibly cruel and unnecessary. Most people don't want to think of themselves as unkind and cruel and so it is a matter of showing them there are compassionate choices available which make a massive difference to animals.

**Tell us about your forthcoming book on kindness.**

My first book will be out by September, it's called Earth Boy. It's basically a funny story of my journey with kindness by my side. It covers my life from birth to 2020. Earth boy was a nickname I had in my twenties because of my love for the natural world. It's a book that will make you laugh but the moral of kindness is there on every page. I wanted to inspire people to make positive choices in any situation they found themselves in.



**What advice would you offer to someone who is considering veganism?**

It really comes down to this key concept of kindness. Our slogan is 'Be Kind, It's Easy.' and it is indeed so easy to show kindness on our plate. Nowadays, it's just as easy to pick up that carton of oat milk off the shelf as it is cow's milk and the difference it makes is huge.

I really encourage people to eat well, ensure they have a good balanced diet of fruit and veg and you won't look back! You will never regret it. In fact, so many vegans I know wish they had made the switch earlier. Every step towards veganism is a positive one for your health, the environment and the beautiful animals. Animal agriculture is both terribly cruel and environmentally damaging with its disproportionate use of water, a commodity that's becoming less and less available, enormous carbon footprint, land use, cruel slaughter of billions of animals, negative impact on human health, inefficiency in producing food (compared to the same size area for feeding vegans), pollution of air, waterways and land and impact on wildlife.



*A vegan cooked breakfast available at The Retreat Café*

**In what ways can people of faith actively show kindness to animals?**

The word sanctuary, in its original meaning, is a sacred place, such as a shrine. It was place of peace where humanity encountered the sacred. I feel there is indeed something “sacred” about showing care and kindness to animals. People of faith, for who the expressing of kindness is a particularly important issue, can express love to all creatures by adopting a vegan diet. Through veganism, our plates and kitchens can become sanctuaries, that is to say, places of peace where kindness is shown to all creatures.

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For more information about [The Retreat Animal Rescue Farm Sanctuary & Café](#).