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Too humanlike to increase my appetite: Disposition to anthropomorphize animals relates to decreased meat consumption through empathic concern

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People who exclude meat from their diets are not only devoid of situational pressures to disengage morally and deny humanlike mental states to animals but also they may be dispositionally more inclined to ascribe human-like qualities to non-human animals than omnivores. The aim of this research was to test whether individual differences in anthropomorphism are related to empathic connection with non-human animals and hence decreased meat consumption. In two studies ($N = 588$) we confirmed that decreased meat consumption was associated with both increased recognition of human features of animals and increased empathy to animals. Most importantly, our data support a model in which animals' anthropomorphism predicts empathy. Empathy, in turn, increases the importance that potential animal harm plays in dietary choices regarding meat, leading to reduced meat consumption.

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