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Do animal welfare concerns and degree programmes affect the dietary identity of the undergraduates?

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The dietary identity of an individual may be influenced by a range of factors including his or her animal welfare concerns and academic exposure. The objective of this study was to understand impact of animal welfare concerns and degree programme on the dietary identity of the undergraduates. Two hundred and thirty eight undergraduate students purposively selected from faculty of medicine (M), agriculture (A), veterinary (V), management (MG), art (AR) and engineering (E) and, their dietary identity and attitudes regarding the animal welfare were studied using a pre-tested structured questionnaire. An overwhelming majority of students (98 %) were non vegetarians. However, only a 32% of the respondents accepted fish, egg or any meat. The most popular meat type was chicken. Among the non-vegetarians, many respondents accepted fish (6%) than eggs (0.6%). Among the respondents who refused meat, 70% were females. Though 76% of the undergraduates said that they are familiar with the term animal welfare, the term was less familiar to the undergraduates following management and art degrees. Only 4% of the respondents, mainly MG and AR undergraduates, said that animal welfare conditions are good in Sri Lanka. Sixty one percent of the undergraduates were in opinion that animal welfare conditions in Sri Lanka are bad. Seventy one percent of the respondents knew that better animal welfare standards incur additional cost on farmers and 69% of respondents expressed their willingness to pay extra money for welfare guaranteed animal products. It was concluded that animal welfare concerns and kind of degree programme follows have no impact on the dietary identities of the Sri Lankan undergraduates.