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Frank, Are You Telling the Truth About Your Chickens?

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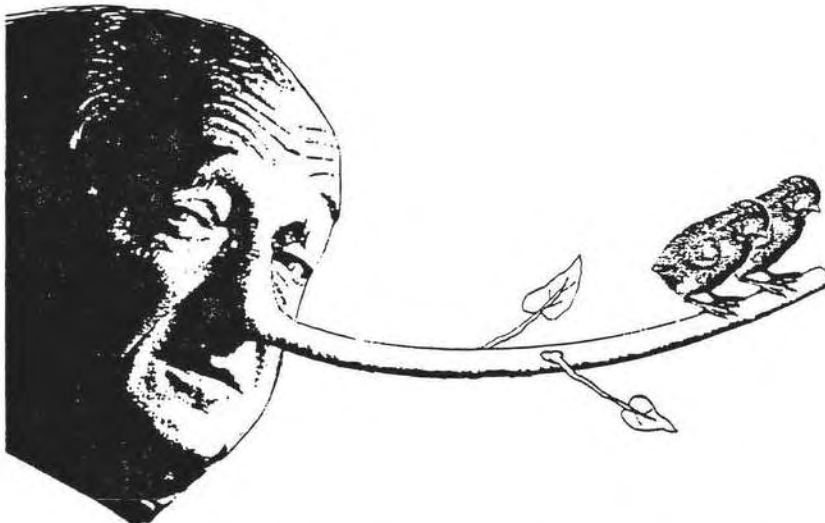
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FRANK, ARE YOU TELLING THE TRUTH ABOUT YOUR CHICKENS?

Is Frank Perdue's advertising just a pile of poultry puffery hiding the brutal realities of an inhumane industry?

For nearly 20 years, Frank Perdue has crowed about the creature comforts of his chickens, painting a picture of pampered pets living in "resorts" which he likes to describe as "chicken heavens." He says in one ad that they "ear better than you do" and in another that "your kids never had it so good!" This farmyard fantasy has clearly helped Mr. Perdue to parlay the misery of millions of chickens into a jumbo nest egg. And many of us have been happy to sit back and pay up to 20 cents more per pound to gobble up this feathery fiction.

In reality, life in Mr. Perdue's chicken "resorts" begins with painful dismemberment and ends with electrocution — with a lifetime of stress crowded in between. Resort life for a "pampered" Perdue chicken begins painfully with dismemberment as the young bird's beak is burned off with a hot knife. Mr. Perdue is not, strictly speaking, a farmer at all. He breeds chicks that are "designed" — genetically speaking — to grow as rapidly as possible on the least amount of food. This technique often produces chickens that are so oversized for their age that they are unable to support their own weight and live out their lives on painfully crippled legs. Mr. Perdue's main business is slaughter and packaging. The actual raising of chickens is left to contract growers to whom the debeaked chicks are trucked when they are a few days old.

After having their beaks burned off with a hot knife, chickens struggle through life — often with less than one square foot of living space per bird.

Contract growers typically crowd 25,000 birds into one long windowless shed (and sometimes as many as 75,000 or more). In these conditions each bird can expect about one square foot or less of living space for its entire life. Obviously as the bird reaches its full size of about four pounds, living conditions and the attendant problems become even more stressful. Attacks on each other, cannibalism disease and sudden death are all by-products of this severe overcrowding and the "farmer" resorts to drugs and debeaking to discourage these man-induced "vices".

Mr. Perdue proudly markets his birds as oven stuffers, but the bird in your oven may have four times the space it had when it was alive!

The unnatural density of today's poultry sheds (and filthy litter which can not be cleaned while so many birds occupy the shed) often results in overheating, suffocating air which, when combined with abnormally warm weather, can lead to death and disease. Technology frequently allows just one person to "take care of" tens of

thousands of chickens and provides little opportunity for real interaction between farmer and bird. On a daily basis he may move through the shed to remove dead chickens, but the sudden intrusion of strangers or even a loud noise can set off mass hysteria which moves in waves from end to end of the barn as the jittery chickens pile up against the walls ten deep with hundreds dead or injured.

Yellow skins or purple prose? Mr. Perdue says his birds are healthier because of their yellow skins — consumer studies say nonsense, and the regulatory groups say foul!

Mr. Perdue copied the yellow skin gimmick from a company in Maine which found it could charge a few more cents per pound after putting skin coloring additive in their chicken feed. He has since been restrained from making any health claims based on yellow skin. A lot of strange things go into Mr. Perdue's chicken feed, including ground up dead chickens. Not surprisingly, Mr. Perdue has chosen to focus on marigold petals

Back at Mr. Perdue's plant, chickens approach the gates of "chicken heaven" pinned upside down as their heads are dragged through an electrified water trough prior to having their throats cut. The farms of yesterday with contented animals in natural surroundings are almost extinct. They have been replaced by corporate factories — cramped indoor facilities — where nature, biological necessity and any reasonable consideration towards animals are spumed in favor of the massive profits that can be realized by treating animals as a commodity. And the high mortality rates associated with intensive confinement are merely considered an "incidental cost" in an insensitive business. Is there anyone who has exploited this inhumane system more profitably than Mr. Perdue with his misleading depiction of "Chicken Heaven"?

Mr. Perdue appears to be equally callous to his workers. And when they tried to organize, he quickly winged his way to the mob for help.

Recent reports on National Public Radio and in the Washington Post depict a work environment at Perdue's Lewiston, NC plant where employees unable to function due to work-related injuries were routinely fired. According to a National Health Service doctor, up to 50 percent of the workers in that factory are afflicted with repetitive motion syndrome, a potentially crippling disorder of the hands or wrists, caused by having to cut up to 75 chickens per minute. A Perdue personnel memo stated that it was normal procedure for

about 60 percent of workers to go to the nurse for pain killers and to have their hands bandaged. Donna Bazemore, a former employee, told NPR that she'd seen women urinating and vomiting on the work line because they were not allowed to leave it to go to the bathroom. None of the Perdue factories is unionized. And in 1986, Frank Perdue told the president's commission on organized crime that he sought help from organized crime figures to keep it that way.

Here's how you can help

Mr. Perdue's chicken literature says that when you're unhappy you should "squawk to Frank". You can write to Mr. Perdue at: PERDUE FARMS INC., P.O. BOX 1537, SALISBURY, MD 21801. Tell Mr. Perdue that you will not buy his chickens until he does the following:

1. Tells the truth

Provides a complete list of his slaughterhouses and contract farms, and allows the media unannounced access to film and report what life is really like for the Perdue chicken. Stops misrepresenting the realities of factory intensive poultry "farming" in his advertising.

2. Gives the birds some quality of life

Guarantees each bird two feet by two feet of living space. Doesn't sound like much to ask, does it?

3. Starts a research program

Investigates more humane methods of raising poultry. Almost all animals including calves, pigs and cattle raised for food suffer on factory farms. Your involvement and opinion can change this inhumane system.

You can run this ad. This ad was produced by the Coalition for Non-Violent Food, a project of Animal Rights International, and is not copyrighted. We invite you or your organization to run it with your name. Contact us if you would like a camera-ready copy of this ad.

Animal Rights Int'l. (ARI)
Henry Spira, Coordinator
Box 214, Planetarium Sta.
New York, NY 10024

Send me more information about what I can do to stop the suffering of factory farm animals.

Here's my tax deductible contribution to ARI to run this and related ads.

Name (please print) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____