FOOD ANIMALS ARE SUFFERING

HSUS Intensifies Campaign to Eliminate Cruelty on ‘Factory Farms’

It’s the subject adults rarely talk about. It’s the topic children quickly learn to stop talking about. It’s how our animal food products get to our kitchen tables. Yet, it is this one use of animals that accounts for untold cruelty and suffering.

Annually, our food delivery system processes more than 4 billion animals through a chain of events fraught with cruelty. As consumers, we first meet the cattle, chickens, pigs, sheep, and dairy products at our local supermarkets. The meat is wrapped in clear plastic. The eggs are attractively displayed. The butter comes in cubes. And the veal is already breaded for our quick consumption. The animals that suffered for our daily meals are anonymous creatures we’ll never meet.

Our food delivery system is one of the most efficient in the world. The large corporate farms that produce most of our animal food products operate in much the same manner as automobile factories. The animals are often treated like machines that satisfy a basic human need.

Many animals are not treated as living creatures. Their comfort and basic needs are frequently ignored. The unspoken thought is—After all, we’re going to eat them!

The factory farm is cruel. It is not the farm of days gone by. Animals are confined in unnatural settings. Few are allowed to engage in normal habits. They are crowded together in stress-producing situations. Cattle are forced to stand in their own wastes. Egg laying chickens are jammed four to a cage that is hardly big enough for one. Chickens have their beaks clipped to prevent them from pecking one another. Pigs have their tails cut off to stop them from chewing on one another. Shade and shelter are for the pig, cattle, and sheep in feed lots almost nonexistent. Many animals are raised indoors and never feel the soil underfoot.

Hollywood may still think the farm is an idyllic place, but HSUS researchers know this is not true. Unfortunately, most Americans have never been inside a factory farm nor ever will be. Once in a while we get behind a cattle truck on the highway. Sometimes our children remark about the cattle and how they’re jammed into the truck. Or, perhaps it’s a truck piled high with chicken cages. The children wonder how the chickens can survive crowded together and stacked like blocks.
Cruelty is an everyday fact of life in many slaughterhouses. Animals awaiting slaughter are often beaten, kicked, prodded with electric shock, and forced into stressful fear-producing situations. This is not because there is a conspiracy of livestock handlers to be cruel; rather it is a product of ignorance.

In order to keep the slaughter lines moving, workers resort to cruelty. When animals balk, frustration sets in for the handler. In the end, the handlers’ frustrations are vented on the frightened animals.

Aware of this subtle cause of needless pain and suffering, The HSUS has commissioned a study by Temple Grandin of Grandin Livestock Handling Systems, Tempe, Arizona, to review current livestock systems and provide HSUS with recommendations. The HSUS will then take these recommendations to the meat industry in the hope that they can be persuaded to make their business more “humane.”

In mid October Temple Grandin addressed a packed house at the annual HSUS conference. Ms. Grandin pointed out many simple adjustments to standard procedures, which if employed by the meat industry, could reduce the amount of suffering on the part of food animals.

For example, Ms. Grandin showed the conference slides of equipment she has designed which prevents needless injury to beef cattle. Vee-shaped doorways which replace ramps and thus eliminate fear and stress; curved loading ramps which tend to keep animals moving and prevent them from crowding and hurting each other; and structural devices which control an animal’s visual field are among many of her special “humane” systems.

“When the animals move easily without balking they are less likely to be abused by impatient handlers,” Ms. Grandin told the audience. “Knowledge of livestock behavior is essential in order to design equipment which will reduce stress,” she said. To prove her point, Ms. Grandin showed the audience that cattle and sheep have a visual field which allows them to see in back of them. “They can detect movement behind themselves without turning their heads,” she said. Temple Grandin went on to show that this visual acuity causes problems when men attempt to move cattle through chutes to the stunning pens prior to slaughter. By building solid sides on the loading chutes, the animal’s visual field is reduced and the animals tend to follow one another automatically without need of prodding by handlers.

The livestock industry has changed little over the years. Perhaps they are ready for some advice from the outside. The handwriting is on the wall. The passage of The Humane Methods of Slaughter Act of 1978 signals a new beginning for those who care about animals. The meat industry should realize this is a signpost to the future. If they fail to incorporate modern humane methods of handling and slaughter, The HSUS shall seek additional remedies. Temple Grandin’s report to The HSUS will be seeking receptive ears in the meat industry soon.

Animal Farm Revisited

Animal Farm Revisited is the title of a major study of factory farming by Dr. Michael Fox, Director of HSUS’s Institute for the Study of Animal Problems. Dr. Fox unveiled this study at the 78 annual conference of The HSUS. He clearly detailed the inhumane practices of the factory farming system. Some of his findings are capitalized with the following photos.

Dr. Fox’s study notes that debeaking chicks is a very questionable practice. The beak is blunted with a hot iron so that the chicks will not peck each other. “With good husbandry (adequate space) and selective breeding for low aggressivity, debeaking has been shown to be unnecessary.

A growing trend in pig farming is to raise pigs entirely indoors under controlled conditions. However, the death loss is higher than on a ground lot during the first weeks of confinement.

In January of 1977, The USDA reported that shipping stress causes millions of dollars in annual loss to the cattle industry. The stresses of transportation, including temperature extremes, long periods without food or water, rough handling during loading and off-loading are deadly.

This sow is trapped. The piglets have a degree of freedom but the mother pig can’t even turn around or get off by herself. Stress and frustration are high for the mother.

Most veal calves are kept immobile and in darkness (except at feeding time) in order to prevent them from “wasting energy.”

This conveyor restraining system greatly reduces injury to the cattle. It is one of the most humane systems currently in use. The steer is about to be stunned.

The wire floors in these cages can cause foot problems and aggravate any lameness or injury.
Congress Passes New Slaughter Law
HSUS Was A Major Force
Behind Passage

Described by HSUS President John A. Hoyt as “one of the most significant pieces of legislation to come before Congress this year,” The Humane Methods of Slaughter Act of 1978 has recently passed both houses of Congress. President Carter signed the bill into law October 10, 1978.

The bill extends the provisions of the 1958 humane slaughter law to many animals not now covered by state or federal law and requires all imported meat to be humanely slaughtered. In addition, the bill ensures the humane handling of livestock prior to slaughter, a feature of enormous significance when viewed in the context of the number of animals that undergo great stress and suffering in the pens and chutes while awaiting slaughter.

Sponsored by Representative George Brown (CA) and Senator Robert Dole (KS), the bill also makes sure that death for food animals is both quick and humane. Under the bill, humane slaughter methods are incorporated into the federal meat inspection system administered by The U.S. Department of Agriculture.

For the first time, meat inspectors will be able to order a halt in a slaughter line when they discover something wrong. The improper use of electric prods, beating animals, and poor use of the stun gun are all items now covered by the new law.

The HSUS was instrumental in passage of the new law. HSUS Board Vice Chairman, Robert Welborn, Vice President for Program Coordination, Patricia Forkan, and Legislative Associate, Margaret Morrison, all testified before congressional committees working on the bill. In addition, Dr. Michael Fox, head of HSUS’s Institute for the Study of Animal Problems presented a statement on the pending bill. The late Frederick “Doc” Thomsen of Humane Information Services of St. Petersburg, Florida, was also a prime advocate of the bill. Unfortunately, the kosher method of slaughter is still exempt from these new requirements, and the cruel practice of hoisting and shackling the animal prior to slaughter will continue.

YOU CAN HELP

Our livestock production systems fail the test for a civilized society. We treat our computers and cars better than we treat our fellow animals. Something must be done. And the HSUS is actively doing it.

Of paramount importance are our attitudes toward the animals we eat. Collectively, we must turn over a new leaf. These food animals are providing us with nutrients that contribute to our well being and growth. We must make our food production systems humane. If we continue to treat food animals as machines, what does the future hold for all animals?

Animals have no power in this world. Yet they are at the core of all existence. To protect and defend them is to help ourselves.

Join with The HSUS as we seek a better world for the animals.

There is not much that you, the consumer, can do to improve the lot of food animals other than the support of HSUS programs. You have no way of knowing where your food comes from, how it was raised, and if it was mistreated. If you believe that food animals deserve better treatment, then you should lend your strength and support to our efforts.

Use the contribution envelope that accompanies this report to assist HSUS efforts on behalf of the animals. Help the Humane Society create a humane society. Do it today!

HSUS Members Adopt ‘Factory Farming’
Resolution at ’78 Conference

WHEREAS, the stresses of livestock transportation are responsible for considerable cruelty to animals and frequent loss of life; and

WHEREAS, there is an increasing trend towards intensive, confinement raising of pigs, poultry, beef and dairy cattle, and veal calves; and

WHEREAS, such systems are contrary to the best traditions of ethical animal husbandry; and

WHEREAS, such systems can be unduly stressful to the animals and rarely satisfy the animals’ basic behavioral, emotional, and social needs; and

WHEREAS, the number of animals potentially involved is close to four billion annually;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that

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