



As a society, we cannot afford our current meat addiction. We Americans have just about the highest per capita consumption (200 pounds a year)—more than the Argentinians or the French, twice the amount for a person in China, and 25 times more than the Indians, most of whom consider cows sacred.

Just in the U.S., it adds up to nearly 9 billion animals slaughtered each year. Behind all this seemingly cheap, palatable protein are hidden costs: cruelty to animals confined on factory farms, pollution from untreated animal waste, greenhouse gas emissions warming the planet, enormous amounts of grain fed to animals instead of people,

and serious public health consequences, not the least of which is the emergence of antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

If we want sustainable agriculture and less animal suffering, we must reduce consumption. Just observing Meatless Monday would save more than a billion animals a year and proportionately soften the impacts associated with intensive animal agriculture.

But even if that goal were achieved, we'd still be raising billions of animals. And that's why it's our duty to pay attention to the methods of raising and slaughtering them.

Just this year, we've secured pledges from McDonald's, Burger King, Safeway, Denny's, Kroger, and other major food retailers to improve the lives of animals in their supply chains—mainly by phasing out the purchase of pork from producers that confine sows in gestation crates. We're also working with the egg industry to set a national standard for the treatment of laying hens, supporting legislation to give them more space by phasing out the use of barren battery cages and to provide consumers more information about the animals' living conditions.

One of our most promising alliances is with the Global Animal Partnership, an independent group with a multi-tiered animal-welfare rating system that certifies farms and ranches raising animals for Whole Foods Market and other retailers. In this issue, you'll meet certified farmers like Andrew Thompson, whose pigs spend their lives on pasture, and David Pitman, who traveled to Europe to learn about pasture-based models for chickens. While virtually all animals used for food will go through the unenviable process of slaughter, the run-up to that moment—in short, the bulk of their lives—need not be filled with privation, misery, and fear.

At The HSUS, we are about protecting all animals. That means we take on all major forms of animal cruelty, including the use of animals in industrialized agriculture. How they are raised, whether in extreme confinement on factory farms where they are treated like machines, or in pasture-based systems with someone who cares about the quality of their lives, matters to these beings. And it should matter to every one of us.

As I travel around the nation, so many people ask how they can help. There's so much each of us can do, starting with our food choices. We control those choices.

If enough individuals act with conscience, we can reshape the market for many sectors of the economy and build the kind of society we want. The goal, in our broadest sweep, is to create a humane economy, where commerce reflects our most deeply held values. Your HSUS can help get us there, but we need your support—in more ways than one.



A STUDY IN CONTRASTS: HSUS investigations have revealed cruel confinement of mother pigs (top; see p. 10). But farms like Becker Lane Organic (bottom) offer an alternative. Learn about a program promoting more compassionate choices in the marketplace (p. 16).

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