

# HALT HOG



# FACTORIES



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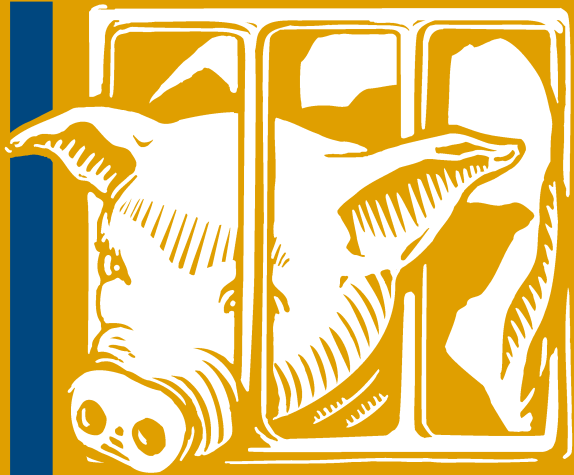
**THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
OF THE UNITED STATES.**

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**FAMILY FARMS,  
RURAL COMMUNITIES,  
HUMAN HEALTH,  
THE ENVIRONMENT,  
AND THE ANIMALS  
ARE ALL IN PERIL  
FROM FACTORY FARMS.**

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OF THE UNITED STATES.**



## HALT HOG FACTORIES

Hog factories transform the raising of farm animals into manufacturing units. Hogs are born and spend their entire lives in large industrial barns holding as many as 2,500 animals. These giant barns produce enormous amounts of waste, which can threaten water and air quality. Animals are fed antibiotics daily to speed up growth and prevent disease, which can contribute to the spread of drug-resistant bacteria. And formerly independent farmers can lose the power to make their own production decisions, becoming contract serfs on their own land. It's time to call a halt to hog factories.

## THE END OF THE INDEPENDENT FAMILY FARM

**I**ndependent family farmers who make their own production decisions, farm sustainably, and have profitable access to marketplaces are likely the best stewards of the land, protectors of animal welfare, and promoters of consumer interests.

In 1950, there were 2.1 million U.S. farms raising hogs. Since 1985, the number of hog farmers has decreased from 389,000 to less than 85,000 while the number of hogs being raised has increased. This consolidation of production has come at the expense of the independent family farmer—80 percent of the 50–100 million hogs raised each year are raised in hog factories. Today, five industrial hog corporations control more than 50 percent of the nation's hog production. The hog factory system now depends on near-monopoly power and direct and indirect public subsidies for its continued existence.

Farmers operating hog factories typically do so under a contract system that removes virtually all decision-making powers from them and transforms hog farmers (now called “contract producers”) into factory workers—or serfs on their own land.

Under the industrial system, hog farmers must borrow money to build their factory barns, often using their farms as collateral. In most states, the farmer signs a contract with an integrated industrial hog corporation that effectively ends his or her independence as a farmer. Under this contract,



THE ISSUES

*Hogs are denied their most basic needs, including room for independent movement, in this factory farm. Family farmers, too, can lose their independence—and even their land—under the industrial farming system.*

the corporation (sometimes called “the integrator”) provides the farmer with the animals, feed, and feed additives, including antibiotics. The farmer provides the factory-style barns, labor, and manure disposal. Yet the corporation unilaterally sets the price paid to the farmer for the hogs. And the farmer’s personal profits become a cost to be minimized under an exploitative industrial agricultural system.

Under some types of contracts (called “ledger contracts”), farmers have actually *lost* ownership of their land under the hog factory system—in effect becoming tenants.

## THE NATURE OF HOGS



*Hogs are extremely intelligent and social animals, actively cooperating with one another and exploring their surroundings. But factory farms deny them access to sunlight, soil, and bedding materials—and even any opportunity for normal companionship.*



**H**ogs are extremely active and inquisitive. When free to pursue their natural behavior, they spend much of their day roaming, smelling, nibbling, and rooting with their snouts.

Few species are more social than hogs. They are gregarious and actively cooperate with one another. Contrary to myth, hogs are very clean animals, and they will designate a spot as far from their sleeping area as possible for waste. Even piglets only a few hours old will leave the nest to relieve themselves.

When ready to give birth, a sow will build a nest for her young, lining it with grass, straw, or other materials. After birth, the piglets live with their mother in a close family group.

All animals are adapted to live as part of the natural environment. When removed from this setting, they cannot express their natural instincts and behaviors. And they suffer as a result. This happens when hogs are confined in hog factories.

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) is committed to ending the suffering of the millions of hogs raised in animal factories—*while* striving to support the independence and profitability of humanely operated, sustainable family farms—and to educate consumers about conscientious food choices.

## THE LIFE OF A SOW AND HER PIGLETS

**P**erhaps the most inhumane treatment of hogs in animal factories is of females, called sows, after they conceive. Breeding sows spend their pregnancies and most of their lives confined in “gestation crates” two feet wide and seven feet long—barely larger than their bodies. In these barren conditions, sows frequently develop neurotic behavior, like obsessively gnawing on the bars of the crates.

Other nations, like Sweden and the United Kingdom, have recognized the barbarity of gestation crates and outlawed



*After their mothers are confined in “gestation crates”—restrictively narrow cages—during pregnancy, piglets in factory farms are born in metal-and-concrete “farrowing crates” and then forcibly weaned months earlier than they normally would be, only to be packed into barren, crowded cages.*

them. The European Union and other countries will be phasing out gestation crates over the next 12 years, and a similar law has recently been passed in Florida.

Before her litter is born, the sow is moved to a “farrowing crate” with a concrete-slatted floor. Then the hog industry minimizes the turnaround time between pregnancies—to increase profits—by forcibly weaning piglets when they are as young as two weeks of age. Weaning occurs naturally when piglets are three *months* old.

Once separated from their mothers, the piglets are crowded into barren pens or cages, sometimes stacked two levels high. Stress from overcrowding and the unnatural environment can make the piglets behave abnormally, inducing tail biting and aggression from which victims cannot escape. Rather than reducing profits by increasing the space allowed each piglet, their tails are simply cut off—*without* anesthesia.

When the piglets weigh about 55 pounds, they are shipped to a “finishing” facility where they are confined in industrial barns for four months until they reach a slaughter weight of about 250 pounds. Thousands of these hogs live crowded together, 100 to a metal pen, never seeing open sky or feeling soil.

## EFFECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

**O**n traditional hog farms, animals are integrated into the farming system at every level. Animal manure is composted and used to fertilize fields without nutrient runoff. Hog raising facilities are small in scale and dispersed throughout the countryside.

A single hog produces 1.9 tons of manure a year. A typical 5,000-animal factory produces 9,500 tons of manure a year—about 26 tons a day. This is as much waste as a small town produces. A town, however, would have a sewage treatment plant. A hog factory stores this massive amount of waste in open “lagoons” or concrete cisterns under the factory barn itself.

Manure spills and runoffs occur when lagoons leak or when excess liquefied manure is applied to fields. A lagoon rupture can spill hundreds of thousands of gallons



*The stressful conditions hogs endure in factory farms make them neurotic and abnormally aggressive and susceptible to disease. Tail-docking and routine, massive doses of antibiotics in their feed are the industrial system's solutions.*

of liquefied manure onto the land and into waterways or groundwater supplies. The cumulative impact of many smaller spills can be equally harmful. In Missouri, one of the country's largest hog farms was responsible for 25 animal waste spills and discharges in 1999. More than 224,000 gallons of manure and wastewater were discharged during these spills.

When manure runs off of the land or leaks into waterways, fish can be poisoned. Local well water can become contaminated. Massive swarms of flies can be produced. And odors from lagoons can make being outside unbearable for miles around a hog factory.

Iowa, which produces 15 million hogs a year (more than any other state), constitutes only 5 percent of the



*Communities near hog factories must often absorb the costs—both obvious and hidden—of environmental cleanup efforts, public health problems, and lower quality of life.*

## HUMAN HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY CONCERNS

People are becoming increasingly concerned about the effect of food on their health. They want to know what is in the foods they consume and how these foods are produced.

Antibiotics are routinely fed to animals in hog factories to promote faster growth and prevent epidemic levels of disease. Many of these same antibiotics are also used to protect human health. The use of antibiotics in animal factories is contributing to the spread of drug resistance in bacteria including *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter*, which cause food-borne illness in humans.

Children, the elderly, and people with suppressed immune systems are most at risk from illnesses made untreatable by drug-resistant bacteria. Furthermore, meat is sometimes contaminated with feces, and rather than solving the problem of meat contamination, the industry proposes to simply irradiate the contaminants right along with the meat.

Agricultural workers and rural residents are also at risk. Waste from hog factories produces hydrogen sulfide, ammonia, carbon dioxide, organic dust, endotoxins, and methane. A survey done by the University of Iowa found that more than 60 percent of large animal veterinarians who service hog factories have developed associated respiratory diseases.

Additional studies have linked exposure to hog factory odors to headaches, runny noses, sore throats, excessive coughing, and diarrhea. Mental health can also be affected with increased tension, depression, anger, and fatigue. Manure spills from lagoons holding millions of gallons of liquefied waste can contaminate drinking water sources with nitrates and pathogenic bacteria. These are the human health consequences of living near a hog factory. Imagine what is happening to the animals *inside* the industrial barns.

*The horrible conditions of factory farms do not stop at the industrial barns' walls. Hog factories endanger the environment, human health and safety, and the very future of independent farming and rural communities. But there is another way.*



THE IRISUS

*Large, crowded factory farms produce enormous amounts of animal waste—all concentrated on one site, rather than dispersed throughout the countryside. Environmental degradation is the inevitable result.*

Mississippi River's watershed but contributes 25 percent of the nutrient pollution in the river. The Mississippi's nutrient pollution has created a 7,000 square mile (and growing) dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico.

A new study by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has found estrogen from animal factories in the tissue of fish in the Chesapeake Bay. Estrogen (even in extremely tiny amounts) acts as a hormone disruptor in the marine environment, affecting the ability of fish and other organisms to reproduce.

If factory farms followed environmental laws, the increased cost of production would make hogs raised on family farms much more competitive in the marketplace. Hog factories are an environmental—and economic—disaster.



THE IRISUS

## HUMANE AND SUSTAINABLE ALTERNATIVES

A secure, safe food supply depends on working *with* nature—not against it. Humane, sustainable, economically viable alternatives for raising hogs exist.

Our food is grown and farm animals are raised in a complex web of life that includes domesticated plants and animals, wild plants and animals—including soil microbes—and ourselves. This ecology of food is a natural system.



*Hogs can be raised profitably in a way that is sensitive to the needs of the animals, the integrity of the environment, the interests of consumers, and the future of farmers and rural communities.*

The current industrial system in agriculture is ultimately unsustainable and doomed to failure—with severe consequences for future generations. Instead of fighting nature, we must work *within* it.

Hogs can be raised with access to pasture and the freedom to be hogs. Sows can have their litters in deeply bedded straw. And hogs can be raised profitably without being fed antibiotics to promote growth.

Increasingly, consumers want to know where their food comes from and how it is raised. With this new consumer awareness, sustainable animal production is a rapidly growing market.

Poet, philosopher, and Kentucky farmer Wendell Berry wrote, “If we view a farm as an organism, we see that it is impossible to sacrifice the health of the soil to improve the health of plants. Or to sacrifice the health of plants to improve the health of animals. Or to sacrifice the health of animals to improve the health of people.” In other words, when we respect the nature of animals, we respect nature itself.



## WHAT YOU CAN DO

Hog factories are the result of corporate manipulation of the meat industry. Industrial agriculture is not necessary to feed the world. In fact, the opposite is true. Animal factories, because they violate nature, are ultimately unsustainable. But you can take steps right now to halt hog factories.

- ▶ Ask your grocer about the sources of the food products you purchase.
- ▶ Refuse to purchase products produced in animal factories.
- ▶ Shop at local food cooperatives and farmers’ markets or join a community supported agriculture (CSA) program. They are more likely to carry more humanely raised and sustainably produced products.
- ▶ Ask your local supermarkets and restaurants to carry humanely raised, sustainably produced local food products.
- ▶ Develop and support efforts to have humanely raised and sustainably produced local foods served in local schools and office cafeterias.
- ▶ Oppose all animal factories—hog, poultry, and dairy—in your state and community. Support local food systems instead.
- ▶ Contact your state and federal legislators to tell them about how factory farms are detrimental to the quality of life of humans, pigs, and the environment.
- ▶ Contact The HSUS. Visit our website at [www.halthogfactories.org](http://www.halthogfactories.org).