

The so-called “Coalition for Humane and Ethical Farming Standards” wants to keep force feeding ducks even though they’ve had 7 years and 4 months to find an alternative way to produce foie gras.

Here’s how their proposed “charter” standards stack up against the reality of foie gras production...

“California Charter for Hand Feeding of Ducks and Geese”	Reality
Audits: Each farm must follow a set of specific humane protocols including every point addressed in this charter, and submit to regular inspections by independent certified animal welfare experts to ensure compliance.	These protocols seek to codify the current practice of sickening ducks’ livers by expanding them to ten or more times their normal size which causes severe pain, illness, and suffering and is not humane. <i>No existing farm animal care auditing or certification program approves of force feeding.</i>
Hand feeding: Farmers must use industry optimum equipment to feed the ducks using methods that do not cause harm to the esophagus or beak. Periodic exams must confirm the safety of the procedures.	Ducks have bills, not beaks, and all this means is that workers will use their hands to force a pipe down birds’ throats to force-feed them. This would codify current force-feeding practices which can cause damage to the esophagus and more importantly, purposefully inflicts a state of illness in the bird’s liver. The National Advertising Division of the Better Business Bureau considered similar claims about foie gras ducks being “hand raised” and ruled that this and other humane treatment claims made by D’Artagnan, the largest US distributor of foie gras, were deceptive and misleading.
Animal Health Care Professional: Farms will schedule regular visits by an Animal Health Care Professional to assess the general health and living conditions of the birds. This is to be incorporated as a protocol, and frequency is to be determined by USDA inspection results.	Factory farms already have so-called “professionals” who try to keep animal health such that most of the animals remain alive until they are slaughtered. This does nothing to stop the force-feeding of birds or inhumane treatment.
USDA inspection: Each bird must be inspected for good health by a USDA approved officer at the time of slaughter.	USDA inspectors are already at poultry slaughter plants—this changes nothing. USDA has refused to halt the slaughter of severely ill birds for foie gras, and does not inspect for humane treatment either on farm or at slaughter. On US foie gras farms, ducks are force fed three pounds of mash a day through a pipe shoved down their throats – the equivalent of force-feeding 45 pounds of food to an adult human – inducing liver disease known as hepatic lipidosis that often cripples and poisons the birds. This is not “good health.”
Caretakers: Must be properly trained and adequately supervised. They must be gentle and calm in their gestures and movement.	Foie gras factory farms claim they already “train” their workers, but the problem is that they’re trained to force-feed the birds and induce a state of illness in their livers. Whistle-blowing exposés of foie gras production facilities in the US have documented violent and rough treatment of birds

	who resist the efforts to forcibly feed them.
Mobility: Birds are to be raised in an environment to help build and maintain strength in their legs and overall good health.	Countless videos of foie gras production show animals too ill to move. Ducks at foie gras farms have been observed panting and struggling to stand, using their wings to push themselves forward when their crippled legs can no longer support them. Struggling to move causes infection-prone open pressure sores to develop and fester on their hocks (legs) and keels (chest area). This is all caused by the massive overfeeding induced by force-feeding practices.
Optimization: Birds are to be hand-fed in a manner that is adapted to their age and size. Each bird will be checked prior to feeding to evaluate its capacity so that the amount of feed may be optimized as opposed to maximized.	“Hand-fed” is an Orwellian term used to sugar-coat the fact that workers are using their hands to shove a pipe hooked up to a pneumatic feeding machine down the birds’ throats. It is impossible to accurately tell how much feed is already in the bird’s crop, and birds are force fed the same amount of feed each time.
Living conditions: Birds will be kept in comfortable conditions to minimize stress and maximize comfort at each stage. Appropriate lighting will be provided. Birds will have continual access to clean water. All barns will be kept at suitable temperatures consistent with each area’s specific weather conditions.	The whole purpose of force-feeding—to induce a state of illness in the bird—inherently causes severe discomfort. No matter the lighting, drinking water quality, or temperature – the “discomfort” of force-feeding and disease is patently cruel, inhumane and unhealthy.
Cage free: Beginning January 1, 2017, birds may not be housed or fed at any time in cages that restrict the bird’s ability to turn around freely, lie down, stand up, and fully extend their wings.	No foie gras producers in the US cage their birds anyway. This simply describes the status quo, and is a false and misleading claim.
Predators and pests: Appropriate measures must be implemented to keep predators, rodents, and pests away from birds, and should include regular visits by professional pest control services.	Factory farms already claim to have rodent control measures. However, there is ample evidence that force-fed birds are too ill to move and fend off attacks from rats and other rodents. During whistle-blowing exposés at US foie gras facilities, overweight ducks were documented to be too weak to defend themselves against rats and in one case rats were seen eating ducks alive. The debilitating and intentionally induced illness is the problem and no pest control service can fix that.

SB 1520 (Burton, 2004) was signed by Governor Schwarzenegger at the urging of California’s only foie gras producer, who wrote, "I have the moral stature to accept that if within the seven-and-a-half years established by S.B. 1520, science and government don't arrive to the conclusion that the methods used in our foie gras production are acceptable ... I will be ready to quit."

