



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
P.O. Box 41100 • Olympia, Washington 98504-1100

September 8, 2008

Inga Gibson, State Director
West Coast Regional Office
The Humane Society of the United States
Walla Walla, Washington 99362

Dear Ms. Gibson:

Thank you for your letter of interest dated August 8, 2008, requesting an investigation of the pheasant-rearing program administered by Correctional Industries at Washington State Penitentiary (WSP) and Coyote Ridge Correctional Center (CRCC). An investigation was conducted by Lyle Morse, Director of Correctional Industries, and included a site visit to each facility on August 28, 2008. Your letter specifically requested the investigation to report on overcrowding, heat exposure and improper care. The enclosed letter from Program Manager Don Weaver addresses these concerns. Also included are photos of the site visit showing the flight pens in question.

A point which must be stressed is that the Pheasant Program at CRCC and WSP is a voluntary program. No offender is ever forced to participate in the program let alone one in which they may have difficulty with its basic requirements and realities. Cruelty to animals is never tolerated; rather attention to proper care is taught and demonstrated. This is the first time for many offenders to be depended upon for such life-giving support.

We share a common interest in the successful re-entry of offenders into society. Correctional Industries has been shown to be an evidence-based program which reduces recidivism. Inhumane treatment of animals would not support our goal of a successful re-entry. Thank you for your concern and for the opportunity to respond. Should you wish to visit the pheasant farms at any time, please call Don Weaver at 509-727-2213 for a personal tour.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. Vail", written over a horizontal line.

Eldon Vail
Secretary

"Working Together for SAFE Communities"

August 25, 2008

Mr. Lyle Morse
Correctional Industries Director

Dear Mr. Morse:

This letter is in response to accusations of inhumane treatment of pheasants at our Correctional Industries Pheasant Program at the Washington State Penitentiary and Coyote Ridge Correctional Facility. I will address each of the concerns.

I'll first address the accusations regarding overcrowding. The pheasant flight pens are 100' x 600' long (60,000 square feet). The pens are designed so the birds get up and fly inside the pens. We designed our operation according to industry standards based on a book endorsed by Fish and Wildlife. The book is called, *Game Bird Propagation*. This book recommends that pheasants between 6 to 12 weeks old be given 4 square feet per bird. According to *Game Bird Propagation* standards we could house 15,000 pheasants per flight pen -- our largest pen has 2,700 pheasants. Our birds are not overcrowded. Flight pens have excellent forage which provides shade and protection from the heat. As of August 25, the average daily high temperature for Walla Walla was 86°F (weather data courtesy of Washington State University, Public Access Weather System at <http://weather.wsu.edu>). Days of temperatures above 100°F were August 15 – 17. The days that the 900 birds were collected were on the 15th through the 19th.

The only exception to the above is when we are processing. In order to handle them individually, the pheasants must be held in smaller pens until worked (health checked, de-beaked, specked, and prepared for release). As the birds are held before being processed we instruct our offender employees to mist the birds with water sprayed from a standard garden hose to help minimize the stress from heat. All of the supervisors know this is the procedure during processing.

We hatch around 80,000 pheasants per growing season. Of that, 71% to 77% reach maturity over a 28 to 30 week time period.

All of the following procedures are designed to improve the mortality rate of the bird population in confinement. De-beaking does not impair their ability to survive in the wild. Their beaks will grow back before they are released. Blinders are installed to reduce pecking of animals during confinement. Blinders are installed at 8 to 10 weeks and removed at 20 to 24 weeks of age at their time of release. These are exactly the same procedures being used by Fish and Wildlife. We de-beak and apply blinders to our birds just as the Department of Fish and Wildlife do at their game farm.

We feed the birds different rations based on the recommended nutrition based on the birds' age. We also provide natural forage in the flight pens and supplemental forage so the birds can learn survivability skills.

Correctional Industries is a voluntary program. The purpose is to improve the offender's chance of public re-entry. The Pheasant Program provides an excellent opportunity for inmates to secure a contemporary work experience in animal husbandry, compassion for animals, and good work habits. Our program is committed to enacting all the best known methods and practices to produce a successful program.

If you have any further questions, or concerns, I encourage you visit either of our facilities. You can reach me at (509)727-2213 so we can complete the paperwork needed to schedule a tour.

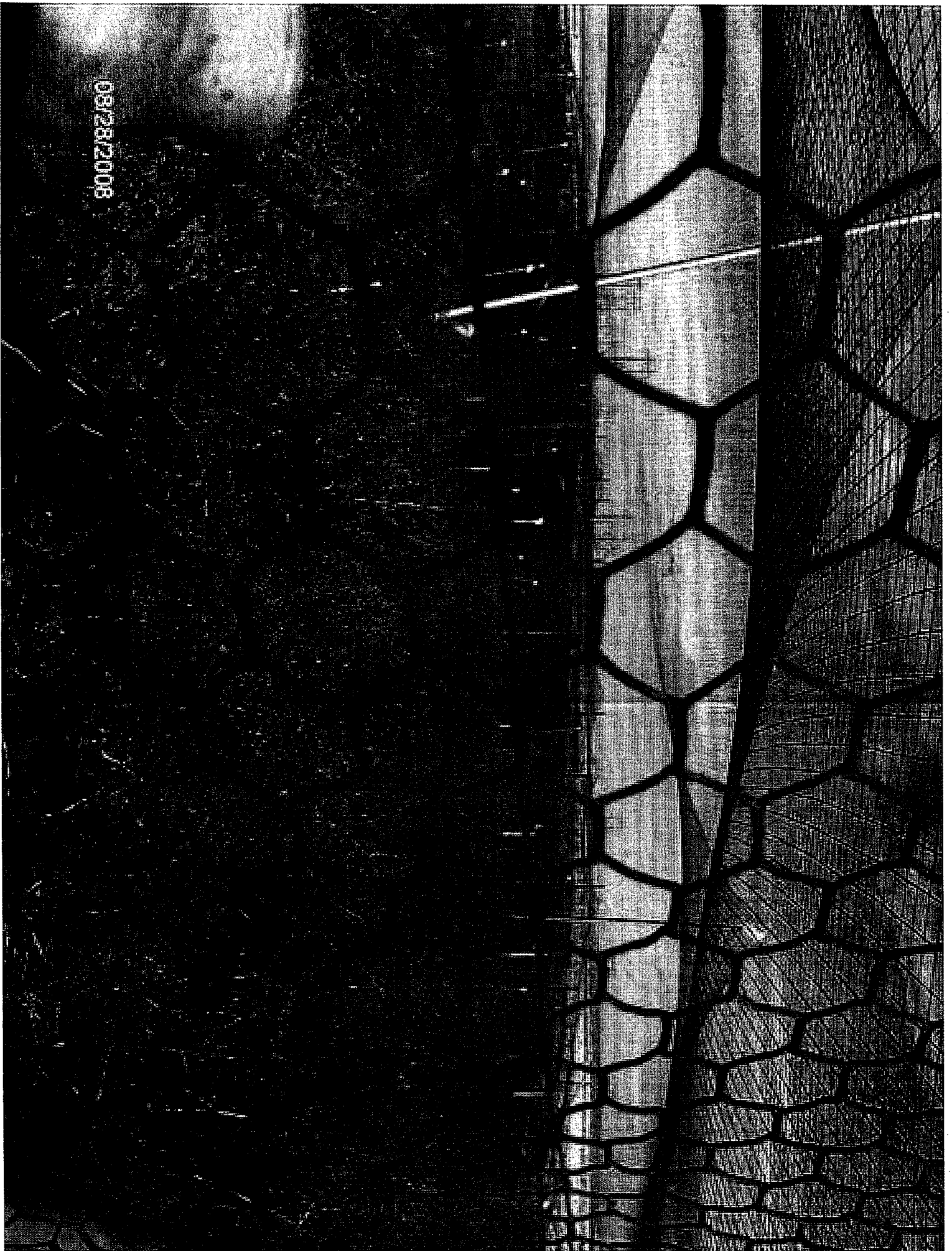
Sincerely,

/s/

Don Weaver
Agricultural Services
Correctional Industries, Walla Walla

Game Bird Propagation, Sixth Edition, John Mullin

08/28/2008



08/28/2008

