

# Fact Sheet

## New York Pheasant Stocking

New York stocks close to 100,000 farm-reared, exotic pheasants each year for a shooting season that has no place in modern wildlife management. These grassland birds are native to China and history has shown that pheasants cannot survive in New York's woodland habitat. Instead of accepting the failure of forcing an exotic species to naturalize, wildlife managers favor the interests of a handful of hunters wishing to kill exotic animals over programs protecting native wildlife.

### Rearing

To provide shooters pheasants to kill, the Department of Environmental Conservation releases or distributes at least 25,000 adult pheasants, 15,000 young pheasants and 60,000 day-old chicks. All of these animals start out life at the state-owned and operated Richard E. Reynolds game farm.

At this facility, the pheasant chicks progress through an inhumane rearing process composed of incubators, boxes and pens. Artificial light, feed and temperature must be tightly controlled to prevent massive bird die-offs.

The animals have "blindners" placed through their nose holes to keep the stressed birds from pecking at each other. The DEC produces a bird rearing guide for private hunting organizations participating in its day-old chick program and even suggests that in some instances debeaking, or cutting the birds beaks off, is useful in stopping pecking.

### Survival

Because they are pen-raised, stocked pheasants often lack the skills necessary to fend for themselves. Studies consistently show that the pheasants who survive the initial shooting gauntlet usually succumb to harsh weather, starvation or predators.

The DEC admits in its ten-year pheasant management plan that "adult pheasant stocking is strictly for hunting recreation and is not intended to increase wild pheasant populations."<sup>1</sup>

Hunting ethics demand that animals be given a reasonable chance to escape the gun. Yet to keep the birds from dying before shooters have a chance to kill them, New York releases pheasants just prior to the start of the hunt and continues stocking throughout the season. The agency also provides hunters with the exact location and time of bird releases, leading shooters to sometimes wait in parking lots for the arrival of trucks bearing pheasants.

However, there is no humane option when considering the timing of releasing pen-raised animals. The exception to the hunting season release is the state's young pheasant program that allows participating clubs to release the pen-reared birds weeks or months prior to hunting season. Because of the admitted economic waste of such a program, New York is one of the only states to release birds for summer recreational stocking. Summer stocking studies show that as many as 75 percent of the birds are dead from starvation or predation just four weeks after release.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> New York Department of Environmental Conservation. *Summary: A ten-year management plan for ring-necked pheasants in New York*. 1999. Available: [www.dec.ny.gov/docs/wildlife\\_pdf/pheasum.pdf](http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/wildlife_pdf/pheasum.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Rodgers, R. 1991. The stocking controversy. *Kansas Wildlife and Parks*, May/June.



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