

Farm Animal Protection

Introduction

Nearly all animals raised for food in the U.S. are locked inside factory farms. These are industrial operations that typically treat animals more like production units on an assembly line than the living, feeling individuals who they are.

For example, [the pork industry confines the vast majority of breeding pigs](#), day and night, in cramped, two-foot-wide cages barely larger than their own bodies. These social, intelligent animals are kept in this state of immobilization for nearly their entire lives prior to slaughter—it's hard to imagine a more miserable existence. This epitomizes factory farming, though is sadly only one example of it, and causes an enormous amount of animal suffering.

Many farm animals endure not only the deprivation of living in a cramped, barren environment, but they've been selectively bred for such fast growth rates that they're virtually guaranteed to suffer. Most chickens raised for meat are forced to grow so large, so quickly that they suffer heart attacks, lung failure and their legs can even buckle underneath the weight of their upper bodies. Turkeys are largely unable to even naturally mate anymore due to selective breeding for massive breast meat, and so must be artificially inseminated. In effect, many victims of factory farming have been bred to suffer.

Factory farms also often subject animals to excruciating procedures with no pain relief whatsoever. Many dairy cows and nearly all pigs, for example, have their tails cut off with no effort made to minimize pain and distress.

Frequently Asked Questions

Aren't there laws that regulate factory farm abuses?

Thanks to The HSUS and other animal protection organizations, nine states now prohibit once-standard abuses, like confining pigs in gestation crates, chopping off cows' tails, cramming calves into veal crates, and more.

Farm animals' legal status is still grim though. There are no federal laws that protect animals on factory farms from abuse. Once at the slaughterhouse, on their last day of life, a small percentage of animals (roughly two percent) have some protection under the federal Humane Methods of Livestock Slaughter Act, which The HSUS helped pass in 1958.

But the vast majority of animals, for the vast majority of their lives, aren't afforded legal protections. That's why it's so important that consumers and corporations continue taking a stand against factory farming's many abuses, and why it's so important that the public let their legislators know they favor laws to protect farm animals.

As a consumer, what can I do to help stop this abuse?

The HSUS promotes eating with conscience and embracing "The Three Rs"—reducing the consumption of meat and other animal-based foods; refining the diet by [avoiding products from the worst production systems](#) (e.g., switching to cage-free eggs); and replacing meat and other animal-based foods in the diet with plant-based foods.

Explore our [Guide to Meat-Free Meals](#) and get recipes, cooking tips, and news of interest to people who are voting with their forks to support humane treatment of farm animals.

What's The HSUS' position on animal agriculture, in general?

The HSUS is a big tent organization that welcomes vegetarians and meat-eaters alike. In fact, the majority of our members are not vegetarians. We know that most people eat meat and we support efforts by individuals, corporations, voters and lawmakers to help reduce the suffering of the animals who produce it. At the same time, even those people who choose to eat meat do not want to see animals treated inhumanely, and many standard industry practices today are clearly out of step with the sentiments of most Americans. This is why HSUS focuses the bulk of our farm animal resources on improving conditions for the billions of animals caught up in our agricultural system each year.

We support a variety of reasonable efforts to help reduce animal suffering. If consumers want to avoid eating meat, we'll provide them with the information they need to find other foods. If they want to reduce the amount of meat they

eat, we'll give them recipes and other useful information. And if they want to avoid products that cause the most animal suffering (e.g., switching from battery cage eggs to cage-free eggs), we applaud that too, and give them the info they need on where they can find those products. This is the range of motion for the bulk of the American public, and we are comfortable working in all of these ways.

Additional Information

- [HSUS Farm Animal Protection Facebook page](#)
- [“Meatless Monday” video](#)
- [Background information on gestation crates in the pork industry](#)
- [Background information on cages in the egg industry](#)
- [Timeline of major achievements for farm animal welfare](#)
- [Our favorite recipes](#)

Materials for Tabling

- Three Steps to Eating More Humanely pamphlet
- [Guide to Meat-Free Meals](#)