



ANIMAL WELFARE

VALUE SPOTLIGHT

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Source from producers that provide healthy and humane conditions for farm animals.

In the United States, more than 99 percent of the animals raised for meat, dairy, and eggs¹ are raised in confined, intensive, and controlled operations known as factory farms.² On such farms, large numbers of animals are often kept under constant stress in densely-crowded conditions, subjected to physical alterations like teeth-clipping and tail-docking without anesthetic or analgesic, and given steady doses of antibiotics to compensate for unsanitary conditions.³

In 2015 alone approximately 9.2 billion farm animals were slaughtered in the United States.⁴ While polls show 94 percent of Americans agree that these animals deserve to live free from abuse and cruelty, federal and state laws do little to protect farm animals and only a fraction of food labels give consumers meaningful information about animal welfare standards.⁵

There is little or no regulation of the treatment of farm animals in the United States. Aside from those covering USDA Organic animals, federal regulations only cover transport and slaughter, and even then, these laws do not apply to birds, which in 2016 made up over 98 percent of land animals raised and slaughtered.⁶

The main land animals raised for food are cattle, chickens, pigs, and turkeys. Most suffer not only from intensive rearing practices, but also from their genetics. Designed for maximum production, they suffer from freakish abnormalities: “meat” chickens, for example, can grow so large and quickly that their skeletons and organs give out, inducing heart failure and broken bones.⁷ Scientists have called these birds “extreme organisms”⁸ and compared them to 660-pound infants.⁹ Such genetic weaknesses compromise animals’ immune systems, increasing the danger and welfare implications of removing antibiotics from their diets without improving these and other underlying factors stressing their systems.

OVERVIEW, CONT.

Intensive animal rearing also exposes workers and adjacent communities to respiratory diseases from exposure to pollutants¹⁰ and contributes greatly to global climate change.¹¹ Thus, the humane treatment of animals has many potential benefits for animals as well as workers, nearby communities, and the environment.

Market demand for farm animal welfare is high. Products with meaningful third-party animal welfare certifications like Certified Humane and Global Animal Partnership are sold in all 50 states, including through major supermarket chains.¹² By further increasing demand for humanely-raised animal products, institutions that adopt the Good Food Purchasing Program can help animals live better lives and expand opportunities for farmers and ranchers who use better welfare practices.



The Center for Good Food Purchasing's Good Food Purchasing Program provides a metric-based, flexible framework that encourages large institutions to direct their buying power toward five core values: (1) local economies, (2) environmental sustainability, (3) valued workforce, (4) animal welfare, and (5) nutrition. Through the Program, the Center works with institutions to establish supply chain transparency from farm to fork, evaluate how current purchasing practices align with the Good Food Purchasing Standards, set goals, measure progress, and celebrate successes in using institutional purchasing power to improve the food system.

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- 1 This does not include the many other animals, including fish and other marine species, that are used for food products. Concerns around animal welfare exist in those industries as well.
- 2 Calculation based on US Department of Agriculture, 2012 *Census of Agriculture*, 2014, Source: Farm Forward, <https://farmforward.com/ending-factory-farming/> (accessed Nov. 6, 2017).
- 3 ASPCA, "Factory Farms," <https://www.aspc.org/animal-cruelty/farm-animal-welfare> (accessed Nov. 8, 2017).
- 4 US Department of Agriculture, "Livestock Slaughter," December 23, 2015, <http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/usda/nass/LiveSlau/2010s/2015/LiveSlau-12-23-2015.pdf> (accessed Nov. 8, 2017).
- 5 ASPCA, "Factory Farms," *op. cit.*
- 6 USDA, "Poultry Slaughter 2016 Summary," February 2017, <http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/usda/current/PoulSlauSu/PoulSlauSu-02-24-2017.pdf>; and USDA, "Livestock Slaughter 2016 Summary," April 2017, <http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/usda/nass/LiveSlauSu/2010s/2017/LiveSlauSu-04-19-2017.pdf>
- 7 ASPCA, "A Growing Problem: Selective Breeding in the Chicken Industry, A Case for Slower Growth," 2015, https://www.aspc.org/sites/default/files/chix_white_paper_nov2015_jores.pdf
- 8 Heather Paxton et al. "The effects of selective breeding on the architectural properties of the pelvic limb in broiler chickens: a comparative study across modern and ancestral populations," *Journal of Anatomy* 217(2); 153-166, 2014.
- 9 Robert F. Wideman and Rhonda D. Prisby, "Bone Circulatory Disturbances in the Development of Spontaneous Bacterial Chondronecrosis with Osteomyelitis: A Translational Model for the Pathogenesis of Femoral Head Necrosis," *Frontiers in Endocrinology* 3: 183, 2012.
- 10 FM Mitloehner and MS Calvo, "Health and Safety in Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations," *Journal of Agricultural Safety and Health* 14(2):163-87, 2008; and Carrie Hribar and Mark Schultz, "Understanding Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations and Their Impact on Communities," National Association of Local Boards of Health, 2010, https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/docs/understanding_cafos_nalboh.pdf
- 11 See: Good Food Purchasing Program Value Spotlights on Valued Workforce and Environmental Sustainability.
- 12 Safeway, "Safeway Surpasses Goal in Cage-Free Egg Animal Welfare Effort," December 18, 2012 (press release), <http://investor.safeway.com/phoenix.zhtml?c=64607&p=irol-newsArticle&ID=1768301>