

Factory Farming for Food and Profit

by Mary Zepernick

Humanity's true moral test, its fundamental test, consists of its attitude towards those who are at its mercy: animals. And in this respect humankind has suffered a fundamental debacle, a debacle so fundamental that all others stem from it. - Milan Kundera

As some humans use and abuse one another, so do we visit such behavior on other creatures who share the planet. However, unlike our forebears, we have a wider range of possibilities for healthy and humane food consumption.

Rolling Stone magazine, among others, lifted the veil on a litany of animal abuses at factory farms, carried out by Big Ag. Annually, there are an estimated 9 billion broiler chickens, 113 million pigs, 33 million cows, and 50 million turkeys consumed in the United States.

You're a typical milk cow in America, and this is your life. You are raised on a concrete slab in a stall barely bigger than your body. You never touch grass or see the sun until you're herded to the slaughter. You're sick to the point of total collapse from giving nearly 22,000 pounds of milk a year (That's more than double what your forebears produced just 40 years ago). By the time they've used you up (typically at four years of age), your bones are so brittle they often snap beneath you and leave you unable to get off the ground on your own power.

New York Times food editor Mark Bittman came up with the term "Ag-Gag" bills that aim to prohibit undercover photos and videos used by the animal protection movement to expose animal cruelty. Paul Shapiro, senior director of farm animal protection for the Humane Society, says: "These draconian bills to silence whistleblowers show just how far the animal agribusiness is willing to go and just how much the industry has to hide."

While some members of the public demand animal welfare reforms, do we humans have a right to kill non-human animals for our purposes?

Overuse of antibiotics in animals is causing more strains of drug-resistant bacteria, which is affecting the treatment of various life-threatening diseases in humans. The Institute of Medicine at the National Academy of Sciences has estimated the annual cost of treating antibiotic resistance to infections in the U.S. is \$30 billion.

Fifty million pounds of antibiotics are produced in the U.S. each year. Twenty million pounds are given to animals, of which 80 percent is used on livestock merely to promote more rapid growth. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has reported that low-level doses of antibiotics kill off some of the weaker bacteria, but other strains survive and mutate to become more resistant to antibiotic treatment and more likely to cause serious disease. Every year at

least 23,000 Americans die from antibiotics-resistant infections.

Unfortunately, the Food and Drug Administration has repeatedly failed to limit the industry use of antibiotics. The FDA has said it can't even tell how much of the industrial use of antibiotics is for disease prevention and how much is simply to promote growth.

With over nine billion animals raised and slaughtered for human consumption each year in the U.S. alone, modern animal agriculture puts an incredible strain on natural resources like land, water, and fossil fuel. Factory farms yield relatively small amounts of meat, dairy, and eggs for this input, and in return produce staggering quantities of waste and greenhouse gases, polluting our land, air and water - and contribute to climate change.

The demand for livestock pasture is a major driver of deforestation. Between watering the crops that farm animals eat, providing drinking water for billions of animals each year, and cleaning away the waste in factory farms, transport trucks and slaughterhouses, the animal agriculture industry has a huge impact on the water supply. Producing one pound of beef takes an estimated 581 gallons of water - roughly what the average American uses in 100 showers.

RESOURCES FOR ACTION

SUPPORT & visit FARM SANCTUARIES

* Farm Sanctuary: P.O. Box 150, Watkins Glen, NY 14891; information@farmsanctuary.org
California Southern & Northern Sanctuary can be reached via above.

* Woodstock Sanctuary: P.O. Box 1329, Woodstock NY 12498

CONTRIBUTE TO ANIMAL WELFARE ORGANIZATIONS

* Animal Legal Defense Fund: P.O. Box 96041, Washington DC 20077

* ASPCA: 424 92nd St., New York, NY 10128

* The Humane Farming Association: P.O. Box 3577, San Rafael CA 94912

* Humane Society US: P.O. Box 52137, Phoenix AZ 85072

QUEENIE

As a young cow, Queenie was awaiting her death at a New York City slaughterhouse in Queens. She made a daring escape through the city and her story was picked up by the media, alerting millions to the plight of farm animals like her. Farm Sanctuary in Watkins Glen NY offered to take Queenie in and give her a home and the life of freedom she sought and deserved.

HEALTHY & HUMANE EATING

Today there is a greater awareness of nutrition and the sources of our food, accompanied by a wider range of vegetarian and vegan choices. Generally, vegetarians do not eat meat, poultry or fish, while vegans don't eat any animal-based food, including dairy. A vegan diet is easier to maintain today due to the increased number of tasty and nutritious alternatives. Additional factors are less stress on the environment and a greater awareness of animal rights.

* Organic Consumers Association, 771 South Silver Hill Drive, Finland MN 55603

* The Lucky Ones: My Passionate Fight for Farm Animals, is by Jenny Brown, founder of the Woodstock Farm Sanctuary in the Catskill Mountains (site of the famous music festival). She tells the story of how she came to this point, and includes snapshots of the animals and some vegan recipes.

* The Face on Your Plate by Jeffrey Mousaieff, author of When Elephants Weep.

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By What Authority (ISSN: 524-1106) is published by the Program on Corporations, Law & Democracy. The title is English for *quo warranto*, a legal phrase that questions illegitimate exercise of privilege and power. We the people and our federal and state officials have long been giving giant business corporations illegitimate authority. Today, a minority directing giant corporations and backed by police, courts, and the military, define our culture, govern our nation, and plunder the earth. **By What Authority** reflects an unabashed assertion of the right of the sovereign people to govern themselves.

POCLAD is a group of 11 people instigating democratic conversations and actions that contest the authority of corporations to govern. Our analysis evolves through historical and legal research, writing, public speaking, and working with organizations to develop new strategies that assert people's rights over property interests.

BWA is a tool for democracy proponents to rethink and reframe their work. To that end we encourage readers to engage us with comments, questions, and suggestions.

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