Chickens and turkeys

As more and more people are switching from beef and pork to poultry, the number of birds raised and killed for meat is sky-rocketing. More than 600 million "broiler" (meat-type) chickens and over 20 million turkeys are slaughtered each year in Canada.[1]

Overcrowded by the thousands into ammonia-laden sheds where disease runs rampant, the birds often cannot even flap their wings.[2,3] Most will never see sunlight or breathe fresh air, except on their way to the slaughterhouse.

DID YOU KNOW?

Chickens are inquisitive animals who, when in natural surroundings, enjoy dust-bathing, making nests, roosting in trees, and searching for food.

Like us, chickens form friendships and strong family ties. They love their young and mourn the loss of loved ones.

According to animal behaviorist Dr. Chris Evans, chickens are as smart as mammals, including some primates. He explains that chickens are able to understand that recently hidden objects still exist, which is beyond the capacity of small children. Furthermore, Dr. Joy Mench, professor and director of the Center for Animal Welfare at the University of California at Davis explains, "Chickens show sophisticated social behavior. They can recognize more than a hundred other chickens and remember them. They have more than thirty types of vocalizations."

References

Bred for Pain

Chickens have been genetically manipulated to grow much larger and more quickly than their ancestors. According to an article in Feedstuffs, an agribusiness journal, "...broilers now grow so rapidly that the heart and lungs are not developed well enough to support the remainder of the body, resulting in congestive heart failure and tremendous death losses."

Modern broiler chickens also experience crippling leg disorders and lameness because their legs are not capable of supporting their abnormally heavy bodies.

Researchers have found that this lameness is so chronically painful that lame chickens will repeatedly choose food that has painkillers added to it over regular feed.[5] Another study found that 26% of broiler chickens are severely crippled and that 90% cannot walk normally.[6]

Turkeys also suffer from unnatural breeding. According to another Feedstuffs article, "turkeys have been bred to grow faster and heavier but their skeletons haven't kept pace, which causes 'cowboy legs'. Some turkeys have problems standing and fall and are trampled on..."[7]

Transportation

Chickens and turkeys who don't die on the factory farm are roughly grabbed by workers and slammed into transport crates to be taken to slaughter at just a fraction of their natural lifespan.

Slaughter

At the slaughterhouse, fully conscious chickens and turkeys are shackled upside-down by their ankles to a moving conveyor belt. The birds are then given intensely painful electric shocks,[10] which are intended to immobilize them to make it easier to slit their throats.[11] The shocks are frequently not powerful enough to render them unconscious.[12] After being shocked, the birds' throats are slashed, usually by a mechanical blade.

Inevitably, the blade misses some birds who then proceed to the next station on the assembly line: the scalding tank. According to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, in 2013 almost 60,000 birds had their bodies submerged in scalding hot water (about 62° C) while they were fully conscious.[13]

According to Virgil Butler, a former Tyson slaughterhouse worker, "When this happens, the chickens flop, scream, kick, and their eyeballs pop out of their heads. Then, they often come out the other end with broken..."