

Turkey meat production... the hidden price of suffering... / Friends of Animals Under Abuse (FAUNA).

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TURKEY MEAT PRODUCTION



DREADFUL CONDITIONS INSIDE A TYPICAL TURKEY UNIT (Sun Valley) - photo F.A.U.N.A. South Wales.

In the past, turkeys were mainly reared for the 'traditional' Christmas market. However, nowadays they are produced all year round, ending as processed turkey 'rolls', mince, sausages and burgers.

Every year over 36 million turkeys are produced in the UK for their meat. Kept on factory farms, thousands of turkeys are crammed into dark, windowless sheds. One shed may contain over 30,000 birds. Most turkeys are intensively reared in deprived conditions and slaughtered at 12-26 weeks old. Their natural lifespan is around 10 years.

Because of selective breeding, turkeys have been bred to put on an unnatural amount of weight in a short time, resulting in diseased hip joints and lameness. Modern breeding techniques result in obese adult birds that can hardly walk.

THE HIDDEN PRICE OF SUFFERING...



Injured, dying turkey on a Sun Valley transporter photo-FAUNA, South Wales

REARING ...

After hatching, turkey chicks ('poults') are crammed in their thousands in dimly lit sheds. Turkeys are either kept crowded in 'pole barns' (open-sided, natural light) or more commonly broiler sheds (dark windowless units). It is here that they spend the rest of their short miserable lives, trapped in a cramped and filthy nightmare world. The litter on which the birds are forced to live becomes wet and contaminated with excreta, resulting in painful foot ulcers and breast blisters. Disease and death is very common. Birds suffer from liver damage (blackhead), fowl cholera, haemorrhagic enteritis, eye infections, salmonella etc. Around 2 1/2 million turkeys die in these units ever before reaching slaughter age. Many poults die due to 'starve-outs' - which is where the young birds fail to learn where the food and water points are located. Due to overcrowding, sick birds are frequently trampled to death.

DEBEAKING - a painful mutilation ...

Under stress, turkeys can become aggressive due to the grossly overcrowded and unnatural conditions. This can lead to feather pecking and cannibalism. To prevent this, the majority of turkeys are debeaked at 5 days old. Debeaking is a painful process which involves part of the birds' beak being cut off with a red-hot cauterising blade. Sometimes the beak is cut back so severely that nostrils are damaged. Shearing through a bird's sensitive beak causes untold pain and suffering and many birds suffer life-long pain. Over 75% of turkeys are mutilated in this way. To suppress aggression even further they are kept in virtual darkness.

BREEDING ...

Commercial turkeys reared for meat are bred to be 'heavy' and 'meaty' and because the males ('stags') are too heavy, broad breasted and suffer from lameness due to diseased hip joints, they can no longer mate naturally with the smaller females. Breeding turkeys now suffer the repeated stress, degradation and indignity of artificial insemination. Artificial insemination is an obscene procedure which causes repeated pain and abuse to both males and females. Every 2-3 days the males are caught and their semen is 'milked' by a pair of workers who stimulate (masturbate) the birds sex organs until semen is ejected. The semen is then injected with tubes into the female birds. Once past their egg laying or semen producing peak, the 'parent' birds are slaughtered and finish up in pâté and pies.

CATCHING AND TRANSPORT ...

As early as 12-26 weeks of age, the young birds are ready for the table. They are stuffed into tightly packed crates to endure the journey to the slaughterhouse and premature death. Caught by their feet by gangs of 'catchers' they are thrust and bundled into crates. Rough handling results in severe bruising, broken bones and broken blood vessels.

SLAUGHTER ...

Poultry slaughter is a highly mechanised and automated procedure and the birds are loaded into the system like objects without any regard for their fear. At the slaughterhouse turkeys are hung upside down on a moving conveyor belt before their throats are cut. They can be left dangling upside down on the shackle line for 6 minutes before reaching the automatic stunner. This causes much pain and distress, especially to the heavier birds, which can weigh the equivalent of a 9 year old child. Sometimes the electric stunner (an electrically charged water bath through which their heads should be immersed) fails to render the birds unconscious. Many birds receive painful shocks. Machines are not able to react to any changes in circumstances - birds arch their necks or lift their heads and miss the stunner completely. Despite this the machine carries on, surrendering its victim to the automatic throat cutter. Large or small birds can get cut in the breast, head or eye. If the birds throats are not cut properly or if they miss the knife, they can enter the scalding tank alive. Experts estimate that every year between 30-40,000 turkeys enter the scalding tank alive. This horror story is turkey slaughter every day, all over the country - this they call 'humane'.

CHRISTMAS ...

Every year over 16 1/2 million turkeys are killed for Christmas, the so-called season of 'peace and goodwill'. The welfare of the birds is sacrificed to supply cheap meat for the festive season. But, the true price is paid in suffering and misery on a massive scale.

YOU CAN CHANGE THIS

- DON'T BUY TURKEY MEAT
- JOIN US NOW !

☐ I would like to join FAUNA and I enclose a cheque/Po made payable to FAUNA for £6 (£4 unwaged)

☐ Please send me a Poultry Information Pack

☐ I enclose a £..... donation to help stop animal cruelty

Name..... Age.....
(If under 18)

Address.....

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