

Cage-Free Eggs: Behind the Myth

Hens used for egg production come from hatcheries, where male chicks (because they do not lay eggs) are killed immediately after hatching. **Each year, hundreds of millions of these vulnerable beings are suffocated or ground up alive to produce fertilizer or feed.**

Chickens used to produce eggs, including eggs labeled “cage-free,” have their beaks forcibly mutilated to minimize the damage they cause each other from being crowded together.

At all farms, large- and small-scale, laying hens are killed when their production declines, typically by two years of age, as feeding these individuals cuts directly into profits. Often the bodies of “spent” hens are so ravaged that these debilitated animals are not even sent to slaughter, and instead are ground into fertilizer or just sent to a landfill.

If allowed to live free of exploitation and slaughter, chickens can live ten years or more. They protect, feed, and nurture their young, just like other animals.



What about organic?

Organic standards pertain largely to the content of animal feed and the use of medicines put into animals' bodies, rather than how the animals are treated. **At many organic farms, antibiotics are withheld from sick animals in order to maintain the saleability of dairy, eggs, or meat that will be labeled “organic.” This creates tremendous suffering** as the animals are left to either die or recover without the benefit of medicine. Numerous investigations of organic farms have revealed animals living in conditions which are deplorable, yet do not violate “organic standards.”



Happy Cows: Behind the Myth

In order to maintain uninterrupted milk production, cows are forced year after year to go through an endless cycle of pregnancy and birth, only to have their calves immediately taken from them. It is well known in the farming community that mother cows and their calves cry out for each other long after they are separated.

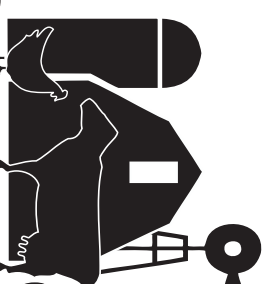
All forms of dairy farming involve forcibly impregnating cows. People in the industry have referred to the restraining apparatus as a “rape rack.” The process involves a person inserting his arm far into the cow's rectum in order to position her uterus, and then forcing an instrument into her vagina.

Half of all calves born are male, of no use in milk production. **Many are sent directly to auctions where they are sold and slaughtered when they are just a few days old. The others are sent to veal-producing operations** where they endure a crude castration process and are killed after four months spent in small crates or pens. Since not all female calves are raised to maturity for milk production, unwanted female calves face the same fate as male calves.

If allowed to exist free of exploitation and slaughter, cows can live 25 years or more. But after just 4 to 6 years, dairy cows are considered “spent” from being forced to continuously produce milk. **Often weak and ill, they endure transport to auction and slaughter, all of which are traumatic for these gentle animals.**

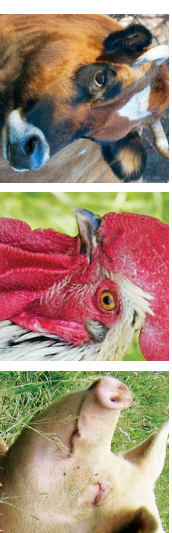
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With growing awareness of the injustices commonly occurring at large-scale, industrial animal farming operations, compassionate citizens are increasingly seeking alternatives. Labels such as “Cage Free,” “Free Range,” “Humane Certified,” “Grass Fed,” “Organic,” and “Local” make it seem like those who are willing to pay a higher price can enjoy eggs, dairy, and meat from small-scale “humane” farms that treat animals with compassion and respect.

But is the public being misled?





Currently, both the animal-using industry and even some organizations that claim to protect animals are propagating the idea that it is possible to use and kill animals in a manner that can be fairly described as respectful or compassionate or humane. This “Humane Myth” misrepresents the realities of animal use, and cultivates a positive image of activities that are neither just nor kind nor sustainable.

The public deserves to be told the full truth about who animals are and what is being done to them behind closed doors, as well as the catastrophic impact our society’s consumption of meat, eggs, and dairy products is having on human health and the environment.

Please visit www.HumaneMyth.org to learn the truth behind the “humane” myth and to find out how you can make more informed choices.

I care about animals, but still eat animal products. Isn’t it kinder to buy “humane” animal products?

The animal-using industry has a decades-long track record of misleading the public, on everything from the health benefits of consuming their products to the living conditions and mode of death of the animals being used and killed: **While positive-sounding labels are guaranteed to increase sales of more expensive “humane” products, the evidence suggests that the marketing hype has little do with reality.**



What the animal-using industry does not want the public to know is that the creation of all animal products unavoidably involves injustice and cruelty. **No matter the label, animals exploited for profit are forced to endure confinement, social deprivation, mutilation, reproductive manipulation, and premature death.**

Therefore, the only way we can truly be sure that our dietary choices are not harming animals is to stop eating their eggs, milk and flesh. **Each time we make the decision to use or consume an animal-free alternative, we can be confident we are making a real difference, that we are no longer contributing to a grievous injustice done to animals on farms.** We will also be helping wildlife, as animal agribusiness is the number one cause of habitat destruction worldwide. And since healthy, tasty, environmentally friendly, vegan alternatives exist, it’s never been easier to do what is good for our health, good for the animals and good for our planet.

Aren’t “humane” animal products more sustainable?

According to a 2006 United Nations report titled “Livestock’s Long Shadow,” **animal agriculture is the number one source of greenhouse gas impact,** making a greater contribution to global warming than all cars, trucks, buses, planes, trains, and ships combined. A 2009 report published by the Worldwatch Institute, “Livestock and Climate Change,” found that **at least half of all human-caused greenhouse gases come from animal agriculture.** As our population grows, and as more cultures adopt a diet based on meat, dairy, and eggs, the disastrous impact on the environment will expand regardless of the method being used to produce these products. As it is, **worldwide consumption of meat has increased five-fold in the past half century.** If present trends continue, in another 50 years it will have increased a total of 15-fold.



The production of food for a diet based on meat, dairy, and eggs uses several times more energy and water, and creates more toxic pollution, than that of a diet based on grains, vegetables and fruits. “Humane” farming methods also require several times more land than the more common industrial-style farming. As more unspoiled lands are cleared, more and more wild animals will be displaced or killed, and more species will be driven to extinction.

Therefore, each time we take a step toward adopting a diet free of animal products, we are acting as responsible global citizens by dramatically reducing our contribution to global warming, resource depletion, deforestation, pollution, species loss, poverty, hunger, and animal suffering. While they may please our palate, **“humane” animal products deceive our conscience, and simply do not solve any of the problems that need to be addressed by our species if we are to live on this planet in a just and sustainable manner.**

