



# ANIMAL FRIENDS VETERINARY SERVICES



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Daniel Hauff  
Director of Investigations  
Mercy for Animals  
3712 N. Broadway St. Suite 560  
Chicago, IL 60613

Dear Mr. Hauff:

I have viewed the video from the egg farm and composed my professional veterinary opinion in the paragraphs that follow. I am currently a practicing veterinarian (University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine, Doctor of Veterinary Medicine, 1986) with an advanced degree in veterinary clinical pathology (Western College of Veterinary Medicine, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Master of Veterinary Science, 1992). I have completed two additional related post graduate courses. The first was Public Health Concepts and Practices at the University of Illinois at Rockford, Illinois, in 2005. The second was Animal Welfare Assessment for Veterinary and Graduate Students, Michigan State University in 2006.

There is an exorbitant amount of animal suffering and abuse occurring in this video. As a veterinarian I am appalled by the apparent lack of concern for the physical and psychological basic necessities of keeping hens for egg production.

The confinement conditions at this facility are extremely crowded with most cages housing 4 to 5 birds. The birds have no room to lie down or spread their wings without touching another bird or the sides of the cage. Some of the cages appear very dirty with feces and feathers stuck to the flooring. There is evidence of cage floors containing large holes with sharp wires protruding and hens attempting to avoid the holes. Wings, feet, legs, and heads are caught in grotesque, unyielding positions in cages and along the egg conveyor belt. One barely breathing hen has somehow become suspended by one foot from a feed trough and is draining body fluids into the food trough of the hens below. The noise level is intense and atmosphere appears dusty. This type of confinement denies the hens their most innate physical behaviors of nesting, perching, roosting, scratching and foraging, dust bathing, wing flapping and preening, exploring and exercising, and standing alert. The inability to perform these behaviors causes extreme psychological distress.

The handling of the hens by the workers displays at the very least an absolute ignorance of how a live animal should be humanely handled, and at the most, one would wonder if

the brutality exhibited was intentional. Workers are seen forcefully yanking hens from the cages and while the hens vocalize in distress, they grab the hens by the head and twist them around violently in the air for a few revolutions, and then are seen dropping or throwing them to the ground. The workers then kick them into the manure pit below the cages. These hens are still alive and flailing. One worker stands on the head and neck of one hen before kicking her into the pit. These handling techniques are atrocious and cause an extreme amount of undue pain and suffering before the hen eventually succumbs to her injuries and dies; or, dies from starvation and dehydration.

Cases of illness and injuries are numerous and deserve veterinary care. None of the birds appear clinically healthy. Most of the birds suffer from extremely poor feather condition and severe feather loss. Primary and secondary feather shafts on the wing are broken in most birds, and tail feathers are also broken. Feathers are important for warmth and temperature regulation. Hens show facial swellings that are highly suggestive for infraorbital sinus infections caused by bacteria. There are hens with severely enlarged, edematous wattles which also raises high suspicion for bacterial infection. Some hens show swollen faces, especially periorbital areas. Ammonia levels in the atmosphere can cause corneal irritation and the hens may be trying to rub their eyes on caging or with their wings causing more trauma and secondary infections. Open sores and broken/dislocated limbs and wings are evident in the population. Many hens are trapped in cage wire in contorted, inescapable positions and are witnessed gasping for air, exhausted from struggling to free themselves, and being pecked by cage mates. There are examples in live and dead hens of cloacal or uterine prolapse. One hen is witnessed in a weakened state while she continues to painfully strain against either a very large impacted egg or abnormal caudal abdominal mass. Many hens are moribund and exhibit agonal, open mouth breathing, signaling the advent of death. I feel these conditions violate cruelty laws and that this producer should be charged with cruelty to animals.

Death is everywhere from the dead hens decomposing in the cages to the piles of bodies in the garbage cans to the numerous hens in a near death state. Some of the bodies not removed from the cages are so necrotic, they are barely recognizable as chickens, and their cage mate hens continue to lay eggs for human consumption right over the top of rotting corpses. Many live hens are buried under dead hens in the garbage containers and likely die of asphyxiation. If they somehow raise themselves to the top, they likely die slowly from starvation or dehydration. Chickens are sentient animals. The degree of panic, fear, pain, distress, frustration, and sheer suffering is inexcusable and needs to stop.

From the veterinary and animal welfare standpoint and from a basic human decency standpoint, there is absolutely no excuse for the conditions and actions seen in this video. When you keep an animal and deny its every physical, medical, and mental necessity for the sake of what it can produce for you, and worse yet, treat that animal inhumanely every day of its short, contrived life, there needs to be a very close examination of the business and the humans behind it. Unfortunately, due to lack of regulation and oversight, the industry standard of care has dropped so low that there really is no standard

of care. Consumers, however, do care about how their food animals are treated. Based on the mandate recently adopted by popular vote in California as the harbinger of standard agriculture practice in regard to egg laying hens, the producer in this video is woefully off the mark.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Debra Teachout". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Debra Teachout DVM, MVSc