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Daniel Hauff
Director of Investigations
Mercy For Animals
3712 N Broadway Ste 560
Chicago IL 60613

Mr. Hauff:

You have asked me in my capacity as a professor and veterinarian to review video footage taken at an egg production facility involving chickens. For identification purposes, I am Emeritus Professor of Veterinary Medicine at the University of California. I have over 36 years of experience, much of it involving farmed animals including chickens.

There were several sections to the videotape I viewed and I first will provide some comments relative to these.

Confinement

The caging was the standard metal wire design. As is typical of this method of housing, the hens were under extremely crowded conditions. There was no room or provision for the birds to perform normal functions such as stretching of wings, dust bathing, flying or perching. Subordinate hens could not escape dominant ones. The wire floors are known to cause injury to the hens' feet. Because there were tiers of cages, hens below each row of cages would be subjected to waste material from the hens above, something that is unhygienic at best. Many of the hens had badly damaged feathers or had very poor overall feather condition, probably a consequence of the extreme crowding and lack of opportunity to properly maintain their plumage. In addition, the hens had part of their beaks trimmed so that the front of the beak was grossly deformed. This deformity would prevent the hens from properly grooming themselves and would make food prehension difficult.

Handling

In the first scene, a worker roughly pulled a hen out of the cage, feet first. This would be "against the grain," so to speak, and would lead to breakage of feathers or more serious injury to the bird. This is an improper method of bird removal, which should be gentle and allow for protection of the body.

The worker then swung the hen while holding the head, apparently as a method of "killing" the hen. He then dropped the bird to the floor where she was clearly still alive and able to bounce around. The movement of the hen suggested a response to pain as opposed to unconscious reflex movement. The worker then kicked the hen into the gutter while she was still alive. Another bird was subjected to the same treatment.



This method of "killing" is not the accepted manner in which to cause cervical dislocation. Even so, this worker's application of this method was insufficiently vigorous to ensure instantaneous and adequate cervical dislocation.

Although cervical dislocation can be an effective method of killing hens, it has to be applied properly. This was not being done in the videotape. Nevertheless, there are no scientific studies to confirm that this method is truly humane. In fact, loss of consciousness may not be instantaneous and electrical activity in the brain may persist for many seconds suggesting that the individual can continue to feel pain and suffer during this time.

Illness & Injury

Although there were many hens with various lesions or abnormalities, it was not clear from the videotape just what the nature of these was, how long they had been present or what effect they were having on the hens. One hen appeared to be egg-bound, which is a painful condition. This would require immediate attention in order to prevent continued suffering and death. Another hen had a mass involving the wattle, but this did not appear to be a problem for the hen in that it was not associated with obvious signs of inflammation.

Another hen had swelling in the facial region, possibly from abscess or other inflammation, something that would be painful. Prompt medical attention would be necessary to evaluate and treat this. The final scene showed a hen who had a crippled leg and could not walk properly. The nature of her movements suggested that she was in pain. Again, prompt medical attention would be necessary to reduce suffering.

If medical attention could not be provided for whatever reason, humane standards of care would dictate that the affected hens be quickly and humanely killed in order to reduce suffering.

Hens Trapped in Cage Wire

There were many hens trapped in the cages. Some of these were alert and otherwise healthy appearing, suggesting that their entrapment was recent. In many cases, however, the hens were in advanced states of deterioration and decompensation, barely conscious or in extremis. In these cases, it was clear that they had been trapped like this for at least a couple of days, probably longer. It is expected that injury to the trapped body part would occur as a result of attempts by the hen to free herself. This was evident in at least one scene.

Injuries from attempts to escape would cause pain and suffering. As a result of being caught in their cages, these hens would not be able to access food or water. This would lead to further and substantial suffering as a result. The hens also could not escape aggression by the other hens in the cage, leading to further injury and suffering. There was at least one scene demonstrating this.

Live Hens on Dead Piles

It appeared that barrels were used to store dead birds. There were, however, unquestionably living birds in these barrels, often buried under the bodies of dead birds. These living hens were



in various states: some were almost dead, others were upright and very alert. Death should have been assured before the birds were placed in the barrels. The living birds would not have access to water or food, which would lead to suffering. Being crushed beneath the bodies of dead birds would add to the suffering. The fate of the birds beyond this point, when they were removed for disposal, is uncertain, but is likely to include further suffering before death.

Live Hen Hung on a Feed Trough

A bird was hanging from one leg from a wire on the feed trough. It was represented to me that a worker normally hangs dead birds in this fashion prior to removal for disposal. This bird, however, was still alive and almost certainly suffering. Workers should be ensuring that only dead birds are handled in this fashion. Living birds who are not wanted should be killed quickly and humanely.

Holes in Cage Flooring

Many of the cages were in disrepair with large gaps in the flooring or sides. Some of these gaps were relatively small, but had bare wire protruding so that the hens could become entrapped. Others were large enough to allow a hen to fall through into the area below. It was not clear what this area was, but a hen in that situation would not have access to food or water.

Death

There were many scenes of dead birds. From the condition of some of the bodies, it was evident that the birds had been dead for at least a day, some for many days or weeks. Normal animal husbandry dictates that workers observe the birds daily and remove dead individuals immediately. This was not being done for whatever reason. In one case, a dead hen had obstructed the egg conveyor belt resulting in a massive backup of eggs with spillage onto the floor.

With proper observation, some of the deaths could have been prevented, such as in the case of entrapped hens. In other cases, the sick hens should have been removed from the cages for either proper medical attention or humane killing.

There was no way to determine from the videotape whether the hens had died quickly or had experienced a slow and possibly painful death. It is feasible that some may have died of contagious conditions or have developed contagious opportunistic infestations during decomposition that could then have placed the other hens at risk. It is axiomatic that dead animals should be immediately removed from contact with living animals particularly under intense housing conditions such as battery cages in order to reduce the chance of contagion.

There is substantial scientific evidence to show that housing hens in battery cages leads to serious animal welfare and well-being problems. Unfortunately, this sort of housing is commonly used to house hens for egg production purposes and is considered the "standard." Nevertheless, the conditions at this particular facility were in glaring violation of this "standard." Some of the cages were in deplorable condition leading to potential for injury and death to the birds. Observation of the birds was clearly



inadequate leading to substantial suffering, injury and death. This was particularly evident with the number of hens who were entrapped in their cages. Medical care appeared to be lacking. The method of killing the birds was not consistent with accepted humane standards and would be a source of intense pain and suffering for the birds.

There is no question that the manner in which the chickens depicted in the videotape were treated was cruel by any normal definition of the word and resulted in suffering for the birds. The treatment of the hens violated norms of conduct with respect to animal welfare and veterinary care. None of this was necessary in order to pursue the purpose of the facility, which appeared to be the production of eggs. As such, it seems to me that this would constitute a violation of applicable animal cruelty laws.



Nedim C. Buyukmihci, V.M.D.
Emeritus Professor of Veterinary Medicine

PO Box 4006
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87502 U.S.A.
Phone: 505.629.5876
E-mail: ncbuyukmihci@ucdavis.edu

NCB:ztp

