“HSUS won’t go away; in fact it has gained strength. It has the formula down and will replicate its strategies within the pork sector as well as across the agriculture sector.”

— POULTRY MAGAZINE EDITORIAL, Nov. 7, 2012

60% OF SOWS CAN’T FIT INTO CONVENTIONAL GESTATION CRATES WITHOUT BEING COMPRESSED AGAINST THE SIDES.

CRATES VERSUS GROUP HOUSING

GESTATION CRATE

For virtually their entire lives, breeding sows live in crates averaging about 2 feet long by 2 feet wide. They’re so tight, when pigs lie down to sleep, their udders protrude into neighboring crates.

FREE STALL ACCESS

Sows use stalls to feed, rest, or avoid other pigs but can open the doors to walk in small common areas.

ELECTRONIC SOW FEEDING

Pigs live in a group pen without crates. They eat by passing through a feeding station, where a computer reads their ear tags and dispenses food.

CHANGING LIVES CRATE BY CRATE

The shift came fast. In 2012, one company after another pledged to stop using pork from farms that lock breeding sows in gestation crates—so small the animals cannot turn around. In December, Paul Shapiro, HSUS vice president for farm animal protection, looked back, happily astonished. “Few would have predicted such a change in such a short amount of time.” For decades, factory farms crated most pregnant sows. Frustrated pigs gnawed their mouths bloody on metal bars. Sows went lame for lack of exercise. Then The HSUS began winning statewide crate bans, prying companies to change, and conducting undercover investigations, including those released in 2012 of Tyson supplier Wyoming Premium Farms and of Oklahoma operations owned by two of the largest U.S. producers. Now the industry is poised to adopt systems that let sows move freely and socialize. Retail prices will rise little if at all. The debate is over, says Mother Jones magazine. “HSUS won the argument.”

STATES THAT HAVE PASSED CRATE BANS

ARIZONA  CALIFORNIA  FLORIDA  OHIO  MAINE  OREGON  COLORADO  MICHIGAN  RHODE ISLAND

“How would you like to spend the rest of your life in a space as small as a bus seat?”

That was the question posed by HSUS messages on city buses in Des Moines, capital of the largest pork-producing state, and Washington, D.C., in 2012. The ads covered buses in images of sows confined in gestation crates, challenging the National Pork Producers Council’s support of this extreme confinement.

“Do you have a farm? Would you want to live in a space as small as a bus seat?”

— ELIZABETH ANDREWSON, JUNE 1, 2012

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