



CHICKENS PAY HIGH COST OF COSTCO'S CHEAP EGGS

INVESTIGATION REVEALS HENS SUFFERING AND DYING IN CAGES ON SUPPLIER'S EGG FARM // BY KAREN E. LANGE

THE GRASS WAS JUST LIKE THE REASSURING PASTURE depicted on the “Nearby Eggs” cartons sold in Costco stores: It grew brilliant green. But the barns in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, owned by Costco supplier Hillandale Farms were two stories tall and cinder block, not like the old-fashioned red one illustrated on the package. And the scene inside?

An HSUS investigator found some 120,000 birds per barn confined in dim, hot, dust-choked, fly-infested spaces a quarter mile long that stank of ammonia, manure and death. Cramped cages contained up to seven chickens each, many with cut and swollen feet. Some were dead, mummified and trampled flat. Others were caught in the wire mesh or trapped in the egg collector beneath, having followed their instincts to nest in darkness. The ensnared carcasses blocked eggs, which spilled onto the floor, yolks baking to the consistency of glue.

Though Costco indicated in 2007 that it would go cage-free, it appears to have taken no steps toward ending the use of battery cages, even after a Hillandale farm was found to be the source of a 2010 salmonella outbreak that led to the nation's largest egg recall.

“The company has seemingly backtracked,” says Paul Shapiro, HSUS vice president for farm animal protection. “There are several million birds laying eggs every year for Costco. Costco has the power to reduce their suffering. Costco should do the right thing.”

Many consumers agree and have voiced their concern. Actors Brad Pitt and Ryan Gosling joined their ranks, each writing a letter to CEO Craig Jelinek urging him to go cage-free.



The barns at the real Hillandale Farms in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, look nothing like the image on this carton.

The investigator carries one hopeful memory from his experience: Over many months, a few birds managed to escape from cages. Searching for food and water, they landed on manure collection belts that spit them out onto a waste pile. Despite the filth, it was the first time they'd known life beyond bars. They made nests in the darkness, he says, and they laid eggs. “They were actually free.”

+GO TO humanesociety.org/tell-costco to encourage Costco to keep its pledge.

INNER LIVES

PRIMATES AND CANINES
HUNTING IN HARMONY

// BY JONATHAN BALCOMBE

AN UNLIKELY FRIENDSHIP has developed in the wilds of Ethiopia, where endangered Ethiopian wolves are joining troops of gelada baboons on their daily forays. The wolves, often entering the monkey tribe individually, seem to be doing it because they are almost three times as likely to catch rodents in the grass when they are among baboons. Presumably, the rodents are roused by the monkeys, similar to how insects are stirred up by grazing cows and caught by cattle egrets and cowbirds. The wolves are also probably less conspicuous to rodents when they are among baboons, who are a similar size.

While it might seem that the wolves are taking advantage, the baboons don't seem to mind. Even though these wolves occasionally prey on young sheep and goats, which are as big as young geladas, the canines try to appear nonthreatening and refrain from harassing the baboons.

The symbiotic relationship between the two species isn't unique to the deserts of Ethiopia. In parts of northwestern India, feral dogs and langur monkeys have also established close ties. The monkeys groom the dogs who benefit from a parasite-removal service and a nice massage. The act of grooming is therapeutic for monkeys, who likely also benefit by having “guard dogs” in their midst.

It might be only a matter of time before baboons are grooming wolves on the highlands of Ethiopia.



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