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Frank, Are You Telling the Truth About Your Chickens?

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FRANK, ARE YOU TELLING THE TRUTH ABOUT YOUR CHICKENS?

Is Frank Perdue's advertising just a pile of poultry puffery hiding the brutal realities of an inhuman industry?

For nearly 20 years, Frank Perdue has crowed about the creature comforts of his chickens, painting a picture of pampered pets living in “resorts” which he likes to describe as “chicken heaven.” He claims in one ad that they “eat better than you do” and in another that “your kids never had it so good!” This farmyard fantasy has clearly helped Mr. Perdue to parcel the misery of millions of chickens into a lumpy nest egg. And many of us have been happy to sit back and pay up to 50 cents more per pound to gobble up this feathered fluff.

In reality, life in Mr. Perdue’s chicken “resorts” begins with painful disemboweling and ends with electrocution—with a lifetime of stress crowded into in between. Reason life for a “pampered” Perdue chicken begins painfully with disembowelment as the young bird’s beak is burned off with a hot knife. Mr. Perdue is not, strictly speaking, a farmer at all. His birds are “designed” —generically speaking—so as to be asparsely possible on the plane of food. This technique often produces chickens that are so oversized for their age that they are unable to support their own weight and live out their lives on painfully crippled legs. Mr. Perdue’s main business is slaughter and packaging. The actual raising of chickens is left to contract growers to whom the debowed chicks are trucked when they are a few days old.

After having their heads burned off with a hot knife, chickens struggle through life—often with less than one square foot of living space per bird. Contract growers typically crowd 32,000 birds into one long windowless shed (and sometimes as many as 40,000 or more). In these conditions, each bird can expect about one ounce of food per week. This technique often produces chickens that are so undernourished that they cannot support their own weight and live out their lives on painfully crippled legs. Mr. Perdue’s main business is slaughter and packaging. The actual raising of chickens is left to contract growers to whom the debowecl chicks are trucked when they are a few days old.

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