



THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES

Animal welfare & food service



PHOTO BY: MEREDITH LEE/THE HSUS

Animal welfare can be defined as how well an [animal is doing physically and mentally](#). It is a consideration of how much pain and suffering an animal is feeling and how often they can engage in natural behaviors. In other words, the welfare of an animal is asking the question, “how good of a life is this animal living?” In the case of animals in factory farms, there are very serious welfare concerns. Perhaps most notably is the issue of confinement and its related health outcomes. **The good news is, as food service providers, you have the power to make a difference in the welfare of vast numbers of animals!**

The link between food service and animal welfare

While there is a long history of research examining how consumers often have conflicting views regarding meat consumption, there is also research revealing that [people do care](#) about the conditions of the animals that they consume.

There are good reasons to believe that when individuals buy plant-based foods, they can, through collective action, [have an impact on animal welfare](#). Imagine if food service operations across the country, who have more power and scale than individuals, made similar choices. By reducing large amounts of demand for the meat of poorly treated animals, suffering is *directly* reduced!

Therefore, even a simple switch, like using a plant-based mayonnaise as the default mayonnaise or offering plant-based burgers alongside animal-based burgers, could have massive impacts in terms of reducing the number of individual animals that have to suffer on factory farms.

Demand for less animal suffering and more plant-based foods

Data shows that the overwhelming majority of Americans support animal welfare measure and are against animal suffering.

- One poll showed that [70%](#) of Americans have some discomfort with the way animals are used in the food industry and 69% think factoring farming of animals is one of the most important social issues in the world today.
- A Gallup Poll showed that [41%](#) of respondents ranked concern about animal welfare as a “major reason” for eating meat less, rarely, or never.
- Another survey from 2014 showed that [69%](#) of Americans prioritize animal welfare when deciding what foods to buy.
- According to another story, [94%](#) of Americans agree that animals raised for food deserve to be cruelty-free.
- The Humane Society of the United States ranked companies from best to worst on their animal welfare policies in the [Food Industry Scorecard](#). Many food service management companies and restaurants ranked in the Top 10.

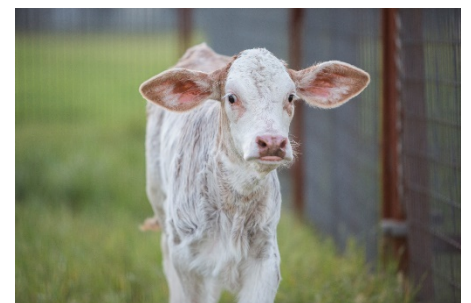


PHOTO BY: JP BONNELLY

Chickens

Chickens, the farm animal most exploited for food, face significant welfare challenges due to intensive confinement and other practices like **beak trimming** and **genetic modification**. Broiler chickens (chickens raised for meat) have been bred to grow so large so fast that they often cannot support their own body weight. **Battery cages**, small cages that hold 5-10 birds at a time, introduce challenges such as depriving hens of their natural behaviors. Each hen has the space equivalent to the size of an iPad to live out her entire life. [Dr. Ian Duncan](#) cites the inability for chickens to engage in nesting behaviors as “undoubtedly” the largest sources of frustration in chickens. Hens in cages also face extreme metabolic disease due to the lack of opportunity for movement. Just like people, chickens can experience conditions like **hypertension** and **heart failure!**

Pigs

Intensively confined pigs on factory farms also endure extremely painful conditions. [Gestation crates](#), small cages where mother pigs are trapped, are too small for a mother pig to turn around. Like chickens, pigs in these conditions will experience weaker bones, weaker cardiovascular systems, and more injuries than their non-caged counterparts. The suffering these pigs endure is not just physical—often they will develop abnormal behaviors like bar-biting and becoming unresponsive. These unusual behaviors are indicative of **frustration, depression**, and even **brain damage**.

Veal

Veal is meat that comes from a male calf (baby cow). Only male calves are raised for meat because female calves are raised to produce milk for dairy products. [Calves raised for veal only live until they are about 18 weeks old before they are slaughtered for meat.](#) Calves are often confined in crates that measure approximately 2.5 feet wide in which it is near **impossible** for them to lie down comfortably. The crates are designed to **impede muscle and bone development**, but they also destroy the ability for calves to interact with other calves. Cows are innately social creatures that find comfort in the touch and presence of other cattle, so calf interaction is vital to their health.

Dairy cows

The U.S. has over [9 million dairy cows](#). Since dairy cows only produce milk after giving birth (just like humans), they are repeatedly impregnated to produce more milk than they otherwise would naturally. [The majority of dairy cows are confined primarily indoors](#) with less than 10% primarily raised on pasture. Most cows are kept in tie-stalls where they are individually tethered by their neck which severely limits their ability to move and perform any natural behaviors. Dairy cows also typically have their tail-docked, or amputated, without anesthetic.



PHOTO BY: DAVID PAUL MORRIS/FOR THE HSUS

Confinement

Confinement is when a farm animal is restricted to a very small space for the entirety of its life. While confined, [farm animals are unable to exercise, fully extend their limbs, or engage in important natural behaviors](#). Farm animal confinement is analogous to a situation in which a person could not stand up for **years** at a time.

There is little doubt that these conditions cause a large amount of physical discomfort, pain, and injury, as well as emotional suffering.

Chickens, pigs, and veal calves experience the most intensive confinement, but through our procurement practices we have the power to make a meaningful difference.

Factory farming

Factory farming is the large-scale production of animals raised for food. Due to the massive demand of meat, dairy and eggs, the majority of these products come from factory farms. Many common practices on factory farms contribute to immense amounts of animal suffering. By serving less meat, dairy and eggs and serving more plant-based foods, you can help reduce animal suffering.

Find out more information by visiting forwardfood.org.



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