

HUMANITY FOR HENS

(Fighting the cruelties of the intensive poultry industry)

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Durbanville
7550
SOUTH AFRICA

NEWSLETTER FOR APRIL 1992

Dear Supporter,

SPCA NATIONAL COUNCIL AND BEAUTY WITHOUT CRUELTY PLEDGE THEIR SUPPORT IN THE FIGHT AGAINST BATTERIES

As you know HUMANITY FOR HENS has laid a charge with the Paarl CID to the effect that battery farming violates the Animals' Protection Act of 1962.

The SPCA National Council and BWC have both pledged their support in written statements to Captain Kitshoff who is heading the investigation.



IS THE ANIMALS' PROTECTION ACT WORTH THE PAPER IT IS WRITTEN ON?

We want to see this case in court. Is the Animals' Protection Act worth the paper it's written on or should it be officially amended to refer to cats and dogs only?!

In the battery:

- A space allowance of 25% less than an A4 sheet of paper is allotted to each hen for the entire year of her laying life; WE CALL THAT "INADEQUATE SPACE".
- Unable to adapt to the close confinement, the hens sometimes peck each other to death. For this reason they are debeaked (the industry likes to call it beak-trimming). WE CALL IT "MAIMING".
- In the wire cages, the hens are unable to fulfil any of their basic instincts. WE CALL THAT "UNNECESSARY SUFFERING".

The Attorney General's office has assigned an advocate to the case and it will be his decision as to whether a prosecution goes ahead or not.



BRITISH VETS SPEAK OUT AGAINST FACTORY FARMING

While South Africa's veterinary surgeons maintain a stony silence on the merits (or rather, demerits) of factory farming, their British colleagues have become quite vocal on the subject.

At a Press Conference staged by the animal welfare organisation Compassion in World Farming on January 7th in London, they had this to say:

DR DAVID COFFEY, Director of the Centre for Animal Welfare Studies, described factory farms as systems of torture and asked: "How has the veterinary profession allowed this to happen? Why does the veterinary profession not stand up and say these conditions are totally and utterly unacceptable?"

DR HENRY CARTER, former President of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons: "Some veterinary surgeons are more concerned with the economic welfare of the producers than for the welfare of the animals themselves."

DR TOM GIBSON: former President of the British Veterinary Association, declared his "utter abhorrence" of the battery system of egg production.

Kent vet **DAVID REDFERN** had this to say: "The battery cage should now be phased out and it would be pleasing to see my colleagues for once taking the lead in calling for this. It is time that we had the courage to put the interests of our patients before those of our clients when the two do not coincide."

WE CALL ON SOUTH AFRICAN VETS TO STOP THEIR SILENCE AND TAKE A STAND.

(Humanity for Hens has one paid-up veterinary surgeon on its Membership List. He wishes to remain incognito but this is what he has to say: "Keep it up. You're doing the right thing. They (my colleagues) might be laughing at you now – but they won't be two years from now")!

DEBEAKING: THE PAINFUL INSULT

A recent official British report proposing an urgent ban on the debeaking of poultry should not go unheeded by our own government and poultry farming industry.

The proposal has been submitted by the Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC), an independent body set up by the British Government to advise on legislative changes necessary in the interests of farm animals.

Describing debeaking as "a serious welfare insult to the hen", the FAWC's Majority Report recommends "the introduction of legislation immediately to require the banning of all routine, non-therapeutic beak trimming (debeaking) by 1996.

The FAWC's Minority Report recommends that "all beak-trimming should be banned within the next two years".

The FAWC report adds that the operation can result in "chronic pain for long periods after the operation".

More than 11 million battery hens in South Africa are routinely debeaked each year.

CONSUMERS CAN PUT A STOP TO THIS CRUELTY FASTER THAN ANY BAN. EGGS ARE NOT A STAPLE FOOD. IF THE EGGS AVAILABLE ARE NOT FREE-RANGE, WE SHOULD RATHER DO WITHOUT THEM.

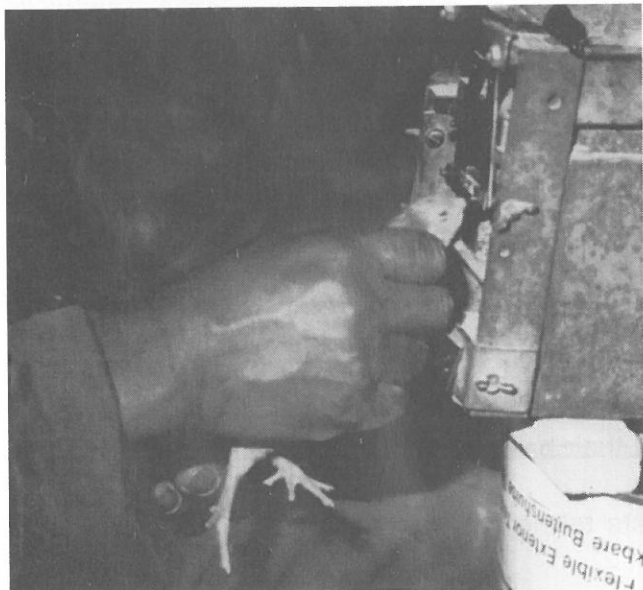
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BRITISH POULTRY SCIENTIST DR MIKE APPLEBY'S EXTENSIVE RESEARCH INTO WHETHER HENS SUFFER IN BATTERY CAGES HAS GIVEN A MAJOR BOOST TO THE WELFARE MOVEMENT IN EUROPE.

His findings: Yes. Hens suffer in battery cages. And Yes again. Battery cages in their present form should be banned.

"We should not jump to the conclusion that if an animal has different intelligence from ours, or indeed has less intelligence than ours, it is less capable of suffering," Dr Appleby said in a recent interview.

Humanity for Hens has formally requested Dr Appleby to make himself available as a witness for the prosecution in the event of the complaint against the battery industry coming before the court. Dr Appleby has given a conditional "yes" to this request but we will still need to do some serious fund-raising to pay his substantial fee for testifying as an expert witness.



BROILERS . . .

IN PAIN FOR THE LAST 20% OF THEIR LIVES

Moments from death. These six-week-old 'table' birds (known as "broilers") are shackled by the feet at a poultry abattoir near Bronkhorstspuit in the Transvaal. The conveyor belt will take them through electrified water to stun them before their necks are cut.



Genetically engineered to be giant, these "table birds" are fed an antibiotic which acts as a growth stimulant (such as zinc bacitracin) and a coccidiostat (such as Amprol).

The need for a coccidiostat is because the chicks are very closely packed on the shed floor and the litter on which they are kept becomes highly contaminated with droppings. The litter is not changed at all until the next batch of broilers is to be brought in. These conditions lead to the chicks developing coccidiosis.

In addition, the lights in the sheds are kept on almost continuously to encourage them to eat more. Far too heavy for their bone structure, these chicks can barely walk by the end of their short lives.

"Broilers are the only livestock that are in chronic pain for the last 20% of their lives," according to a report by poultry expert Professor John Webster in The Guardian in October last year. "They don't move around, not because they are over-stocked, but because it hurts their joints so much".

In addition, according to research conducted by British poultry scientist Dr Christine Nicol, the transport of broilers to the slaughterhouse induces a degree of fear in them roughly the same as that induced by a severe electric shock.

According to a report in the Argus last October, a SA Poultry Association spokesman estimated that up to 18 percent of the nearly 400 million broiler chickens raised annually in South Africa fall prey to disease despite the antibiotics and coccidiostats.

'Humanity for Hens' request to Pick 'n Pay that consumers be offered free-range broilers met with the following response from Mr Ray Murray, General Manager, Perishables:



Supermarkets Western Cape

A division of Pick 'n Pay Retailers (Pty) Ltd.
Reg. No. 73/04739/07

Pick 'n Pay Centre, Corner of Main and Campground Roads, Claremont 7700
P.O. Box 23087, Claremont 7735 • Tel. (021) 683-2140

Telex: 5-21786 • Telefax: (021) 61-5317

Republic of South Africa

Local Directors: J.E.I. Barry, A.F. Baxter (Brit.), M.A.C. Erasmus, G.J. Gibbobs, R. Murray (Brit.)

Dear Louise

...

Slowly, slowly turns the wheel of change and you can be assured that we are keeping our finger on the proverbial Chicken Market and should the consumers in South Africa request a Free Range Broiler, then we will have to look at stocking it and developing suppliers to satisfy that need.

Ray Murray

General Manager: Perishables

Please let's put pens to paper and formally advise our supermarket managers that we DO want food which has been humanely produced.

NO COMPASSION SHOWN FOR THE BROILERS WHICH WOULD HAVE SUPPLIED WOOLWORTHS HAD THEY NOT BEEN SO BADLY BRUISED.

Fractionious chickens leave a gap as Woolies

MARC HASENFUSS
Business Staff

HENPECKED took on a whole new meaning for local Woolworths branches this week as chickens embarked on a heat-induced fighting frenzy on local chicken ranches, leaving the store short of certain poultry products.

The retail chain ran a sizeable advertisement in The Argus this week apologising for

says no to pecked hens

the "shortage of quality chicken".

The shortage of quality birds was the result of the intense heat experienced in the Peninsula over the recent holiday period.

A spokesman for Woolworth's supplier County Fair said the heat had caused sporadic fights among the chickens. The fights, and resultant scratching and pecking, had left many chickens bruised and scarred.

The damage was only cosmetic and would not affect the taste of the chicken but Woolworths refused to sell the damaged birds.

A Woolworths poultry division spokesman said it was only the whole chickens that were unacceptable and that chicken portions "were not that badly damaged".

However, the spokesman said the quality of chicken was improving all the time in line with the onset of cooler weather.

A veterinarian confirmed that chickens were likely to get distressed in hot weather.

The Argus, Business Section, Jan. 18, 1992

HUMANITY FOR HENS LETTER TO WOOLWORTHS CONCERNING THIS NEWSPAPER REPORT:

Miss Elizabeth Strydom
Poultry Technologist
Woolworths
93 Longmarket St
Cape Town
8001

20 January 1992

Dear Miss Strydom

I enclose a copy of an article which appeared in the Argus on January 18, 1992. I really am appalled to think that conditions at County Fair were such as to cause the chickens to become so aggressive.

Since the chickens in question were close to slaughter at the time of the heat-wave, one assumes they were about six weeks old. Anyone who knows chickens will know that a pecking and scratching frenzy is certainly not the normal behaviour expected from a six week old chick (no matter how giant in size due to genetic engineering) or any fowl, for that matter, irrespective of age. One wonders just how great the stocking density in the barn was to spark off such a venting of discomfort and frustration.

Woolworths is renowned for the quality of its food. I urge you to please consider extending the definition of the term "quality" to include the quality of life of the creatures which produce our food as well as those who become our food too. If Woolworths were able to come up with a meaningful "Quality of Life" label on its animal food-stuffs, it would be taking a giant step forward in improving the rearing and living conditions of farm animals in this country.

Sincerely
Louise van der Merwe

No reply has been received as yet

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keeping up with demand, please once again **put pens to paper** or telephone and tell the supermarket managers about this.

Humanity for Hens has been told by Pick 'n Pays' Mr Brian Daitsh, Regional Perishables Buyer, that the free range egg suppliers are afraid that current demand for free range eggs is just a flash-in-the-pan and thus are reluctant to expand their free range operations any further at this stage.

Please let's give our assurance in writing to the supermarkets that our request for humanely-produced food is no flash-in-the-pan but is part of a "green tide" sweeping the world and is here to stay.

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SALMONELLA

It is interesting that growth promoting antibiotics are now found to be a reason for salmonella outbreaks.

According to Professor Alan Linton, formerly a professor of Bacteriology at the University of Bristol: "Most growth promoters actually increase the susceptibility of birds to colonization by salmonellae."

"No doubt the antibacterial nature of the agents alters the composition of the gut flora and thereby makes the birds more readily colonized ... In work done at Bristol/Langford we have shown that greater numbers of salmonellae are found in birds on feed additives and the duration of excretion continues for a longer period thereby increasing the public health risk".

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FREE RANGE EGGS

Humanity for Hens has had many telephone calls from consumers complaining that they have difficulty obtaining free-range eggs, at Pick 'n Pay or Woolworths, because when they get there the shelves are empty.

If you have found that the supply of free range eggs at Pick 'n Pay or Woolworths is not nearly

CANTHAXANTHIN:

THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION IS UNABLE TO ESTABLISH A SAFE LIMIT OF THIS CHEMICAL COLOURANT WHICH IS SOMETIMES INCLUDED IN BATTERY HENS' FOOD TO MAKE THEIR EGG YOLKS A DEEPER YELLOW.

Colourant 'could be toxic', no yolk

DALE KNEEN

Weekend Argus Reporter

SOME eggs bought off super-market shelves contain a toxic substance which scientists believe may cause an accumulation of crystals in the retina of the eye and also possibly damage the liver.

The substance is canthaxanthin — part of the food colourant carophyll, which is fed mainly to battery hens to make their egg yolks the same deep yellow colour as those of free-range hens.

One of several feed additives used by poultry farmers, canthaxanthin is banned in the United States and the World Health Organisation (WHO) has recently called for a total ban.

A report for the WHO said two long-term studies showed carcinogenicity in rats and liver damage when canthaxanthin was given to them in large

doses. The experts also found crystals in human eyes.

Some specialists say any effects on consumers from canthaxanthin would only occur over a long time and would not be of an acute toxicological nature. However, the WHO report has not determined a safe limit.

At least one of the major animal feed companies in South Africa sometimes adds canthaxanthin to feed on request, according to Mrs Louise van der Merwe of Humanity for Hens, a group which fights cruelty in the poultry industry.

"In a battery, no greenery is incorporated in the hens' diet so their egg yolks are often very pale yellow. Battery hens sometimes are fed colourants to enhance the colour of the yolks," she said.

"Because yellow maize is something of a colourant in itself, South African hens are not fed as much canthaxanthin as

their European counterparts, whose staple food is wheat.

"It is used, however, when yellow maize is in short supply for whatever reason, like drought." Mrs van der Merwe said Humanity for Hens had "strenuously, but unsuccessfully" tried to have South African battery eggs analysed for traces of additives.

"We are now attempting to have such an analysis carried out in Switzerland where, I believe, chemical testing of this nature is carried out," she said.

There were 11,25 million laying hens in batteries in South Africa, but it was unknown how many consumed canthaxanthin. Mrs van der Merwe said almost all battery hens in South Africa ate another chemical, larvadex, in summer.

This was fed to battery hens so that their droppings were toxic to fly larvae.

from:
Weekend Argus,
March 14, 1992

THOUGHTS UPON WHICH TO PONDER:

JOHN ROBBINS, President of the EarthSave Foundation and author of *Diet for a New America*, has been nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. He reminds us that:

When we speak of being 'taken under someone's wing', we are correctly referring to a remarkably caring and sensitive kind of nurturing that is part of being a hen.

He says: "Living as divorced from nature as most of us unfortunately do, we may not have much personal experience with chickens anymore, and so may not know what wonderful mothers they are.

"But in many cultures throughout recorded history, the hen has been a symbol of the best kind of mothering. In fact the Romans thought so much of the maternal qualities of the hen that they frequently used the phrase 'son of a hen' to mean a fortunate and well-cared-for man".

He continues: "Our lack of respect for the total earth community is particularly apparent in our treatment of the animals we use for food. Modern agriculture treats these creatures as commodities.

"'Livestock' is seen strictly as a resource to exploit, hardly different from inanimate forms of wealth."

LONDON WEEKEND TIMES, September 28 1991:

A recent survey by Bradford University in Britain showed that there are now more than 3,6 million vegetarians in Britain and providing them with cruelty-free and ideologically acceptable clothing is becoming increasingly big business.

GANDHI: "I hold that the more helpless a creature, the more entitled it is to protection by man from the cruelty of man".

PETITION

A petition for the banning of batteries for laying hens in South Africa is our next strategy.

We feel that this petition will be vital for presentation to the Minister of Agriculture, hopefully with full Press coverage.

I will have to wait for the 'Humanity for Hens' funds to fill up again before proceeding with this.

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Dear Supporters – so far your demand has enabled 7800 chickens laying for Pick 'n Pay in the Cape to escape the battery and feel the sunshine on their backs. Judging by the number of would-be farmers who telephone me asking for free-range criteria, the total number of hens now on "range" countrywide far exceeds this number. In addition, this newsletter has been made possible by all your wonderful support and generous contributions to Humanity for Hens.

PLEASE KEEP UP YOUR VALUED ASSISTANCE.

Sincerely,
Louise van der Merwe



300 eggs laid each and of no further use to the farmer. The leg sticking out was broken.

THE HENS NEED OUR HELP. PLEASE LET US NOT FAIL THEM.

– THANK YOU TO ALL OF YOU –

(Please note that the "letter" purportedly written by me in the April edition of Woman's Value was not in fact written by me. It was written by a well-intentioned supporter without my knowledge. Regrettably a few errors crept into her interpretation of H for H's brochures. Woman's Value will publish a correction in their next issue.)