

What's Wrong with Dairy and Eggs?

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Even though most people have never visited a slaughterhouse, the panic, dread, and terror that await innocent creatures, and the gruesome sights and sounds, which emanate from these hidden "houses of death" are not at all difficult to imagine. What many people do not realize is that these same horrors are the fate of every factory-raised dairy cow and every hen at commercial egg farms.

Milk's got more... cruelty!

A dairy cow's life is a continuous cycle of impregnation, birth, and milking to provide one thing only – a constant supply of milk for human consumption and profit. She will be milked for 10 months out of the year, including seven months of each of her consecutive nine-month pregnancies. Two to three times a day, seven days a week, she will be attached to an electric milking machine, like just another cog in a factory. Then she will be returned to her cramped, narrow, concrete stall to do nothing but await the next milking.



Calf in a veal crate
Without the dairy industry there would be no veal industry.

Within hours after giving birth, the mother's calf will be forcibly taken from her. Male calves will be sold for pet food, killed at just a few days old to make "bob veal," or raised for beef. Others will be auctioned to producers of "formula-fed veal." On veal farms, male calves are confined in small crates to restrict their movement in order to keep their muscles tender. They are fed an iron-deficient diet, which causes severe anemia. This keeps their flesh white, making it more valuable when they are sold for meat. Subjected to total sensory deprivation and stripped of any measure of joy, 20% of veal calves will die before even reaching the typical slaughtering age of 16 weeks.

The female calves will be sequestered in tiny stalls in preparation for their enslavement to the dairy industry. When they are old enough to be artificially inseminated, they will begin the drudgery of a dairy cow. Their mother will be promptly put back into intensive milk production, where she will remain at risk for numerous stress related illnesses, infections, and diseases, many of which can be fatal.

A dairy cow will survive a mere four years of this cruel, hollow life, whereas under natural conditions, she might live up to 25 years. At the end of her days, when she can no longer keep up the demanded level of milk production, drained and exhausted, she will be packed into a crowded truck for transport to her final destination – the slaughterhouse.

After a life of slavery and servitude, her retirement gift will be to end up like her fellow "food animals" – on somebody's plate. All vegetarians, especially those who continue to drink milk while unwittingly clinging to the myth that it is benignly begotten, should be outraged to know that 40% of America's hamburger is made from "spent" dairy cows.



Debeaked hens in "battery cage"

The incredible, inedible egg

On factory egg farms, laying hens are housed in intensive confinement buildings where up to 100,000 birds are crammed into a single warehouse in stacked rows of bare wire cells called “battery cages.” Four to ten laying hens are crowded into each cage about the size of a folded newspaper, unable to stretch their wings, walk, or even roost. Because of this immobility, hens’ feet frequently grow directly around the bare wire of their cages.

To reduce stress-induced pecking and fighting resulting from over-crowding, the hens’ beaks are painfully severed at the tip. This delicate tissue is amputated without the use of anesthesia, using a hot knife or a crude guillotine-like device. Debeaking causes excruciating pain and severe shock and frequently results in death.

Hens are also forced to undergo a production process known as “forced molting.” This common egg industry practice involves denying the birds food and water for days on end in order to shock their systems into another egg-laying cycle. Ultimately, this destroys a hen’s immune system and greatly increases the risk of salmonella contamination of her eggs.

Many people naively view dairy and egg production as less abusive than meat production because milk and eggs do not necessitate the immediate deaths of the cows and chickens that produce them. Clearly, dairy and egg farms are not innocuous industries as so many of us have been led to believe. Their alliance with animal abuse and slaughter is inextricable and undeniable.

What About “Humane” Farms?



Egg laying hen being “debeaked”

“Free-Range” Eggs

Although “free-range” hens are generally given more space to live in than hens kept in battery cages, there is no uniform, industry standard defining how “free-range” hens must be housed. The hens might simply be put into larger cages than their sisters on

factory farms. In addition, it is common for “free-range” layers to be debeaked and force molted just like battery cage layers. Even if “free-range” hens were given all the space they could use and an environment in which they could fulfill normal social and behavioral needs, they will still be killed for meat when their egg production rates drop off, usually after just one or two years. And, like other “free-range” animals, they are subjected to the horrors of abusive handling, transportation, and slaughter.

Another problem inherent with ALL egg production involves the disposal of unwanted male chicks at the hatchery. Because males don’t lay eggs and because egg-laying strains of chickens don’t grow fast enough to be raised profitably for meat, the baby male chicks are killed shortly after hatching. Typically, killing methods include suffocation or being ground up alive. All chicken hatcheries commit these atrocities whether they provide hens for factory farms or “free-range” farms.

There is no incentive for producers to spend time and money to euthanize these male chicks which they consider to be a liability. Hence, male chicks are killed by the cheapest and easiest means available.

“Organic” Milk

For a cow to produce milk she must bear a calf. Most cows on modern dairy farms are forced to have a calf every year. The female calves are used to replace worn out, less productive cows in the milking herd. While dairy cows living on less abusive dairies may live longer and suffer somewhat less than cows in intensive production, ultimately ALL dairy cows end up at the slaughterhouse.

Unlike female calves born to dairy cows, male calves cannot produce milk. Therefore, they are used solely for meat. The veal industry was created as a direct result of the dairy industry. It was developed in order to capitalize on the millions of male calves born to dairy cows each year. This ongoing alliance among the dairy, veal, and beef industries occurs whether the farms are “organic” or intensive, factory-style operations.

*Excerpts from **Vegan Vittles** by Joanne Stepaniak available from Action for Animals!*

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