



## **Fowl Play**

INTRODUCTION: YOU THINK OF THEM AS BREAKFAST FOOD ... A BAKING INGREDIENT ... OR A SOURCE OF PROTEIN. BUT WHEN YOU TAKE THAT CARTON OF EGGS OFF THE GROCERY STORE SHELF, DO YOU EVER THINK ABOUT WHERE THE EGGS CAME FROM? A LOCAL GROUP WANTS YOU TO THINK ABOUT IT.

THEY SAY HEALTH CONSCIOUS AMERICANS WOULD BE "APPALLED" AT THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF EGG-LAYING HENS... ESPECIALLY IN THIS AGE OF ORGANIC FOOD ... FREE RANGE CHICKENS ... AND ANTIBIOTIC FREE BEEF.

FOX FIVE'S ROBY CHAVEZ REPORTS.

(PKG) WHEN YOU THINK OF EGG FARMS, SCENES LIKE THIS LIKELY COME TO MIND.

BUT ANIMAL RIGHTS ACTIVISTS SAY THIS IS OFTEN THE REALITY... HENS CRAMMED IN CAGES, THEIR FEATHERS FORCED OFF, THEIR BEAKS BURNED.

THIS FOOTAGE WAS TAKEN BY THE D.C. BASED ANIMAL RIGHTS GROUP —"COMPASSION OVER KILLING."

ACTIVIST **"She's badly decomposed ... "**

IN THE PAST TWO YEARS, THEY HAVE BROKEN INTO THREE MARYLAND EGG FARMS.

Paul Shapiro, Compassion Over Killing: **"The factory farmers worst nightmare is an activist with a video camera."**

PAUL SHAPIRO FOUNDED THE GROUP... WHICH HOLDS DEMONSTRATIONS ON D.C. STREETS ALMOST EVERY WEEK.

Eric Porter, observer: **"It makes me feel sick. You've got to see it to believe it."**

THEY SHOW THEIR VIDEO ... AND PETA VIDEO OF ANIMALS OF FARM ANIMAL MISTREATMENT TO GET THEIR MESSAGE ACROSS.

Paul Shapiro, Compassion Over Killing: **"Hens who lay our eggs for the most part never see sunlight, never touch earth and never even flap their wings."**

SHAPIRO SAYS HE AND OTHER ACTIVISTS FOUND HORRIFIC CONDITIONS ON ALL THE FARMS — AND ADD THESE FARMS ARE "TYPICAL" OF ONES ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

WHAT APPALLED THEM THE MOST: CAGE SIZE.

A STANDARD CHICKEN FARM GENERALLY HOUSES ABOUT 100 THOUSAND BIRDS ... BUT CAN HOLD UP TO ONE MILLION.

THEY'RE KEPT IN LONG WAREHOUSES IN WHAT ARE CALLED "BATTERY CAGES."

Roby Chavez/REPORTING AND THEY'RE PRETTY PACKED IN THERE. A CHICKEN IS ABOUT THE SIZE OF A FOOTBALL... THEY'RE GIVEN 48 SQUARE INCHES OF LIVING SPACE EACH.. THAT MEANS FARMERS CAN PUT UP TO 8 CHICKENS INSIDE A CAGE THIS SIZE.

BUT BECAUSE OF PRESSURE FROM ANIMAL RIGHTS GROUPS, THE EGG INDUSTRY ASKED FARMERS TO INCREASE THE SIZE OF A HEN'S LIVING SPACE.

TO MEET THAT, ALL FARMERS NEED TO DO IS TAKE OUT "ONE" HEN BUT THEY'RE NOT REQUIRED TO DO IT.

Shapiro: **"The industry right now is trying to come up with new requirements that would only give them a minimal amount of more space that still would not be enough to flap their wings."**

BUT THE EGG INDUSTRY SAYS HENS DON'T NECESSARILY NEED TO FLAP THEIR WINGS AND MAINTAINS MAKING CAGES ANY BIGGER WOULD BE A WASTE OF SPACE.

Ken Klippen, United Egg Producers: **"The research showed it was humane to have chickens in cages. In fact, they would prefer to be in cages."**

KLIPPEN IS SPOKESMAN FOR UNITED EGG PRODUCERS — OR UEP — WHICH REPRESENTS 90 PERCENT OF THE COUNTRY'S EGG PRODUCERS.

HE BALKS AT "COMPASSION OVER KILLING'S" FINDINGS, SAYING HENS ARE ACTUALLY "MORE" SANITARY IN CAGES BECAUSE THEY DON'T PECK THEIR OWN DROPPINGS.

ANOTHER ISSUE — KEEPING DROPPINGS OFF THE HENS SKIN AND FEATHERS.

Shapiro: **"These hens are stacked one cage on top of the next below. Oftentimes, the manure from hens above will fall on top of hens in the lower cages."**

THE U-E-P DENIES IT.

Klippen: **"Every poultry farmer would look to make sure that's not happened .... No one wants feces falling on chickens."**

BUT SOMETIMES, THE "CHICKENS" FALL INTO THE "FECES."

"COMPASSION OVER KILLING" TOOK THESE PICTURES OF HENS "IN" MANURE PITS.

SHAPIRO'S GROUP ALSO DOCUMENTED DEAD AND ROTTING CHICKENS... SHARING CAGES WITH LIVING ONES.

Shapiro: **"And her head is resting on the egg collection belt. You can see the eggs here."**

AND THERE'S VIDEO OF A HEN STRANGLER TO DEATH — APPARENTLY BY CAGE WIRES.

THE EGG INDUSTRY SAYS THAT MAY ACTUALLY BE THE "ACTIVIST'S" OWN DOING.

Klippen: **"When they go in at night, the chickens are resting, the lights are off. When they turn on the lights, chickens are very flighty. They respond to that. They may run to end of the cage, they may hurt themselves because of what these groups are doing."**

BUT ANIMAL RIGHTS GROUPS MAINTAIN NO ONE IS LOOKING OUT FOR THE HENS.

AND THEY'RE RIGHT — THERE ARE NO FEDERAL LAWS PROTECTING FARM ANIMALS.

Shapiro: **"If the abuse these hens endure were forced upon dogs and cats, there would be prosecution in all 50 states."**

IN OTHER WORDS, OWNERS CAN LEGALLY TREAT HENS ANY WAY THEY WANT.

THE HUMANE SOCIETY SAYS THAT'S SIMPLY NOT RIGHT.

Dr. Mike Appleby, Humane Society: **"We feel what is standard in the industry is inhumane .... It doesn't take that much more in political will or economics to give the hens the facilities they need."**

BUT THE EGG INDUSTRY SEES NOTHING WRONG WITH THE WAY THEY'RE DOING BUSINESS.

Klippen: **"Science shows that the production practices, according to our guidelines, are humane and that's what the industry is going to adopt and that's what the industry is going to follow."**

MEANWHILE, COMPASSION OVER KILLING WILL CONTINUE TO FOLLOW THE INDUSTRY ... HOPING THEIR WEEKLY PROTESTS CONVINCING AT LEAST A FEW PEOPLE... TO THINK BEFORE THEY BUY.

CONCLUSION: FARMERS THAT DO GIVE HENS MORE LIVING SPACE WILL PUT A "CERTIFIED ANIMAL CARE" SEAL ON THEIR EGG CARTONS. BUT THAT NEW AMOUNT OF SPACE IS STILL SMALLER THAN THE AVERAGE PIECE OF PAPER. THE CHANGES ARE PURELY VOLUNTARY. THOSE THAT DO VOLUNTEER HAVE UNTIL 2008 TO MEET THE NEW STANDARDS.

This story was posted on February 25, 2003 and has not been updated.