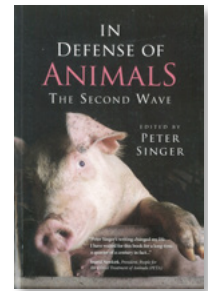


## ENGLISH TEXTS

### Extended Written Texts (Non-Fiction)

Singer, Peter (ed). *In Defense of Animals: The Second Wave*. Wiley Publishing (2006).  
Extracts from chapter 7 – *Brave New Farm?* (pp. 104 & 105). Mason, Jim and Finelli, Mary.



## Brave New Farm?

Jim Mason and Mary Finelli

In our mind's eye the farm is a peaceful place where calves nuzzle their mothers in a shady meadow, pigs loaf in the mudhole, and chickens scratch about the barnyard. These comforting images are implanted in us by calendars, coloring books, theme parks, petting zoos, and the countrified labeling and advertising of animal products.

The reality of modern farmed animal production, however, is starkly different from these scenes. Now, virtually all poultry products and most milk and meat in the U.S. come from animals mass-produced in huge factory-like systems. In some of the more intensive confinement operations, animals are crowded in pens and in cages stacked up like so many shipping crates. In these animal factories there are no pastures, no streams, no seasons, not even day and night. Growth and productivity come not from frolics in sunny meadows but from test-tube genetics and drug-laced feed.

Animal factories allow producers to maintain a larger number of animals in a given space, but they have created serious problems for consumers, farmers, and the environment, and they raise disturbing questions about the degree of animal exploitation that our society permits.

### Factories Come . . . Farms Go

Right under our noses agribusiness has wrought a sweeping revolution in the ways in which animals are kept to produce meat, milk, and eggs. It began in the years before World War II, when farmers near large cities began to specialize in the production of chickens to meet the constant demand for eggs and meat. By supplementing the birds' diet with vitamin D, they made it possible for them to be raised indoors without sunlight. The first mass-producers were able to turn out large flocks all the year round. Large-scale indoor production caught on fast around the urban market centers, but the new methods created a host of problems. Nightmarish scenes began to occur in the crowded, poorly ventilated sheds. Birds pecked others to death and ate their remains. Contagious diseases were rampant, and losses multiplied throughout the budding industry.

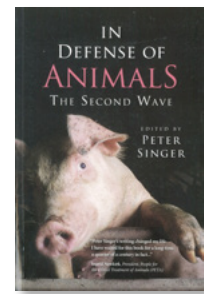
Chickens themselves were not entirely ready for mass-production, and the poultry industry set about looking for a better commercial bird. In 1946, the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company (now A&P) launched the "Chicken of Tomorrow" contest to find a strain of chicken that could produce a broad-breasted body at low feed cost. Within a few years poultry breeders had developed the prototype for today's "broiler" – a chicken raised for meat who grows to a market weight of about five pounds in seven weeks or less. The pre-war ancestor of this bird took twice as long to grow to a market weight of about three pounds.

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The egg industry went to work on engineering their own specialized chicken – the “layer” hen, who would turn out eggs and more eggs. Today’s model lays twice as many eggs per year as did the “all-purpose” backyard chickens of the 1940s. Egg producers also tried to follow the “broiler” industry’s factory ways, but they were faced with a major problem: confined hens produce loads of manure each week. “Broiler” producers had the manure problem with their large flocks too, but the birds were in and out within twelve weeks, and accumulations could be cleaned out after every few flocks. (Today, it can be years between complete litter changes.) Egg producers, however, kept their birds indoors for a year or more, so they needed a means of manure removal that would not disturb the hens or interfere with egg production. Unfortunately for the hens, they found it: producers discovered they could confine their chickens in wire-mesh cages suspended over a trench to collect droppings. At first they placed hens one to each cage, but when they found that birds were cheaper than wire and buildings, crowded cages became the rule. Although crowding caused the deaths of more hens, this cost was considered “acceptable” given the increased total egg output.

Having reduced chickens to the equivalent of living machinery, entrepreneurs and government scientists began looking about for ways to extend factory technology to other farmed animal species. In the 1960s they began developing systems for pigs, cattle, and sheep that incorporated the principles of confinement, mass-production, and automated feeding, watering, ventilation, and waste removal.

About a week before her piglets are due, she is moved to a narrow “farrowing crate.” This device permits her to lie and stand, but she cannot walk or turn around; its purpose is to keep her in position only to eat, drink, and keep her teats exposed to the baby pigs. Soon after birth, the piglets’ teeth are clipped; their tails are cut off, their ears are notched for identification, and males are castrated – all without any anesthetic. In a few weeks, the sow goes back to the breeding area, and the piglets are moved to pens in the “finishing” buildings, where they spend about sixteen weeks until they reach a slaughter weight of about 250 pounds.

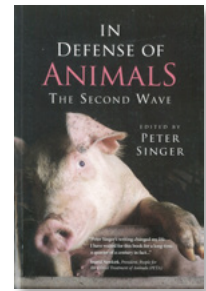
In “beef cattle” feedlots, stress from crowding, exposure, and an unnatural diet adversely affect the animals’ health. Liver abscesses are common in these animals because their digestive tracts are geared more to roughage than to the steady diet of high-energy grain and growth promotants that they receive. Cattle may be dehorned and branded, and males are castrated, all without anesthesia.

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Ducks are raised both for meat and to produce foie gras (“fatty liver”), which involves a most brutal practice. Total confinement housing is the most common method of raising ducks, with thousands of birds kept in a single, dark building. Being aquatic animals, they need to submerge their head in water in order to keep their eyes healthy. But the only water they are provided with is for drinking, from nipple-like devices. The tip of their sensitive bill is burned off with a hot knife, often resulting in chronic pain and debilitation. At about four months of age, ducks used for foie gras are put in small pens or are kept virtually immobilized in individual cages. For two to three weeks, up to two pounds of a corn/fat mixture are forced down their throat through a 12- to 16-inch pipe attached to a motorized pump. The massive quantities of food cause the bird’s liver to swell to up to ten times its normal size, a clinical disease state called “hepatic steatosis.” Many of the birds also suffer blindness, lameness, throat injuries, and ruptured livers.

Increasingly, fish are being raised in cages floating in the ocean. Sea lice proliferate in these crowded confines, boring holes in the skin of fish and feasting on their flesh. Schools of fish inevitably escape through torn nets, flooding, or accidental release during transport. Once free, they spread disease and compete with wild native fish. Genetically engineered fish, made to grow at much faster rates, pose an even greater potential threat.

Many farmed fish species spend most of their lives in steel buildings, crowded into shallow, cement troughs. According to the 2002 Compassion in World Farming report “In Too Deep,” twenty-seven one-foot-long trout share the equivalent of a bathtub of water. At high densities, fish exhibit abnormal behaviors, such as increased aggression; suffer widespread injuries, deformities, and disease; and have high parasitic infestations. Scientific research has shown that fish are capable of experiencing pain and distress. Veterinary medicine for fish is very limited, and pre-slaughter mortality rates are high.

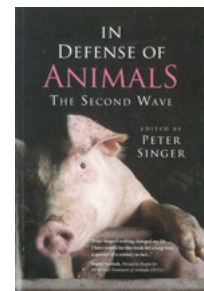
Fish are commonly starved for seven days or more prior to slaughter. To increase shelf life, many are left to suffocate on bins of ice. Others are rendered immobile rather than insensible at slaughter, resulting in their being processed while still alive and fully capable of immense suffering. Stunning methods include clubbing and gassing. Slaughter methods include bleeding and electrocution. Less inhumane methods are being researched.

In confinement, animals are subjected to a variety of stressors. In addition to acute stresses such as early weaning, debeaking, dehorning, tail docking, and castration, other causes of stress in the factory farm are constant. The animals have no relief from crowding and monotony. In a less restrictive environment they would relieve boredom by moving; confined animals cannot. Nor have they relief from social disturbances caused by factory conditions. When animals are crowded and agitated, they are more likely to fight. In the restricted space of confinement pens, less aggressive animals cannot get away to make the instinctive show of submission. With caged birds, for example, each cage contains a small “flock,” with one member at the bottom of the social ladder. This unfortunate bird cannot escape her tormentors. When growing pigs are moved to larger pens and mixed with unfamiliar pigs, fighting can occur, leaving pigs injured or dead.

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In pigs, stress-induced aggression or “cannibalism” takes the form of tail biting, best described by a swine expert for Hog Farm Management back in 1976, when such practices had not yet raised controversy and farming publications were more plainspoken than they are today: “Acute tail biting is often called cannibalism and frequently results in crippling, mutilation and death. . . . Many times the tail is bitten first and then the attacking pig or pigs continue to eat further into the back. If the situation is not attended to, the pig will die and be eaten.”

There are many, many costs in the new factory methods and systems for raising animals, although agribusiness experts would have us hear only their talk of benefits. They are fond of using cost/benefit analyses to justify crowding animals, the use of antibiotics in feed, and converting farming communities to factory towns. They assert that the benefits to consumers from these practices outweigh the risks involved. But if this sort of test is to have any validity in agricultural affairs it must take into account all the costs of factory methods, which harm:

- farmed animals, who are restricted, mutilated, manipulated, and ultimately killed;
- the health of consumers, who are put at much greater risk for both acute and chronic disease;
- the land, much of which is used to grow animal feed or is degraded by overgrazing;
- wildlife, whose habitat is destroyed and who are killed by agricultural predator control programs;
- the environment, polluted by pesticides and toxic animal wastes;
- our limited supply of fossil fuels, their procurement causing environmental destruction and escalating international strife;
- the atmosphere, polluted by fossil fuel use and methane gas, generated by the immense numbers of ruminant farmed animals, adding to global warming;
- prospects for alleviating world hunger, by the depletion of fresh water and other natural resources;
- farm families and rural communities, whose livelihood is stolen by high-tech factory systems;
- citizens, who pay for subsidies that prop up costly systems, and farmers – and ultimately all residents – in other countries who are unable to compete with the “cheap” imports;
- human dignity and self-respect, as a result of carrying on all of the above and on such a massive scale.