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What's Wrong With Eating Turkeys?

Ben Franklin called turkeys “true American originals.” He had a tremendous respect for their resourcefulness, curiosity, agility, and beauty.

The hundreds of millions of turkeys destined to end up on American dinner plates every year are just as interesting, intelligent, and resourceful as their wild cousins. Turkeys have a range of personalities and individual tastes. Some are friendly, while others are shy or temperamental. Unfortunately, on factory farms, they are never allowed to do anything they enjoy, from the moment they're born to the moment they're killed.



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A Recipe for Misery



Turkeys' upper beaks and toes are partially sliced off with a hot blade to stop the overcrowded birds from pecking and scratching each other to death.



This rescued bird is free to roam on a sanctuary.

DID YOU KNOW?

■ Factory-farmed birds are fed antibiotics and have been purposely bred to gain an enormous amount of weight in a short period of time. This leads to painful, swollen joints, crippled feet, and heart attacks.

■ Turkeys slaughtered today live for months in sheds packed so tightly—usually 3 square feet per bird—that flapping a wing or stretching a leg is nearly impossible. They stand mired in waste, the urine and ammonia fumes burning their eyes and lungs.

■ To keep the overcrowded birds from scratching and pecking each other to death, a portion of their upper beaks and toes are sliced off with a hot blade (without anesthetics).

■ Millions of turkeys don't make it past the first week, sometimes drowning in water dishes or starving to death if eating with their mutilated beaks is too painful. Between 10 and 15 percent of turkeys die in the sheds from the horrible conditions.

■ At the slaughterhouse, turkeys are hung upside-down by their weak and crippled legs. Their heads are dragged through an electrified "stunning tank," which often immobilizes them but does not render them unconscious. Many dodge the tank, meaning that they are fully conscious when their throats are slit.

■ If the knife, too, misses its mark, birds are boiled alive in the tank of scalding water used for feather removal.

■ Millions of people become sick and thousands die each year from eating contaminated flesh. Studies indicate that as many as 90 percent of supermarket birds are contaminated with salmonella, campylobacter, or other bacteria.

■ Turkey contains no fiber but has lots of fat and cholesterol. For example, a roasted turkey's leg contains 72 milligrams of cholesterol and is 47 percent fat—more than many cuts of beef.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

■ Give turkeys a reason to be thankful—go vegetarian.

For a free vegetarian starter kit, visit GoVeg.com or call 1-888-VEG-FOOD.

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