

Suppose you were an animal thrown into a truck, driven to a slaughterhouse, and hung by the foot or neck to be slit open for human consumption while having body parts that could be used for your defense amputated. How would you feel? Such cruelty should not have to be endured, yet it occurs every day of our lives, often without the general public being aware of such immoral practices. Such is the case in the turkey industry where these poor turkeys spend their lives in submission, chronic pain, and suffering. In the meantime, producers have sought profit over turkeys' well being.

Are you aware that 252 million turkeys are killed annually to meet consumer demand (USDA)? Most turkeys that reside on farms today spend their entire lives inside of overcrowded and poorly ventilated warehouses that typically house 10,000 to 25,000 birds with only a few square feet of floor space per bird. These turkeys barely have enough air to breathe and room to maneuver. Thus, turkeys have virtually no room to perform normal behaviors and are susceptible to stress and fatal diseases (American Meat Institute).

In the United States, unlike other countries, it is not required that poultry be rendered unconscious before they are slaughtered. Imagine what their thought process must be the moment before they are executed. Furthermore, there is no federal pro-turkey legislation that protects them on the farm, in transit, or during the slaughtering process. So long as consumer demand is met and food is on the table, turkeys' lives shouldn't matter right? Absolutely not! It is an atrocious act to engage in such acts of immorality. For example, in the turkey hatchery disposal some of the miniature turkeys are placed into bags while still alive and suffocate until their imminent death.

The turkey is an animal that deserves to roam free in its natural habitat, but around the 1940s in the U.S., farms began to rear turkeys in intensive confinement for profit and production output. The sad truth is that these turkeys may never see daylight because they are virtually in a prison. They get no phone calls to their other turkey friends to bail them out, and do not enjoy the right to a Supreme Court

case to overturn their confinement. So long as there is no legislation protecting turkeys, this practice will continue. The problem with confinement is that it stimulates an increase in aggression, disease, and stress in turkeys. Overcrowded sheds also results in bad air quality. As bacteria breaks down accumulated litter and droppings, the air quality depreciates because it becomes polluted with ammonia, dust, and bacteria. As a byproduct, these poor jail birds constantly inhale harmful circulating air and are more susceptible to respiratory infections. The worst part is that even though these conditions are clear and present to factory farmers, they readily accept the fact that many of these turkeys will indeed die from injuries, stress, and disease. Their practices and methods remain the same in order to bring in profit for their own use at the expense of crippling and demoralizing a turkey for life.

Turkeys are now being intensively bred to produce the most meat in the shortest possible amount of time, using the least amount of resources such as food to provide to the birds (Hocking). Here is where the law of diminishing returns becomes a factor. By definition, the law of diminishing returns states that as more investment in an area is made, overall return on that investment increases at a declining rate. In other words, after a certain period of time, effectiveness of a certain act will diminish in its output value. Because turkeys are bred to grow at a very rapid pace and heavier, their body skeletons simply cannot keep up with this pace (Whitehead). Consequently, turkeys often live their lives with a walking deficiency and yet are cruelly put to sleep so that we may enjoy a nice Thanksgiving dinner. This is something that I am not thankful for.

How do turkeys cross the country and make their way onto a hot steaming plate at the dinner table? By transport. It is important to note that United States’ federal law does not protect turkeys during the transportation process. Therefore if a turkey becomes injured, there is no such thing as workers’ compensation or any injury benefits that the bird will receive. The turkey must fend for itself and hope to complete the trip alive once the farmer reaches the desired destination. These virtually

defenseless turkeys are held by each wing, which can dislocate the bird’s humerus from the shoulder joint, and are slung into crates which will be loaded onto the back of trucks. These crates are exposed to the elements because they have openings on each side. Suppose that it was raining or snowing outside. What about the turkeys? Will they be protected and safe from the harsh and unforgiving elements? Not in the least. There is a good possibility that the turkeys may die while on the trip from diseases such as heart failure or hypothermia.

The final round of torture and suffering has come—the slaughter process. If these poor and innocent turkeys manage to hang on to life while in the crate, they are then transported out of the trucks, heaved onto conveyers and hung upside down on shackles around their ankles. Shackling is quite painful for these birds because of their skeletal problems they constantly endure. Does this sound familiar to a type of hostile bondage that the United States once had during the 19th century known as slavery? The slaves, much like the turkeys, had to endure harsh punishments such as whippings and backbreaking labor. Some were poorly fed and inadequately clothed and housed by their masters. They often suffered from disease from working in the fields for minimal to no pay. History can repeat itself. And it doesn’t just apply to human beings either—turkeys are included. There is a process called electric stunning that involves a current-filled water bath (Boyd). The turkeys are taken into the bath and are given a painful shock, which is used to immobilize the bird right before their execution. After being mercilessly stunned, their throats are slashed and they bleed to death (Weeks). However, workers are not perfect and sometimes miss cutting the throat at the right position. This means that turkeys may be conscious as they enter tanks of scalding water intended to loosen the birds’ feathers.

This crisis is in desperate need of an immediate response. Therefore, I propose to create a new organization called the National Association for the Prevention of Turkey Abuse (NAPTA). This national

organization will be comprised of members of the major animal organizations such as the National Humane Society, PETA and others.

NAPTA will be divided into two party factions who will each create its own government and elect a president for their party. However, unlike political party elections where one candidate becomes victorious, NAPTA will have co-presidents, one from each party. They, along with their governments who are comprised of animal organization members, will perform the following functions: (1) propose a bill that would increase taxes on the wealthiest ten percent of American citizens which would go to the government. Once that money is in the hands of the government, NAPTA will lobby for a second legislative bill to use up to 50 percent of tax money from the wealthy to fund animal research, rescue projects and its advertisements to promote turkey abuse prevention. (2) NAPTA members will sign a pledge that encourages them to change their eating habits towards a more vegetarian diet. By purchasing meats, especially turkey, consumers are directly supporting the factory farm abuses that occur daily. Therefore, members pledge to reduce their meat consumption by at least 25 percent. (3) NAPTA will partner with high ranking officials, resource officers and policemen to investigate and search farms across the country for animal cruelty, particularly the turkey. Those farmers who are found guilty of engaging in turkey mistreatment will be severely fined and that money will go towards funding NAPTA. (4) all members will receive pamphlets that discuss turkey mistreatment. In addition to pledging to gradually reduce meat consumption, members will also pledge to distribute these pamphlets and become active in the fight against turkey abuse. (5) presidents from both party factions will serve as the respected spokesperson for their group. They will avidly perform lectures across the country, primarily in churches, public and private schools, colleges and universities. And finally, (6) members will meet with city planners to advocate allotting more space for farms to operate. This is intended to increase the amount of space that turkeys have to maneuver. And once the truth has been exposed of the horrific

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"Gobble Gobble?"

cruelties of these birds, maybe America will wake up not to the sound of the rooster in the morning, but to the crying call for help from the turkey: "Gobble! Gobble!"

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