

I sit in my room on a Friday night, at my computer. My mind wanders to the topic of animal cruelty, and I watch the videos and read articles about the cruelty of the meat industry. Tears begin to form in my eyes, but I hold them back. I think about how one can stop animal cruelty, and how we can make our world a better place to live in. So I write. I write about everything I know, and everything that comes to my mind. I write with the hope to eventually change the world, little steps at a time, and to eventually get rid of the cruelty we have.

What is animal cruelty? Animal cruelty is described as the “treatment which causes unacceptable suffering to animals” There are several examples of animal cruelty such as puppy mills, hunting, hoarding, and dog fighting. However, I would like to focus on the meat industry; more specifically the turkey industry. I have been a vegetarian since the day I was born. At first, I was a vegetarian because of my religion. However, as I grew older, and became more informed and knowledgeable, I began to realize the truth behind the meat industries, and how they inhumanely and cruelly treat their animals. The turkey is a large bird that is usually domesticated for food and is one of the most popular birds in America. It is important to know all the hidden facts behind the turkey industry, so that one can be completely informed and educated on the subject.

So why did I pick turkeys as my topic of discussion? 45 million turkeys are killed every Thanksgiving, and this is just on one day of the year. It’s an unbelievable yet unavoidable fact. A lot of people think of Thanksgiving as a day to spend time with their family and enjoy, however, not many people think about what food they’re eating. Eating turkey is a tradition that began in 1621, when the Pilgrims had their first meal in America. According to the National Turkey

Federation, 91% of Americans consume turkey every Thanksgiving. Even outside of Thanksgiving, about 300 million turkeys are consumed a year.

So what exactly happens in these cruel turkey industries? Turkeys spend the majority of their short lives stuck in sheds with little room. The turkeys are inseminated artificially and bred to gain large amounts of weight. The conditions of most turkey factories are severe. After they are born, blades are used to cut off parts of their body such as their toes. Then, they are given an injection, typically on their neck. Next, they are crammed into crowded spaces, despite any injuries that they may bear. In some factories, there are 25,000 turkeys crammed into one shed. The conditions are so inhumane that approximately 10% of the turkeys don't survive the next stages of the slaughterhouse. After about 4 months, they are hung on a conveyor belt. Their necks are slit, and they are put in burning hot water as an attempt to remove their feathers. This should is what usually happens at turkey slaughterhouses.

An example of a cruel slaughterhouse is the House of Raeford Farms, the seventh largest slaughterhouse in America. It kills over 25 thousand turkeys a day. There are many inhumane practices at this slaughterhouse. One worker used the turkeys as punching bags. Other workers stuck their hands into the turkey, and squeezed them to take their eggs as a joke, while the supervisor didn't intervene. Some workers had a "game": one worker would throw the turkey up to another worker, who would kick it back down. A lot of the birds arrive at the slaughterhouse in poor and harsh conditions; many workers harm or injure these hurt turkeys. A large portion of the turkeys eaten are horribly mistreated at slaughterhouses, and this example should illustrate what actually occurs in the slaughterhouse.

Now, I'm not asking us to abruptly stop eating turkey. I merely wish that one day, we will be able to live in a world where there is no cruelty. If humans have the right to a humane life, why can't animals have that right, too? Why must they have to face such injustice and inhumanity, when they are a part of our society, too? I strongly believe that if us as people, take small steps, we can eventually cease any cruelty to animals. Our small steps can make a big difference in changing our corrupt world.

There are several steps that we as individuals can take to prevent the cruelty to animals. First of all, **educate** others. Sharing your knowledge on this information will greatly help save our turkey population. I once made brochures about the cruelty of the bird industry, and put them in the mailboxes of the people in my neighborhood. I included in my brochure that I would be coming by in a week to pick up any donations to a local industry that supported the prevention of cruelty to birds. Within a week, I had collected money from about 20 people, totaling about 100 dollars. There are 36 houses in my neighborhood, and this shows how much people are willing to contribute once they've been educated.

Second, **do not consume** turkey, or **lower your amounts of turkey** per year. Doing so can significantly reduce the amounts of turkeys that are brutally murdered a year. There are a large number of vegetarians in the US who have adapted to a healthier lifestyle. Vegetarianism promotes the prevention of cruelty to animals, and is beneficial. Third, **support** an animal group. Doing so will help you become more informed and updated. I joined few groups, like the ASPCA (The Animal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) the Animal Rescue Site, which both have a lot of useful info. I receive newsletters often from these groups; this was very useful for me, and I became very aware of what was going on in the animal community. Fourth,

try **an alternative**. If you eat turkey a lot, maybe you could try to substitute it with turkey slices made of soy or turkey made of tofu. I'm a vegetarian so I buy a lot of soy alternatives: they're healthy and humane, and they taste good. Fifth, **take action**. This may seem like a given, however there are not many people who do take action. The action you take doesn't have to be huge. I have saved many baby birds that I find sitting on the street with injuries. I have taken care of them, and nurtured them until they were able to fly and start their own life. Even small actions like these can make a change. One summer, I decided that it was time for me to help the animal community, and I did so in a way that impacted me strongly, and taught me about the power of our actions.

One day in the hot summer of 2009, my best friend and I were sitting on the swings of our park. We were bored with nothing to do, and were trying to come up with ideas. Suddenly, an idea came to me. I proposed that we start a fundraiser for animals, so we began to prepare. We gathered all the eager and keen kids of the neighborhood, and set up work stations in my neighborhood. One of our friends had a lot of trinkets and items that he didn't want. So we thought of a reasonable price for each one. We chose our support group next, the ASPCA (The Animal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals), a highly reputed organization. We made signs, and everyone had a role. The kids of our volunteer group ranged from three to twelve years old. The younger kids held the signs, and put the money in a box; the older kids spoke to the customers, and bargained for higher prices. We advertised and sold items in the summer daily for one week, for hours a day. At the end of the one week period, we had earned a total of 400 dollars! This was a magnificent and life-changing experience for me, and it taught me that even the smallest steps can make the biggest difference. It also taught me that people, no

matter what age, can have the greatest impact, and we all work together collaboratively, we can put an end to this animal cruelty.

My passion for animals and my action towards the prevention of animal cruelty have motivated me to write this essay. I will one day excel in a field that involves animals and their rights. I have strong feelings towards injustice of any sort, and will always take action to defend what I love.

So are you ready to take a journey? Come on and take my hand; even though your small efforts may not seem helpful now, they will one day have the potential to make a huge and magnificent change to our universe. Let's make a change.

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