



Federation of Indian Animal Protection Organisations

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FIAPO collaborates with the Sunday Guardian to reveal the truth of poultry factory farms in India

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Poultry Factory Farms in India subject poultry birds to intensive confinement, antibiotic use and deprive them of any opportunity to engage in their natural behaviour. This leads to severe physiological and psychological damage to their health, untreated waste from these farms compromise the environment and use of antibiotics have a negative impact on human health. FIAPO has worked together with the Sunday Guardian to bring out an exhaustive article on the issue of poultry factory farms in India, with the aim of sensitizing the public to the plight of the unfortunate animals who are subjected to horrific living conditions daily in these farms.

Read the article here: http://www.fiapo.org/view_news.php?viewid=13118

Full Text below:

The chicken you eat may be making you drug resistant **Sunday Guardian**

The chicken being served on your table may be making you resistant to antibiotics. Poultry birds in India are being fed low doses of antibiotics through their water and/or food to make them grow faster and to increase their weight. Many of these antibiotics are similar to those consumed by human beings to fight infections. Bacteria in the poultry birds (as in humans) start resisting antibiotics when exposed to low doses of drugs over a long period of time. During an undercover visit to some poultry farms in Haryana, this newspaper witnessed firsthand the manner in which these birds were being fed antibiotics apart from being treated with cruelty, by confining them inside battery cages. This raises their stress and cholesterol levels to a dangerous high, thus having a direct effect on the consumer.

Several countries in the European Union have discontinued the practice of feeding antibiotics to the birds and battery cage systems.

At one of the farms in Haryana's Sonapat district, the owner Rohtas (name changed) engages his entire family in the business of breeding broiler chicken. His wife and two daughters who study in college join in tending to their flock of nearly 8,000 hens. Rohtas

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claimed that it was a must to subject the hens to antibiotics on a regular basis as the entire flock can be felled by a disease if even one of them gets infected. "When we see some hen show symptoms of disease, we give the entire flock dosages of whatever is the correct antibiotic. We use Roxacin, Amprol, Diloxin or Anerocin. We pour the antibiotics into the overhead water tanks and it keeps flowing out into the only available source of water. It is expensive to spend on antibiotics, but it is far more expensive if my entire flock is wiped out," said Rohtas. However, he refused to disclose the labels of the antibiotics so these reporters could not access the correct commercial name or manufacturer of the liberally used antibiotics or growth promoters.

Rohtas' farm did not have any battery cages, so the broilers were free and on the ground. However, the poultry enclosure was packed to capacity with broilers. The hens looked sluggish and drugged. Despite Rohtas' usage of antibiotics, the walls of the enclosures were lined with some dead and sick birds.

No such "freedom" existed in the other poultry farms these correspondents visited. They had battery cages, where each enclosure held approximately 2,000 hens in tightly packed, small cages. A single row of several battery cages has three tiers and each row contains at least 1,000 hens. Each cage in the row holds approximately five-six hens, with each hen being held in a space smaller than the area covered by an A4 paper. Poultry farm owner Ashok (name changed) is also a teacher in a school in Haryana and his poultry farm has four huge enclosures that hold thousands of hens that lay fertilised eggs which produce chicks.

The light bulbs shine 24X7 and the hens lay eggs while still being held in a space that allows them no scope to step, walk, fly or even flap their wings. The fertilised eggs laid by these hens are harvested and then sent to incubation chambers filled with such a high concentration of noxious chemical vapours that make breathing difficult.

"The feed we buy for the hens is laced with the requisite amount of antibiotics. The hen eats the feed and stays protected. We spray medicines in the incubation facility to protect the incubating eggs that will soon be hatched. We do not allow outsiders to visit the facility and you are an exception because of the contacts you arrived through," said Ashok. He also said that the fertilised eggs that are not put through incubation get routinely diverted to the egg consumption market without a single cautionary word.

Another farm owned by Harinder (name changed) stocks 3,500 hens in each enclosure, and he owns a flock of 20,000 hens. "I purchased 10,000 chicks during the monsoons. Due to some unexplained illness, I lost 7,500 of the chicks in one spell and could barely save the rest. How can I make do without the antibiotics?" he asked these correspondents.

The overall condition of the enclosures at Harinder's farm was deplorable. The pit at the bottom of the cages was covered with heaps of hen excreta and the air reeked of thick acidic fumes. However, the workers were not wearing any protective gear, leaving them vulnerable to possible skin allergies and lung infections.

"Since factory farming of poultry (mass production) is the norm across India, every piece of meat you eat will give you a small dose of antibiotics. A small dose is not enough to kill bacteria, and that's exactly the problem. The bacteria that aren't killed ultimately become stronger and they no longer respond to higher doses of antibiotics when you need them," said Dr Nandita Shah, nutritionist and founder-director of Tamil Nadu-based Sharan India, an organisation that works for human health and reconnection to animals.

"The antibiotics used in poultry are present in the broiler chicken and the eggs when they are sold in the market. No amount of washing is going to cleanse the chicken or eggs of the dangerous amount of antibiotics it is laced with," said Dr Shah.

Nuggehalli Jayasimha, managing director, Humane Society International, India, said that factory farming is hazardous at several levels. "Confinement of hens in poultry farms make the area susceptible to an outbreak of bird flu and also food borne diseases like typhoid that are caused by the salmonella pathogen," said Jayasimha.

The pathogen-related scare is not unreal as lakhs of Americans fell sick in a single incident caused by salmonella-contaminated liquid eggs in 1994. Only three years ago, half billion eggs were recalled in the US after they were found to be contaminated with salmonella

that came from chicken feed.

Shweta Sood, campaign coordinator, Farm Animals, Federation of Indian Animal Protection Organisations (FIAPO) said, "One can only imagine the sheer horror of spending a lifetime, as the hens do, in such a cramped space. How can eggs or meat coming from hens that suffer from osteoporosis, fatty liver haemorrhagic syndrome, cage layer fatigue and other damages from the cruel and barbaric treatment, be healthy for us, the end users?"

Manjunath Marappan, the co-founder of India's first free range poultry farm called The Happy Hens Farm, said that free range farming is a healthier alternative to factory farming. "Factory farming has brought down the quality standards of the eggs and chickens that are produced," said Marappan. He also said that there are natural and healthier ways to treat birds that are ill, rather than subjecting them to antibiotics. "It is better to include herbs like brahmi, basil, sweet flag, turmeric etc. These herbs are very nutritive and they boost the immunity of the birds," said Marappan.

Intensive confinement in poultry factory farms in India, such as keeping egg laying birds in battery cages, or broiler birds in sheds violates Chapter III, Section 11 of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, based on which, the Animal Welfare Board of India has recommended to all the state and Union Territory governments to phase out the use of battery cages by 2017.

"The condition of the hens in battery cages is similar to prisoners of war. Hence, we have urged the governments to phase out battery cages and improve the quality of life of the poultry birds," said Major General (Retd.) Dr R.M. Kharb AVSM, chairman, Animal Welfare Board of India.