The Rotten Truth
A Coast-to-Coast Egg Industry Exposé

Film for Thought
MFA’s New Award—Winning Documentary

Thanking the Monkey
Exclusive Interview with Karen Dawn

Vegan A Go-Go
Dishing Up Veggie Delights

VICTORY! Boca Goes Egg-Free
Dear Friends,

Farm animals are vulnerable to cruelty and exploitation in a way that other creatures are not. This is the simple reality that propels our obligation to protect them. Confronting cruelty and lifting humanity up to its fullest potential—compassion and respect for all beings—is the driving principle behind Mercy For Animals’ tireless work. This is our commitment that unifies our diverse group of supporters nationwide, and it is this heartening dedication that fills me with joy with each passing accomplishment we achieve together.

My commitment to ending needless cruelty was strengthened this past December when I myself became a victim of senseless violence. During the pre-dawn hours in downtown Davenport, Ohio, I was brutally attacked by a complete stranger in a hate crime, simply for being who I am—a gay man. I was brutally attacked by a complete stranger in a hate crime, simply for being who I am—a gay man.  During the pre-dawn hours in downtown Davenport, Ohio, I was brutally attacked by a complete stranger in a hate crime, simply for being who I am—a gay man. During the pre-dawn hours in downtown Davenport, Ohio, I was brutally attacked by a complete stranger in a hate crime, simply for being who I am—a gay man.

When I was in pain, the pain of others became more real—less an abstract concept or hypothetical situation. Pain, whether experienced by a man, woman, child, dog, or pig, is head-pounding, teeth-grinding, “make-it-stop,” real. Following my experience, I found myself connecting and empathizing on an even deeper level with the animals physically and emotionally abused at the hands of humans.

It is humanity’s shame that we exploit and abuse billions of animals simply for being “other” than us—cows, pigs, chickens, turkeys, lambs and other animals unfortunate enough to be labeled by many in society as “food animals.” Far too many of these vulnerable creatures spend their entire lives never knowing kindness or freedom, spending day after day after night after night locked in tiny cages and in crowded sheds that stink of feces, being thrown around, roughly handled, maltreated without painfulkillers and violently killed— all unnecessarily and without prosecution.

If we truly aspire to live by the golden rule—treating others the way we would like to be treated—then we are compelled to put ourselves in the shoes (or hooves, feathers, or fins) of those who are different from us. Perhaps once we see the world through their eyes, as they search for the same things we all do in life—companionship, comfort, and joy—then expanding our circle of compassion to include them won’t seem like such a noble task, but simply a commonsense one.

For a kinder tomorrow,

Nathan Runkle
Executive Director

Mercy For Animals (MFA) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit animal advocacy organization that works to help protect farm animals, a irreplaceable individuals who have morally insignificant interests and hence rights, including the right to live free of unnecessary suffering. MFA is dedicated to establishing and defending the rights of all animals.

Glimmer of Justice for Turkeys

History was made in early February, when a state grand jury returned 11 felony indictments against workers caught on tape committing terrifying acts of cruelty at an Aviagen Turkey, Inc. plant in Greenbrier, West Virginia. Until these indictments were issued, there had never been a felony-level prosecution in the U.S. for abuses to birds bred and killed on factory farms.

The indictments declare that the workers stomped on turkeys’ heads, twisted the turkeys’ necks, and slammed at least one turkey’s head against metal scaffolding. The undercover investigators who sparked the indictments also reported employees pounding as many as 450 turkeys to death with 2×4 planks, and committing a sickening list of other atrocities, including jamming a broomstick down a turkey’s throat and injecting turkeys’ heads with sulfuric acid.

The impact of this case is likely to be felt far and wide. According to a New York Times report, German-based Aviagen Turkeys supplies most of the breeding stock used by turkey operations in the U.S.

Vegan Demand Now a Serious Market

This year, meatless product leader Lightlife Foods plans to reduce the number of eggs it uses in its products by 166,000. The company will also be adding five new vegan items to its product line, including new versions of its Veggie and Mushroom burgers, which became entirely egg-free on June 1, 2009.

Moreover, conventional food ingredient manufacturers are increasingly aware of this new consumer purchasing trend. Back in January, the press release of Technomic’s New Product Development was headlined “There’s a Vegan Food Revolution afoot.”

Vegan food products, now perceived by the food industry as mainstream, are no longer pushed off to the “specialty” section of grocery stores, department stores, specialty sports stores, and restaurants. In addition, the vegan movement is increasingly influential in the food industry, as the number of vegan options that large food manufacturers are introducing is steadily increasing.

According to a recent poll of 2,000 vegan consumers, conducted by Technomic, the most common reason people go vegan is “animal welfare.” Other strong motivations include: reduction in environmental impact, ethical treatment of animals, concerns about animal cruelty, and health.

Yet, there is still a long way to go. The vegan market is at the early stages of development, and with the growing interest in plant-based foods, the vegan movement is poised to continue its growth.

Mounting Evidence of Meat and Dairy Health Risks

Researchers at UC San Diego and University of Dundee recently discovered that meat and dairy products import to their consumers a static acid called GC, which provides a unique metabolic gateway through which a particularly dangerous strain of meat-borne E. coli can spread its toxins.

Humans do not naturally produce GC, but when GC is ingested, it gets deposited throughout the human body, forming the medium that the toxic E. coli bacterium need in order to harm the human gut, liver, blood vessels, and kidneys. The research findings estimate that people who eat GC-laden meat and dairy products are approximately 10 times more susceptible to this serious E. coli infection than are people who do not.

A report linking meat and dairy to prostate cancer has also made news in recent months. University of Oxford scientists reviewing 12 different studies say that men with high blood levels of IGF-1, a growth factor carried in meat and dairy products, face up to a 40% increase in their risk of getting prostate cancer.

Feeding Operations Must Report Greenhouse Gas Emissions

An attempt by the departing Bush administration to exempt concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) from having to report their greenhouse gas emissions was defeated. As a result, CAFOs emissions stand a good chance of being seriously factored into U.S. strategies to combat global warming.

The EPA describes CAFOs as places where “animals, feed, manure and urine, dead animals, and production operations” take place within “a small land area.” According to a study recently published in the American Journal of Agricultural Economics, with each doubling of the number of animals held in CAFOs, within a given county, there is a 7.4% increase in human infant mortality, very likely attributable to toxic levels of hydrogen sulfide and ammonia emitted from the CAFOs.

Lamenting the tendency of policymakers to play down the environmental problems caused by animal agriculture, the top official of the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change recently told the New York Times that humans should eat less meat in order to reduce their carbon footprints.

Contributors

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Vegan baking” possibilities, Gum Technology recently announced that it has developed an egg-free alternative to its product line, including new versions of its “egg-free” products. Last year, Lightlife Foods plans to reduce the number of eggs it uses in its products by 166,000.

Citizens Bank Park in Philadelphia, for example, is adding meatless options to its menu, including vegan choices such as tofu, tempeh, and seitan. Another sign of the growing demand for vegan food is that sports arenas are becoming places where vegans can now eat. Last year, the Charlotte Bobcats announced that it would offer vegan options at its games, and several other teams have followed suit.

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According to a report by the Meat Industry Association, the average American consumes 150 pounds of meat per year, and that number is expected to increase by 50% by 2050. This trend is concerning, as meat production has been linked to a number of health problems, including heart disease, diabetes, and certain types of cancer.

However, the trend towards veganism is growing. According to a recent study by the Vegan Society, the number of vegans in the United Kingdom has increased by 57% over the past five years.

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Jennifer Kaden is a powerhouse for animals who repeatedly goes above and beyond the call of duty to be their voice. Since becoming MFA’s Cleveland Regional Coordinator, she has effectively worked with other volunteers to organize numerous vegan dinners, lectures, video showings, and 50 leafleting events where over 33,000 brochures on veganism have been distributed. Her positive “can-do” attitude, ever-present smile, and encouraging words to volunteers make her an exemplary leader and community organizer.

CL: Can you describe your involvement with MFA?
JK: I found out that there was an MFA chapter getting started in Cleveland in 2005. I started going to the dinners and lectures and helping out wherever I could with promoting events, bringing food to the dinners, and helping set up and clean up. I started setting up vegetarian displays at area libraries and distributed MFA’s Vegetarian Starter Kits. I took over as Cleveland Regional Coordinator during the summer of 2007. As such, I coordinate our monthly vegan dinners and lectures, leaflet at concerts, colleges and community events, hold screenings of animal rights documentaries and organize protests.

CL: How did it feel to receive MFA’s “Hope Award” at the Ohio Celebrating Compassion Gala?
JK: I felt honored to be the recipient of the Hope Award and I especially like the name of it… “Hope.” That’s something which is hard to hang onto once you become aware of the enormous amount of animal suffering in the world. But I do have hope, because I’m continually inspired every time I learn about someone going vegan or vegetarian because of something they learned because I’m continually inspired every time I learn about someone going vegan or vegetarian because of something they learned about someone going vegan or vegetarian because of something they learned about someone going vegan or vegetarian because of something they learned about someone going vegan or vegetarian because of something they learned about someone going vegan or vegetarian because of something they learned about someone going vegan or vegetarian because of something they learned about someone going vegan or vegetarian because of something they learned about someone going vegan or vegetarian because of something they learned about someone going vegan or vegetarian because of something they learned about someone going vegan or vegetarian because of something they learned. I would also encourage anyone wanting to get involved with MFA or animal rights activism.

CL: Any advice for people who want to get involved with MFA or animal rights activism?
JK: There are so many ways to make a difference for animals so never think that small things don’t matter because they often do! An excellent book I would recommend for someone who wants to know where to start is Stalking the Roots by Mark Hawthorne. It’s a wonderful resource for people motivated to get active, but unsure where to begin.

CL: Why did you become a vegan?
JK: I picked up the book Vegan: The New Ethics of Eating by Erik Marcus, which was part of a vegetarian library display at the Cleveland Heights Library. I never knew before what unbelievable suffering animals endure in the egg and dairy industries and by the time I had finished that book I decided I had to be vegan.

CL: How did you make the leap to being an activist for animals?
JK: In 2004 I attended Farm Sanctuary’s “How Down” conference in Watkins Glen, NY and they screened the documentary Peaceable Kingdom. This was the first time I had witnessed the reality of what it takes to turn a sentient being into a commodity. I had never before seen animals truly terrified and I saw them behaving no differently than we would in a similar situation. I connected so profoundly with their suffering. Between seeing Peaceable Kingdom and meeting the rescued farmed animals, I felt an overwhelming need to get involved.

It All Ads Up

In October 2008 Boatner’s got some food for thought, courtesy of MFA’s pro-vegetarian ad campaigns. Replicating a highly successful campaign launched in Chicago, 600 ads ran on Boatner’s train and bus systems, exposing the cruelty of factory farming. As pigs, calves and chickens stared out from cramped cages, the ads asked riders, “How Much Cruelty Can You Swallow?” These ads were viewed over 20 million times.

MFA also cosponsored two pro-vegetarian billboards in Michigan. One showed animals crammed into cages and urged passersby to “Help End Animal Cruelty.” The other declared, “Animals are friends, not food” and featured a chicken perched on a woman’s shoulder. In 2009 MFA cosponsored a third Michigan billboard, featuring the adorable faces of a piglet and a puppy side-by-side. It asked drivers, “Why love one but eat the other?” The billboards amassed an estimated total of 90,000 views daily.

Party Animals

In December MFA held its first-annual Celebrating Compassion Gala in Chicago and Columbus. The Galas were a resounding success, filled with hope-inspiring awards ceremonies, live music, mouth-watering vegan hor d’oeuvres and desserts, cruelty-free silent auctions and more. Venues included the stunning rooftops of the beautiful Chicago Cultural Center, and the elegant and trendy Landmark’s Gateway Theatre in the Columbus art district.

Both Galas featured awards ceremonies to honor local activists, artists, progressive businesses and political leaders for their life-saving animal advocacy work. Highlights included Alderman Joe Moore’s acceptance of the “Compassionate Leadership Award” for his efforts to ban the sale of foie gras in Chicago. Newly elected Ohio congresswoman, Mary Jo Kilroy, also accepted an award for her outspoken efforts to protect animals and local communities from cruel and environmentally dangerous factory farms.

Veg Out In NC

The pro-veg movement is gaining momentum – even in North Carolina, a state known for animal agriculture. MFA’s Asheville, NC chapter responded to the state’s growing need for veg-friendly resources by creating a new website, VegNC.com.

Modeled after successful vegetarian resource sites for other states, such as MFA’s VegIllinois.com, VegNJ.com and VegPA.net, this site is chock-full of restaurant and grocery store listings for the cruelty-free consumer. VegNC.com also lists animal advocacy and veg-friendly social networking organizations.

Restaurant listings range from chains such as Panera to Ashville’s 100% vegan Firestorm Café, offering hearty sandwiches, bagels and homemade desserts, on French Broad Luscious Chocolates – an elegant chocolate and wine lounge, offering vegan truffles and hot chocolate. Listings include menu descriptions, hours and locations.

Year In Numbers

2008 was a monumental year for MFA. Dedicated activists conducted over 400 outreach events, including 40 humane education lectures, 40 vegan dinners and 200 leafleting events. Activists distributed over 300,000 pieces of pro-vegetarian literature.

Our high-profile campaigns and investigations generated over 230 television and print news stories and ChooseVeg.com, MFA’s one-stop vegetarian resource site, attracted nearly 2 million visitors.

MFA conducted two undercover exposés of California battery-cage farms: Gemberle Enterprises and Norco Ranch, California’s largest egg farm. Our Gemberle exposé resulted in Trader Joe’s ending its supplier relationship with the cruel farm. One month following our Norco Ranch exposé, Californians passed Proposition 2, a measure that banned battery cages in the state.

Thank you to all of our amazing volunteers and supporters who made these life-saving achievements possible.

Activist Spotlight: Jennifer Kaden

Position with MFA: Cleveland Regional Coordinator
Home town: Cleveland Heights, OH
Email: jennifer@mercyforanimals.org
Favorite Quote: “…animal liberationists …identify with the powerless and the vulnerable – the victims, all those dominated, oppressed and exploited. And it is the non-human animals whose suffering is the most intense, widespread, expanding, systematic and socially sanctioned of all.” – Henry Spira

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CL: Any advice for people who want to get involved with MFA or animal rights activism?
JK: There are so many ways to make a difference for animals so never think that small things don’t matter because they often do! An excellent book I would recommend for someone who wants to know where to start is Stalking the Roots by Mark Hawthorne. It’s a wonderful resource for people motivated to get active, but unsure where to begin.

I would also encourage anyone wanting to get involved to attend MFA or other animal rights events in their area or make the trip to a conference to meet others of like-mind. I guarantee you’ll leave feeling inspired and empowered.

CL: Any favorite resources for people who want to go vegan or learn about farmed animal issues?
JK: My favorite websites are: ChooseVeg.com – Hundreds of cruelty-free recipes and information about the impact of factory farming on the environment, health and animals. HumansMyth.org – Created by the director and producer of Peaceable Kingdom, this website educates consumers about the myth of humanely-raised animal products, such as “free-range,” “cage-free” and “humane certified.” VeganOutreach.org – Download and distribute numerous pro-veg publications or order from VO’s catalog. Publications are available in English, Spanish and Chinese.

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Q: How can I follow a nutritious vegan diet without busting my food budget?

One of the biggest misconceptions about a vegan diet is that it is too expensive to maintain, and that is simply (soy) baloney! Here are some tips for eating a healthy vegan diet while staying on a budget.

Cook For Yourself

It seems that my generation and those younger are so spoiled by convenience foods that we balk at the idea of having to boil a pot of water. Relying on pre-packaged items, such as expensive frozen meals, or dining at pricey restaurants can send your weekly food budget through the roof. If you are scared of venturing into the kitchen, help is on the way. There are so many wonderful cookbooks, websites and podcasts that teach everything from properly cutting an onion to assembling a three-layer cake. For free recipes and cooking videos, check out ChooseVeg.com.

Stick With the Basics

Beans, grains and produce are low-cost and should be the backbone of any healthy vegan diet. A two-pound bag of dried beans costs around $1 at my local grocer and will easily feed me and my husband for a few meals. Grains and produce are affordable and require zero preparation. Full of protein and fiber, beans should be used often. Rice, pasta, and nontraditional grains, like millet and quinoa, are also inexpensive. When omnivores ask me, “Well, what do you eat?” as if I am dramatically limiting my options by choosing to go cruelty-free, I take pleasure in naming foods of which they have never heard. The platters of international cuisine, whether it is Indian, Asian, Mexican or Middle Eastern, is not only tasty but really inexpensive. Chana Masala, an Indian dish, is one of my all-time faves that costs well under $5 to make and feeds me for a few meals.

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Make A List

List making is in my genes. My dad is a chronic list-maker. Wish lists, “to-do” lists, “books to read before I die” lists – I enjoy making them all. The grocery list is no exception. Taking the time to create a shopping list for a week’s worth of meals can be daunting at first, but you will get the hang of it. Just remember, you are saving money!

If you are watching your budget, chances are your friends are too. Planning a potluck in which everyone brings a vegan dish is a great way to enjoy a yummy meal, while only investing the time and money for the one dish you prepared.

Just remember, you work hard for your paycheck, so it’s ok to spend $5 on dessert at your favorite vegan bakery every now and again. Plus, you are helping a vegan establishment stay in business. So, indulge! A lovely alternative to tomato sauce, this tasty pasta will have you wishing you doubled the recipe so you could have leftovers. If you can’t find vegan sausage, try throwing in half a small can of beans (your choice) or nothing at all.

Pasta, enough for two people
1 medium onion, chopped
1 cup vegan sausage, sliced
1 tbsp oil
1 1/4 oz can unsweetened pumpkin purée
½ tsp salt
½ tsp black pepper
¼ – ½ cup vegetable stock (optional)
½ cup vegan cheese, grated (optional)
Boil the pasta in a large pot of salted water. While pasta is cooking, in a large saucepan on medium-high heat, sauté the onions and “sausage” in the oil until onions are translucent. Add the pumpkin, salt, and pepper and simmer for 5 – 7 minutes. This sauce can be quite thick, so to thin it out, add ½ cup stock at a time until you’ve reached the desired consistency. When pasta is cooked, drain noodles and return to pot. Add the sauce to noodles and toss well. Serve immediately, garnished with “cheese.” Makes 2 large or 4 small servings.

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Featured Product

Thanks to Crispy Cat candy bars, you’ll always be able to satisfy your candy cravings! Asheville-based Tree Huggin’ Treats has a line of candy bars to treat the taste buds of cruelty-free candy lovers everywhere. Crispy Cats are organic, vegan, kosher, and completely delicious! They come in three flavors that rival any dairy-based bar: roasted peanut, toasted almond, and the new mint coconut. All three flavors are available in the U.S. and Canada in stores and online. VegNews readers voted Crispy Cat “Product of the Year” and “Best in Show” in 2007, so unwrap one for yourself and indulge in the guiltless pleasure of a candy bar with a conscience.
I found a live hen with her body trapped under her cage’s front wall, draped over the egg belt with eggs piling up behind her head. I dislodged her, took her to a worker and said, “She’s not dead.” The worker grabbed the hen by the head and swung her in circles several times before throwing her onto the concrete floor, where she gasped and convulsed for nearly two minutes.

“Mark,” a Mercy For Animals’ investigator, documented these ghastly incidents at Norco Ranch in the southern California town of Menifee. Norco is the state’s largest factory egg farm, confining over 2 million hens, and a major supplier to companies such as Land O’ Lakes and Eggland’s Best.

For four weeks during the summer of 2008 Mark worked undercover at Norco – living a lie to expose the truth. Each day he entered the facility wired with a pinhole-sized, covert camera. Working alongside other factory employees, Mark secretly documented the depraved reality of modern egg production. The images he captured on film would later shock consumers nationwide.

The following is a mere snapshot of the horror documented at Norco:

• Birds confined in wire cages so small that they couldn’t walk, perch or stretch even one wing.
• Ill birds neglected to die on top of dead piles – denied veterinary care, food and water.
• Workers killing birds by grabbing their heads and swinging them in circles – an attempt to snap their spines which often resulted in prolonged deaths.
• Blood, feces and insects on hens, egg collection belts and eggs.
• Birds left to die entangled in cage wires unable to reach food or water.
• Decomposing carcasses in cages with birds still laying eggs for human consumption.

The “ranch” was actually a collection of warehouses, each approximately the length of a football field. Indoors, running nearly the length of the warehouses, were rows of birds, packed body-to-body in barren, wire cages. Their eggs rolling down the slanted cage floors onto conveyor belts, the hens had been reduced to mere cogs in an egg-production machine.

Mark’s diary entries describe four to six birds per cage no larger than a standard file cabinet drawer. Birds forced to live in such overcrowded conditions often incur severe bodily trauma and trauma-related deaths. Mark observed numerous broken bones and wings, including the grotesque case of a hen with her leg bent backward nearly 45 degrees. He also witnessed a hen trampled so severely that her internal organs spilled out of her vent and through the wire flooring of her cage.

Overcrowding can lead to further unimaginable horrors. Due to the unnaturally large volume and size of eggs that commercial laying hens are genetically manipulated to produce, they are susceptible to uterine prolapse – a condition in which the uterus herniates outside of the hen’s vent during egg-laying. Because the hens cannot escape their cage mates, their prolapses are vulnerable to cannibalism from the other birds.

In order to discourage cannibalism and reduce the damage caused by aggressive pecking – a behavior induced by overcrowded conditions – egg producers sear off part of the birds’ sensitive beaks with a hot blade. This mutilation, which cuts through nerves, is performed without anesthesia. Debeaked birds frequently develop painful tumors on the remaining parts of their beaks.

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• Birds left to die entangled in cage wires unable to reach food or water.
• Decomposing carcasses in cages with birds still laying eggs for human consumption.

The “ranch” was actually a collection of warehouses, each approximately the length of a football field. Indoors, running nearly the length of the warehouses, were rows of birds, packed body-to-body in barren, wire cages. Their eggs rolling down the slanted cage floors onto conveyor belts, the hens had been reduced to mere cogs in an egg-production machine.

Mark’s diary entries describe four to six birds per cage no larger than a standard file cabinet drawer. Birds forced to live in such overcrowded conditions often incur severe bodily trauma and trauma-related deaths. Mark observed numerous broken bones and wings, including the grotesque case of a hen with her leg bent backward nearly 45 degrees. He also witnessed a hen trampled so severely that her internal organs spilled out of her vent and through the wire flooring of her cage.

Overcrowding can lead to further unimaginable horrors. Due to the unnaturally large volume and size of eggs that commercial laying hens are genetically manipulated to produce, they are susceptible to uterine prolapse – a condition in which the uterus herniates outside of the hen’s vent during egg-laying. Because the hens cannot escape their cage mates, their prolapses are vulnerable to cannibalism from the other birds.

In order to discourage cannibalism and reduce the damage caused by aggressive pecking – a behavior induced by overcrowded conditions – egg producers sear off part of the birds’ sensitive beaks with a hot blade. This mutilation, which cuts through nerves, is performed without anesthesia. Debeaked birds frequently develop painful tumors on the remaining parts of their beaks.
of their beaks. Mark documented several birds with beaks mangled due to botched debeaking. Some of their top beaks were half the length of their bottom beaks, making it difficult to pick up food.

In addition to extreme and often fatal injuries, Mark observed advanced stages of untreated disease. In one instance he noticed a pool of blood in a pile of feces below one of the cages. The hen above it had a hardened, swollen rear abdomen and a vent covered in pus. He also discovered numerous hens with eye infections so severe that entire sides of their faces were swollen and their eye sockets filled with pus.

Contributing to the overall repulsiveness of the environment, maggots squirming the floors and bloodied, feces-covered and mite-infested eggs and egg collection belts were common sights at Norco.

Many veterinary professionals agree that distress and suffering are inherent to the battery-cage system and that incidents such as those documented at Norco are not isolated; for example, according to Dr. Kate Hurley, DVM, who also holds a degree in Preventative Veterinary Medicine from University of California, Davis: “Battery cage systems cannot provide humane conditions under the best of circumstances: suffering is inevitable when the hens cannot even take a few steps or stretch their wings without running into wire cage walls or another bird.”

MFA’s investigation at California’s largest egg producer came at an opportune moment in our nation’s history. A coalition of animal advocates had succeeded in gathering enough signatures in 2008 – over 800,000 – to place the “Prevention of Farm Animal Cruelty Act,” commonly referred to as “Proposition 2,” on the November ballot for direct vote by Californians. Prop 2 was a modest measure, requiring California farmers to provide animals with enough space to stand up, lie down, turn around and stretch their limbs or wings.

The release of MFA’s shocking investigative findings at Norco Ranch and another mega California egg farm, Gemberle Enterprises, earlier last year drew extensive media coverage to the Prop 2 debate. Exposing the cruelty at Norco Ranch was particularly damning to the industry, as Norco’s parent company, Moark LLC, was the second-highest contributor to the campaign against Prop 2.

On November 4th, Prop 2 not only passed in a landslide victory of 63%, but it became the most popular ballot initiative in California history. Passage of this historic measure made California the first state in the nation to ban battery cages for laying hens, the third state to ban veal crates for calves and the fourth to ban gestation crates for breeding sows. Clearly, consumer opposition to animal cruelty is mounting. With the passage of Prop 2, California has accelerated the momentum and set the stage for similar legislation in other states.

Passage of Prop 2 certainly merits pride of accomplishment and hope within the animal advocacy movement, but the statute is not without its limitations. It does not require farmers to provide animals with outdoor access or enough space to walk, run or fly. Nor does it prohibit other routine factory farming abuses, such as brutal handling, denial of veterinary care or mutilations without anesthesia, such as castration, tail docking and debeaking. Furthermore, the measure does not take effect until 2015.

Enactment of Prop 2 is an important step in the right direction, but as a subsequent MFA investigation on the opposite U.S. coast revealed, there is still much work to be done.
Mark also observed dilapidation throughout the facilities, such as broken cage wires sharply protruding into cages, placing the hens at risk of gouging or impalement. Elsewhere a partially collapsed ceiling with her face submerged in the manure. Mark documented one hen lying in a pile of liquid feces with dead hens. Each had a live hen among the dead. One of the live hens was mostly buried under dead hens. Both were visibly breathing and the one lying under dead hens made an audible call. On another occasion he witnessed a worker throw dead hens and then a live one into a trash can, the live hen screeching and flapping as she was thrown. Mark brought this routine abuse to the attention of workers and supervisors but was met with callous disregard from all. One day Mark witnessed a worker throwing dead birds out of a trash can into a pile of liquid feces. The worker replied bluntly, “Don’t matter. Leave it there.”

Mark documented 150 cases of birds trapped in the wire of their cages or under leading trays, left to suffer the constant physical assault of their cagemates, whose sharp nails scratched into their skin, leaving many with bloody, open wounds. One live hen had become trapped under her cage’s front wall with one side of her face pinned against a moving egg belt. The side of her face, including her eye, was encrusted in egg yolk and dirt. Another hen’s wing had become caught on a cage wire and her torn skin had regrown around the wire.

On nearly a daily basis, he documented live hens discarded in trash cans and on dead piles to die without food, water or veterinary care. Such hens were often buried under the corpses of other birds, some documented as alive and suffering for more than several days. One occasion Mark observed two trash cans overflowing with dead hens. Each had a live hen among the dead. One of the hens was mostly buried under dead hens. Both were visibly breathing and the one lying under dead hens made an audible call. On another occasion he witnessed a worker throw dead hens and then a live one into a trash can, the live hen screeching and flapping as she was thrown. Mark brought this routine abuse to the attention of workers and supervisors but was met with callous disregard from all. One day Mark witnessed a worker throwing dead birds out of a trash can into the back of a truck. He said to the worker, “Sometimes there’s live birds in there.” The worker replied bluntly, “Don’t matter. Leave it there.”

In March MFA submitted an extensive petition to the Animal Welfare Program of the Maine Department of Agriculture (AWP), urging that criminal animal cruelty charges be brought against the employees and management of QEnE. In response to the petition, AWP procured a search warrant and state investigators raided the farm on April 1st. During the 8-hour raid, state investigators collected further evidence of animal cruelty, including 70 dead hens. Four state workers who participated in the raid developed burning sinuses, coughing and tightness of breath and immediately sought medical attention for ammonia exposure – the same searing and choking exposure to which the hens at QEnE are subjected 24-7.

Workers at QEnE also frequently botched attempts to snap the hens’ spines for a swift kill, causing them extreme pain and prolonged, agonizing deaths instead. Independent experts in animal welfare and veterinary medicine reviewed the video footage from MFA’s undercover investigation and issued written statements denouncing QEnE.

Dr. Temple Grandin, perhaps the world’s leading expert on farmed-animal welfare and advisor to the USDA, harshly condemned QEnE, stating, “The place is a filthy, disgusting mess and very poorly maintained. The chickens look awful as well.” A veterinarian for the state of Maine concurred, stating that the hens at QEnE are “tortured and deprived.”

THE REALITY BEHIND “QUALITY EGGS”

One month following the passage of Prop 2 in California, Mark traveled over 3,000 miles east to the quiet town of Turner, Maine. Off the back roads of this sleepy community sits an infamous giant of the egg industry, Quality Egg of New England (QEnE) – one of the nation’s largest producers of brown eggs. QEnE confines over 3.5 million hens in battery cages. QEnE’s barns were like dangerous vaults. As far as Mark could see were aisles of cages, stacked three-tiers-high and crowded with distraught birds, four to six per cage, often clambering and climbing over one another in an effort to find space. Beneath the tiers of cages, running the length of the facilities, were deep pits, packed with manure. The choking stench of rot and ammonia permeated the air. Mark frequently observed live hens walking around in the pits, having fallen from their cages or been kicked into the pits by workers to slowly die from starvation or dehydration.

Some of the dead hens in the pits had drowned in liquid excrement. Mark discovered one hen lying in a pile of liquid feces with his face submerged in the manure. Mark also observed dilapidation throughout the facilities, such as broken cage wires sharply protruding into cages, placing the hens at risk of gouging or impalement. Elsewhere a partially collapsed ceiling exposed hens to the bitter winter cold. During the entire 6-week investigation, the ceiling remained in disrepair.

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Release of the investigative findings, which captured national headlines and generated hundreds of television, radio and print stories, prompted Eggland’s Best to drop its QEnE distributor, Radio Foods, which in turn dropped QEnE. Radio Foods subsequently announced that it would phase out battery cages within ten years, making Radio the first egg producer in the nation to adopt a battery cage phase-out plan and representing perhaps the largest corporate policy change ever to result from an animal cruelty investigation.

The state of Maine continues to process evidence in the QEnE cruelty case.

RAIDING THE HENHOUSE

Dr. Sara Shields, Ph.D.
Animal Welfare Scientist,
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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The abuses Mark recorded at Norco and Quality Egg of New England are consistent with those documented by MFA and other animal advocacy groups at egg farms across the country—a strong indication that such abuses are the industry norm, not the exception. The best step we can take to prevent farmed animal cruelty is to adopt a vegan diet, free of all animal products. The sole reason that the meat, egg, and dairy industries exist is consumer demand for their products.

One may question just how much of an impact an individual consumer can have on the lives of farmed animals. The answer is heartwarming: every American who abandons an animal-based diet in favor of a vegan diet will spare the lives of over 50 animals per year. In the particular case of the egg industry, according to USDA estimates, most Americans consume an average of 259 eggs per year. A laying hen endures an average of 34 hours in deplorable conditions to produce just one egg; therefore, most Americans could spare laying hens over 8,800 hours of suffering per year, simply by eliminating eggs from their diets.

While the benefits of a vegan diet to animals are reason enough to make the change, the benefits extend beyond humane concerns; for example, veganism is an excellent—arguably the best—diet for our health. Decades of research tell us that consumption of animal products is directly linked to higher rates of cancer, heart disease, obesity and diabetes, while plant-based diets, in particular vegan diets, are associated with reduced risk of chronic disease and even reversal of such disease.

A vegan diet is also the most earth-friendly diet. A growing number of governmental, university and environmental agencies, ranging from the United Nations to the Pew Commission, acknowledge the serious threats that animal farming poses to the planet. According to conservative estimates, animal farming consumes eight times more fossil fuel than plant-based farming. Meat production also requires far more water than plant-based farming and is responsible for more greenhouse gas emissions than all of the world’s cars, trucks and planes combined.

Making the initial change to a vegan diet is becoming easier all the time. Many grocery stores are carrying a wider variety of fruits, vegetables and grains, as well as vegan alternatives to everything from cheese, sour cream and mayonnaise to comfort foods, such as “no chicken” nuggets, “meatballs” and potstickers. Such products are increasingly labeled “vegan” for consumer convenience. As animal rights activists continue to expose the cruel truth behind animal agriculture, consumers increasingly awaken to the power of their consumer choices to prevent animal suffering. Driven by the realization that each meal is a vote for compassion and against cruelty, the vegan movement is gaining unprecedented momentum—steadily moving our society toward a day when all animals are treated with compassion and respect.

The serious threats that animal farming poses to the planet, ranging from the United Nations to the Pew Commission, acknowledge the need to reverse our current trajectory. According to the Heart of America Heart Association, heart disease and diabetes, the two leading causes of death in America, are associated with increased risk of chronic disease and even reversal of such disease. A vegan diet is also the most earth-friendly diet. A growing number of governmental, university and environmental agencies, ranging from the United Nations to the Pew Commission, acknowledge the serious threats that animal farming poses to the planet.

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Mock meat powerhouse BOCA Foods, widely known for its mouthwatering meatless “chik’n” nuggets and patties, veggie burgers and hot dogs, announced in mid-March plans to remove eggs from all of its products. BOCA spokeswoman, Sydney Lindner, stated, “The BOCA brand will be eliminating eggs in all of its products by the end of this year. We anticipate all BOCA products will be egg-free in 2010.”

BOCA’s compassionate decision came less than two months after Mercy For Animals joined forces with Compassion Over Killing, the Animal Protection and Rescue League and consumers of conscience nationwide to encourage the company to leave eggs out of its products.

This coalition of animal advocates not only initiated discussions with the company about discontinuing its use of eggs – citing the extreme confinement, violent handling and painful mutilations and deaths suffered by laying hens on factory farms – they also launched BOCAEggFacts.com as part of the BOCA egg-free campaign.

Check-full of illuminating “Egg Production Facts” and a photo gallery exposing the startling reality of battery cage egg farming, the website garnered vast consumer support for the campaign and was instrumental in its success.

BOCA’s commitment to stop using eggs demonstrates progressive industry leadership in offering humane and healthier food choices. Other companies, including Morningstar Farms, Gardenburger and Lightlife Foods, have also taken important steps in reducing the number of eggs in their products. Clearly, there is a growing movement for companies to take action to prevent cruelty to animals and meet the needs of an expanding vegan consumer base.

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Please take a moment to thank BOCA for making this compassionate decision by sending an email to boca@casupport.com

Boca Announces Egg-cellent news for Hens

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4 Simple Ways You Can Get Active for Animals

Be an Online Activist

Turning your MySpace or Facebook profile into an animal rights education center for all to see is a quick, easy, and free way to spread the message. Simply by displaying a pro-vegetarian or animal rights web banner or video, you can reach thousands of people with ease. An array of powerful videos to embed on your website is just a click away at YouTube.com/MercyForAnimals.

Another effective technique is to turn every email into a statement by adding a link to ChooseVeg.com and including a thought-provoking quote from one of history's many animal-friendly great thinkers, such as Albert Schweitzer, Isaac Bashevis Singer, or Albert Einstein, who once said, “Nothing will benefit human health and increase the chances for survival of life on Earth as much as the evolution to a vegetarian diet.” Google “vegan quotes” for inspiration.

Leaflet

Distributing literature in busy public places like college campuses or outside music concerts is a great way to educate others about animal cruelty and the benefits of a plant-based diet. Hit the streets with MFA’s new Why Love One but Eat the Other? brochure, or our popular Another Inconvenient Truth leaflet – perfect for environmentally focused events. See page 23 for ordering info.

Organize a Video Showing

Many documentaries about the issues surrounding animal protection and factory farming are available to order online or from your local library. Consider hosting a video screening in your community at a library, church, theater, college or your home to share this information with others. There are numerous excellent documentaries, such as The Witness, Fowl Play, Meet Your Meat, Earthlings, and The Emotional World of Farm Animals.

Visit TribeOfHeart.org and click on the “Get Involved” link for a guide to holding successful screenings.

Veganize Your Cafeteria or Local Restaurants

If you’re a student, consider organizing a campaign to get more vegan options into your cafeteria. You could also approach local restaurants and urge them to offer vegan options. Compassion Over Killing offers The Complete Guide to Restaurant Outreach, available at cok.net. Just click on the “Library” link.

For six more empowering ideas on how to take immediate action to help animals, including more detailed info and links, visit MercyForAnimals.org/Action.
**Cl: What advice would you give to our readers on how to get media outlets to show more balanced and positive media coverage on animal issues?**

KD: You’ve thrown me another softball book pitch as there is a detailed section in Thanking the Monkey about attracting positive media. Basically we need to befrend the media – give them interesting stories, and show appreciation for good coverage.

**Cl: What is next for you?**

KD: I am going to walk my dogs. And I am working on a new book and a radio show, both focused on the connection between caring for the animals, the earth, and ourselves.

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**CL: Could you share what your book says on why people should care about the welfare of fish?**

KD: How did we get the idea that fish are dumb? Anyway, if that were reason to eat them, we could solve our human overpopulation crisis in a flash – starting with my legislators. I share articles about people who have trained their goldfish to do terrific tricks, and about fish who make their way through courses they learned 11 months earlier. I describe groupers who swim with and playfully rub themselves up against scuba divers. Plus, modern research has quashed the idea that fish don’t feel pain. Given all that, why wouldn’t we care about their welfare?

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**CL: What is DawnWatch.com and how did you come up with the idea?**

KD: DawnWatch sends media story links to activists, encouraging them to respond to the media with positive feedback for animal-friendly coverage. The power of feedback is immense. People who have heard me lecture have probably heard my “NY1 story,” which describes that power and the genesis of DawnWatch; others will find it in the last chapter of my book.

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**CL: Your book has fantastic information about the ethical problems of so-called “humane” animal products. Could you share with us the concerns about organic milk and cage-free eggs?**

KD: Some of the cartoonists in my book do a better job than I can with that information. Bizarro’s Dan Piraro provided a cartoon headed, “Bazikill the Lunch Lady,” which shows a woman who has just delivered milk to some first graders. Giving them a chorey wave goodbye, she says, “And remember, kids – not only is milk a fattening health hazard, but when you’re drinking milk, it means a sad and lonely calf somewhere isn’t!” Bazikill indeed! People forget that mammals don’t produce milk until they are ready to give birth.

So every year a cow, organically fed or not, is impregnated and then has her newborn taken from her, so that we can drink the milk she made for him. Even Temple Grandin, an effective welfare worker but surely no animal rights activist, tells us that the worst sounds she has ever heard are mother cows bellowing, sometimes for days, for calves who have been taken toveal crates. I have seen video of a cow pathetically running after a departing trailer that held her newborn. It’s heartbreaking. And it’s avoidable. Soy lattes rock!

Dairy cows become hamburgers. Organic dairy cows become organic hamburgers. Slaughter sucks, either way. Last year on CNN we saw cows being electrically prodded and dragged by forklifts to slaughter – dairy cows. A slaughterhouse passes USDA standards if 95 percent of the animals are effectively stunned on the first go. That means five percent may not be. Every day cows get hump up and travel down the slaughter line fully conscious. When people think about those things, some might start to question how badly they need dairy foods, organic or not, when there are so many great alternatives.

Onto eggs: The book includes cartoons from Dan Farley, one of which has a hen telling another, “Menopause is easy. After you stop laying, they kill you.” Cage-free is not menopause-free. And hens, like all birds, are exempt from Federal Humane Slaughter laws. In Thanking the Monkey I describe some of the common methods of cheap kill, not the funniest section of the book.

I share articles about people who have trained their goldfish to do terrific tricks, and about fish who make their way through courses they learned 11 months earlier. As for hens’ lives: Often people hear the words “cage-free” and envision Old McDonald’s farm. But the vast majority of cage-free hens live in huge sheds, on concrete, or in their own excrement, never scratching and pecking at the earth or seeing and feeling the sun.

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**CL: Animal rights can be a heavy subject, but Thanking the Monkey covers it in a colorful, star-studded and humorous manner. Why did you choose this approach?**

KD: Our movement already had terrific books. But when a friend started work at a publishing house division aimed at “The 18-35 celebrity-driven market” it hit me that we had a hole – and I set to filling it. I wanted my book to be fun and packed it with cartoons, cool art and celebrity photos and quotes, so that it would seem inviting and positive media-lobbying opportunities. By subscribing to DawnWatch’s Media Alerts, you will be informed of animal rights stories that serve as perfect media-lobbying opportunities.

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Karen Dawn talks about the Media, Celebs, and Fish

DawnWatch founder and author Karen Dawn speaks with MFA’s Freeman Wicklund about her book Thanking the Monkey: Rethinking the Way We Treat Animals and her efforts to make the media more animal-friendly.

Thanking the Monkey

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**Fowl Play**

**Doctor in the Henhouse**

Dr. Holly Cheever, Fowl Play's featured veterinarian, provides insight into laying hen suffering that cannot be captured on film. She describes the noxious, irritating, "stinking-high levels of ammonia waste" to which the hens are exposed 24-7. She explains that ammonia waste causes severe infections of the eyes and respiratory tracts, not only to chickens, but to all of us, and informs us that "even though hens and roosters are exposed to ammonia, it is the hens that are exposed to ammonia 24-7."

Fowl Play also cites studies that find that despite hundreds of generations in captive, unnatural environments, chickens and other animal species retain the behaviors and needs of their wild ancestors. For example, a factory-farmed hen, if removed to an area with trees available, will immediately fly up and perch, just as her ancestor, the Red Jungle Fowl, does in the trees of Southeast Asia. This is just one of many striking comparisons. Balcombe draws between captive-bred chickens and their ancestors.

**Factory to Sanctuary**

Fowl Play shares the heartwarming stories of the extraordinary people who give lifelong sanctuary to rescued farmed animals. Mindy Mallet is founder of Sunrise Sanctuary, a beautiful farm sanctuary in Ohio. "Hope," a hen rescued by FMA from a factory farm garbage can, has lived happily at Sunrise for years. Before founding her sanctuary, Mallet had focused on dog and cat rescue. She realized, however, that there were many organizations devoted to companion animals, while few were concerned with farmed animals. This realization inspired her to change the focus of her rescue work.

Liz and Garret Perry are the rescuers of a lovely hen they named Consuela. The Perrys brought her home after they found her injured and wandering in a landfill—presumed dead from toxic gas asphyxiation and dumped with a truckload full of gassed dead hens and garbage from a nearby factory farm. Consuela is now fully recovered and thrives in her new home complete with green grass, a cozy barn and chicken companions.

Balcombe also cites studies that describe the little-known yet irrefutable fact that knowing is necessary to appreciate chickens as individuals. As she puts it, “Chickens are amazing.”

**Putting Our Ethics on the Table**

Fowl Play introduces viewers to a small-town, athletic vegan family and follows along as the family grocery shops, enjoys a visit to a local vegan bakery and prepares meals together. This family exemplifies veganism as a healthy, satisfying diet that is feasible for everyone.

**From Trash to Treasure**

While the majority of factory-farmed animals meet sad and ugly fates, some, like Consuela, a lucky little hen rescued by Liz and Garret Perry, experience the blessing of human kindness. Spotted by the couple amid the chaff and waste of the Deer Track Landfill in Wisconsin, Consuela bore evidence of the ruthless conditions of factory life. She was unconscious, missing many feathers and suffering dehydration.

Upon questioning a landfill worker, the Perrys learned that she was likely a survivor from a group of chickens gassed and dumped there by Crescent Fresh Farms, Inc. Herds labeled “open” by the industry, meaning that their egg production has declined enough to render them unprofitable, are routinely asphyxiated in CO2 gas chambers. Herds that manage to survive the process often linger for days, suffering until they die on their own. Thankfully for Consuela, though, this is one story that ends happily.

**Director Interview**

Q: What motivated you to become a documentary filmmaker?
A: Video is one of the best mediums for communicating animal issues to the public. People generally respond strongly to footage of mistreatment. Hopefully telling these animals’ stories in documentary form will open people’s hearts to their suffering.

Q: What do you ultimately hope to accomplish through your films?
A: I would like to generate discussion of our ethical obligations to farmed animals among consumers and politicians in their debates. In this way I hope to see farmed animal rights become a mainstream social justice issue.

Q: What was your proudest moment?
A: A footage from my first film, “Wegmans Cruelty,” aired on national network television, and I was really proud about that. Lately I hope Fowl Play gets the same sort of coverage!
compact fluorescent light bulbs and energy efficient appliances. But, please don’t neglect the need to choose vegetarian meals. A 2006 study done by researchers at the University of Chicago, an environmental organization, showed that switching to a hybrid car could reduce more greenhouse gas emissions than all the world’s cars and trucks combined. Meat production is a leading cause of global warming. Learn how raising farmed animals creates more greenhouse gas emissions than all the world’s cars and trucks combined.

According to a 2006 study, an environmental organization concluded, “Go Vegetarian.” The left sleeve bears the MFA logo.

Choose Vegetarian “Girls Baby Cap T”
$15 (XS, S, M, L)
Available in white or black.

This pro-vegetarian hipster T features the etchings of the human rib cage, a dotted line delineating the stomach, and a swallowed chick with attitude declaring, “Not Cool.” A larger chick rests on the back bottom corner of the T who concludes “Go Vegetarian.” The left sleeve bears the MFA logo.

Choose Vegetarian “Beef Cuts 101 T”
$20 (XS, S, M, L)
Parodying the classic Beef Cuts diagram used by butchers, this edgy new T gives a brutally honest look at what’s truly for dinner.

Choose Vegetarian “Fowl Play DVD”
$10
MFA’s new, award-winning documentary featuring footage from the country’s largest egg facilities, as well as interviews with animal rescuers, undercover investigators, and animal care professionals.

Choose Vegetarian “Global Warming Brochure”
10/$1
This new MFA brochure exposes another inconvenient truth: meat production is a leading cause of global warming. Learn how raising farmed animals creates more greenhouse gas emissions than all the world’s cars and trucks combined.

Choose Vegetarian “Puppy & Piglet Brochure”
10/$1
Complete with graphic factory farm and slaughterhouse photos, shocking facts, and info dispelling the “humane” meat myth, MFA’s newest brochure challenges readers to show compassion for all animals, not just cats and dogs, by going vegetarian.

Choose Vegetarian “Vegetarian Starter Kit”
4/$1
MFA’s 32-page Starter Kit is packed full of mouth-watering recipes, helpful tips, and thought-provoking information on the health, ethical, and environmental reasons to go vegetarian.

Choose Vegetarian “Logos T”
$15 (XS, S, M, L, XXL)
Show your support for animal liberation with MFA’s logo apparel. Features the MFA logo on 100% cotton, sweatshop-free garments made by American Apparel.

Choose Vegetarian “Eat Kind Bag”
$5
This new, lightweight canvas bag is great for trips to the grocery store. Nude color with “Eat Kind, Choose Vegetarian” in green print, accompanied by a cute pig holding a sign with the MFA logo.

Choose Vegetarian “Messenger Bag”
$25
For school, work, and travel — MFA’s messenger bags give you go-anywhere capabilities with ease. Perfect size for laptops and textbooks. Bag made from black canvas by Anvil.

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Choose Vegetarian “Exp. Date”

Choose Vegetarian “Signature”

Choose Vegetarian “Mail order and payment to: Mercy For Animals, 3712 N. Broadway, Ste. 560, Chicago, IL 60613”

Choose Vegetarian “Total”
Pigs, cows, and chickens experience pain, suffering, frustration, pleasure, and joy just like our beloved dogs and cats. Yet, to produce burgers, nuggets, omelets, and hotdogs, billions of farmed animals are subjected to extreme confinement, painful mutilations, violent handling, and merciless slaughter. Please widen your circle of compassion to include all animals by leaving meat off your plate.

Choose Compassion. Choose Vegetarian.

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