

Negative consequences of factory farming

[Environment](#), [Animals](#)



What comes to your mind when you hear the word farm? Probably the image of cows grazing the grass fields, chickens running around in spacious coops, and pigs playing in the mud. However, this imprinted illustration of a typical farm does not exist in the modern farming industry. Truth is most of these animals will never see the light and day in their whole life. A majority of these animals are incarcerated in small cages until they finally meet their fate. These helpless animals are forced to live in dark overcrowded facilities where they are miserably tortured and are raised for food. The industrialization of factory farming has led to animal cruelty, environmental destruction, and a wide variety of health risks for both the consumer and the animals. Factory farming makes meat more affordable for our ever-growing population, however, its negative consequences far outweighs its benefits. If factory farms are all that bad for people's health and the environment then why are these large corporate industries flourishing?

Well, the simple answer is that people just like cheap food. An average American would much rather pay for the cheaper factory farmed chicken which tastes the same as any other chicken than the more expensive organic free-range chicken. Some may argue that factory farms requires less human labor, more efficient, more affordable for the consumer, and ensures a stable food source for the growing population. While these arguments are correct and agreeable to a certain degree, it compromises the quality of food, the well-being of the animals and the purity of our planet. Factory farming causes the spread of pathogenic viruses in animals. There are several reasons factory farms have a high risk of causing a viral outbreak. Dorothy Crawford, a professor of Medical Microbiology at University of

Edinburgh, published a book called *The Invisible Enemy* which states “strains of the influenza virus that infects human beings originated from contact with other animals.”

Animal and human diseases go hand and hand, if animals that are raised for consumption are not taken care of in a sanitary environment then humans can quickly come in contact with them. This is when the phrase “We are what we eat” comes to play. Crawford goes on to say: “Crowding animals in very close proximity causes stress, suppresses the immune system leading to the rise in parasites and makes animals more susceptible to infections. Close contact between different species of animals gives viruses a continuous opportunity to mutate and reassert to create a new strain. Most factory farms confine large groups of animals in indoor spaces that lack sunlight or ventilation, which allows viruses to survive longer without a host.”

There is a clear potential danger that when animals are kept in conditions where it is very likely for them to come in contact with diseases and viruses. Factory farms are homes for influenza. Viruses who can jump from species of hosts to another have existed for over centuries, but when viruses are introduced to forced enclosure agriculture increases viral transmissions between animals and humans dramatically. One of the most common illnesses Americans face is influenza commonly known as the “flu”, many Americans are required to get flu vaccines annually. And although it is impossible to track the exact origin of a particular flu strain, scientists have pointed time and time again towards factory farming being the main cause of many newly modified strains that we now see today. For instance Dorothy

Crawford a Professor of Microbiology states “ The[H5N1] virus started life as a harmless infection in the intestines of wild birds and jumped to domestic chickens in 1990’s where modern intensive farming techniques gave it the opportunity to adapt and evolve.”

There seems to be a trend that the more and more factories are built, the more it seems these viruses are becoming stronger, deadlier, and more accessible to hop from one species to another. Viruses are just like any other species who adapt, evolve and mutate over many centuries. However, turning a blind eye to the growing evidence which proves that factory farming is a leading cause of viruses exponentially evolving faster than they have before should be alarming. The moral question of the story is can we as a society justify practices which increase the likelihood of a new worldwide viral epidemic. The recent discovery of antibiotic resistance have made people more aware of the potential dangers of using antibiotics excessively. Antibiotics are powerful medicines that fight certain infections and can save lives when used properly. They either stop bacteria from reproducing or destroy them.

According to Centers for Disease Prevention Center (CDC) excessive overuse of antibiotics is a problem. Many people have learned the basic evolutionary principle which states that our increasing use or misuse of antibiotics fuels the evolution of antibiotic resistance bacteria. But only a few people are aware of the connection between the widespread use of antibiotics on farm animals and its detrimental effects similar to antibiotic resistance in people. In a recent study of antibiotic resistance on US farms, the Environmental

Working Group found most of the common meats bought in US supermarkets, 81% of turkey, 69% of pork chops, 55% of ground beef and 39% of chicken contained antibiotic resistance bacteria he later goes on to say that these numbers should not be alarming because bacteria have been carrying antibiotic-resistant genes for millions of years. Yet, studies suggest that the recent increase in antibiotic resistance bacteria are mainly cause by factory farming practices. Philosophers have questioned whether or not animals have rights and if so where these rights come from. Many have argued that sentient creatures capable of feeling pain and frustration is the only condition needed for animal rights. Others have argued that rationality and consciousness is more necessary condition for moral standards. Sentient creatures not only deserve protection they deserve the freedom to exercise their instincts and freedom from torturous pain. Animal around the world are all treated differently, for example in Europe they have robust anti-cruelty laws, while the U. S. government offers no protection for animals raised for food. As the great Mahatma Gandhi once said “ The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.” The U. S. government will never be seen as the land of the free until they first apply that principles with their animals. All animals raised for consumption should have basic rights, a stress free environment and free to practice their instincts.

Factory farms are cruel and inhumane. Picture the scene of a helpless chicken being locked up in a cage so small there isn't room to turn around, then hung upside down and skinned alive. Their beaks cut off and electrocuted. This only begins to describe some of the cruse abuse these

animals face on a day to day basis. First of the most common animals in the factory is the chicken. Chickens are kept in low light environment and the ends of their sensitive beaks are cut off all without any painkillers then they are shoved into tiny wire cages, where they don't even have enough room to spread their wings. Second are the cows, when they are born they are branded, their testicles are dissected out of their scrotums, and their horns cut all without painkillers. Calves who are used for veal (meat of slaughtered calves between the age of 3 and 14 weeks) are separated from its mother only shortly after birth then deliberately squashed so that muscle growth is inhibited and their flesh is tender for sale. Thirdly are the pigs who are said to be the second smartest land mammal after the chimps. Piglets have their testicles cut out of their scrotums, their tails clipped off, their teeth cut in half, and their ears mutilated, also without any pain relief. Terrified and in extreme pain, urine and excrement falls on it from the stacked piglets. This abuse is taking place while these animals are conscious, the only difference between them and humans are that they can't talk.