

factory farming essay sample

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Do you ever wonder how the grocery markets and major food stores like Wal-Mart keep a huge inventory of meat on hand at all times? More importantly, where is this food coming from? Many people do not put much thought into where food comes from or how it is treated before it arrives in a grocery store. Today's mass consumption of meat directly correlates with the cycle of how livestock is raised, slaughtered, and served to consumers. The process may be surprising to the average shopper. Mass meat consumption has led to the development of factory farming, or farming where livestock is mass produced. Factory farming has taken mass production of meat to a new level beyond that of traditional farming; however, not much is known about the processes involved with factory farming.

This farming method not only jeopardizes traditional farming and livestock, but it is endangering the well-being of consumers as well. Factory farming is modernized farming to provide mass industrial livestock production. This production includes cattle, poultry (chickens, turkeys, etc), and hogs. The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) states that "over 99% of farm animals in the U. S. are raised in factory farms." PETA also does study's on these factory farms and also says that approximately 10 billion land animals are raised in the U. S. each year for food, and most come from these farms. Many of these animals are forced to live in sub-par conditions in order to meet the needs of mass production.

They are often confined to small spaces and reproduced at a high re-breeding rate. This process is used to yield the highest production at the lowest cost. Keeping these animals in small enclosures and in large concentrated amounts has its drawbacks. Not only are the animals limited in movement,

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but diseases and viruses often plague them due to the overcrowded living conditions. Farmers are then forced to use antibiotics and pesticides in an effort to treat the illnesses in order to continue the mass production. Many small farmers suffer from this form of farming as they are unwilling to mass produce animals under these conditions. I spent my teenage years living and working on a small family farm in Mercersburg, Pennsylvania. We raised our own dairy cows for over 40 years. This ended 6 years ago when factory farming swept America by storm.

A new dairy farm was established not even 10 miles down the road. The farm sustained hundreds of dairy cows to our two dozen dairy cows. The animals were milked 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by industrial technology. My family's farm was not able to match this level of production with our limited supply of cows, and workers. We were unable to compete against the price of the milk that was being mass produced just down the street at a lower cost. As a result, we were quickly forced out of dairy farming. We turned to selling cattle and field farming as a means of survival against a world of evolving technology. This practice is widespread in nations which have developed the technology and machinery needed in mass production. According to the PETA Article online "Compassion in World Farming Web site," as of 2012, 74 percent of the world's poultry, 43 percent of beef, 50 percent of pork, and 68 percent of the world's eggs were produced by factory farms.

Privately owned farms are quickly diminishing. Privately owned farms have their benefits in comparison to factory farms. These farms do not mass

produce livestock. Whereas factory farms tend to raise a lot of one particular animal, most small farms don't have the space or the land to feed and house such large quantities of animals. Small farmers standardly raise a smaller population of animals ranging anywhere from cows and pigs to ducks, geese, goats, and chickens. Smaller populations allow for better living conditions for these animals. They are not forced to undergo numerous immunizations due to over-crowding. Privately owned farms standardly produce their own feed for the animals with the process remaining in-house. The animals have the ability to graze on a diet of grass, hay, and grains which are easy to digest and healthy for the animals.

Most factory farms feed their livestock with food that is brought in from an outside source. This food is full of preservatives, hormones, and corn byproduct that can be difficult for the animals to digest. The purpose is to cause the livestock to gain excessive weight more quickly before being slaughtered. Most animals raised on private farms are able to live in a more natural habitat where they have the freedom to walk and root around the ground. The animals raised in the commercial farms normally won't feel sunlight on their backs or breathe a breath of fresh air, unless they are traveling to the slaughter house. Unlike small farms and locally run establishments, factory farms usually specialize in only one species of livestock. Beef cattle, pigs, chickens, turkeys and egg laying chickens are the most common.

There are 5 top beef feedlot states in the world: Texas, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, and Colorado. According to the food and water watch, the national

average for beef feedlots is 3800 heads of beef cow. The Food & Water Watch is a Washington, D. C.-based non-governmental organization and consumer rights group which focuses on corporate and government accountability relating to food, water, and fishing. They play a big role in ensuring that the food, water and fish we consume is safe, accessible and sustainable. Most of these cattle farming lots are located in rural counties. The mass number of cattle results in poor treatment and harsh living conditions. Beef cattle are often castrated and de-horned without painkillers to decrease their natural defenses and aggressiveness.

They are forced to stand for hours on end due to overcrowding, which directly results in the animals being covered in their own urine and feces. Cattle populations produce the same amount of waste as some of the largest cities in the United States. The waste from these farms not only endangers the wellbeing of the cattle, but also the surrounding land and consumer. The mass waste can generate polluted run-off, and over-applied manure on farm fields can infect water sources and rivers with dangerous bacteria. The cows are fed unprocessed corn. What most people are unaware of is that corn contains e-coli, which is very dangerous if consumed by humans. E-coli is an inner hemorrhagic strain of the bacterium *Escherichia coli*. Infection may lead to hemorrhagic diarrhea, and to kidney failure.

The cattle arrive at the slaughter house covered in feces and bacteria, which is impossible to keep out the beef product following their slaughter. It is clear that factory farms need to establish more stringent food standards to reduce the risk of contamination. Factory farms also use beef cattle for other

purposes. Some of the cattle are used for milk-production and reproduction prior to reaching the slaughter house. In the online article “ A Well-Fed World,” it is revealed that factory farms maintain milk production by continuously impregnating dairy cows in what the industry calls “ rape racks.” The newborn calves are removed from their mothers immediately after birth to prevent a drop in milk production. The factory farms will chain these calves from the neck in wood or handmade crates for 16 weeks till they are ready to go to slaughter for veal meat.

Baby calves see their mother for mere seconds before they are taken from them. Each year there are about 39 million cattle and calves killed for consumption in the U. S. That percentage is much less than the 120 million pigs that are slaughtered every year. Factory farms’ rearing of pigs is very similar to cattle. Pigs are repeatedly impregnated and kept in small metal crates. Metal prevents the pigs from chewing through the enclosure, and the small size allows for more pigs to be kept in one enclosure. In addition, the smaller enclosure prevents mother pigs from trampling their young and eating the deceased piglets. The nursing period for young pigs is usually 12 weeks long. Factory farms have cut this period to 2-4 weeks so the mother sow can actually be impregnated again in order to repeat the process.

Over 20% of the piglets will die from stress related factors and disease as a result of being prematurely weaned from their mothers. After 3-4 years of breeding the pigs are then sent to the slaughter house to end their ill-fated lives. Chickens raised on factory farms are also fated for poor living conditions. There are two main types of chicken farms. The first is chicken

layers—chickens that are bred to lay eggs only. These are female-only chickens. Some of the peeps, or baby chickens, hatched from the eggs will be raised to produce more eggs. The female chicks will have their beaks seared off with a hot iron to prevent the stress-induced pecking of other hens. The males will not lay eggs and are of no use to the farmers.

They are ground alive or dumped into huge plastic bags so that they will suffocate. The female chickens are packed into wooden crates. These wooden crates are about the size of a newspaper page and have sloping wire mesh for a floor. This often cuts the bottoms of the chickens' feet, causing bruising and rubbing off the feathers on the bottom of the chickens. At about 15 months old the chickens go through a process called "forced molting." Force molting is a process where they feed the chickens a very low-calorie diet while keeping them in low-light buildings for about 14 days. This technique stresses their systems which increases egg production. The process usually lasts about 6 months when they are finally sent to slaughter. I know this info from personal experience and have been around the chickens and all types of farming for many years.

The second type of chicken farm consists of chicken-broilers—chickens raised for meat only. Generally the buildings that hold these chickens can house tens of thousands of birds. Most of these birds are crippled and cannot walk. This is because they have been genetically engineered with larger breasts in order to yield more white meat. The chickens are so genetically altered that they are unable to move. The stench in these buildings caused by the chickens' waste is overpowering. It contains poisons such as

hydrogen sulfide, ammonia, and methane. Fortunately, the chickens are not kept in these conditions for very long as they are sent to slaughter after only seven weeks. In an average year 9.5 billion chickens are killed in order to meet the demands of the American population. Unfortunately, chickens and other animals raised on factory farms are not the only casualties of the farms.

Wild life poses a large threat to animals in factory farms due to the loss of their natural habitat to factory farms. The wetlands, forests, and other habitats are taken away and are converted into hundreds of acres of crop feed lands to everything from corn, soybeans, wheat, and barley are grown. The loss of the habitat and natural food sources has prompted many species of animals to view factory farms as a source of easy food. Chicken houses, in particular, are very attractive to wildlife due to the large concentrations of smaller, easy prey in one area. Coyotes, wolves, mountain lions, bears and many other small wildlife creatures die each year from factory farms that kill them to protect their investment. The animals are discarded and are not put to any further use. Even birds, mainly starlings and blackbirds, are poisoned to keep them from eating the feed in the housing units.

The process is less than desirable and is often hidden from the public eye. Why do factory farmers strive to keep their processes out of the public eye? Clearly, many operators of factory farms realize that their processes are less than desirable to consumers. They are very careful to keep their processes on the down-low. A recent film known as " Food Inc." exposed these conditions to the public consumer. The film highlighted companies, such as

McDonald's, as the driving source behind factory farm conditions.

McDonald's demands that the beef provided in their restaurants taste the same. In order to accomplish this demand the beef must come from the same farm. How big does the farm have to be to hold all the beef cows for that? Companies such as McDonald's control this. As a result, animals experience overcrowding and inhumane living conditions.

Viewers were able to see for the first time what factory farms looked like behind closed door. The industry doesn't want you to know what goes on inside the factory because if you did, you might not want to eat the food that is produced. Most food industries like Tyson Chicken and Perdue will not comment on the living conditions for the livestock in their factory farms. Many of the farmers that operate the factory farms are not permitted to discuss the process of how the animals are raised and slaughtered. This is a red flag for the operations that occur in factory farms behind closed doors. So who do we blame for the issues made with factory farms? Should we blame the industry buyers like Tyson and Perdue because they actually own the chickens, beef cows, and all the pigs as soon as they are born? Do they actually control the farmers or do the farmers have a choice to fight regulations?

According to " Food Inc." in 1998 The U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), a cabinet-level agency that oversees the American farming industry, implemented plant inspections to test for e-coli. The idea was that if the plant continued to fail the inspections they would shut the plant down for obviously having a contamination problem. The meat and poultry

organizations immediately took the USDA to court. The courts ruled that the USDA didn't have the authority to shut down the plants. In other words, it was basically ruled that there could be salmonella or e-coli in your meat and the USDA couldn't really do anything about it. Numerous outbreaks of e-coli occurred throughout the following years. A new law was later implemented as a direct response to the court's decision and the ongoing outbreaks.

That law was called Kevin's Law. Kevin's Law was nicknamed in memory of two-year-old Kevin Kowalczyk of Colorado, who died in 2001 after developing hemolytic-uremic syndrome due to eating a hamburger contaminated with e-coli. This law gave the USDA the power to shut down plants that repeatedly produced contaminated product. It has been one of the only regulations implemented in factory farming. Factory farming is a highly unregulated and inhumane source of mass food production. While the farms are able to produce enough food to meet the needs of the American consumer, the steps taken to achieve this goal are less than desirable. Many animals are forced to live in overcrowded quarters where they are subjected to standing for long periods of times in their own feces and urine. These animals will often incur bruising, cuts, and/or loss of fur or feathers as a direct result of infection from these conditions.

They are often injected with multiple hormones to fight of diseases that result from this overcrowding, which is then later ingested by consumers. The animals are genetically engineered to grow larger and yield more meat and, even worse, have their natural life cycles altered for the same purpose. The average farmer is unable to compete with the mass

production, resulting in less privately owned farms where animals have better living conditions and healthier life development. Not only is factory farming dangerous to livestock but it is dangerous to the consumer as it lacks major structure and regulation. Consumers often risk ingesting the e-coli or other viruses that plague livestock in factory farms. It is clear that factory farming is a hazardous method to meet the growing needs of the American consumer.

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