

Factory Farming



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THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATESWorking to reduce the suffering of
animals raised for meat, eggs, and milk
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The HSUS Heralds the Year of the Pig

February 1, 2007

According to the Chinese calendar, Feb. 18 heralds the arrival of the Year of the Pig. Advancements for pigs in 2006 set the foundation for a massive movement away from the pig industry's worst abuses.

"A revolution is underway in the pig industry," said Wayne Pacelle, president and CEO of The HSUS. "Whether at the corporate, legislative or consumer level, there is a tidal wave of opposition to the common U.S. agribusiness practice of confining mother pigs in gestation crates so small the sows cannot even turn around. While last year's landmark advancements for pigs were tremendously exciting, we can expect the upcoming year to bring even more improvements for the welfare of these social, intelligent animals."



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Industry Leaders Making Change

In late January, [Smithfield Foods](#), the world's largest pig producer, announced that it was making perhaps the most monumental advance for animal welfare in the history of modern American agribusiness—phasing out the confinement of breeding sows in

gestation crates over the next decade. Less than one week later, Canada's largest pig producer, [Maple Leaf Foods](#), made a similar pledge.

These decisions came just three months after [Arizona](#) voters overwhelmingly approved an initiative banning gestation crates—despite a multimillion-dollar industry campaign to defeat it. In 2002, Florida voters approved a similar measure. The Humane Society of the United States spearheaded both efforts.

Compassion in Popular Culture

This winter, filmgoers were treated to "[Charlotte's Web](#)", a touching and inspiring rendition of E.B. White's classic book. Millions of families watched the film, which sent a strong message of compassion for all beings—especially Wilbur the pig, whose rescue from slaughter joyfully demonstrated that these animals have the same will to live that we do.

Bernie Williams, executive producer of "[Charlotte's Web](#)," explained, "If the public were to see pictures in the food store of the inhumane and cruel crates that the sows are forced—and I mean forced—to exist in they would stop buying animal products from factory farms. We rescued the mother of Wilbur from a breeding facility and when she was released into a farm for the first time she was bewildered for weeks. Why? She had never seen daylight, smelt grass, or been allowed to walk freely. She eventually found a corner and made her nest from broken twigs and branches, lied in the mud and now has the biggest smile."

Restrictive Confinement

[Gestation crates](#) are 2-foot by 7-foot barren, metal cages that house breeding pigs. The sows have a gestation period of four months and are in the crates for nearly their entire pregnancy. After giving birth, they are re-impregnated and placed back in the crates, enduring perhaps eight or 10 successive pregnancies in the crates before they are reproductively "spent." The crates are so restrictive that the animals are unable to turn around, lie down comfortably, or take more than a step or two for months on end. Pigs confined in gestation crates suffer both leg and joint problems along with psychosis resulting from extreme boredom and frustration.

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See the Video

- ▶ [Gestation Crates: A Sow's Life](#)
- ▶ [Confinement by Crate](#)

Related Links

- ▶ [Think Outside the Crate Campaign](#)
- ▶ [Nation's Largest Pig Producer Moves to Phase Out Confinement of Pigs in Gestation Crates](#)
- ▶ [Election '06: Animals Win in Arizona and Michigan](#)
- ▶ [About Pigs](#)
- ▶ [An HSUS Report: Welfare Issues with Gestation Crates for Pregnant Sows](#)