



1. COCKFIGHTING BANNED IN NEW MEXICO; LOUISIANA LAST HOLDOUT

On Monday, March 12th, New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson signed into law a ban on cockfighting as of June 15th (see: <http://tinyurl.com/2dky8c>). "Today, New Mexico joins 48 other states in affirming that the deliberate killing of animals for entertainment and profit is no longer acceptable," said State Sen. Mary Jane Garcia, who for nearly two decades had introduced legislation to ban cockfighting. Opponents argue that cockfighting is part of the state's culture and tradition, and that it might now be moved to tribal lands, which are not affected by the ban. The head of the New Mexico Game Fowl Association said a legal challenge is planned.

Louisiana is now the only state where cockfighting is legal. Gov. Kathleen Blanco wants it banned. Last year, a proposed cockfighting ban passed the state Senate but was blocked by a House committee (see last item: <http://tinyurl.com/2xgc28>). The Governor's support will greatly increase its chance of passage this year. The Humane Society of the U.S. intends to make a Louisiana ban one of its top priorities. An editorial in the (Shreveport, La.) Times opines: "...Congress should pass federal legislation, now under consideration, that would make it a felony to transport any animal over state lines for an animal fighting venture. But wouldn't it all be much better, not to mention the right thing to do, if Louisiana lawmakers would finally put this archaic bit of brutality out of its misery and enact a statewide ban? The answer, of course, is yes."

COCKFIGHTING BAN APPROVED IN NEW MEXICO
 The New York Times/The Associated Press, March 12, 2007
<http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/us/AP-Cockfighting-Ban.html>

BATTLE LOOMS OVER COCKFIGHTING IN LOUISIANA
 The Associated Press, Doug Simpson, March 12, 2007
<http://tinyurl.com/338nqn>

LEGISLATORS: COCK-A-DOODLE-DON'T
 Las Cruces Sun-News, Walter Rubel, March 9, 2007
http://www.lcsun-news.com/ci_5391363

TIME TO DEAL COCKFIGHTING A KNOCKOUT BLOW
 The [Shreveport] Times, Editorial, March 14, 2007
<http://tinyurl.com/28huq5>

2. VEAL COMPANIES CANNING CRATES

In the U.S., the majority of calves raised for veal are tethered in individual stalls measuring 28 inches wide by 7 feet deep. A 1989 USDA-funded study found that close confinement of calves caused chronic stress. The lead scientist summarized: "...our studies found that maintaining calves in crates is physically detrimental to the calf, something that is common knowledge in the industry." Marcho Farms, one of the nation's largest veal companies, has announced it will no longer tether calves and will employ group housing. The company said the change will help dispel myths about veal production.

Strauss Veal & Lamb, which claims to process between 18% to 25% of the calves used for veal in the U.S., has set a goal of completely converting from stalls to group pens in the next 2-3 years. Randy Strauss, the company's CEO, has written that veal crates are "inhumane and archaic" and "do nothing more than subject a calf to stress, fear, physical harm and pain." Stating that "Animal rights are important," he said: "We want to be the company to revolutionize the veal industry. There are a growing number of people who, if they feel good about what they're eating, will eat veal. If we can capture that market, we're going to increase the 0.6-pound per capita consumption market resulting in a healthier veal industry." Strauss asserts that veal consumption rose in Europe, where individual veal stalls are now illegal, during the 5-10 year conversion process there. The company has also expressed interest in free-range and organic production.

STRAUSS VEAL AND MARCHO FARMS ELIMINATING CONFINEMENT BY CRATE
 The Humane Society of the U.S., February 22, 2007
http://www.hsus.org/farm/news/ournews/strauss_and_marcho_veal_crates.html

CHANGES UNDERWAY IN LIVESTOCK HOUSING
 Ohio Farm Bureau Federation, March 6, 2007
<http://www.ofbf.org/page/REVN-6Z2HXP/?OpenDocument>

REVOLUTIONIZING THE VEAL INDUSTRY
 Meat Processing, Bryan Salvage, December 2006
<http://www.meatprocessing-digital.com/meatprocessing/200612/>

3. OP-EDS AND BILLS AGAINST CONFINEMENT

Nicolette Hahn Niman is haunted by the pigs she saw while touring pig confinement operations as an environmental attorney. In a March 14th New York Times op-ed, she notes that 95% of the 60 million pigs in the U.S. are continuously confined inside metal buildings. Studies have shown that sows confined in gestation stalls exhibit "behavior characteristic of humans with severe depression and mental illness," Niman states. Stress, crowding and contamination inside confinement buildings promote disease. In an attempt to counter it, the pig industry uses an estimated 10 million pounds plus of antibiotics – "three times more than all antibiotics used to treat human illnesses." Boredom is considered the primary reason that pigs engage in tail-biting and other aggressive behavior in confinement systems, as pigs in natural conditions typically spend ten hours a day foraging and roaming. Niman's husband founded [Niman Ranch]: <http://www.nimanranch.com>] "a network of farms that raise pigs using traditional, non-confinement methods." Herself a cattle rancher, Niman contends that "Congress should ban gestation crates altogether and mandate that animal anti-cruelty laws be applied to farm animals." She is writing a book about the meat industry.

Members of the pig industry are promoting the "PQA Plus" (Pork Quality Assurance Plus) to address pig welfare. The on-farm program is said to be "a last piece of the puzzle: farm, truck, plant." See: <http://tinyurl.com/25xqv2>

A public hearing of Oregon Senate Bill 694 is scheduled for Friday (3/16). The bill seeks to ban "restrictive confinement of pregnant pigs and calves raised for veal. Similar bills are pending in 15 other states, and similar ballot measures have already passed in Florida and Arizona (see: <http://tinyurl.com/2gxxak>). An Oregon bill to ban the sale and production of foie gras was killed in 2005 by chefs and restaurateurs, but they've yet to act on S. 694. There is no veal industry in Oregon, which has about 4,000 pigs used for breeding purposes.

Also on the 16th, Connecticut's Environment Committee will hold a public hearing on House Bill 7304, which would essentially prohibit the use of battery cages and require that egg purchases by the state be from cage-free producers (see: <http://tinyurl.com/34vv7c>) The Hartford Courant published an op-ed by Michael Markarian, executive vice president of The Humane Society of the U.S., in support of the bill. He quotes poultry scientist Ian Duncan and Pope Benedict XVI, both of whom have spoken of how the cages are detrimental to the birds. Markarian notes schools (including Yale University and the U. of Connecticut) that are eliminating or greatly reducing their use of eggs from caged hens, grocery chains that have stopped selling them, and food companies that are phasing out their use of them. He asserts: "While socially responsible institutions are helping to improve the welfare of hens, corporate policies need to be complemented by public policies." A detailed article about the progress made against battery cages can be found at: <http://tinyurl.com/38dfe3>

PIG OUT
 The New York Times, Op-Ed, Nicolette Hahn Niman, March 14, 2007
<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/14/opinion/14niman.html>

OREGON BILL WOULD GIVE PIGS MORE ROOM
 The Oregonian, Michelle Cole, March 15, 2007
<http://tinyurl.com/ywktnf>

CHICKENS NEED ROOM TO STRETCH
 Hartford Courant, Michael Markarian, March 7, 2007
<http://tinyurl.com/3cqt5>

4. ABUSE, NEGLECT AT FREEDOM FOOD FARMS

Ducks being punched, kicked, lifted by the throat, and thrown around by staff were some of the scenes of animal abuse and neglect covertly filmed at four farms in Britain, three of which participate in the Freedom Food program (see: <http://www.hillside.org.uk>). The 13-year-old welfare-standards labeling program is run by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), Britain's largest animal protection organization. Hillside Sanctuary also filmed injured and dead ducks, a turkey house "littered with injured birds," and wet and filthy conditions at a farm with no bedding or dry rest area for the pigs there, two of whom appeared lame.

"There were some examples of very poor animal welfare on those farms and of animals that were very clearly suffering and that's not good enough," the RSPCA director general Jackie Ballard admitted of the film footage. She assured that the farms have been suspended. "We have the most monitoring of any of the labelling schemes that there are in this country. But we don't sit on a farm 24 hours a day monitoring, so inevitably sometime things will go wrong," Ballard said. While one in twenty farmed animals in Britain are reportedly covered by the Freedom Food program, only ten full-time officials monitor it, with farms going uninspected for up to 15 months. Animal advocates have claimed on BBC Watchdog and elsewhere that the program effectively constitutes large-scale industrial agriculture.

A recent independent report commissioned by Freedom Food suggests that, while more than half of the public is buying at least one or two "higher welfare" products a week, most shoppers are not confident in the living conditions for farmed animals. The 76-page report, "Consumer Attitudes to Animal Welfare," can be accessed at (PDF File): <http://tinyurl.com/2o6uus>

FILM SHOWS NEGLECT OF PIGS, TURKEYS AND DUCKS SOLD UNDER ETHICAL LABEL
 Guardian, Rebecca Smithers, March 13, 2007
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/animalrights/story/0,,2032547,00.html>

UNDERCOVER FILM SHOWS A FARMER PUNCHING A DUCK
 This is London, March 13, 2007
<http://tinyurl.com/2shkps>

5. "ORGANIC" EGG PRACTICES CRITICIZED

Practices employed in the United Kingdom's organic egg industry are being criticized. The Sunday Times (London) reports: "Faced with growing demand from supermarkets, producers are using nonorganic methods. These include buying nonorganic chicks, extensive use of vaccinations, using up to 15% nonorganic feed and rearing hens in closed sheds until they are ready to lay. Some of the hens are being 'beak-trimmed', which some welfare experts consider mutilation. The nonorganic practices are possible because of exemptions to the rules allowed by the organic certifying bodies..." Some of the country's largest poultry companies are investing in organic facilities there now. The Campaign for Real Organic has been launched to alert consumers about non-organic practices: <http://www.crop-uk.com>. The article sorts out systems under which hens are raised there.

FACTORY LIFE OF "ORGANIC" CHICKENS
 The Sunday Times, Jon Ungood-Thomas with Nic North, Feb. 18, 2007
<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article1400794.ec>

6. DECEPTIVE EGG LABELS

The free-range egg market in Israel is also growing, with 0.4% of all egg sold now marketed as such. However, the definition of "free range" is not been established by law. The country has two major free-range egg producers. Free range is voluntary and conducted by a nonofficial agency. One of the two companies refuses to participate, explaining that the agency "demand[s] a great deal of money to do so." Instead, a senior source stated "Anyone is invited to come and see the chickens themselves." The agency counters that "marketers have an economic incentive to sell regular eggs as free-range, because they are free from price regulation, and can be sold at a far higher price." The Agriculture Ministry hasn't intervened, claiming that it is only responsible for egg monitoring in so far as public health is involved. The labeling of other eggs is also in dispute. A company which controls 11% of the national market describes its eggs as "pampered" and "happy." An anonymous association which claims to have visited the company reports: "Every 50x60 cm, 25 cm high cage houses eight or nine hens, who cannot move, and are squashed against each other."

In Britain last autumn, the government began investigating allegations of eggs from caged hens being falsely labeled as free-range. Producers claimed they could not keep up with demand, and some supermarket chains said they would instead begin selling free-range eggs from France. Planning permission delays and high capitol costs were blamed for preventing British free-range operations from opening or expanding. Similar allegations were made last year in Australia, with the media reporting that up to 20% of eggs marketed as free range were from caged hens. (See: <http://tinyurl.com/338smo>)

In the Netherlands, eggs from caged hens disappeared from supermarket shelves several years ago. The food processing sector is now following suit. While "enriched cages" will be allowed after conventional cages are to be banned in the European Union in 2012, a Dutch animal protection group said that supermarkets there are giving egg producers a strong signal to abandon enriched cages, too.

EGG MARKET PLAGUED BY DECEPTIVE LABELS
 Haaretz, Ronny Linder-Ganz & Eti Afialo, March 8, 2007
<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/834564.html>

FALSE FREE-RANGE LABELLING BASED ON EGG SHORTAGE
 World Poultry, Nov. 17, 2006
<http://tinyurl.com/388nr1>

NO MORE CAGE EGGS IN BELGIUM
 World Poultry, March 2, 2007
<http://tinyurl.com/yvnu6d>

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