



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES**

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Few are in a position to speak for the animals like Wayne Pacelle. As President and CEO of The Humane Society of the United States, he leads 11 million members and constituents in the mission of celebrating animals and confronting cruelty. [Read more »](#)

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November 29, 2010

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Hijacking Humane

Would you consider animals to be “humanely raised” if they were forced to spend much of their lives suffering from chronic leg problems and crippling lameness only to be later shipped to a slaughter plant and shackled upside down, dipped into an electrified vat of water, and finally conveyed to a neck-cutting machine? If the neck-cutting machine doesn’t get the killing right—and USDA claims that millions of birds annually miss the cutting blade—they might even be plunged alive into scalding water, which is designed to loosen the feathers of an already dead bird.

Perdue, the nation’s third-largest poultry producer, apparently thinks so. Perdue’s standards allow chickens to be regularly subjected to [this kind of treatment](#), yet the company markets its products to unsuspecting consumers as coming from chickens who were “Humanely Raised” in order to capitalize on the rapidly growing demand for improved animal welfare.

Today, a member of The Humane Society of the United States [filed a class action lawsuit](#), on behalf of consumers, alleging that the company is illegally marketing its “Harvestland” and “Perdue” chicken products as “Humanely Raised” in violation of the New Jersey Consumer Fraud Act and other laws. [The complaint](#) details how Perdue has based its claims of humane treatment on the so-called “Animal Welfare Guidelines” of industry trade group the National Chicken Council, even though animal welfare expert Temple Grandin, Ph.D. has noted, in an article in an industry trade journal, “[t]he National Chicken Council Animal Welfare audit has a scoring system that is so lax that it allows plants or farms with really bad practices to pass.”



The HSUS

Perdue product labeled “humanely raised.”

Perdue’s [phony “humane” claim](#) is especially offensive because the USDA interprets the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act to exclude poultry, so there is simply zero federal requirement to slaughter these animals by methods that render them insensible to pain before they are killed.

And it’s especially misleading because [alternative, higher welfare poultry slaughter methods](#) currently exist in the marketplace, but Perdue isn’t using them. Controlled-atmosphere killing (CAK) or stunning (CAS) systems work by using a mixture of gasses to kill or render birds unconscious before they are removed from their transport crates. A number of poultry producers, including Jaidl Farms and Mary’s Chickens, have switched or are in the process of switching to these systems.

With opinion polls showing that consumers are willing to pay more for higher welfare products, the response of major producers should be to shift to more humane methods, not to do things the same way and simply rebrand the same old product.

Humane treatment of animals means something. And we’ll be there to keep a careful eye on the companies that misrepresent their conduct and take advantage of consumers who put their faith in the law and the integrity of the companies to do as they say.

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