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Janet K.

Nations Top Veal Producer Eliminating Crates !! February 24, 2007 11:28 AM

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Strauss Veal and Marcho Farms Eliminating Confinement by Crate

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February 22, 2007

In a landmark announcement destined to move American animal agribusiness further away from intensive confinement systems, two of the nation's largest veal producers have recently committed to phasing out the use of tiny crates to confine veal calves.



Strauss Veal, the leading U.S. veal producer, and Marcho Farms both pledged in January to convert their operations to crate-free group housing systems within two to three years. In these operations, while the calves most likely won't be able to go outside, they will be able to turn around, walk and socialize with other calves—all behaviors permanently denied to crated calves. Strauss Veal has also expressed interest in moving to free-range systems after it converts its crate operations to group housing.

Nation's Top Veal Producer: Crates Are "Inhumane and Archaic"

In a written statement, Randy Strauss, co-president and CEO of Strauss veal, said veal crates are "inhumane and archaic" and "do nothing more than subject a calf to stress, fear, physical harm and pain."

Paul Shapiro, director of The HSUS' Factory Farming Campaign, said "the decisions these companies have made are historic and will help end one of the most cruel and inhumane practices associated with factory farming: the veal crate."

Tidal Wave of Opposition

The Strauss Veal and Marcho Farms announcements are the latest in a growing tide of opposition to the use of crates and cages to intensively confine farm animals in the United States. In 2002, [Florida](#) voters overwhelmingly approved an HSUS-led ballot initiative banning gestation crates to confine breeding pigs. And in a landslide vote in 2006, [Arizona](#) voters approved an initiative—also spearheaded by The HSUS—banning both veal crates and gestation crates throughout the state.

The veal companies' announcements came at the same time that the largest pig producers in the United States and Canada —[Smithfield Foods](#) and [Maple Leaf Foods](#)—announced that they are phasing out their use of gestation crates. And major retailers such as Whole Foods Market and Chipotle refuse to use pork from producers that confine sows in crates, while dozens of other [retailers and universities](#) are refusing to use eggs from birds confined in battery cages.

Science Backs Up Common Sense: Animals Should Be Able to Move

The veal crate is notorious for its cruelty, and with good reason. In fact, the entire European Union has already banned veal crates.

Testifying before the U.S. Congress June 6, 1989 regarding a bill that would have prohibited veal crate confinement, Texas A&M animal scientist Dr. Ted Friend discussed a USDA-funded study on veal calf welfare:

Our results show that calves have a very strong drive to move or exercise that is blocked by chronic close confinement. The studies also found that maintaining calves in close confinement causes adverse physiological effects that alter metabolism and reduce the ability of the calf's immune system to respond to disease. All of these are changes in the body that are indicative of chronic stress.

The crated calves required approximately five times more medication than those in the less confining environments.

We also found that all of the symptoms of chronic stress were eliminated after the calves were removed from the crates....

To summarize, our studies found that maintaining calves in crates is physically detrimental to the calf, something that is common knowledge in the industry.

As a result of the decisions by Strauss Veal and Marcho Farms, hundreds of thousands of calves each year will be spared the severe isolation and confinement of the veal crate.

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