

## Consumer Action Sheet

# CHICKEN FACTORIES



**LAST YEAR APPROXIMATELY 470 MILLION CHICKENS WERE KILLED FOR THEIR MEAT IN AUSTRALIA. THAT'S ROUGHLY THE EQUIVALENT OF TWICE THE POPULATION OF SYDNEY – EVERY WEEK.**

THE MAJORITY of meat chickens are factory farmed and spend their entire lives confined in big sheds where they are housed with tens of thousands of other birds. Every aspect of a factory farmed chicken's life is regulated, from artificial lighting (used for hours on end to stimulate production) to the scientific formulas used to determine the food they eat. About 95% of chickens in Australia are raised in this way. Standing on a floor comprised partially of their own faeces, struggling for personal space, chickens kept in intensive conditions are deprived of a meaningful quality of life. They may never see sunlight and have no opportunity to perform some of their most fundamental behaviours such as roosting, perching and nurturing their young. While the natural lifespan of a healthy chicken is five to seven years, the majority of factory farmed chickens live for little more than ONE month before being taken away to slaughter.



**Chickens in factory farms live short lives of immense deprivation in ways that we do not see and many of us do not want to know about. IT'S NOW TIME TO TAKE ACTION AND BECOME A VOICE FOR CHICKENS.**

## QUIZ

- Do you think it's right that factory farmed chickens are housed in sheds with up to 60,000 others?
- Do you think it's fair that most factory farmed chickens will rarely see sunlight except on their way to the slaughterhouse?
- Do you think it's okay that factory farmed chickens never get to perform many of their natural behaviours, such as nest-building, scavenging for food or nurturing their babies?
- Do you think it's acceptable that factory farmed chickens can be bred so big that some struggle to support their own weight?

If you answered **NO** to any of the above, then it's time to act. **YOU** can help ease the suffering of millions of chickens in Australia.

## WHAT IS ANIMAL SENTIENCE?

**Chickens are sentient animals.**

**Sentience refers to the consciousness of a living creature.**

**Sentient animals are aware of themselves and their surroundings and are also aware of their feelings and emotions.**

## DID YOU KNOW?

### MOTHER HENS ARE VERY MATERNAL.

FEMALE CHICKENS (HENS) will often travel long distances to find a suitable place to make a nest. They then go through a complex process of collecting sticks and leaves to build their nests. Even before hatching, a mother hen will form a relationship with her chick by turning the egg and talking (clucking) to it. Once hatched, mother hens are extremely protective of their young, teaching them to find food and drink, how to avoid predators and where to roost.

## DID YOU KNOW? CHICKENS ARE SMART AND SOCIABLE ANIMALS.

IN NATURE, chickens live in small communities of up to 30. They communicate with each other using sounds and calls and can recognise 100 of their kind. Chickens form complex social groups and have special roles within each group. Like humans, chickens can feel pain as well as a range of other emotions including: fear, anxiety, boredom, frustration, discomfort and distress.

**IN THE PAST 50 YEARS, the chicken meat industry has changed dramatically. Aussie family farmers are largely a thing of the past: now, only three companies control 80% of the industry. Factory farming has become big business with the aim being to produce the most amount of chicken in the shortest time for the least cost. Because the industry is no longer outdoors, but indoors, it is much harder for a consumer to see what is happening to the chicken that ends up on their plate. This is where YOU come in. It is time to start asking questions about where your chicken comes from.**

**DID YOU KNOW?  
AUSTRALIANS ARE EATING MORE  
CHICKEN THAN EVER.**

Forty years ago, the average Australian only ate 5.9 kilograms of chickens per year.

Today, Australians eat **36 KILOGRAMS** every year or the equivalent of **27 CHICKENS EACH**.

That's an increase of approximately 600%! **DO WE REALLY NEED TO EAT SO MUCH CHICKEN?** If you eat chicken, have you considered:

- Reducing the amount of chicken you eat – have a vegetarian stir-fry instead of a chicken stir-fry;
- Drawing up a weekly meal-plan that includes 'meat-free' meals;
- Replacing chicken with other ingredients such as lentils, potatoes, chick peas or tofu.



**“I did not become a vegetarian for my health; I did it for the health of the chickens.”**

**ISAAC BASHEVIS SINGER**

NOBEL LAUREATE

## CAN YOU IMAGINE LIFE AS A FACTORY FARMED CHICKEN?

- Living in a massive barren shed with tens of thousands of others
- Never being able to scavenge for food outdoors, feel the earth beneath your feet, or the wind under your wings
- Given antibiotics to ward off diseases (mostly associated with being confined with so many other birds)
- Growing so big that your legs might struggle to support your body
- Struggling to get a good night's sleep because of cycles of artificial lighting and tens of thousands of shed-mates
- Only living for 35 days, rather than up to 7 years, before being killed

### WHAT KIND OF LIFE IS THIS?

## DID YOU KNOW? TODAY'S FACTORY FARMED CHICKENS ARE BRED TO GROW BIGGER AND FASTER THAN EVER BEFORE.

In 1975 it took approximately 64 days to reach slaughter weight.

Now, due to selective breeding techniques used by the chicken meat industry, a chicken can be ready for slaughter in just 35 days.

Rapid body growth can cause all sorts of problems for factory farmed chickens. Some grow too big for their legs to support. They may even suffer broken bones, swollen joints and spinal damage causing unimaginable pain.

**Industrial chicken meat production is: //in magnitude and severity, the single most severe systemic example of man's inhumanity to another sentient animal.//**

PROFESSOR JOHN WEBSTER  
UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL



**FREE-RANGE**

**How do you know what's really in your chicken burger? And what sort of life did the chicken in your nuggets actually have?**

Factory farmed chicken is not labelled or otherwise clearly identified as being factory farmed. This means that when you buy your chicken burger, nuggets, chicken breast or chicken salad, unless it's labelled 'free-range' or 'organic', it's likely to have come from a factory farm.

**Organic**

**CAGE-FREE**

**GRAIN-FED**

**CORN-FED**

**Can you spot the advertising terms commonly used by factory farmers?**

If you guessed 'Cage-free', 'Corn-fed', 'Grain-fed', 'Barn-raised', 'Hormone-free' and '100% natural' you were spot-on!

These feel-good marketing terms have NO real meaning for the welfare of chickens and can easily confuse consumers.

**What should you look for at the shops?**

If you are not sure what to look for when you go to the supermarket, check to see if the chicken is labelled 'free-range' (as part of an accreditation scheme) or if it is 'certified organic'.

REMEMBER: words like 'cage-free' or 'barn-raised' mean different things to different people!

**For more information visit the Voiceless website  
[www.voiceless.org.au](http://www.voiceless.org.au)**

**100% natural**

**BARN-RAISED**

**HORMONE-FREE**

# HOW CAN YOU HELP CHICKENS?

If you feel angry or sad about the way factory farmed chickens are treated, there are plenty of ways you can help them. Individuals and small businesses can have a big impact, so **ACT NOW!**

## If you are an individual

- Write a letter to your local paper, go on talk-back radio or contact your local council. Share your concerns about the treatment of factory farmed chickens and become more informed about the issue.
- Write a letter to your local Member of Parliament and to the Minister responsible for Animal Welfare in your State or Territory. Ask them to outlaw the factory farming of chickens or at the very least, to introduce a proper labelling system that enables consumers to make animal-friendly choices at the supermarket.
- Every time you go to a supermarket, fast-food outlet, restaurant or café, encourage them to consider the welfare of chickens by asking questions about where they purchase their chicken.
- Replace chicken with other delicious and healthy ingredients such as: lentils, potatoes, chick peas or tofu.
- If you eat chicken, cut down on the amount you eat and consider not purchasing factory farmed products.
- Support an animal protection group financially or by volunteering your time, services or skills.

**TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT TAKING ACTION FOR ANIMALS, VISIT [WWW.VOICELESS.ORG.AU](http://WWW.VOICELESS.ORG.AU)**

## If you own a restaurant or food outlet

- Expand your menu to include vegetarian and vegan options.
- Consider not serving factory farmed products.
- Provide information to your customers about where your chickens are sourced from.
- Build strategic partnerships with other organisations (including your suppliers) that have a strong commitment to animal protection.
- Support an animal protection group by becoming a sponsor or donating goods or services.

**TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT HOW BUSINESSES CAN TAKE ACTION FOR ANIMALS, VISIT [WWW.VOICELESS.ORG.AU](http://WWW.VOICELESS.ORG.AU)**

To see a full list of the references used to compile this Consumer Action Sheet, please read "From Nest to Nugget" available from the Voiceless website – [www.voiceless.org.au](http://www.voiceless.org.au)

© November 2008 Voiceless Limited ABN 49 108 494 631

Disclaimer: Voiceless Limited ('Voiceless') is a company limited by guarantee. Voiceless is not a legal practice and does not give legal advice to individuals or organisations. While Voiceless has made every effort to ensure the accuracy of information, including images, presented in this Consumer Action Sheet (CAS), Voiceless does not guarantee the accuracy or completeness of that information. This CAS is provided by Voiceless for general information purposes only and any use of or reliance on it should only be undertaken on a strictly voluntary basis after an independent review by a qualified legal practitioner (or other expert). Voiceless is not responsible for, and disclaims all liability for, any loss or damage arising out of the use of or reliance on this CAS. This CAS is protected by copyright and no part of it should be reproduced in any form without the consent of Voiceless. To learn more about Voiceless, please visit <http://www.voiceless.org.au>