



# A DEADLY FEAST

What you are not told about your Thanksgiving turkey

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### A NINE-MONTH INVESTIGATION BY DIRECT ACTION EVERYWHERE (DXE) REVEALS AN ELABORATE SCHEME TO DECEIVE CONSUMERS ABOUT THE HORRIFIC CONDITIONS AT ONE OF WHOLE FOODS MARKET'S MOST FAMOUS SUPPLIERS.

Diestel Turkey Ranch, which has received Whole Foods' highest rating for animal welfare, operates a showcase farm in Sonora, CA that is heavily promoted in the company's marketing and described as "humane." However, the showcase farm stopped commercial production in 2012 and now raises few, if any, animals for sale – it's little more than a prop. DxE investigators identified one of the actual facilities where animals are raised for sale and found horrific conditions including:

- Filthy, noxious, and crowded barns.
- Birds trapped in feces which covered much of the floor, a half foot deep in some places.
- Many birds with swollen shut eyes, swollen nostrils, open wounds and bruises.
- Records showing up to 7% of birds dying in a single week.

The problem of fraudulent welfare marketing is not isolated to Diestel. The nominally independent, third party certification system utilized by Whole Foods is funded almost entirely by Whole Foods itself, and, until

recently, was managed by Whole Foods' former Global Meat Coordinator. Two prior investigations, moreover, show Whole Foods' marketing of animal welfare is more image than reality.

To date, state and federal authorities have failed to take any action to stop this systemic fraud. The USDA failed to provide any documentation to justify its approval of animal welfare claims made by 20 out of 25 animal agricultural companies and has expressly denied responsibility for ensuring the welfare of over 98% of the animals raised and killed for food.

While polls show that the vast majority of the American public is concerned about the welfare of animals used on farms, the conditions and deceptive practices at Whole Foods, Diestel, and other food companies demonstrate the inherently violent – and unethical – nature of animal agriculture.

State and federal action must be taken to protect the public against consumer fraud. To ensure truly adequate protection for animals, however, action must be taken to give individual animals legal standing or "personhood" – cognizable legal protection for each individual animal's basic interest in safety, happiness, and freedom. The only truly humane way to engage with animals is to end our exploitation of them entirely.

## SARAH'S FIRST THANKSGIVING

Terror was surely the first feeling Sarah ever had.

Once upon a time, most turkey chicks huddled with their mothers immediately after breaking through their shells. But today, most turkeys raised for food never see their mothers. Sarah's life began with violence, as men roughly hanged her by her face, feet dangling, onto a machine that would sear off her beak.



Some of the chicks shrieked and squealed desperately

as they stared face first into a frightening, dark machine. Others became catatonic, paralyzed by fear. But all would soon feel the searing pain as radiation burned their beaks (highly sensitive organs that birds use to explore the world) to a crisp.

In a pain-induced stupor, Sarah was roughly thrown onto an assembly line to be sorted by sex. In one bin went the females; in the other, the males. Keeping girls and boys together is dangerous, as the boys grow larger and faster and, in the crowded conditions, would assault and even kill the girls. Sarah was thrown into a shipping container along with her sisters. Here, she stood on rough plastic grates, shoved against thousands of nameless others, with no water or food on the long drive to the only home most turkeys will ever know: the "grow-out farm."

## WHOLE FOODS SHAM 'HUMANE' FARM

If you make the trip to Whole Foods Market's meat counter this Thanksgiving, you will likely see a large sign – "Working Together to Raise Quality of Life for Animals."

But are these fine sounding words the truth? Do animals found on these smaller, so-called "sustainable" farms really have better lives than those on factory farms?

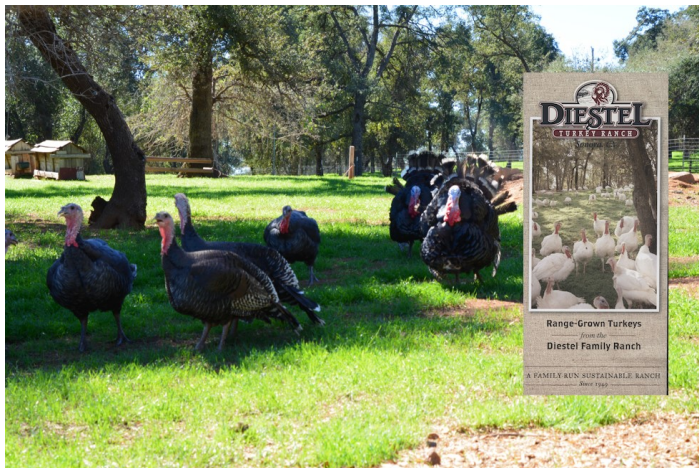


Figure 1 - Diestel Turkey Ranch showcase farm, Sonora, CA, 2015. None of these turkeys are for sale. Inset, Diestel brochure.

A nine-month investigation by the animal rights organization Direct Action Everywhere (DxE) set its sights on that question.

The company at issue, a large supplier of Whole Foods in California, is the Diestel Turkey Ranch, which slaughters about 2 million turkeys each year.

"Our birds live in harmony with the environment and we allow them to grow slowly and naturally with plenty of room to roam," says a Diestel Turkey Ranch promotional brochure provided at Whole Foods.

That picture perfect scene is played out at Diestel's Sonora, CA ranch where visitors can see healthy-looking bright-eyed turkeys roaming on tree-shaded green pastures. That farm has been certified a perfect "5+," according to Whole Foods "5-Step" standards. Only three farms out of the more than 2100 or so that supply meat to Whole Foods have been certified 5+, so Diestel's farm is the best of the best.



Figure 2 - Turkeys crowded inside a barn at Diestel's Jamestown facility, 2015. These turkeys will be slaughtered and sold as "humanely raised."

However, DxE's investigation this year found that few, if any, turkeys raised at the 5+ Sonora farm are actually sold at Whole Foods or anywhere else. Most of the Diestel brand turkeys available for purchase bearing "humanely raised" labels are raised instead at other facilities, which are effectively hidden from public scrutiny.

Step-Rated Farms and Ranches by Species							
	1	2	3	4	5	5+	Total
<b>Beef</b>	473	57	0	499	5	0	1034
<b>Pork</b>	324	108	50	26	1	1	510
<b>Chicken</b>	4	320	98	53	4	0	479
<b>Turkey</b>	102	14	11	3	1	2	133
<b>Total</b>	903	499	159	581	11	3	2156

\*As of March 1, 2013.

Figure 3 - Whole Foods meat suppliers as rated by Global Animal Partnership.

From January to September of 2015, DxE made nine visits to Diestel's massive Jamestown, CA facility, spending around 40 hours investigating the farm. The entire site visited by investigators included 26 barns with anywhere from 7,000-17,000 birds per shed. The buildings – enclosed with fences around each one – were surrounded by barren land.

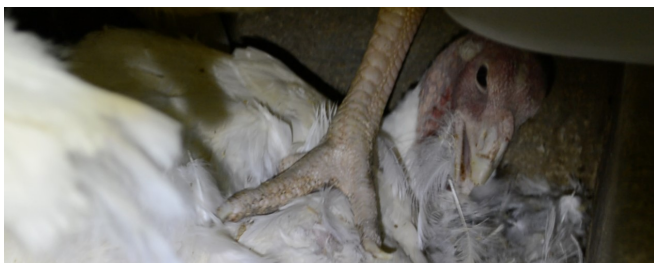


Figure 4 - The first chamber of the birds' digestive system, the crop, on many birds was blocked and inflamed, leading to starvation and death, 2015.

Among the findings:

- Turkeys in filthy, noxious, crowded barns.
- Air inside dense with ammonia, particles of feathers and dried fecal particles.
- Birds languishing or dead.
- Birds trapped in feces which covered much of the floor, a half foot deep in some places.
- Many birds with open wounds and bruises.
- [Diestel records](#) showing up to 7% of the birds dying in a single week.

Investigators saw numerous turkeys covered with feces, missing large patches of feathers and/or with grotesquely inflamed and swollen crops.



*Figure 5 - Turkeys were sometimes packed so densely some were helplessly trampled, 2015*

Many of the turkeys at the Jamestown site also had inflamed and swollen nostrils, indicative of difficulty

breathing. Some had eyes severely swollen with infection. Nearly all the turkeys the investigators saw had stress bars on their feathers, which are indicators of poor environmental conditions or severe malnutrition.



*Figure 6 - Many birds were in poor, painful conditions—desperately needing veterinary care, 2015.*

Investigators found no sign that the birds had regular access to the outdoors, despite marketing to the contrary. Some birds were found trampled to death. Yet these Diestel turkeys are promoted and advertised as “humanely raised.”

“All of our turkeys are raised in the same manner as our turkeys are raised here,” a Diestel representative told DxE investigators (pretending to be consumers) when they visited the 5+ Sonora farm.

## LIFE ON THE FARM

The first week at the facility would be the deadliest. As Sarah was roughly dumped onto the barren, lifeless floor, she no doubt witnessed dozens, and perhaps hundreds, of her fellow chicks already dead. We found as many as 7% dead in some facilities; their tiny corpses littered the floor of the barn. Some died of diseases such as aspergillosis, a fungal infection that causes pneumonia. Common in the filthy barns turkeys are grown in, aspergillosis fills the birds’ lungs with spores until they collapse and suffocate.



Other chicks die of trauma from botched debeaking or rough handling. The burned beaks are supposed to fall off the birds, leaving a flattened and scarred tip. But

where the burning is botched, the chicks can be left with grievous injuries, injuries that rot and ultimately lead to death. Debeaking is still economically justified, however, as a dead chick today is better than dozens of dead birds tomorrow – the inevitable result if thousands of birds with intact beaks are forced to live in the crowded environment of the farm.

But perhaps the most common method of death is what the industry calls “starve out.” Babies such as Sarah literally weaken from starvation and are trampled to death. In the desperate and crowded struggle for life on the farm, they are simply unable to obtain enough food and water to survive. This is most likely what was happening to Sarah. She was smaller than the other birds. She was unable to win the fight to the food bowl. And the accumulated toll of too many lost battles wore her down over the weeks. By the time we found her, at approximately 6 weeks old, she was less than half the size of the other chicks. The other birds were already beginning to trample her, and she was struggling to muster the strength to stand.

On the Diestel website there is no indication that any of the company's farms or facilities are any different from any other in terms of animal welfare. Instead, [Diestel](#) and [Whole Foods](#) actively promote the 5+ rating, despite the fact that few, if any, Diestel turkey found in the grocery store comes from the farm shown on the website.

This information was confirmed by a 2013 California Regional Water Quality Control [report](#).

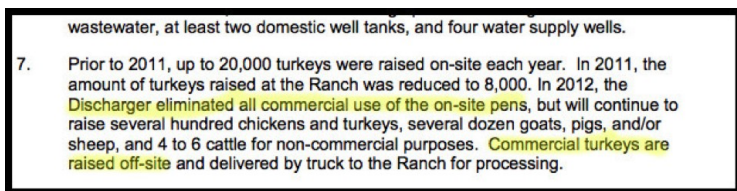


Figure 7- Detail from California Regional Water Quality report on the Diestel Sonora ranch.

Heidi Diestel, a company spokesperson and daughter of Diestel's owners, said during an interview in late November that 1000s of turkeys for sale were raised at the Sonora farm this year, but she also said that the majority of their birds are raised elsewhere. When the information in the California Regional Water Quality Control document was quoted to her, she said, "That's curious. We raise more [than a couple hundred] turkeys here. I'm not sure what was going on in 2013 but as of this year we raise more than a couple 100 turkeys here on our main site."

## ENTERING THE JAMESTOWN FACILITY

Wearing environmental safety suits and sanitary shoe covers, DxE investigators entered the barns at the Jamestown Diestel facility.



Figure 8 - Google maps view of the barns at Diestel's Jamestown facility visited by investigators.

One of the investigators was so overwhelmed by the toxic air she couldn't breathe and had to leave. Inside, the barn was revealed to be a barren shed where Whole Foods' own standards were being routinely violated.

Indeed, investigators found evidence that more than a dozen standards, crucial to the well-being of the animals, were being blatantly ignored.

## THE HUMANE HYPE

Whole Foods insists that all farms that raise animals and supply meat to their stores be audited by the [Global Animal Partnership](#) (GAP) which has a "[5-step Animal Welfare Rating System](#)." The grocery chain [states](#), "We are committed to and focus on animal welfare for all species of animals raised for our meat department."

That is why they have been able to sell "humanely raised" Diestel turkeys, for example, for up to \$104 for a 15-pound turkey.



Figure 9 - Diestel turkey sold at Whole Foods and marketed as "Humanely Raised," 2015.

## REALITY OF THE TURKEY INDUSTRY

- 240 million turkeys killed for food every year.
- Turkeys receive no protection under federal animal cruelty law.
- Turkeys are killed as juveniles at 3-6 months but have a lifespan of 10 years.
- 40 pound animals are generally given less than 2 ft<sup>2</sup> of space. (Imagine a dog living his entire life on a large laptop.)
- Turkeys used for food are bred to grow so fast and big that their legs often snap under the weight.

# WHOLE FOODS SAYS...

Sick or injured turkeys must be promptly treated or euthanized.

Odor and dust must be "hardly noticeable."

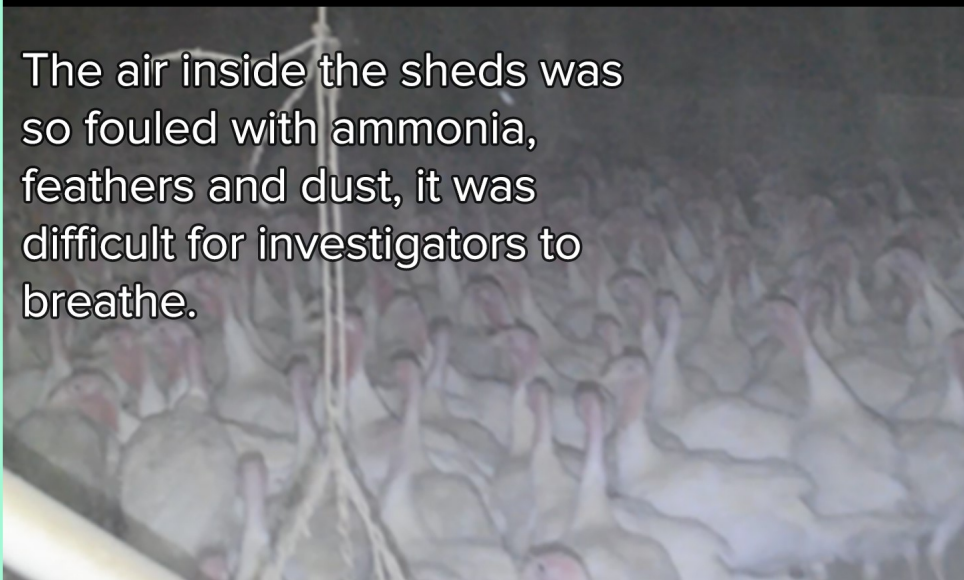
Turkeys must have enough space to express natural behavior.

# REALITY

Hundreds of birds were languishing and dying at the farm.

The air inside the sheds was so fouled with ammonia, feathers and dust, it was difficult for investigators to breathe.

Animals were often packed so tightly that they couldn't move.



## VESTED INTERESTS

Global Animal Partnership (GAP) describes itself on its website as a “non-profit, charitable organization” with a “commitment to continually improve the lives of farm animals.” However, GAP’s tax returns for the past four years show the organization is [more than 90% funded](#) by Whole Foods Market. Based on [GAP’s 2014 tax return](#), GAP spent a total of \$96,711 on employee salaries last year.

	c	Gross profit or (loss) (attach schedule) . . . . .	
11		Other income (attach schedule) . . . . .	1,211
12		<b>Total.</b> Add lines 1 through 11 . . . . .	329,863
		13 Compensation of officers, directors, trustees, etc	
		14 <b>Other employee salaries and wages</b> . . . . .	96,711
		15 Pension plans, employee benefits . . . . .	9,224
		16a Legal fees (attach schedule) . . . . .	850
		b Accounting fees (attach schedule) . . . . .	2,872
		c Other professional fees (attach schedule) . . . . .	109,379
		17 Interest . . . . .	
		18 Taxes (attach schedule) (see instructions) . . . . .	10,542

Figure 10 - Detail from Global Animal Partnership 2014 tax return.

## THE ENDLESS NIGHT

The suffering Sarah must have endured over those 6 weeks is hard to imagine. Again, turkey chicks, like most baby birds, are desperate for comfort and protection. They make a distinct high pitched chirp when they lose sight of their mothers. In the wild, their mothers will quickly respond, and the chicks and mothers will huddle together until the child is calm. But in the farm, the chilling cries of thousands of orphaned chicks go completely unheard. There are no mothers to care for the children, or protect them from the harshness of the outside world.

But Sarah, like all the other birds, never lost her instinct to find her mom. One of the most heartbreaking sights I have ever witnessed occurred when I first walked into Diestel’s nursery. Thousands of chicks rushed up to me, calling for their mothers. Turkey chicks have not yet learned to fear human beings, and they mistook me for their mom.



Chicks that fall behind, like Sarah, suffer the most from the denial of maternal care. Weak and frightened, they are unable to fight through the streaming mass of bodies slamming against them. A mild bug, fatigue, or dehydration will quickly snowball into something far worse. On the first day, Sarah may have eaten half the food and water she needed. On the second, perhaps it dropped to 25%. By 6 weeks, when we found her, she was probably not eating or drinking at all. She would have died within days.

That is, if the men at the farm did not get to her first. Despite their natural friendliness, the chicks begin to realize humans are to be feared because, every day, a man would walk through the farm and brutalize the weak birds. Those chicks, after all, become an economic liability. They are too small or sick to make it to slaughter, so their necks are snapped, one by one. This process, which is completely unregulated, is sheer terror to the birds, as they are highly social animals who form close bonds with members of their flocks. Who knows how many friends Sarah had to watch being killed before her last day would come? And who knows how many times Sarah cowered in fear, as a violent man descended upon her? How many times did Sarah wonder if her neck would be the next to snap?

**They are too small or sick to make it to slaughter, so their necks are snapped, one by one.**

It is not surprising, in the face of this endless fear and stress, that virtually all of the birds develop a fear of human beings. By week 15 or 16, as they approach slaughter, the friendly and curious chicks have transformed into broken, filth-covered, and fearful juveniles. The mere sight of a human being can cause thousands to flee in a horrifying mass of wings, feathers, and flesh. So perhaps weak birds like Sarah, who usually die young, have it better. After all, they have nothing to look forward to. There will be no end to their nightmare and pain.

Except sometimes, there is. On this holiday season, Sarah was saved.

**Find out more about Sarah’s incredible recovery by visiting [www.deadlyfeast.com](http://www.deadlyfeast.com) or by searching the hashtag #WhatAnimalsDeserve.**

GAP's tiny staff, which until recently was headed by Whole Foods' former Global Meat Coordinator, supervises the lives of nearly 300 million animals. A farm that applies for a GAP rating must pay for a third-party audit from one of three GAP-approved auditing companies. But even farms approved by GAP can engage in animal abuse that would be criminal if done to a dog or cat.

"[We] walk the flock every day. This is a practice passed down from Great Uncle Ernest, that we have incorporated and refined through the years. We pay close attention to the health of our birds by spending time with them in the fields, observing their behaviors, and making sure that they have the best environment possible."

"[We] concentrate on the health of the birds. Our free-range environment allows the birds to get plenty of exercise and fresh air, and our careful farming management and strict sanitation practices eliminate the need for us to administer antibiotics. On our ranch a turkey can truly be a turkey."

**From the Diestel website**

Practices allowed by GAP include: castration of baby pigs and calves without anesthesia, nose ringing of sows, which is both physically and psychologically distressing to the pig, and euthanizing turkeys by breaking their necks by hand.

## **EVEN THE MOST PAMPERED ANIMAL WILL EVENTUALLY BE KILLED, USUALLY AS A BABY.**

For turkeys, at Step 1, GAP only requires one square foot of living space for every 10 pounds. At Step 2, GAP only requires one square foot for every 7.5 pounds. This is less than the industry standard of 2.25 square feet for a 16-pound hen (one square foot for every 7.1 pounds).



Figure 11 - The body of a turkey that had succumbed to disease is left to rot, 2015.

So even if adequately enforced, Whole Foods' own standards demonstrate the inherent violence in animal agriculture. In the pursuit of profit, companies inevitably cut corners when it comes to the welfare of all animals raised for food.

Even the most pampered animal will eventually be killed, usually as a baby. Diestel turkeys are killed at 6 months when they could live to 10 years. Cattle at farms throughout the US are killed at 2 years when they could live to be 25. Calves used as veal are killed just a few months after their birth. Males in the egg

industry are either ground up alive or stuffed into garbage bags to suffocate just moments after they hatch.

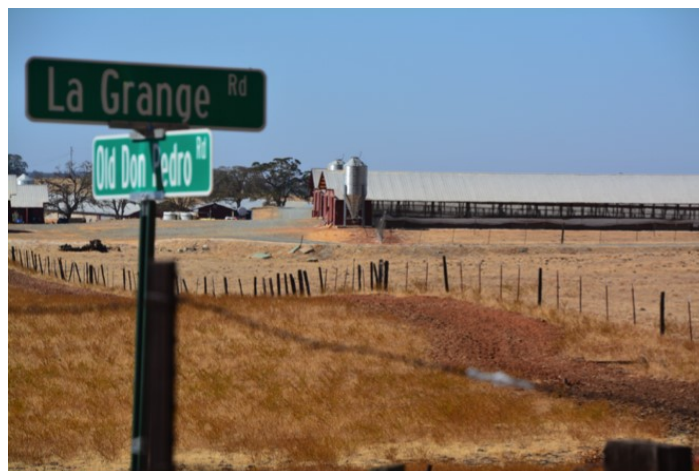


Figure 12 - Bams where Diestel turkeys are raised for Whole Foods and other stores, 2015.

GAP farms are audited just once every 15 months and visits are announced ahead of time to the farm. This means, for example, that the vast majority of flocks of chickens used by the meat industry are never inspected because chickens are generally slaughtered at 6 weeks old. For all farms, day-to-day treatment of the animals is not monitored by any outside party. There is no way for GAP or Whole Foods to know, for example, whether turkeys are getting the daily access to the outdoors that the GAP standards require. Finally, so-called "minor" non-conformance must be documented on three consecutive audits (i.e. over nearly 4 years) for a farm to lose its animal welfare certification.

"What we now have is business as usual parading under the banner of righteous reform," wrote historian and author James McWilliams, who writes frequently about

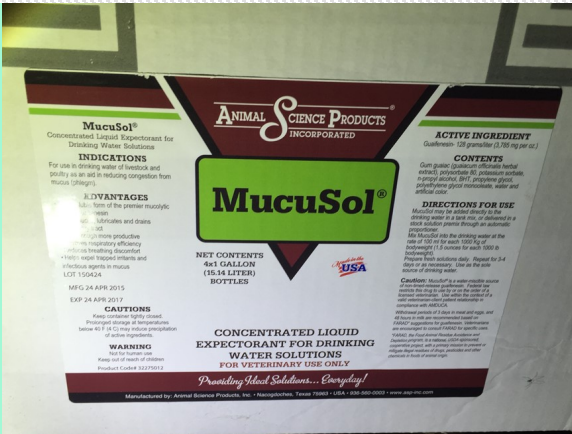


# IS THIS "NATURAL"?

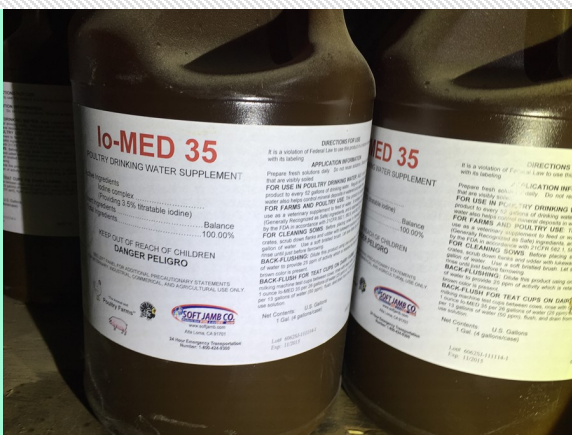
Diestel's marketing and says, "We never feed any hormones, antibiotics or chemicals to the turkeys." Yet here is a sampling of the chemicals our investigators found.



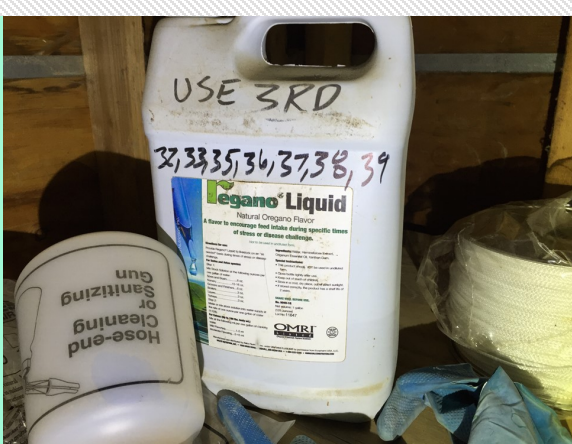
**BIOSUPREME L**  
Reduces ammonia fumes.



**MUCUSOL**  
Added to drinking water to reduce respiratory congestion.



**IO-MED 35**  
Controls bacteria in contaminated water.



**REGANO LIQUID**  
Encourages birds to eat during times of "stress and disease challenge."

animal welfare issues in *The New York Times*. “When consumers see a ‘humanely raised’ label they think they’re getting ‘happy meat.’ All they’re really getting is a dose of slick marketing.”

Conditions at Diestel and other recent investigations of so-called “humane” farms show that animal agriculture is fundamentally cruel even on these “humane” farms.

## **MALES IN THE EGG INDUSTRY ARE EITHER GROUND UP ALIVE OR STUFFED INTO GARBAGE BAGS TO SUFFOCATE JUST MOMENTS AFTER THEY HATCH.**

Animals killed for food have been selectively bred for commercial purposes, not for health or well-being. Pigs, like turkeys, for example, are bred to grow fast and big to maximize profits. They have abnormally large appetites and grow so fast that they suffer from heart failure and broken or maimed feet and legs.

Female cattle used in the dairy industry have been bred to produce enormous amounts of milk, 10 times what they produced just a few decades ago, causing their udders to become painfully infected and swollen. Their bones become weak. A significant portion of these cows cannot walk to their own slaughter which usually happens at about 5 years. Normally a cow can live to be 25 years old.

Chickens used in the egg industry were designed by nature to produce about 87 eggs a year. Instead, thanks to selective breeding they lay about one a day. It’s hard on a chicken to lay an egg a day. They are prone to usually fatal egg binding and ovarian cancer.

In short, even on so-called “humane” farms, animals suffer immensely.

## **WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT TURKEYS**

All available scientific evidence indicates turkeys are sensitive, sophisticated, sentient animals who have the same emotional lives as our beloved dogs and cats, as well as cows, goats, pigs and other animals. Turkeys are curious and can be affectionate towards humans they bond with, following their guardians just as a dog would. Susie Coston, Shelter Director of Farm Sanctuary in



*Figure 13 - One of the rescuers with Angie, a young turkey DxE saved from death, 2015.*

Watkins Glen, New York and an expert on turkey behavior, emphasized during a recent interview that once turkeys are rescued from these very stressful farm situations, their individual personalities can emerge. “I have turkeys who will sit in your lap for hours and fall asleep,” Coston said. “I’ve had chickens who would line up on my bed in the morning and crow. But it’s no different from being woken up by a dog who’s licking you in the face. It’s morning, get up.”

Despite Diestel’s claim that their turkeys are “allowed to grow slowly and naturally,” the birds found at the Jamestown facility were commercial Broad Breasted Whites, a breed that grows so fast and big that the animals’ internal organs cannot keep up. These birds become too big to mate, perch or fly, as their natural ancestors, the wild turkeys, can. “The saddest thing is to see them try to fly,” Coston said. “They run full speed and flap their wings and just want to fly because they’re turkeys. They [the breeders] forgot to take that part out. A turkey wants to fly.”



*Figure 14 - One of the turkeys at the Jamestown facility, 2015.*

# THE HUMANE CHARADE

Studies have shown that Americans love animals, and not just our pets.

A [2015 Gallup Poll](#) showed the vast majority of Americans believe that the welfare of animals deserves protection, with almost a third claiming animals warrant as much protection as humans. Another recent poll by the Humane Research Council shows that 79% of Americans believe that animals must be protected from “all suffering and harm caused by humans.” Both results are significant increases from prior years.

Despite caring for animals, many Americans continue to eat them. To resolve this tension, many of us have turned to so-called “humanely raised” animals.

A [survey](#) of over 5,900 participants in 2014 showed:

- 94.9% stated they were very concerned about “farm animal welfare.”
- 92.6% believe that it’s “very important” to buy “humanely raised products.”
- 75.7% stated they were willing to pay more for “humanely raised meat, dairy and eggs.”

The humanely raised label was ranked highest in importance to consumers over organic, natural and antibiotic free.



Figure 15 - Turkey at Diestel's Jamestown facility, 2015.

As consumers, we have taken comfort in the promises by companies such as Whole Foods and Diestel Turkey Ranch. We have been led to believe in a dichotomy between industrial farms and “humane” farms. Recent investigations, however, demonstrate that violent

practices are common even on so-called “humane” farms.

## NO PROTECTION

There are [no federal definitions or standards](#) for the terms “humane” or “sustainably raised.” Moreover, while the USDA has a legal responsibility to ensure accuracy in food labeling, the Food and Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) consistently approves the use of animal welfare claims with no supporting evidence whatsoever.

### 79% OF AMERICANS BELIEVE THAT ANIMALS MUST BE PROTECTED FROM “ALL SUFFERING AND HARM CAUSED BY HUMANS.”

The Animal Welfare Institute (AWI), filed Freedom of Information Act requests to learn what information was required by the USDA to get approval to put animal welfare claims on product packaging. Diestel Turkey Ranch gained approval from the USDA to promote its products as “Humanely Raised,” although the USDA said it could only find a [two-sentence statement written](#) by Diestel’s Quality Assurance Manager as supporting evidence. And in the cases of 20 out of 25 claims made by 19 companies, the USDA could find no supporting evidence at all, which [attracted the scrutiny](#) of Sen. Dianne Feinstein and Sen. Cory Booker.

Worse yet, the USDA’s negligent approval process has served as an obstacle for state authorities to independently regulate food marketing claims. The USDA’s action, courts have held, [preempts state authority on the issue](#).

The USDA’s utter failure to regulate the fraudulent use of animal welfare marketing is consistent with its general posture towards animals: inaction and negligence. As Bruce Friedrich points out in the Georgetown Law Journal, the USDA has interpreted the Humane Methods of Livestock Slaughter Act to cover [a mere 2% of animals killed](#) for food. The other 98% (all birds), are in many cases [shackled, hoisted, and their throats cut](#), while remaining sensitive to the pain.

## A BRUTAL HYPOCRISY?

We recoil in horror when we hear of and see people in Asia killing dogs and cats for food but how different are

we when we kill these turkeys, pigs, and cows? All are sentient animals [who experience pain, fear, joy, affection](#) and the implacable desire to care for their young and, indeed, the overwhelming desire to live.

In our society we have an expression, “mother hen,” connoting a mother who fusses over and dotes on her young. She keeps them safe and makes sure the babies are never too far away. She takes them under her wing (another favorite expression) to keep them warm. Yet chickens and turkeys, including those labeled



Figure 16 - Meat from Whole Foods comes wrapped in their “The More You Know...” butcher paper, 2015.

“humanely raised,” never even see their young. The eggs are taken away shortly after laying.

We also have another expression, “our nest egg,” which suggests that a bird’s egg is most precious to her. She is robbed of what is most treasured and loved. And her babies never receive the attentive care that nature intended for them.

## WE RECOIL IN HORROR WHEN WE HEAR OF AND SEE PEOPLE IN ASIA KILLING DOGS AND CATS FOR FOOD BUT HOW DIFFERENT ARE WE WHEN WE KILL THESE TURKEYS, PIGS, AND COWS?

All animals, human and otherwise, are born with basic emotions – emotions that ensure their survival. The fear of pain and danger helps animals keep themselves safe and uninjured. The intense bond between the baby and mother also insures the survival of the species, as does the drive to mate and reproduce. Close friendships among animals have been documented again and again. Animals’ social drives serve to protect them.

As consumers we have allowed the violent system we know as animal agriculture to continue, despite our pangs of conscience, on the promise that government or industry will offer the animal victims some safeguards. Yet

as we have shown, that promise has been broken.

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS

What, then, can be done to effectively protect the interests of animals?

First, as indicated by senators Booker and Feinstein, we must take federal action to stop consumer fraud. We have a problem with animal welfare labels in this nation. While the USDA is nominally required to ensure truth in food labeling, the agency instead has become a marketing department for animal agriculture. Legislation must be passed to provide true transparency in our food system, including the name, location, and true conditions of the animals we use and kill for food.

Second, given the increasing consensus that animals matter, we must seriously move towards legal “personhood” for animals. Harvard Law School’s Cass Sunstein, former regulatory czar in the Obama administration, has compellingly argued that animals must have legal standing, i.e. recognition of their independent interests in a court of law. However, effective protection for animals goes beyond mere standing. After all, many historically marginalized classes – from women to people of color -- have suffered horrendous discrimination and violence despite having nominal legal standing. What is needed, in short, is what lawyer and activist Steven Wise has called “legal personhood,” including recognition of the basic rights that all legal persons hold – life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. While the idea of nonhuman personhood might seem revolutionary, we already treat one class of nonhuman animals – our own feline and canine companions – with the respect and dignity that would be accorded to a family member or friend. It is time for us to extend that consideration to other species through legal or even constitutional action.

*Contributing Authors:*

*Wayne Hsiung is lead investigator in the DxE Open Rescue Network. He formerly practiced securities law at two national law firms and served on the faculty at Northwestern School of Law.*

*Leslie Goldberg is a lead researcher on the DxE investigatory team and former investigative reporter for the San Francisco Examiner. She was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. An artist, political cartoonist and writer, she holds a master’s degree in interdisciplinary art from Goddard College.*

*Michael Goldberg is a lead researcher on the DxE investigatory team and was an investigative reporter and Senior Writer at Rolling Stone for 10 years. He has contributed to Wired, Esquire, Details, The Daily Pitchfork and other publications. His second novel, “The Flowers Lied,” will be published in February 2016.*