

Turkeys deserve a merry Christmas, too

Why compassion should be on your Christmas dinner menu

BY SOPHIA MAXWELL

Turkey No. 146-I, a snow white bird with a breast as big as a basketball, has dropped to the bottom of his own pecking order. At about 30 pounds, he's too big for his spindly legs, which have collapsed. No. 146-I can no longer support the weight of his white meat. Now, he's the flock's target. Other turkeys have shredded No. 146-I's back and plucked feathers from his wings. Turkey No. 146-I will not make it to his intended slaughter date. (Associated Press report 11/95).

Every year, 20 million turkeys in Canada are bred for slaughter. Most of these birds are raised specifically for holiday meals, and are crowded into "factory farm" confinement operations, where each turkey is given less than three square feet of space. Disease and suffering are rampant in these filthy and inhumane conditions. Stressed and agitated, turkeys are driven to excessive pecking and fighting. To avoid "economic losses", it is a common practice to cut off the birds' beaks and toe tips. Both are painful mutilations conducted without anesthesia.

To meet consumer demand for breast meat, today's turkeys have been altered to have disproportionately large breasts. This anatomical manipulation contributes to the turkey's difficulty in standing, and makes it impossible for the birds to mount and reproduce naturally. Turkey producers rely entirely on artificial insemination as the sole means of reproduction.

It remains a common conviction that turkeys and other poultry are "stupid" animals that are not worthy of our concern. During transport, handling, and eventual slaughter, too little in the way of humane care is taken. When turkeys reach market weight, they are packed into crates and trucked to the slaughterhouse. Birds often freeze to the sides of transport trucks in the winter, or die of heat stress in the summer.

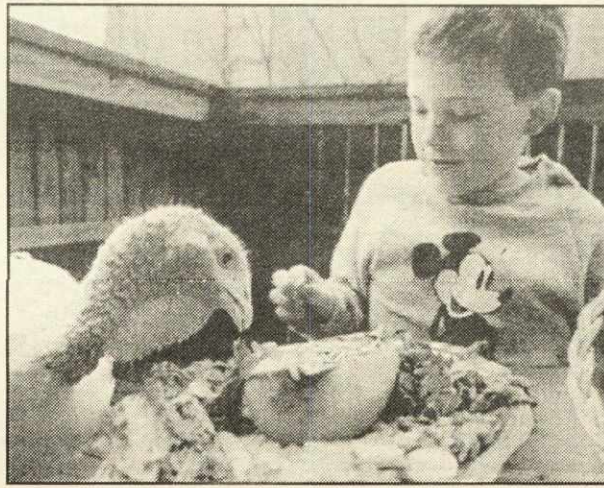
Once at the slaughterhouse, fully conscious turkeys are hung upside down by their feet on metal shackles, suffering pain and terror as they are carried on a conveyor belt to the knife. Under federal "humane slaughter" laws, turkeys and other poultry are supposed to be stunned before slaugh-

ter. However, the sheer number of animals moving through poultry abattoirs means that this does not always happen. This results in the knifing of fully conscious turkeys that are left to bleed to death. They are then dropped into the scalding tank for defeathering.

The poultry industry has been very successful in convincing consumers that their products are healthier alternatives to red meat. As a result, poultry consumption has skyrocketed in recent years. However, the public's perception of poultry as a "health food" is false. Poultry is only marginally less fatty than red meat, contains just as much cholesterol, and contains no fibre. Also, many poultry products are contaminated with salmonella, campylobacter and other harmful bacteria.

Turkeys are friendly and affectionate, thinking animals that suffer and feel pain. A turkey's life is just as dear to the turkey as your life is to you. Please consider eschewing turkey at your Christmas dinner in favour of a cruelty-free feast which is free of all animal products. There are thousands of healthy and tasty vegan and vegetarian recipes available in cookbooks or on the internet at <http://www.vegweb.com>.

By having a holiday dinner which rejects violence and cruelty, you will be extending the Christmas spirit of love and generosity to all beings.



This Christmas, feed a turkey instead of devouring one.

This Christmas, don't forget the animals:

The Gazette's Cruelty-Free Christmas Shopping Guide

BY SOPHIA MAXWELL

As we all know, Christmas sales account for the majority of retailers' profits. Unfortunately, many gift products cause animal suffering on their way to the store shelves. In this list are some of the grim facts that manufacturers often hide from their customers. To show your protest against such induced suffering, please keep this list handy when you are doing your Christmas shopping and try to educate your family and friends about making compassionate selections.

(Source: Nova Scotia Network for Animals)

INSTEAD OF

1. Assorted cheeses. Today's dairy cow lives 4-5 years (until peak production wanes), compared to the normal 20-25 years. Most are confined, milked 3 to 4 times daily, and kept in a perpetual cycle of reproduction with hormones and artificial insemination. Calves are taken away within 48 hours of birth. Male calves are raised for veal, kept in isolation and immobility until their slaughter as early as 14 weeks of age. Females are also raised in isolation, either for veal or to become replacement dairy cows. Once the cows are "spent" (their milk production is not profitable enough), they are shipped off to be slaughtered and ground up for fast food burgers and other uses.

2. Commercial sweets are loaded with refined sugar, which is processed using animal bones.

3. The raw ingredients of Cosmetics from major companies that claim they no longer use animals as controls are actually animal-tested, and slaughterhouse materials are still used in their manufacture.

4. Any pet that may not receive proper care due to owner cruelty, disinterest, or ignorance.

5. Gifts made of animal products:

Fur pelts & reptile hides mean killing animals solely for human vanity, and no-holds-barred slaughter methods. Snakes can take up to two days to die, no matter how savagely beaten.

Leather sales keep slaughterhouse profits up when meat consumption is down.

Over 80% of Wool comes from Australia where, without anesthesia, sheep suffer tail-docking, ear punching, castration and mulesing (slicing away extra skin around the tail). They're shipped alive to foreign markets on crowded cargo vessels where many die from stress and suffocation.

Down feathers are often repeatedly plucked from the tender skin of living geese.

Silk is obtained by boiling silkworms alive to retrieve the cocoons.

6. New products hot off the assembly line. Their manufacture costs dearly in terms of the Earth's resources, environmental pollution, and ever-larger garbage dumps that shrink wildlife habitats.

7. Notecards, diaries or calendars from "wildlife" and "environmental" groups that support hunting and trapping (like the Canadian Wildlife Federation, World Wildlife Fund, & Audubon Society).

CHOOSE

1) Baskets of fresh fruit, dried fruit, nuts, nut butters and crackers (often assembled in health food stores at holiday time).

2) Candy, cookies, or jams made with natural sweeteners, e.g. maple syrup, rice syrup, fruit juice concentrate, barley malt, and date sugar.

3) Ethically-produced cosmetics sold in health food stores or at The Body Shop.

4) Miniature fruit trees, houseplants, or an indoor herb garden.

5) Gifts made of earth and animal-friendly fabrics, e.g. linen, ramie, cotton, hemp, canvas, and recycled rubber.

6) Recycled treasure; "one of a kind" from a 2nd hand store or yard sale.

7) Donations in friends' names to your local animal shelter or to legitimate animal charities.

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