

PETAINDIA

PO Box 28260
Juhu, Mumbai 400 049
India
+91 22-40727382
+91 22-26367383 (fax)
Info@petaindia.org



What's Wrong With Eating Eggs and Chicken Flesh?



Report by **PETA**INDIA and



INTRODUCTION

An eyewitness from Anonymous for Animal Rights visited major hatcheries and farms for chickens used for eggs (“layers”) and meat (“broilers”) in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana in 2016 and gave the material to PETA India. Many of these companies are prominent names in the meat and egg industries, suggesting that the abuse seen at these facilities is common across the country.

More than 220 million hens are used for egg production in India, and most of them spend their lives confined to tiny cages. When chicks are just a few days old, workers sear off a large portion of their beak with a hot blade and no painkillers. Afterward, many are unable to eat because it’s too painful. They are shoved into dirty wire cages so cramped that they can barely move. Many die, and their corpses are often left in the cages to rot among the survivors. After spending about 18 months in these barbaric conditions, the worn-out remaining hens are sold for slaughter.

Choosing to eat eggs or chicken flesh sentences birds to a world of suffering and premature death. Instead, opt for plant-based foods and take a stand against violence towards chickens.

LOCATIONS

The Anonymous for Animal Rights eyewitness visited layer and broiler farms and hatcheries operated and used by the following companies:

Venkateshwara Hatcheries Private Limited

Commonly referred to as Venky’s, the company operates facilities that breed chicks for both egg and meat production in several Indian states. The company supplies Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC), McDonald’s, Pizza Hut, and Domino’s and claims to have pioneered the concept of parent-franchisee operations and to have popularised cage farming.

Sakku Group

Sakku Group owns Venkatrama Poultries Ltd, which claims to be the largest egg producer in India. Venkatrama has 6 million layer hens and produced 1.2 billion eggs in the 2014-2015 fiscal year.

Suguna Foods

This poultry giant conducts its business using the integration or contract-farming model, which means that it hatches chicks and then gives them to independent farmers to raise. When the chickens reach an ideal weight, it buys them from farmers, slaughters them, and sells their meat. The company’s presence is well established in 16 states across the country, and its poultry brands are household names.

SR Group

SR Group owns multiple brands that produce broiler chickens, hatching eggs, broiler feed, layer feed, breeder feed (for chickens who are used solely for breeding), and eggs for human consumption.

Skylark Hatcheries

Skylark Group is one of the largest poultry producers in India. Its operations and facilities include hatcheries, broiler contract farms, feed production, and chicken slaughter. Anonymous for Animal Rights’ eyewitness was not allowed to go inside its broiler hatchery but was able to look around outside.

SH Group

SH Group, of which Srinivasa Hatcheries is a part, is a major player in the poultry industry, operating layer and broiler farms as well as hatcheries.

Mulpuri Group

Mulpuri Group is the second-largest producer of eggs in India.

Diamond Group

Diamond Group takes its breeding stock from Venkateshwara Hatcheries. It runs hatcheries and raises chickens for meat.

Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Poultry Farms Private Limited

This company uses tens of thousands of chickens at a time for egg production.

ABOUT HENS

Like all animals, hens value their lives, and they care about their offspring. In fact, a study at the University of Bristol concluded that they clearly feel empathy for their chicks, which they demonstrate both in physiological ways and through their behaviour. They even communicate with them before they hatch. However, the hens who are exploited by the egg and meat industries never have the opportunity to hatch their eggs, let alone meet or bond with their chicks. Domesticated chickens can live five to eight years (and wild hens can live even longer), but those used as “layers” live only about 72 weeks and spend the entire time confined to faeces-ridden wire cages that are so cramped, they can’t even spread their wings.

Mother hens teach their chicks life skills and modify these based on their progress. Within days of hatching, baby chicks can perform complex tasks, including basic arithmetic, self-control, and basic structural engineering – skills that don’t develop in humans until the toddler years. Hens also have long-term memories of events and individuals and can communicate using over 30 distinct vocalisations that express a wide range of information about nesting, mating, contentment, food discovery, danger, and fear.

These social, sensitive, intelligent birds navigate using the sun, which helps them to find food and water, and even have a sense of time. In nature, they ward off parasites and condition their feathers

by taking dust baths. They also enjoy playing chase and other games.

In addition to forming complex hierarchies, they’re sophisticated enough to coordinate group activities and compare themselves to others. They can also recognise more than 100 individual faces (even after several months of separation), consider the future, and practice self-restraint for a later reward – a skill that was thought to be exclusive to humans and other primates.

INVESTIGATIVE DETAILS

Artificial Insemination

Hens on layer and broiler farms never have the opportunity to mate naturally. Instead, farmers repeatedly artificially inseminate them against their will. At Diamond Group’s broiler farm, workers without gloves roughly extract semen from male chickens, forcibly drag hens out of their cages, and inject the semen into them using the same syringe over and over. After being raped, the hens are shoved back into the filthy cages. The animals were visibly terrified during this cruel process.



Workers at Diamond Hatcheries roughly inject semen into terrified hens using the same syringe for all the birds.

Incubation

Instead of allowing hens to incubate their eggs as they would in nature, farmers steal their eggs and hatch them artificially in mechanical incubators. Sakku Group’s large-scale commercial incubators are manually controlled by company officers and have automatic backup systems, but according

to workers in the hatchery, temperatures can accidentally surge, causing deformities in the chicks, who are then discarded. At SR Group's broiler hatchery, the investigator observed organs protruding from some chicks' bodies. A single incubator, such as the one at Venkateshwara's layer hatchery, can hold as many as 90,000 eggs.

Female chicks in commercial hatcheries never get to meet their mothers. Instead, they're forced into the same vicious cycle that their mothers and grandmothers endured – they lay eggs until their bodies wear out, and then they're slaughtered. At Diamond Group's broiler farm, incubator crates hold up to 180 eggs – so when they hatch, the chicks are subjected to extremely crowded conditions. In fact, the investigator saw chicks being trampled on and pecked by others during the hatching process.

Battery Cages

Hens used for their eggs are confined to tiny faeces-encrusted wire “battery” cages that are so cramped, the birds can't even stretch out a wing. Because the cages are stacked, these normally fastidious animals have no choice but to urinate and defecate on one another, causing conditions in which disease can run rampant. In an attempt to prevent illness, farmers commonly pump the animals full of antibiotics.

At Mulpuri's layer farms, the eyewitness saw nine hens packed into a single cage. Each time a worker approached or reached inside it, the hens were frightened into a frenzy.



Severe crowding is such a problem that hens often trample one another.

At Sri Lakshmi Narasimha's farm, the eyewitness documented that chickens had wounds, eye and skin infections, swollen body parts, and baldness and were packed into wire cages with no way to avoid piles of excrement.

At Mulpuri's layer farms, a senior executive revealed that because asbestos is cheap, it's used in the roofing of the structures where the hens are kept and that eggs from these sheds could have asbestos residue in them.

Debeaking

When female chicks who will be used for eggs are just a few days old, workers cut off a large portion of their beak with a searing-hot blade – without giving them any painkillers – to prevent them from pecking each other out of the frustration that's caused by intensive confinement to small cages. At Sakku Group's layer farm, for example, baby hens go straight from the hatchery into tiny wire cages. The egg industry considers them useless after about 18 months – and during this short lifespan, they aren't allowed to walk on the ground, fly, or even fully spread their wings. Many birds have difficulty eating or drinking after they're debeaked.



Hens crammed into tiny cages languish with ailments, including swollen body parts, eye and skin infections, feather loss, and wounds.

Mulpuri's layer farms debeak chicks when the animals are just 8 to 10 days old. The baby birds aren't given any anaesthetics during this extremely painful procedure – they may be given only vitamin K to clot their blood and heal the wound. Some are debeaked again when they're 14 days old, if their beaks are deformed or were not “properly” cut off the first time.

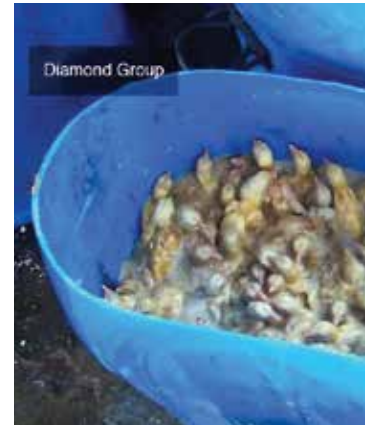


Parts of chicks' sensitive beaks are cut off without any painkillers.

Eight or nine days after they hatch, chicks who will be forced to breed on Diamond Group broiler farms are debeaked by a machine. A supposedly trained worker sits in front of the machine, picks up the chicks one by one, and holds each one's beak to the burning-hot blade. Many defecate in distress and scream from fear and pain. The investigator saw that the worker had a white sheet on his lap to protect his clothes from the chicks' waste and was told that the animals don't eat or drink for many days afterwards because of the pain caused by debeaking.

Killing Baby Chicks

The egg and chicken flesh industries reject male, sick, and deformed chicks and others who are considered undesirable and inhumanely kill them in gruesome ways soon after they hatch. Workers at Suguna treat these sentient beings as if they were trash and callously toss them into waste bins that are stacked on top of one another. At SR



Chicks are drowned in drums of water.

Group and Diamond Group, they toss live chicks into fires, from which the baby birds try desperately to escape. SH Group sells rejected chicks to fish farms as food: trucks packed with starving newly hatched birds pull right up to the water, and the chicks – living, dying, and dead – are thrown directly into fish tanks, where they'll either drown or be eaten alive by fish. Terrified chicks try to escape by hiding under rocks, but workers kick them into the water. Other live chicks at Suguna are thrown into large grinders, along with dead chickens and eggshells. Their ground-



Chicks are slowly burned, and partially burned birds often survive and die gradually later.



Live chicks, along with eggshells and dead birds, are dumped into grinders.

up remains are sold as food for other animals. Outside Skylark’s hatchery, eyewitnesses videotaped a truck on its way to a fishery – it was full of unwanted chicks who were piled on top of each other, with those at the bottom crushed and suffocated by those at the top.

Forced Moulting

At Sakku Group’s egg farm, the eyewitness saw a group of 40-week-old chickens going through forced moulting. This is a cruel technique that typically involves starving hens in order to shock their bodies into starting another egg-laying cycle. Many hens lose all their feathers and much of their bodyweight, and some even die. The birds on Sakku Group’s farm had heavily soiled feathers, and they were climbing on each other and fighting. In 2011, the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) ordered all poultry farms in the country to discontinue the cruel practice of forced moulting immediately, labelling it a punishable offence that violates The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act, 1960.



Farmers forced these hens to moult, leaving them almost completely featherless.

Transportation

When the hens stop producing eggs at the volume the company desires, which usually occurs before 2 years of age, or when chickens to be used for meat are considered ready for slaughter at about 40 days of age, workers violently yank them out of their cages or sheds – often by the wings – and load them onto trucks so that they can be shipped off to the slaughterhouse. These sensitive individuals never have the

opportunity to play, explore, or bask in the sunshine on any day of their lives.

Because hens’ safety isn’t a concern to the egg industry, many die en route to the slaughterhouse. At Sakku Group’s egg farm, the eyewitness saw approximately 2,000 birds loaded onto trucks for a gruelling journey of approximately 250 kilometres to the slaughterhouse. At the Venkateshwara Hatcheries facility, the eyewitness saw workers lift birds violently by the wings and throw them.

Slaughter

Chickens are usually killed in a “backyard” manner at meat shops throughout India – meaning that buyers choose the chickens they want to have killed. The animals aren’t first stunned in any way – they’re held down by the wings or legs as the head is held back and a dull knife is used to cut the throat. The animals are then commonly thrown into a drum, where they writhe in pain until they die. Sometimes they’re even dismembered while they’re still conscious. In the jhatka killing method, the head is completely chopped off. In other cases, a chicken’s neck may be drawn across a blunt blade.



A worker carries chickens by the feet.

At so-called “modern” slaughterhouses in India and around the world, chickens are shackled and hung upside down by their feet on a conveyor belt. Their throats are then cut either manually or

automatically. At facilities where they're stunned, their heads may pass through an electrified water bath before their throats are cut.

Stunning doesn't guarantee a less-painful death. Chickens often lift up their heads and miss the electrified water bath, and their throats are frequently cut improperly at modern slaughterhouses. As a result, when they're finally immersed in the defeathering tanks, many are still conscious and are scalded to death.

RELEVANT LAWS/RULES/ADVISORIES

The AWBI – a statutory body under section 4 of the PCA Act, 1960, and working under the aegis of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change – issued an advisory dated 16 February 2012, which clearly stated that confining hens to battery cages violates Section 11(1)(e) of the PCA Act, 1960, which specifically forbids keeping or confining “any animal in any cage or other receptacle which does not measure sufficiently in height, length and breadth to permit the animal a reasonable opportunity for movement”. Doing so is, therefore, apparently illegal.

That advisory further urged the Government of India and the State Governments to issue directions to poultry farmers prohibiting the use of battery cages in egg production so that the farms with egg-laying hens adhere to the provisions of the PCA Act, 1960, and requiring battery cages to be phased out by 2017. It also advised the Central and State Governments to encourage animal welfare and environmental sustainability within the Indian food sector by promoting production systems that adhere to modern standards for animal welfare (as enshrined by the Five Freedoms) and the PCA Act, 1960. More than six years have passed since the advisory was issued, yet battery cages continue to be standard fixtures in the egg industry.

In its advisory dated 9 March 2011, the AWBI stated that the practice of depriving hens of feed for several days amounts to cruelty to animals under the PCA Act, 1960, and is therefore a punishable offence. Doing so directly violates Section 11(1)(h) of the PCA Act, 1960, so owners' failure to provide chickens with sufficient food, water, or shelter is a punishable offence. This advisory also directed all hatchery owners and integrators to ensure that the practice of forced moulting through starvation is discontinued immediately. It further directed all district SPCAs and animal-welfare organisations to work with the local police and animal husbandry departments to ensure that appropriate corrective action is initiated against farms that practise forced moulting.

Furthermore, in 2012, the AWBI had prepared the draft Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Egg Laying Hens) Rules, recommending that the Ministry of Environment and Forests notify those Rules on 27 December 2012 – however, those Rules haven't been notified yet. In fact, four writ petitions were filed before various High Courts in India with respect to these draft Rules, and all those petitions have now been transferred by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India; *vide* its order dated 5 August 2016 before the Hon'ble High Court of Delhi and are presently *sub judice*. *Vide* the said Order dated 5 August 2016, the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India, *inter alia*, observed, “[W]e expect the Government of India to convene the proposed meeting and expedite the process of framing of the rules and report further developments on the subject to the High Court of Delhi upon transfer of the cases to it.”

Mutilating hens' beaks in a cruel manner or cutting off chicks' beaks without anaesthetics causes unnecessary pain and suffering, and such acts are clearly in violation of Section 11(1)(l) and Section 11(1)(k) of the PCA Act, 1960. Section 11(3)(e) states, “Nothing in this section shall apply to – (e) the commission or omission of any act in

the course of the destruction or the preparation for destruction of any animal as food for mankind unless such destruction or preparation was accompanied by the infliction of unnecessary pain or suffering.”

Regarding the transport of livestock, the Government of India recently notified the Central Motor Vehicles (13th Amendment) Rules, 2016. Rule 125E, sub-rules (1), (2), (3), and (4), *vide The Gazette of India* notification No G.S.R. 546(E), dated 8 July 2015, sets special requirements for motor vehicles transporting livestock. Sub-rule (1) requires that motor vehicles used for transportation of livestock by road shall be in accordance with the specifications of the Bureau of Indian Standards as set in IS 14904 (2007), IS 5238 (2001), or IS 5236 (1982), as the case may be, as amended from time to time. The transporter or consignor of the livestock shall follow the code of practice laid down in the respective specification regarding the transport of the livestock. Furthermore, sub-rule (2), which is subject to sub-rule (1), requires that motor vehicles used for transporting animals have permanent partitions so that the animals are carried individually in each space. The size of the partitions shall not be less than 2 square metres for cows and buffaloes, 2.25 square metres for horses and mares, 0.3 square metres for sheep and goats, 0.6 square metres for pigs, and 40 square centimetres for poultry.

In addition, the Food Safety and Standards (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Regulations, 2011, framed under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, lay down certain guidelines for the pre-slaughter handling of animals, especially with respect to their transport. The guidelines contained in Part IV of Rule 6.4 (a)(1) direct, *inter alia*, that only healthy animals in good condition (as verified and certified by a qualified veterinary inspector) be transported, transportation of animals from areas in which disease is endemic to non-endemic areas should include protective vaccination and quarantine for 30 days before further transportation, and female

animals in advanced stages of pregnancy should not be transported. In addition, all animals must be treated humanely, and they must be provided with sufficient space to stand or lie down. Water and light food is required at regular intervals, and there must be an attendant handling first aid. Loading during extreme temperatures must be avoided, and safety inspections (such as to check for damaged floors and walls and to ensure suitability, such as covering to avoid weather conditions, etc) are mandatory before the animals are loaded.

Chapter VII of the Transport of Animal Rules, 1978, deals with the transport of poultry. Rule 79(a) specifies that only birds in good condition who have been examined and certified for fitness by a veterinary doctor shall be transported. Rule 79(c) and (d) says that the birds being transported shall be fed and watered before being placed in containers for transportation and that arrangements shall be made to feed and water them during transportation, with watering ensured every six hours. Rule 80 directs that, in the case of road travel, containers shall not be placed one on top of another and shall be covered properly in order to provide light, ventilation, and protection from rain, heat, and cold air. Rule 81 says that in the case of rail travel, birds on journeys that last over 12 hours must be accompanied by an attendant. There must be adequate ventilation and protection from weather, and no other merchandise (which may result in the birds' death) shall be transported in the same wagon. Rule 82 specifies that in the case of air travel, the containers carrying poultry shall be kept near the doors and unloaded immediately upon arrival. Rule 83 lays down specifications for containers (i.e. dimensions of containers for month-old chicks, 3-month-old chicks, adult chickens, and geese and turkeys as well as the number of birds per container). It also sets forth special requirements for containers for chicks and adult birds, such as prohibiting wire mesh or net as a bottom for a container. Containers must be properly secured to the vehicle, properly labelled, and continuously transported for no more

than six hours. Vehicles used to transport birds cannot be stationary for longer than 30 minutes, and they must have fire extinguishers.

In India, animals are not commonly stunned prior to slaughter, despite a specific provision under Rule 6(4) of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Slaughter House) Rules, 2001, which states, “Every slaughter house as soon as possible shall provide a separate space for stunning of animals prior to slaughter, bleeding and dressing of the carcasses.”

Furthermore, the Law Commission of India, in its Report No 269 on “Transportation and House-keeping of Egg-laying hens (layers) and Broiler Chickens”, *inter alia*, noted that it is a matter of concern that there are no regulations regarding stocking density and other housing conditions and recommended that the housing and stocking of broiler birds be regulated. It also noted that the relevant provisions of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Broiler Chickens) Rules, 2017, and the modified Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Egg Laying Hens) Rules, 2012, as annexed with that report, should be followed.

Every citizen of this country has a fundamental responsibility to protect animals. Article 51-A(g) of the Constitution of India states, “It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife and to have compassion for living creatures.” The egg and meat industries are not exempt from following the Constitution. It’s time to protect chickens from the abuse that they endure by implementing stronger animal-protection legislation and enforcement measures.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Battery cages should be completely phased out in favour of a cage-free system that will provide hens with ample space to move around and engage in their natural behaviour.

2. Birds should be provided with ample space to prevent them from pecking each other, and debeaking should be stopped, because it’s an apparent violation of Sections 3 and 11(1)(l) of the PCA Act, 1960.
3. The poultry industry should ensure that the killing of unwanted chicks is carried out via a method approved by the World Organisation for Animal Health, of which India is a member country.
4. The egg industry should be required to use *in ovo* sexing technology as soon as it becomes commercially available, which is expected to be in 2018 – it allows the sex of chicks to be determined very early, before they hatch, so that eggs containing males, rather than newly hatched chicks, are destroyed.
5. Since forced moulting is an apparent violation of Sections 3 and 11(1)(a) and (h) of the PCA Act, 1960, this practice must be ended immediately.
6. The Central Motor Vehicles (13th Amendment) Rules, 2016, must be implemented and complied with regarding the transport of animals, and the Transport of Animals (Amendment) Rules, 2001, must be implemented and followed in letter and in spirit.
7. Only appropriately licenced slaughterhouses should be allowed to slaughter chickens.
8. Adult birds must be stunned before slaughter, as per the law.
9. Provisions of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Slaughterhouse) Rules, 2001, and Food Safety and Regulations Standards (Licensing & Registration of Food Businesses), 2011, must be implemented both in letter and in spirit.

The government must strictly enforce these laws and level serious charges against companies that violate them.

EATING EGGS IS UNHEALTHY

Eating eggs wreaks havoc on human health. Other than the human body – which makes all the cholesterol that it needs – animal-derived “products” are the only other source of cholesterol, and eggs are loaded with it. In fact, 60 per cent of the calories in an egg come from fat.

It’s no surprise, then, that the World Health Organisation has found evidence that eating eggs is associated with death from colon and rectal cancer and that a 2011 Harvard study found that by consuming two and a half eggs per week, men increased their risk of developing a lethal form of prostate cancer by a staggering 81 per cent. Eating eggs increases one’s risk of developing diabetes by 68 per cent, and according to a 2010 study in the *Canadian Journal of Cardiology*, people who eat the most eggs are 19 per cent more likely to develop cardiovascular problems (which causes 35 per cent of all deaths in India).

Eating meat is also unhealthy. Chicken flesh is loaded with cholesterol and saturated fat: 23 per cent of calories from skinless chicken flesh comes from fat, and every 4-ounce serving of chicken contains 100 mg of cholesterol. Researchers have found that people can cut their risk of developing heart disease in half just by leaving meat off their plates.

Another health hazard associated with eating eggs and meat is contamination. Porous and fragile shells and filthy farm conditions make eggs the perfect hosts for salmonella, which, if ingested, can result in abdominal cramps, diarrhoea, vomiting, and, in severe cases, organ failure or death. Chicken flesh is often contaminated

with bacteria and antibiotics residue, which contributes to drug resistance in humans.

In contrast, vegan foods are loaded with all the vitamins, minerals, and essential nutrients that humans need, and consuming them reduces the risk of developing serious diseases, including diabetes, heart disease, and cancer.

CONCLUSION

It’s time to send the egg and meat industries the message that subjecting chickens to filthy living conditions, intensive confinement, maiming, and cruel methods of slaughter is unacceptable. Consumers can do their part by avoiding chicken flesh and eggs and instead eating healthy, humane, and environmentally friendly plant-based foods.