
***PETA* INDIA**
**Investigation
Into Hatcheries
Breeding Chickens
for Meat and Eggs**

June 2022



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1. Introduction

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India's latest investigation into hatcheries (the facilities at which chicks are hatched before being sent to the farms where they'll be raised) exposes the common practices for handling and killing chicks by the Indian egg and poultry meat industry. A team of investigators visited hatcheries in Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh from October 2021 to May 2022 and filmed and documented the cruel treatment and horrific deaths that chicks in these industries are subjected to.

PETA India's investigators found that the disturbing conditions and routine use of cruel and illegal practices documented in an earlier investigation, which was conducted by Animals Now (previously Anonymous for Animal Rights) between February and April 2016 in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana and provided to PETA India, continue unabated in 2021 and 2022.

Our investigators found that many chicks are rejected by the industry – because they hatched too early or too late or due to illness, weakness or deformities – and they are killed through various illegal means. The egg industry considers male chicks “waste” since they don't produce eggs, so it kills them using a range of illegal methods. Chickens used for meat and eggs are not the same, as generally, chickens reared for meat are bred to be top-heavy while those used for eggs are bred for abnormally high egg production.

Investigators documented and filmed chicks being killed by the following methods:

- Dumped in drums, pits, ponds, and rubbish bins and left to die
- Buried using earthmovers
- Drowned
- Burned alive
- Fed alive to fish
- Ground up alive and then fed to fish
- Killed by crushing or suffocation
- Left to be eaten by dogs and other animals
- Starved to death

India is the world's third-largest producer of eggs and eighth-largest producer of meat. Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana are the country's top egg producers. Uttar Pradesh is the largest producer of meat in general and a leader in poultry meat production. Several of the companies investigated have a presence in other states, too. For this reason, and given the findings of the 2016 investigation, the conditions and practices described in this report can be considered indicative of those endured by chicks in these industries nationwide.

The investigators traced male chicks and other rejected chicks from “layer” hatcheries (those of the egg industry) as well as rejected chicks from “broiler” hatcheries (those of the meat industry), and they documented that the chicks were killed through various illegal, haphazard means.

Investigators also documented and filmed the conditions in which many unwanted male chicks purchased from layer hatcheries were transported: the contractors who purchased the chicks crammed them into boxes without any food or water for long train journeys across states.

The chicks' lives begin and end with pain and suffering. Problems with incubators can cause the birds' organs to protrude among other health complications, and rough methods of determining sex cause distress. Meanwhile, male chicks – and others who are sick or otherwise considered unprofitable for meat or egg production – are destroyed. These living, conscious, often only day-old chicks are treated like waste.

Other Challenges

The haphazard disposal of unwanted chicks by the industry contributes to environmental pollution and presents a public health hazard by attracting flies, rodents, scavenging birds, dogs, and other animals. Further environmental nuisance arises from poultry farms due to the generation of ammonia and hydrogen sulphide gases, causing odour; dust from the feed mill; and “waste” including dead birds and hatchery waste.

The only way for consumers to ensure they're not contributing to these problems is by eating vegan.

2. Locations

The investigators visited hatcheries handling chicks for the egg industry, the meat industry, or both, operated and used by the following companies:

Diva Hatchery

Our investigators visited two hatchery units of Diva Hatchery – one located near Green Agrovet, Piparsand, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh 226005 and another near Study Hall College, Piparsand–Kanpur Road, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh 226008. The latter unit's staff informed investigators that it engages in contract breeding for Venkateshwara Hatcheries, i.e. it takes eggs from Venkateshwara Hatcheries and supplies chicks back to the company.

FeedPro Hatcheries and Farms

This company has a meat-production hatchery as well as a poultry farm on its premises located near Kheda and Jattari villages in Uttar Pradesh. Our investigators visited the hatchery located at Ruppur village, off Nagala Assu–Sujanpur Road close to Brij Bharti School, near Kheda and Jattari village, en route to Aligarh from Yamuna Expressway, Uttar Pradesh 202141.

Feroz Hatchery

Our investigators visited this meat-production hatchery located next to Sitapur Railway Station, Sitapur, Lucknow division, Uttar Pradesh 261001.

Gitanjali Hatchery

Our investigators visited this meat-production hatchery located outside Ain village (near Amavan), Sarojini Nagar, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh 226401.

Hiba Breeding Farms and Hatcheries

The meat-production hatchery is located alongside poultry farms. Our investigators visited its premises near Malihabad Railway Station, Malihabad, Uttar Pradesh 226102.

Ravindra Hatchery

Our investigators visited the meat-production hatchery located next to Shiva Temple in the outskirts of Nithari village, near Wair Badshahpur, Bulandshahr district, Uttar Pradesh 203203.

Shakti Hatchery

Investigators visited its broiler-production hatchery located at C39, UPSIDC Industrial Area, Newada Samogar, Naini, Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh 211009.

Shrawasthi Agrotech Pvt Ltd

Shrawasthi Agrotech Pvt Ltd has a meat-production hatchery at Road No 8, UPSIDC, Amausi Industrial Area, Nadarganj, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh 226008, which was visited by our investigators.

Skylark Hatcheries Pvt Ltd (Skylark Group)

Skylark Group has diverse operations that include breeding, hatcheries, contract farming, feed production, the processing of dead birds, and large-scale mechanised farming.

Investigators visited the group's hatchery that produces chicks for the egg and meat industries at Survey No. 293 and 294, near Yadaiah College of Education, Yadgarpally (East) village, Keesara mandal, Keesara, Telangana 501301, and its meat-production facility next to BPCL LPG Bottling Plant in UPSIDC Industrial Area, Newada Samogar, Naini, Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh 211009.

Srinivasa Farms

This group is involved with meat and egg production as well as hatcheries. Srinivasa Hatcheries Ltd, a subsidiary, is one of the largest hatcheries in the world. Its operations include breeding for the egg and meat industries, animal feed production, the processing of dead birds, and the retail of chickens' flesh and eggs. The business operations are spread across Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal. Investigators visited its egg-production facility located next to Jersey Milk Processing Plant and Parlour on the Hanuman Junction–Nuzvidu Highway, near Hanuman Junction, Andhra Pradesh 521105.

Sri Ramana Hatcheries Pvt Ltd

Our investigators visited this broiler-production hatchery located in Yavapur Thanda, approximately 1.6 kilometres from Iris Eduvalley World School, near Bunty Road, Thumkunta, Bommala Ramaram mandal, Telangana 508126.

Suguna Foods Pvt Ltd

Suguna Foods conducts its business using the “poultry integration model”, or contract farming, which means it hatches chicks and gives them to independent farmers to raise. When the chickens reach a target weight for slaughter, the company buys them back to kill them and sell their flesh. This large enterprise has a presence in 18 states, and its brands are household names. Investigators visited its meat-production hatchery located opposite Glenmark Pharmaceuticals Ltd, Kurkumbh MIDC, Mumbai-Solapur Highway, Kurkumbh village, near Daund, Maharashtra 413802.

Thai Hatcheries

Our investigators visited two meat-production units of Thai Hatcheries located at 5/334, Marathal Thottam, near Indian Oil Petrol Bunk, Karadivavi, Palladam block, Tiruppur

district, Tamil Nadu 641658 and at 6/174, Pappampati-Karadivavi Road, Palladam-Cochin Frontier Road, Karadivavi, Tamil Nadu 641658

Tirumala Hatcheries Pvt Ltd (Tirumala Group)

Our investigators visited Tirumala Hatcheries' egg-production unit located near Indian Oil Petrol Pump, Vadaigudem, Yadagirigutta, Bhuvanagiri district, Telangana 508115. The facility also has a poultry farm at this location.

UK Hatcheries

Our investigators visited its broiler-production hatchery located in Lakhamapur, near Vani-Dindori Road, Dindori taluk, Nashik district, Maharashtra 422202.

Varalaxmi Hatcheries Pvt Ltd

Our investigators visited Varalaxmi Hatcheries at its broiler-production unit located next to Kishore Warehouse, on Shankarapur Road, Golkonda Khurd, near Shamshabad, Ranga Reddy district, Telangana 501218.

Venkateshwara Hatcheries Pvt Ltd

Venkateshwara Hatcheries supplies eggs for breeding and operates facilities that breed chicks for both egg and meat production in Maharashtra, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, and other states. Investigators visited its egg-production facility at C7, UPSIDC Industrial Area, Newada Samogar, Naini, Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh 211009.

3. Background Information on Chickens

Like all other animals, chickens value their lives. Ethologists (animal behaviourists) describe them as social, sensitive, and intelligent. For example, chickens use over 30 distinct vocalisations that express a range of information about mating, nesting, danger, fear, and the discovery of food. In nature, chicks peep to their mothers even before they hatch and the hens reply with comforting sounds. They also communicate with their unhatched siblings, and they sometimes all hatch at the same time as a result.

Within days of hatching, they develop expertise at complex skills that don't develop in humans until they're toddlers, such as basic arithmetic, structural engineering, and self-control. They can also recognise more than 100 individual faces, even after several months of separation. In addition, they're able to consider the future and exercise self-restraint in order to obtain a later reward, a skill that was previously thought to be exclusive to humans and other primates.

A study by the University of Bristol, in the UK, demonstrated both physiologically and behaviourally that when chicks are distressed, their mothers feel empathy for them. When given the opportunity, hens also teach their young the ways of the world, including lessons in safety, such as which foods to eat and which to avoid.

Chickens can also distinguish among individual humans, remember how they have been treated by them, and develop expectations based on these experiences. They're so smart, in fact, that ethologist Dr Lesley Rogers has stated, "It is now clear that birds have cognitive capacities equivalent to those of mammals, even primates."

4. Investigation Details

Following are descriptions of the treatment of chicks documented by the investigators.

Incubation

Instead of allowing hens to incubate their offspring as nature intended, hatcheries place eggs in incubators powered by electricity. Hatched chicks never meet their mothers, and many are forced into the same cycle of egg laying and slaughter their mothers endured.

Large-scale commercial incubators are controlled by the hatcheries' workers and have automatic back-up power systems. However, problems in incubators, lead to a host of problems, including chicks being born with organ deformities and other health problems. These birds are then discarded.

Some hatcheries have incubators that can produce thousands of birds. A technician at Skylark Group's hatchery near Hyderabad in Telangana, which produces layer and broiler hens, told investigators that the hatchery has 44 incubators and that each machine has a daily capacity of 40,000 eggs, making its production capacity 17,60,000 eggs daily. The Production In-Charge of the same hatchery informed the investigators about its expansion plans, saying, "Six months from now, 2 lakhs eggs processing will happen here daily."

The Manager of Venkateshwara Hatcheries in Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh informed investigators that "40,000 chicks hatch in every batch and 50 per cent of them ... 20,000, are males, which are unwanted waste."



Incubators at Varalaxmi Hatcheries, located near the Hyderabad Airport

Sexing

Shortly after birth, male chicks are separated from females via a process called “sexing”. Hatcheries that supply the egg industry carry out sexing because only females can lay eggs. Males are therefore considered useless and unprofitable and are typically killed in illegal ways, as outlined in the report below.

At Venkateshwara’s egg-production hatchery in Uttar Pradesh, the Manager showed investigators the sexing process. He informed them it is “commonly called vent sexing” and was being performed on the BV 300 variety of chicks. He further explained that “There are two types of sexing – feather sexing and vent sexing for BV 300 type. Colour sexing also happens.” However, vent sexing is the most commonly used by the industry, and it’s typically extremely distressing for the birds – they’re handled roughly by the hatchery workers, who press hard on them to squeeze faeces out of their bodies in order to determine their sex through their anal vent (cloaca).

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Male chicks after sexing, as shown by Venkateshwara Hatcheries' Manager in Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh

Grading

Workers are trained to check for unhealthy chicks and determine those who will be deemed usable or unusable using a process known as “grading”. At Skylark Group’s egg and meat production hatchery near Hyderabad, investigators were told that some chicks are graded as “poor quality”. Some may be kept and sold at a reduced price, but more often than not, they’re discarded and killed.

A technician at that same hatchery was filmed informing investigators that “by the parameters of weight and by health, selection is done and delivery is done of those chicks that meet those parameters. If chicks whose weight is less than the weight parameter are given, there are chances of complaints coming.”

Some newly hatched chicks – for reasons that include early or late hatching, lameness, deformities, general weakness, or being underweight – are rejected in the grading process. Once rejected, live and dead chicks are all thrown into the same crates.



The chick-grading process underway in UK Hatcheries near Nashik in Maharashtra

Debeaking

When female chicks in the egg industry are just a few days or weeks old, farm workers remove a large portion of their beaks with a searing-hot blade without administering any pain relief in a practice known as “debeaking”. Rather than simply providing hens with adequate space, workers debeak them in order to reduce the risk of injury when they peck each other out of frustration from being confined to cramped cages. Debeaked birds show significant signs of pain.

According to a technician at Skylark Group’s Hyderabad hatchery, the facility uses a machine for debeaking. Investigators filmed him saying, “With the machine here, beaks are not cut, they are melted via a heating system. It’s not done for male chicks as the male chicks go as wastage... they are sold to fish farms to be used to feed fish.”

Colouring of Male Chicks

Investigators found that private agents have contracts with hatcheries of Venkateshwara Hatcheries, Skylark Hatcheries, Tirumala Hatcheries, and others for purchasing male chicks. Besides selling unwanted male chicks to fish farms, contractors also sell the male chicks to *pheri wallahs* (“hawkers”) who dye and resell them in markets and villages or sell them to poultry farmers to be reared for meat.

In Andhra Pradesh, our investigator filmed a consignment of 17,000 male chicks being loaded onto a truck at Srinivasa Farms’ hatchery. The buyers informed the investigator that they were taking the male chicks to Odisha to dye and resell them there. Dyed chicks are typically sold to children, who obviously do not know how to care for them, causing the animals to suffer from starvation, dehydration, fear, harm, distress, and often injury and death. The dye can also irritate chicks’ eyes and skin and even poison them.

The Production In-Charge at Skylark Group’s hatchery near Hyderabad informed the investigators that while many of the facility’s male chicks are sent to fisheries, others are sold and dyed. “March onwards, male chicks go to those who colour them and sell a pair at Rs 10 in various villages,” he said.

At Tirumala Hatcheries’ facility in Yadagarigutta, Telangana, the Hatchery In-Charge was filmed telling investigators that its chicks are sold via private contractors to fisheries as well as local markets. The In-Charge shared the contact details of a private contractor who has a contract with Tirumala to buy its “waste”, which includes male chicks. The contractor told the investigators that he sells some of the chicks to hawkers who then sell them in local markets and that the remaining live male chicks are sent to fish *talab* (“ponds”) in Andhra Pradesh.



Dyed male chicks being sold outside a school by a local hawker in Hyderabad



Male chicks purchased and crammed into baskets by pheri wallahs at Srinivasa Farms' hatchery in Andhra Pradesh

Rearing Male Layer Chicks for Meat

Our investigators found that unwanted male chicks sold by hatcheries to contractors also often end up in small poultry farms where male layer chicks are raised for meat.

In Lucknow, the investigators documented a contractor who purchased 17,000 male chicks from a hatchery unit of Venkateshwara Hatcheries. This contractor sent some of these chicks from Charbagh Railway Station, Lucknow, to Jhansi via train, crammed into cardboard boxes without access to food and water. In Jhansi, they were purchased by an individual who sold them to people who would raise them for meat. One investigator also followed another consignment of this contractor's male chicks to a small poultry farm located near Malihabad, near Lucknow. The investigator was informed by the staff at the poultry farm that these chicks would be reared for meat and sold.

Our investigator followed another consignment of chicks sent from Jhansi Railway Station to Indergarh, Madhya Pradesh. The male chicks were delivered to a hawker, who sold the chicks to villagers who rear them for meat.



Male chicks from Venkateshwara Hatcheries purchased by a hatchery waste buyer-contractor at Charbagh Railway Station, Lucknow, transported from a hatchery unit of Venkateshwara Hatcheries by train



Male chicks purchased from Venkateshwara Hatcheries at Jhansi Railway Station, transported in cardboard boxes by train from Lucknow



Male chicks purchased by a poultry farmer from a private contractor to rear them for meat near Malihabad, near Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh



Male chicks being sold in Indergarh, near Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, by a pheri wallah

5. Killing of Chicks

Drowning

Rejected chicks at UK Hatcheries' meat-production hatchery in Maharashtra were documented being drowned in water. An employee of the hatchery and the manager told the investigators that about 700 to 800 unwanted chicks from a day's hatch would be killed in the evening and dumped into a pit within the hatchery premises the next day. They informed the investigators that they drown the chicks, as they cannot give out live rejected chicks outside the hatchery. A staffer brought out two metal trays holding about 80 to 100 chicks (alive, deformed, day-old chicks, deemed unwanted) and an empty blue bucket. He dumped the chicks using his bare hands into the bucket and poured water on top to drown them to death. The chicks desperately tried to swim and stay afloat, but after a long struggle that lasted several minutes, their anguished chirps ended and they drowned. The duo informed the investigators that they drown rejected chicks from every hatch/batch, which happens three times a week.



Water poured on chicks to drown them in UK Hatcheries near Nashik, Maharashtra



Chicks killed by drowning at UK Hatcheries near Nashik, Maharashtra

Chicks Dumped in Drums, Pits, Ponds, or Rubbish Bins and Left to Die

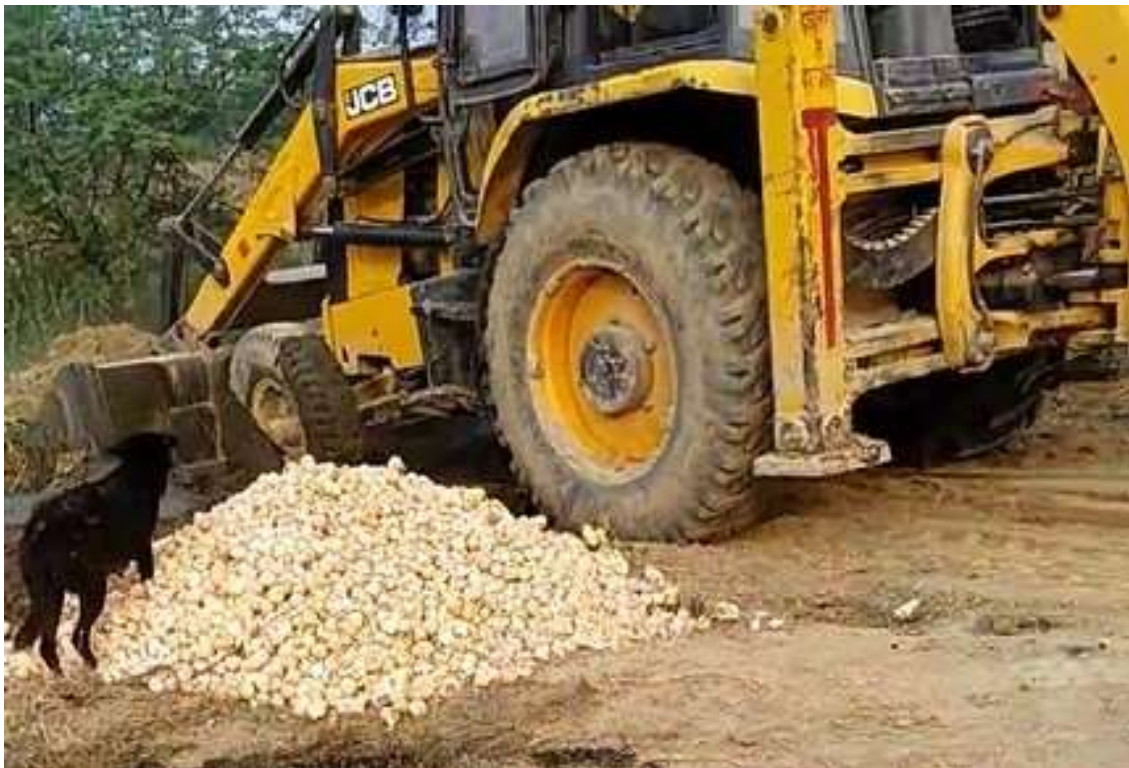
In a broiler-production unit of Uttar Pradesh's Diva Hatchery, 60 to 70 live chicks along with unhatched chicks considered "waste" by hatcheries were filmed being dumped in a pit near the hatchery. The chicks were filmed trying to swim through the sludge on the ground while others drowned in it. A JCB earthmover was used to dump mud over the wet sludge and almost ran over some live, unwanted chicks who were dumped on the ground. Many live chicks were abandoned and left to die at the dumpsite. Two dogs were filmed eating live, dying, and dead chicks amid the dumped hatchery waste.

Investigators also filmed unwanted live and dying chicks being dumped in an open burial pit on the premises of FeedPro Hatcheries and Farms' meat-production hatchery in Uttar Pradesh. Approximately 60 live chicks were filmed in the open burial pit, which was over 3.5 metres deep and swarming with houseflies. The pit was covered with salt and the discarded live chicks were filmed chirping desperately as they were left there to die slowly. A staffer informed the investigators that the deformed chicks are dumped in the pit along with dead adult chickens, and once the pit is filled with carcasses over a few months, it is covered with mud.

At Gitanjali Hatchery in Uttar Pradesh, investigators filmed two staffers from the hatchery dumping two barrels filled with hatchery "waste" comprising live and dead chicks, unhatched chicks, and broken egg shells into open agricultural fields, located approximately about 1.5 kilometres from the hatchery. The suffocating and crushed chicks were abandoned by the workers there in the empty field, left to die a slow, agonising death.

At Hiba Breeding Farms and Hatchery's meat-production hatchery in Uttar Pradesh, two staffers loaded two drums of what the hatchery deems "waste" – which comprised 50 to 80 live chicks, unhatched chicks, and dead chicks – onto a tractor, which they drove to a murky pond, used as a dumpsite, located less than half a kilometre from the hatchery. Here, they dumped the dead, alive, and unhatched chicks at the pond's edge. Several live chicks were filmed being crushed under the weight of the egg shells and unhatched eggs, including some with partially developed chicks visible, when they were dumped from the drums on the tractor onto the ground. A couple of chicks tumbled into the pond and drowned while most died by being crushed under the weight of the hatchery's "waste". Many chicks were left to die abandoned by the pond. A dog was filmed eating the dumped chicks.

At Ravindra Hatchery's meat-production hatchery in Uttar Pradesh, two drums filled with dying chicks and unhatched eggs with partially developed chicks visible were transported from the hatchery to a pond located at its poultry farm, approximately 2 kilometres from the hatchery. The chicks and unhatched eggs with partially developed chicks were dumped in a heap at the pond's edge. Many chicks and unhatched chicks fell into the water while others were crushed under the weight of the shells. The live chicks and partially developed chicks in eggshells were left to die there. Dogs were filmed eating unhatched chicks from the heap.



A dog foraging through "waste" containing live chicks from Diva Hatchery, near Lucknow, before the pile is buried using a JCB earthmover



Day-old chicks amid egg shells and sludge dumped by Diva Hatchery, near Lucknow



Live chicks dumped in FeedPro Hatchery's open burial pit in Uttar Pradesh



07-Dec-2021 1:26:25 pm
Unnamed Road
Ain
Lucknow
Uttar Pradesh

A rejected chick dumped in an open field by Gitanjali Hatchery amid unhatched chicks and shells near Lucknow



07-Dec-2021 1:23:41 pm
Unnamed Road
Ain
Lucknow
Uttar Pradesh

Rejected and unhatched chicks being dumped in an open field by Gitanjali Hatchery in Ain village near Lucknow



02-Dec-2021 8:52:35 am
Unnamed Road
Lucknow
Uttar Pradesh

Unwanted chicks being dumped at a murky pond by Hiba Breeding Farms and Hatchery in Malihabad, Uttar Pradesh



Hiba Breeding Farms and Hatchery's workers dumping live chicks who are being eaten by a dog in Malihabad, Uttar Pradesh



A dead chick in the hatchery "waste" at Ravindra Hatchery in Uttar Pradesh



30 Nov 2021 5:17:22 pm
Unnamed Road
Aroda
Bulandshahr
Uttar Pradesh

Ravindra Hatchery's "waste" being dumped by a pond at its poultry farm near Bulandshahr, Uttar Pradesh



Dogs eating dead and unhatched chicks from Ravindra Hatchery's "waste" dumped by a pond at its poultry farm near Bulandshahr, Uttar Pradesh

Burned Alive

In Telangana's Sri Ramana Hatcheries' meat-production hatchery and poultry farm, one of its supervisors informed the investigators that they kill chicks and dispose of them by burning them in a pit in the hatchery. He also told investigators that 10 litres of diesel is poured on the chicks for this purpose. Investigators were also informed that if the hatchery workers run out of diesel to use for burning, they use black engine oil from the generator to set the waste on fire.

Crushed, Suffocated, and Left for Dead

At Shrawasthi Agrotech's meat-production hatchery in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, workers were observed dumping unwanted live and unhatched chicks into large drums. Those at the bottom suffocated or were crushed under the weight of the other chicks and egg shells. The hatchery's supervisor informed investigators that the drum loads of dead and rejected chicks are dumped at a location outside the hatchery at night, as dumping outside is not allowed during the day.

At Feroz Hatchery's meat-production hatchery in Sitapur in Uttar Pradesh, rejected dying and live chicks were filmed abandoned in two rubbish barrels with other trash like vegetable waste and plastic covers.

At Sri Ramana Hatcheries' meat-production hatchery near Hyderabad in Telangana, investigators found four drums filled with hatchery waste and live chicks left to die in them near the generator room in the hatchery's premises.

At Ravindra Hatchery's meat-production hatchery in Uttar Pradesh, investigators filmed rejected chicks who were kept in stacks of plastic trays without food or water all day and all night before the dying chicks were dumped into barrels, transported to a nearby poultry farm, and offloaded by a pond behind one of the sheds the following evening.

At Varalaxmi Hatcheries' meat-production hatchery near Hyderabad in Telangana, an investigator filmed dying and rejected day-old chicks dumped into two rubbish bins on the hatchery's premises. The dead, dying, and unwanted live chicks were stuffed into the bins with trash like discarded newspapers and abandoned to die slow, agonising deaths from suffocation or starvation.

At a Thai Hatcheries meat-production hatchery unit in Tamil Nadu, a supervisor showed investigators six drums of "waste" kept right outside the hatchery's building on its premises. Of the six barrels (with a capacity of 200 kilograms each), investigators were able to note that two barrels had both live and dead chicks stuffed in them. One barrel contained only dead chicks. When asked why there were dead chicks in the drums, the supervisor informed the investigators that some of the chicks were deformed and some had died during transportation to shops and were returned to the hatchery. The barrels were emitting a foul smell from the dead chicks, and the live ones were left to suffocate among the corpses or die of starvation. The abandoned chicks were left overnight and picked up by a truck the next morning to be disposed of elsewhere.



Chicks dumped and left to die in barrels at the Shrawasthi Agrotech hatchery near Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh



Live chicks moments before being crushed as they're dumped into another barrel at the Shrawasthi Agrotech hatchery near Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh



Dead and rejected chicks left to die in a rubbish bin in Feroz Hatchery in Sitapur near Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh



Chicks abandoned in a drum at Sri Ramana Hatcheries near Hyderabad, Telangana



Rejected chicks like this one were left all day and all night without food or water at Ravindra Hatchery before being dumped near a pond the next evening in Uttar Pradesh.



Chicks slowly suffocating to death amid waste in a rubbish bin at Varalaxmi Hatcheries near Hyderabad, Telangana



Dead and dying chicks stuffed in a barrel and left overnight at Thai Hatcheries' meat-production hatchery near Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu

Used as Fish Feed

At one of Diva Hatchery's hatchery unit in Uttar Pradesh, the investigators documented that one of the workers tossed a tray filled with live chicks to feed catfish (*magur*, as staff said)

breeding in a human-made pond located on the hatchery's premises. The pond was approximately 6 metres below ground level, and it was filled with water and fish. The worker tossed the live chicks from a height of 6 metres directly from the tray into the pond below, and within approximately three to four minutes, all the chicks were consumed by the *magur* fish in the pond. Some chicks tried to swim ashore to survive but were eventually eaten.

The person in charge at Skylark Hatcheries' unit near Hyderabad in Telangana said that the hatchery sells "hatchery loss" like male chicks to three or four buyers who own massive fish farms with 12 to 15 ponds spread over 300 to 500 acres. Investigators filmed the Production In-Charge saying that the fish farms take whatever quantity of waste the hatchery gives, even 5, 6, or 10 tonnes. When asked about the locations of the fish farms to which his hatchery's male chicks are sent, the Production In-Charge was filmed telling the investigators that those fish farms are in Hyderabad, Telangana, and Kolar and Mysore, Karnataka.

In Andhra Pradesh, Srinivasa Farms' egg-production hatchery's In-Charge put investigators in touch with two fish farmers who purchase the hatchery's waste to feed fish. The investigator met one of the fish farmers on the hatchery's premises when he was loading male chicks and unhatched eggs with partially developed chicks visible into a vehicle to transport them to his fish farms. Investigators trailed the fish farmer transporting the hatchery's waste from the hatchery to his fish farm in Pedapadu I village near Pedapadu village in Eluru district in Andhra Pradesh. A person at the edge of the fish farm in Pedapadu I village was filmed boiling and stirring the unhatched eggs containing partially developed chicks in a small iron boat that was heated by burning cardboard boxes underneath it. The person confirmed on camera that the unhatched chicks were brought from a "hatchery". He informed the investigator that he would boil the unhatched chicks for a couple of hours before emptying them in the fish pond later that night to feed the fish. There were also some male chicks from the hatchery kept in a small plastic bucket. He said that he would feed them to the fish later that night, too. This village had several fish ponds with metal grinders kept at the edges of them for grinding chicks to be fed to fish.

At Maharashtra's Suguna Foods' meat-production hatchery, its head of accounting was filmed informing investigators that the hatchery sells all its waste to an owner of a fish farm who has an annual contract/agreement with the hatchery. He said that there are fish farms near Ujjani Dam near Indapur that are approximately 1 acre in size. He said the unhatched eggs and unwanted chicks are processed by the fish farm owner (near the fish farm) and fed to the fish.

Investigators found what – through fish identification – appears to be an illegal African catfish farm in Dharmapuri in Tamil Nadu, details of which were shared by a private agent who has contracts with hatcheries in and around Namakkal to purchase their "waste" (such as male chicks and unfertilised eggs). At this catfish farm, investigators traced a huge consignment of "waste" (comprising live and dead male chicks) from two hatcheries sold to this fish farm owner by the contractor. The fish farm owner told investigators that the two hatcheries' chicks were sold to him by the Namakkal-based contractor. The chicks were transported by the fish farmer from the hatcheries near Namakkal to Dharmapuri to feed the fish in the fish farms there. Approximately 15,000 chicks were transported, stuffed into two filled barrels (with a capacity of 200 kilograms each), two plastic gunny bags, and a basket. Early in the morning, two men working on the fish farm pushed the chicks into a metal grinder that ground up the live as well as dead chicks. The birds were ground into a sludgy paste of minced flesh that fell from the grinder into a concrete sump below. In the sump,

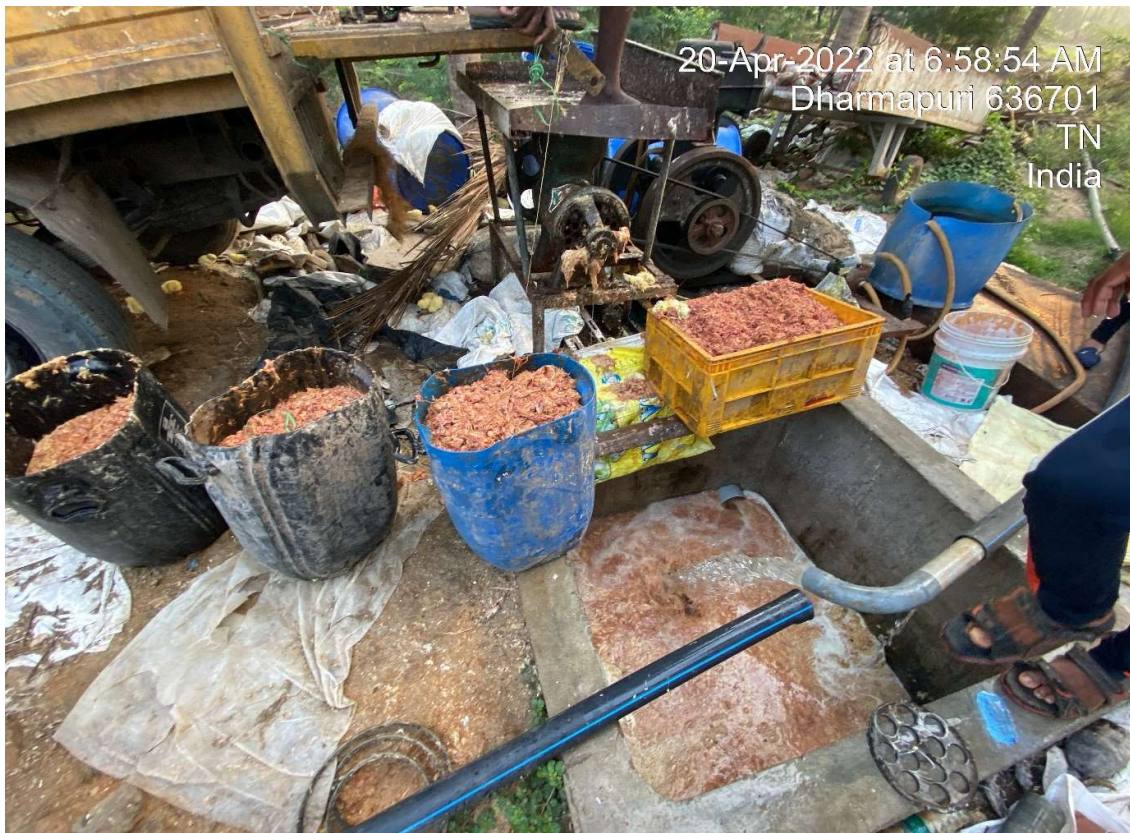
water mixed with the flesh, and this mixture was emptied into the two African catfish ponds via pipes to feed the fish. The African catfish swarmed and crowded around the pipes and consumed the mixture. The men emptied the dead and live chicks from the barrels, gunny bags, and basket into the grinder over a period of approximately 45 minutes. Two live chicks who fell into the concrete sump below were filmed struggling right next to freshly ground minced flesh of chicks like them.

The investigators saw terrified chicks try to hide or run for their lives, but many were collected by the men and tossed alive into the ponds.



Live male chicks being ground up alive to feed to exotic catfish on a fish farm in Dharmapuri, Tamil Nadu

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Close to 15,000 live and dead chicks were ground up in the grinder, and the minced flesh was transferred to barrels to feed African catfish on a fish farm in Dharmapuri in Tamil Nadu.

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African catfish swarming around the pipe supplying the chicks' ground-up flesh on a fish farm in Dharmapuri, Tamil Nadu.



Chicks being tossed into a magur fish pond located on a hatchery unit of Diva Hatchery's premises to feed fish, near Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh



A man working on a fish farm in Pedapadu I village in Eluru district, Andhra Pradesh, stirs and boils unhatched chicks purchased from Srinivasa Farms' egg-production hatchery to feed fish.



A man working on a fish farm in Pedapadu I village (in Eluru district, Andhra Pradesh) stirs and boils unhatched chicks purchased from Srinivasa Farms' egg-production hatchery to feed fish.



Unhatched chicks purchased from Srinivasa Farms' egg-production hatchery are boiled on a fish farm in Pedapadu I village in Eluru district in Andhra Pradesh.

Fed to Dogs

At Charbagh Railway Station's platform in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, a man was filmed sorting male chicks bought from Venkateshwara Hatcheries for its buyer, a contractor. The worker tossed chicks (who died or were dying during transport by train or were otherwise unwanted) onto railway tracks to feed dogs there. The private contractor confirmed on camera that the consignment of "17,000 male chicks" was from "Venky's". Eagles were filmed swooping down onto the railway track and picking up the discarded chicks just after they were thrown there.

The practice of feeding dead and dying chicks to dogs and eagles by the contractor's workers was filmed two days in a row when investigators visited the Charbagh Railway Station.

6. Abusing Chicks Is Against the Law

Every citizen of this country has a fundamental responsibility to protect animals. Article 51A(g) of the Indian Constitution 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.*"

Section 3 of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act, 1960, outlines, "*It shall be the duty of every person having the care or charge of any animal to take all reasonable measures*

to ensure the well-being of such animal and to prevent the infliction upon such animal of unnecessary pain or suffering.”

Killing Chicks Is an Illegal and Cognisable Offence

Killing animals (including chicks) is not permitted in India, subject to specific exceptions, and is a cognisable offence under the Indian Penal Code, 1860. Furthermore, the ways in which the investigated companies often handle, debeak, and transport chicks cause unnecessary pain and suffering and are in apparent violation of the PCA Act, 1960; the Indian Penal Code; the Food Safety and Standards (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Regulations, 2011; and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Slaughter House) Rules, 2001.

Section 11 of the PCA Act, 1960, also makes it illegal for a person to behave in any of the following ways: “(a) beats, kicks, over-rides, over-drives, over-loads, tortures or otherwise treats any animal so as to subject [him or her] to unnecessary pain or suffering or causes, or being the owner permits, any animal to be so treated; or . . . (d) conveys or carries, whether in or upon any vehicle or not, any animal in such a manner or position as to subject [him or her] to unnecessary pain or suffering; or (e) keeps or confines 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; or . . . (h) being the owner of (any animal) fails to provide such animal with sufficient food, drink or shelter; or (i) without reasonable cause, abandons any animal in circumstances which tender it likely that [he or she] will suffer pain by reason of starvation [or] thirst”.

According to Section 11(1)(l) of the PCA Act, 1960, it is an offence when any human “mutilates any animal or kills any animal (including stray dogs) ... in any other unnecessarily cruel manner”. Such an offence is cognisable under the extant laws. The killing of chickens may be allowed only under certain circumstances, including the following:

- Under the authority of any existing law (such as the Prevention and Control of Infectious and Contagious Diseases in Animals Act, 2009, to address outbreaks of diseases like avian flu)
- For experimentation, under Section 11(3)(d) of the PCA Act, 1960
- As food, under Section 11(3)(e) of the PCA Act, 1960
- To euthanise an animal when it would be cruel to keep them alive, under Section 13 of the PCA Act, 1960

The rampant killing of baby chicks in the investigated companies does not fall under any of the above exceptions and is, therefore, illegal.

Under Sections 428 and 429 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 too, killing animals is a cognisable offence.

Section 429 makes the following provisions: “whoever commits mischief by killing, poisoning, maiming or rendering useless ... any other animal of the value of fifty rupees or upwards, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to five years, or with fine, or with both.” Section 428 sets out similar guidelines for any animals of the value of at least Rs 10, where the punishment for infringement is a prison term of up to two years, a fine, or both.

Legal Protections for Chicks During Transit Under Extant Laws

Allowing chicks to be crushed and suffocated in transit violates Chapter VII of the Transport of Animals Rules, 1978, which covers the “Transport of Poultry by Rail, Road and Air”. This chapter was introduced in the Rules by way of an amendment in 2001 and contains provisions that are aimed at preventing such suffering and death.

The Food Safety and Standards (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Regulations, 2011, also require the protection of animals during transportation to the slaughterhouse: *“To avoid exhaustion, the animals shall be given humane treatment and care during transportation. The animals shall not be bound or chained during transit and space provided for them shall be large enough to stand or lie.”*

When it comes to the slaughter of animals used for food, the Food Safety and Standards (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Regulations, 2011, are clear: stunning before slaughter is required. By inducing unconsciousness and insensibility, stunning can avoid and minimise reactions of fear and anxiety as well as pain, suffering, and distress among the animals concerned. Stunning methods induce loss of consciousness and rely on prompt and accurate procedures to cause death.

The cruel killing of chicks evidences that even the basic regulations applicable in relation to slaughtering animals for food under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Slaughter House) Rules, 2001, are not being met.

The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Slaughter House) Rules, 2001, mandate stunning prior to slaughter, stating, “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.”

Moreover, the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Slaughter House) Rules, 2001, state that animals “under the age of three months” are not permitted to be slaughtered. Even when chicks need to be euthanised for their own well-being, the nitrogen or inert gases method (with nitrogen or argon) may be used. It may be noted that the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI), the Law Commission of India (LCI), and World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) under its Terrestrial Animal Health Code also recommend the use of inert gases including nitrogen. Hatched chicks must not be macerated, although it may be an way to destroy embryonated eggs.

As per the extant laws, breeding of exotic catfish is prohibited in India by the Ministry of Agriculture vide orders dated 19 December 1997 and 29 June 2000.

In addition to the violation of animal protection and other laws, the disposal of hatchery waste also violates environmental protection laws and causes health hazards. As is evidenced by this report, hatcheries kill thousands of birds daily in facilities, and accordingly, the level of what the industry considers “waste” (which includes dead, weak, sick, and deformed chicks) is high. This waste is seldom disposed of scientifically, in accordance with the law.

The Method of Disposal of Dead Birds Is Contrary to Extant Law

The Environmental Guidelines for Poultry Farms dated January 2022 (Environmental Guidelines) sets the method for managing and disposing of dead birds. Under the “burial method”, dead birds should be separated from live birds promptly and stored in closed

containers. However, as can be witnessed from our findings, all unwanted chicks – both dead and alive – are being disposed of together without segregation.

The Environmental Guidelines also state that the dead bird burial pit shall be provided with “a vermin/fly proof cover made up of wooden / metal / concrete having a central operable lid of proper size” and should be “covered by a thin layer of soil (at least 40 cm deep) along with calcium hydroxide”. However, the investigation found that the guidelines are being violated, as the live and dead birds are being left unattended on the ground (without separation and without any covering), being eaten by dogs and birds, and attracting flies and other insects.

Furthermore, the Environmental Guidelines does not permit dumping dead chicks into bodies of water, yet the hatcheries have been documented throwing unwanted live and dead birds into bodies of water.

In addition, as per the Environmental Guidelines, poultry farms handling more than 25,000 birds at a single location have to obtain consent to establish (CTE) and consent to operate (CTO) under the Water Act, 1974, and the Air Act, 1981, from the state Pollution Control Board or Pollution Control Committee.

It seems animal welfare and environmental safeguards are of little to no concern for the companies that maim, kill, and sell chickens and their eggs and that, at the very least, the existing legislation needs to be more rigorously enforced.

7. A Different System

Abroad, new *in ovo* sexing technology has been developed that can be used on eggs. Using this technology, the male embryos can be identified at an early stage of development so that an egg, rather than a live bird, can be destroyed. While this doesn't address the issue of the industry's killing methods for unhealthy chicks, it can be used to prevent the killing of live male chicks.

8. Eating Chicken Meat and Eggs Is Unhealthy

Chicken meat and eggs are loaded with cholesterol and saturated fat. In fact, chicken meat raises cholesterol levels as much as red meat does. The average serving of chicken contains about 50% fat, of which 30% is saturated or “unhealthy” fat, which encourages the body's production of cholesterol. And around 60% of the calories in eggs are from fat – much of which is saturated fat. The Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine warns, “Diets high in saturated fats, trans fats, and cholesterol – found in meat, dairy products, and eggs – raise cholesterol levels, which increases heart attack risk.” The doctors' group also warns that carcinogens naturally occur in chicken meat and stated, “The fat and cholesterol found in eggs can harm heart health and lead to diabetes, as well as prostate and colorectal cancers.”

Meanwhile, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, the world's largest organisation of nutrition and dietetics practitioners, says vegans are at reduced risk of certain health conditions, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, various forms of cancer, and obesity.

For children, milk and eggs are common allergens. And when children are given eggs at school as part of the midday meal programme, they are often given only one or two a week. Yet, one large egg contains only 6 grams of protein. A portion of boiled daal contains 17.9 grams.

Eggs and chicken meat can be contaminated with *Salmonella*, which can cause serious infection. In fact, far from being a benefit, offering eggs in schools often lands children in hospital. Reports from 2022 include 48 students hospitalised in Odisha, 42 students hospitalised in Andhra Pradesh, and 25 students hospitalised in Tamil Nadu – all from egg consumption.

According to the World Health Organization, about 50% of all malnutrition is associated with repeated diarrhoea or intestinal worm infections as a direct result of inadequate water, sanitation, and hygiene. The key to ending malnutrition is largely, therefore, cleanliness, not eggs, which can themselves make people sick.

Poultry farms are also common spreaders of bird flu. The H5N1 strain of bird flu has a 60% mortality rate in humans, and other forms are also deadly.

9. Progress

At PETA India's urging, the Animal Husbandry Departments of Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, and Goa have committed to using *in ovo* sex-determination technology when the technology is made available in this country. In addition, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Jammu, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, and Uttar Pradesh have also issued orders directing an end to illegal and cruel chick-killing practices.

Companies around the world are working on *in ovo* sexing technology, and countries are taking steps to adopt it. Germany and France are the first to set urgent dates to prohibit the killing of male chicks in favour of this technology. In addition, organisations including Assoavi, a trade association representing the largest egg producers in Italy, and United Egg Producers, representing the hatcheries that produce 90% of all eggs in the US, have also declared their commitment to adopting *in ovo* sexing technology in order to avoid killing male chicks.

10. Recommendations

In India, various states acknowledge the need to end illegal chick-killing practices, and as mentioned above, countries are taking steps to adopt *in ovo* sexing technology. PETA India recommends that the Indian government follow in these countries' footsteps by announcing similar dates for phasing out the killing of male chicks. We also recommend that the Indian government work to bring *in ovo* sexing technology to India as a matter of urgency and require that the egg industry adopt and implement this technology to prevent the killing of live male chicks. To meet this objective, it is imperative that the Indian government collaborate with the companies engaged in developing *in ovo* sexing technology.

When it's necessary to euthanise unhealthy chicks to prevent suffering, the hatcheries should adopt the inert gases method (with nitrogen or argon). As stated above, the AWBI, LCI, and WOA already recommended the use of inert gases. It is further recommended that the AWBI develop a written standard for this procedure based on these recommendations.

We also recommend that the industry ensure the humane and legal transport of chicks and uncage hens who are used for their eggs and provide them with more space to avoid debeaking.

The general public can help spare chicks these atrocious acts of violence and gruesome deaths by choosing vegan foods, which also benefit human health and the environment.



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