

The Use of Chickens & Other Domestic Fowl in Agricultural Research

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We're a long, long way from using up genetic gain potential in rate of growth, feed conversion, and how we shape our birds. More and more, the biochemist, physiologist, virologist, immunologist, microbiologist and nutritionist will complement the geneticist's activities in poultry breeding programs. All of this translates into relatively large investments in research and development, which in turn must be justified on a R.O.I. [return on investment] potential basis as it relates to the marketplace – market size and market penetration. – “Exciting future for breeders,” Broiler Industry, July 1976, by Wentworth Hubbard, President of Hubbard Farms, Walpole, NH. From 1974 a subsidiary of Merck, Hubbard Farms, one of the largest international “Broiler Breeder” companies in the world, is currently owned by Groupe Grimaud, a French international biotech company.

Brazilian poultry producers go through a marathon in the search of new technologies. Acclimatised chicken sheds, automatic feed distribution and vaccination in eggs are part of the routine in poultry farms. With research they have also already obtained a chicken that grows very fast. The great question now is how to breed a bird with a physiological system that keeps up with this growth. – Isaura Daniel, “The Race for the Perfect Chicken,” Brazilian-Arab News Agency, June 29, 2006.

Status of Birds and Farmed Animals in the United States

- ♥ Farmed animals are excluded from the definition of “animal” under the federal Laboratory Animal Welfare Act.
- ♥ Animals used in agricultural research are excluded from the Animal Welfare Act.
- ♥ Apart from certain wild categories, birds of all species are excluded from federal protection in the United States.
- ♥ Poultry are excluded from the federal Humane Slaughter Act of 1958.

Following are just a few examples of the many types of experiments to which chickens, turkeys, and other domestic fowl are continuously being subjected by poultry science departments and other agribusiness research enterprises worldwide.

Brain Dead Chicken Experiments

Could A Brain-Dead Chicken ‘Matrix’ Solve Ethical Issues Of Factory Farming? *Huffington Post*, February 29, 2012

“André Ford, an architecture student from the U.K., wants to bring new meaning to the phrase ‘like a chicken with its head cut off.’”

“He proposed his ‘Headless Chicken Solution’ for a project at the Royal College of Art in which he was asked to look for sustainable solutions to the U.K.’s farming inefficiencies.”



www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/02/29/brain-dead-chicken-matrix-unethical-farming_n_1306960.html

Debeaking Experiments

Painful debeaking (“beak trimming”) experiments on chickens, turkeys and other domestic fowl are a worldwide enterprise. The book *Beak Trimming* (Glatz 2005) contains 52 pages of published debeaking experiments spanning four decades. According to the editor, despite the “wealth of scientific information on the welfare of beak-trimmed birds, beak-trimming methods and alternatives to beak-trimming,” researchers claim “there is a lack of comprehensive studies that measure the effect of beak-trimming on welfare using multiple indicators. . . .”

www.upc-online.org/debeaking/



Hatchery debeaking tray filled with vivisected chicks' beaks.

Forced Molting Experiments

The poultry and egg industries use food deprivation and nutrient restriction to manipulate egg production in egg-laying hens and in birds used for breeding of both egg-type and meat-type birds. USDA-funded poultry researchers invent, duplicate, and refine starvation and nutrient-reduction experiments for these commercial uses and to perpetuate the research. www.upc-online.org/molting/



Featherless Chicken Experiments

Israeli scientists have spent decades cross-breeding chickens to produce featherless chickens. The result is a naked bird who will not have to be plucked in the slaughter plants, according to *New Scientist*, June 6, 2009.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture breeds and slaughters featherless chickens to study such things as whether featherlessness reduces bacteria on slaughtered chickens' skin. *USDA Agricultural Research Service News Service*, June 25, 2002.

Blind Chicken Experiments

In 1991, United Poultry Concerns investigated the use of red plastic contact lenses in egg-laying hens upon receiving two written complaints from employees in the poultry unit at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo. The complaints charged that a lens experiment by a senior student under the direction of Dr. Robert Spiller was causing severe eye infections, abnormal behavior, and blindness, and preventing the hens from closing their eyes



normally because the lenses were so large and because the type of plastic being used prevented the hens' eyes from receiving oxygen. Hens were "pecking at the air" and "rubbing their eyes repeatedly on their wings." A June 6, 1991 article on the experiment in the school newspaper quoted another student employee who stated that the "infections in the hens' eyes" worsened progressively with time. The purported purpose of this experiment, funded by a company called Animalens, was to see if hens wearing contact lenses laid more eggs.

www.upc-online.org/RedLens.html



Paul Thompson, an agribusiness philosophy professor at Michigan State University, said chickens blinded by "accident" have been experimentally developed into a strain of blind chickens. These chickens, he asserted, "don't mind" being crowded together as much as normal chickens do; so perhaps poultry producers should shift to all blind chickens as a solution to animal welfare problems associated with crowding in the poultry industry. *NPR Morning Edition*, Dec. 4, 2001.

Slaughterhouse and Flock Destruction Experiments

DECOMPRESSION: A New Way to Torture Chickens & Turkeys to Death

Cause of death in one treatment: simultaneous crushing of both lungs. . . .

"Low, guttural moaning" of dying chickens not considered a vocalization for "scoring" their "humane" experience.

Cheek, et al. "New Method for Humanely Stunning and Slaughtering Poultry Using Controlled Low Atmospheric Pressure," *United States Patent Application Publication*, May 7, 2009.

In Fort Smith, Arkansas, a chicken slaughter company has introduced a decompression technology called "low atmosphere pressure system," developed by Mississippi State University poultry researchers. From *Meating Place*, October 2010.



The birds are placed in a sealed cylindrical chamber and the pressure in the chamber "is reduced at a continuous rate to a target decompression pressure for a period of time until a state of death is obtained." Due to its cruelty, decompression of shelter animals is no longer used in the United States. "Decompression sickness" is an agonizing experience arising from the decompression of a body as it is being depleted of oxygen. www.upc-online.org/slaughter/decompression/

Firefighting foam as an alternative method of mass euthanasia for meat-type poultry flocks.

E. Benson¹, R. Alphin¹, G. Malone*¹, M. Dawson¹, G. Van Wicklen¹, and I. Estevez², ¹University of Delaware, Newark, ²University of Maryland, College Park. *Poultry Science* 2005

Suffocating chickens and turkeys to death under rolling blankets of firefighting foam in giant poultry facilities is an “alternative” to mass-gassing of the birds with carbon dioxide which simultaneously suffocates, burns, and freezes them to death.

David Harp

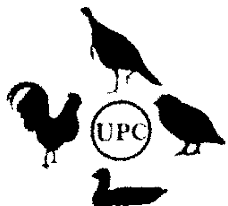


www.upc-online.org/poultry_diseases/71106usda.html

Slaughterhouse Vivisection

Slaughterhouse slaughter is the form of vivisection to which consumers of animal products contribute directly. All farmed animal experiments are built on the fundamental vivisection act of butchering live animals for human consumption. Opposition to vivisection logically and ethically compels a compassionate animal-free diet.

www.upc-online.org/slaughter/



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United Poultry Concerns is a nonprofit organization that addresses the treatment of domestic fowl in food production, science, education, entertainment, and human companionship situations and promotes the compassionate and respectful treatment of domestic fowl.

For more information on the Use of Birds in Experimental Research, go to

www.upc-online.org/experimentation/