If Slaughterhouses Had Glass Walls: The Truth Behind the History, Economics, and Ethics of Factory Farming

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If Slaughterhouses Had Glass Walls: The Truth Behind the History, Economics, and Ethics of Factory Farming

By Deanna Ripley
Abstract

In recent years, the awareness of factory farming has raised many questions regarding the treatment of animals, the health risks towards humans, and the affects it has on the environment. In the United States today, factory farming is the largest form of food production, where it is estimated that over a billion animals each year are killed to meet the high demand in the meat industry. The goal of factory farming is to maximize the amount of meat and dairy in a given amount of time through the cheapest forms of production. Thus, animals continuously live in inhumane conditions and face abuse before they are processed for meat and dairy. Consequently, humans consume unsanitary meat infused with antibiotics, as well as facing the contamination of their local environment. Factory farming is a very powerful industry in the United States and will only continue to exploit animals, humans and the natural environment without public awareness.

In order to approach this topic, this thesis will utilize three forms of environmental policy including environmental history, environmental economics, and environmental ethics/law. First, the history of factory farming and how it came to be the dominating force of food production in the United States. Second, this thesis explore why it is economically profitable for the meat and dairy industry and explore other techniques of farming, such as small organic farms in addition to other alternatives. Next, this thesis will discuss the ethical questions regarding factory farming, such as the physical and psychological affects it has on animals, as well as the risks it has on humans and the environment. Lastly, there will be an assessment of the various laws and regulations initiated against factory farming.
Introduction

Sir Paul McCartney once said, "If slaughterhouses had glass walls, everyone would be a vegetarian." Although this may seem like an obvious observation, many Americans today still continue to consume massive quantities of chicken, pork, and beef despite full awareness of the harsh realities of factory farming. In the United States today, factory farming is one of the most powerful and fastest growing industries. Billions of dollars in profits are made each year, yet the welfare of factory-farmed animals continues to decline. The meat industry continues to ignore the significant environmental damage it causes as well as creating health issues for the people in neighboring communities. Corporations are primarily concerned with financial gains and have ultimately turned factory farm animals into machines for their benefit.

To understand how factory farming became such a powerful industry that controls nearly 99 percent of the meat consumed in the United States, this thesis will explore its advancement throughout history. The factory farming industry manipulated animals for its benefit, as well as exploited small family-run farms that socially and economically depended upon a traditional form of farming. Through an examination of the nature of its production, I will prove how chickens, pigs, and cows became machines for our consumption and profit. As Jonathan Safran Soer states:

“It wasn't just that techniques had changed: biodiversity was replaced with genetic uniformity, university developments of animal husbandry became departments of science, a business once dominated by women was now
taken over by men, and skilled farmers were replaced with wage and contract workers.”¹

In order to further examine the prevalence of factory farming in the United States, this thesis will analyze the economic characteristics, and the relationships between small farmers, workers, and consumers. Corporations maintain such high profits because of a low-input high-output system. Animals are produced at a high rate of efficiency in large quantities and wages of workers remain considerably low. Meat is then purchased in large quantities, which enables it to be sold at very low prices to an ignorant body of consumers. Therefore, the cost of maintaining factory farms is very little, if excluding the social and environmental costs.

In one year, nearly 9 billion broiler chickens, 113 million pigs, and 33 million cows are killed in factory farms.² Factory farm animals are virtually slaves to the machine. They remain in close quarters, with thousands of other animals, unable to move or even see the light of day. They are pumped full of antibiotics and hormones, and often suffer from many health issues due to the unnatural rate of growth. Often enough, their bodies cannot sustain the accelerated growth and they die from health complications before slaughter. Fearing horrific abuse from the frustrated workers as well, these animals spend their entire lives in fear and loneliness. Their short lives end while they are in pain, misery, and fear before they are slaughtered.

Finally, this thesis will discuss various forms of legislation and regulation that are countering the systems of factory farming. In order to stop the injustices of the meat industry, non-profit organizations such as The Humane Society of the United States advocate laws to protect the welfare of factory farm animals. The HSUS also educates the consumer about the abuse of animals, as well as the environmental issues of factory farming. As well as exploring the change in legislation, this thesis will provide the technological advancements engineered by Temple Grandin to create humane methods of slaughter. Lastly, alternatives to factory farming will be presented such as organic and humane forms of meat as well as the benefits of a vegetarian lifestyle.

Chapter 1: The History of Factory Farming

In Wendell Berry’s, The Unsettling of America, he explains that the United States was first built on exploitation. Berry states that originally, farmers were viewed as nurturers. But today, our modern agriculture is made up of exploiters, “the exploiter’s goal is money, profit; the nurturer’s goal is health—his land’s health, his own, his family’s, his community’s, his country’s.”\(^1\) This shift from nurturer to exploiter stems from an attitude toward labor. Originally in the United States, the farm was part of the household. The family relied on the farm as a source of food and as an economic benefit to feed those in the surrounding area. Thus, the consumers were not solely consumers but the producers as well. But soon enough, the role of both consumer and producer deviated and “an enterprise that once had some susceptibility to qualitative standards—standards of personal taste and preference at one end and of good husbandry at the other—has come more and more

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\(^1\) Wendell Berry, The Unsettling of America (Berkeley: Sierra Club Books, 1977), 7.
under the influence of standards that are merely economic or quantitative."² As the consumer continuously becomes detached and uninformed about the actual source of their food, the producer becomes less concerned about how the food is being produced.

As previously mentioned, before the industrialization of the meat industries, there were many small family run farms where the production of meat and other products occurred. But after World War II, many farms became mechanized. The farmers lost power and large agriculture became the dominating force. The culture of the communities changed as a whole. "Among the people as a whole, the focus of interest has largely shifted from the household to the automobile; the ideals of workmanship and thrift have been replaced by goals of leisure, comfort, and entertainment."³ The techniques of animal production in the United States did not originally begin at such a large scale as they are today. In the 1820s and 1830s, slaughterhouses in Chicago started replacing skilled butchers with many men working on an assembly line in order to increase efficiency. Having been influenced further by the industrial revolution, slaughterhouses were now capable of shipping a large quantity of livestock at a given time with the use of railways. By 1908, some slaughterhouses throughout the country were using assembly line production, which is the standard today. Although the efficiency of slaughterhouse production was recognized, many farmers kept with traditional farming techniques throughout the early twentieth century.⁴

² Berry, *The Unsettling of America*, 32.
³ Berry, *The Unsettling of America*, 40.
In 1923, a woman named Celia Steele experimented with the first form of modern day poultry production. Instead of receiving fifty chicks, she received five hundred but decided to see if they could survive. In order to keep such a large number alive at once, Steele added vitamins to feed and kept them in artificial incubators. By 1926, she had accumulated 10,000 birds, and by 1935 she had 250,000.† Steele had systematically achieved the first factory style farming. By the 1930s, Arthur Perdue and John Tyson began to see the chicken industry as a science. In doing so, they produced the first hybrid corn from government subsidies and sought out ways to manipulate chickens to keep them in greater densities. “Every aspect of the chickens’ lives had been engineered to produce more food for less cost.”§ In 1946, the USDA went even further and focused on the genetic make-up of chickens. They discovered that through drugs and antibiotics, they could solely breed desirable large-breasted chickens. Chickens were now being bred separately for either eggs or flesh. The average weight of a chicken, from 1935 to 1995, increased at an astounding rate of 65 percent, while their time-to-market and feeding requirements dropped by 60 percent.¶ The industry was becoming entirely manipulated by profitability.

In the 1950s, the attitude toward small farmers drastically changed with the notion of “Get big or get out.” Small farmers believed it was easier to end their business, rather than face rising costs, high taxes, and competition from bigger farms. The supporters behind agribusiness instilled fear into the nation. The Department of Agriculture virtually brainwashed the nation into thinking that without a mechanized form of food production, they could risk food shortages. Agriculture was not just seen as a business but at the same

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† Foer, Eating Animals, 105.
§ Foer, Eating Animals, 106.
¶ Foer, Eating Animals, 107.
time was becoming a science. Across the United States animal scientists in colleges were
developing ways to hold and feed a large quantity of animals at once, with minimal hands-
on care. During President Nixon’s term, he appointed Earl Butz. Although Butz was only
secretary for five years, his actions during that time made enough of an impact. Butz
pushed for big agriculture, thinking that America could be the dominant force of food
production in the world. However, not every farm jumped onto the big agriculture
bandwagon. Smaller run family farms had functioned this way their entire lives, and were
hesitant to adapt to the growing industrialization of their field. But by the 1970s, the
introduction of the mass production of eggs was making its way into agriculture. At first,
with such a massive conglomerate of chickens in a single area, diseases were more
prevalent. This new approach to “farming” would take time to become mainstream. Today,
however, the chicken industry uses antibiotics and growth hormones for chickens at an
excessive rate in order to avoid these risks. In the 1980s, the growing trend of mass
production quickly influenced other forms of animal production, specifically pork. Wendell
Murphy of North Carolina, who is now one of the highest grossing pig farmers in the
country, noticed the high efficiency rate and mimicked the methods of chicken farming in
the pig industry. Today, virtually 99% of the chicken, pork, and beef produced in the
United States use modern techniques.

Chapter 3: The Economics of Factory Farming

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Factory farming is one of the most economically powerful industries in the United States today. Powerful corporations such as Tyson reach earnings in the billions, which in turn generate massive returns to investors. The enormous earnings from animal products steadily continue due to consistent prices over the last sixty years. “The primary reason is that animal agriculture operates more efficiently than in the past.”¹ Small family farms typically ran animal agriculture before the 1950s. The working conditions for both the people and the animals vastly differed from what occurs today. Previously, there was a relationship between the farmer and the animals being raised and produced. Yet, this approach to farming would cease to exist with biological advancements and industrialization. The meat industry realized production and efficiency could increase with the introduction of confined spaces, in order to produce and hold more animals at a given time, as well as automatic feeders. Today, every major animal agriculture billionaire produces meat using large-scale settings and industrialized mechanisms. Very few companies control the processing of our meat in the United States and thus receive an excessive share of the profits made. Therefore, the animal agricultural industry has become entirely monopolized.

The relationship between industrial factory farms and small farmers today is manipulating and deceiving. Major animal agriculture companies outsource and form contracts with farmers in poor, rural areas to raise the animals before they are slaughtered. Although it appears that the major corporations are helping the small farmers, it is really no different from the farmers working directly in a factory unit. The corporation ultimately decides the conditions under which the animals will live in, what they are fed, the

medication they receive, and when they will be sent for slaughter. The small farmers are now part of the machine that is factory farming. The jobs of small farmers are at stake with the establishment of factory farms in small communities as well as the decrease in property values, family income, retail sales, quality of life, and farmer workers wages. Small farmers have no choice but to settle agreements with the larger corporations. These particular people are desperate and have no other way to support their families. The larger corporations make enticing yet misleading deals with the smaller farmers, and ultimately take advantage of their socioeconomic situation. In order to start business with large corporations, small farmers must construct company-approved buildings where the animals will grow until they are ready for slaughter. Typically, small farmers invest hundreds of thousands of dollars, thus making it difficult for them to earn back expenses in a given amount of time. Therefore, it is not within the small farmers economic interest to begin business with the larger corporations. Often time, however, the small farmers feel they have no choice and soon enough they are debt-ridden to the large corporations who betrayed their trust. Along with causing detrimental affects to small farmers, “large-scale facilities tend to purchase fewer inputs (e.g., building materials, equipment, feed) from local businesses and, compared to smaller farms, a lesser share of profits from factory farms ends in local hands, discouraging economic growth.” Without the system of which factory farms follow, externalizing costs on small farmers and the local communities, these large corporations would never be able to sell meat as cheap as they do now and make as much annual earnings as they do. For example, Smithfield, the largest pork producer in the

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United States, earned $12 billion in 2007, which was only made possible by externalizations and burdens on to the people.\(^4\) Smithfield’s success and profitability is all but an illusion. Those who profit from Smithfield’s cost-benefit analysis further secure its prosperity by outsourcing to other parts of the world.

**NAMES OF FOUR LARGEST FIRMS AND PERCENTAGE OF MARKET SHARE THEY CONTROL\(^5\)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commodity</th>
<th>Percent of Market Controlled</th>
<th>Four Largest Firms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broilers</td>
<td>45% of production</td>
<td>Tyson, ConAgra, Gold Kist Perdue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef</td>
<td>87% of slaughter</td>
<td>IBP, ConAgra, Cargill, Beef America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pork</td>
<td>60% of slaughter</td>
<td>Smithfield, IBP, ConAgra, Cargill (Excel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>35% of production</td>
<td>ConAgra, Rocco Turkeys, Hormel (Jennie-O), Carolina Turkeys</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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In factory style slaughterhouses, the rights of both the animals and the workers are deplorable. Large factory farms target poor rural areas to raise and produce the animals, for they are aware of the desperation and lack of jobs in these areas. “The work at these facilities is highly efficient, owing to worker specialization and rapid line speeds. But the jobs are grueling, and the pay is low.”\(^6\) The workers often can’t fight the companies for higher pay or benefits because most of them are immigrants or worse off, illegal immigrants. They are not aware of the laws that protect their rights. While working with undocumented workers, even US-born workers face injustice in pay and treatment. “An

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employee of a Pilgrim’s Pride poultry processing plant in Alabama has filed a class action suit against the company alleging that the plant’s management hired undocumented workers with the intention of reducing wages for all the plant’s employees.” Even when workers try to protest the unjust conditions of the factories, those in higher positions will automatically fire them. Large corporations are aware that they can easily find more workers to replace those who protest their working conditions. Factory farm workers are essentially slaves to the corporation. Working in factory farms is considered one of the most dangerous occupations in the country. Workers handle dangerous machinery as well as being exposed to toxic chemicals from the meat. The large corporations do not care about the conditions of their workers, for their main focus is to produce as much meat as possible in the shortest amount of time. “Meatpackers try to maximize the volume of animals that go through the plant by increasing the speed at which animals are processed. The speed of the processing line is thus directly related to the profits.”

As well as keeping wages low, the cost of meat has remained at a consistent rate due to the conditions of how it is processed. Scientists have enabled it so that animals can gain weight at a faster rate, or produce more eggs and milk at a faster rate. What is most alarming is the rate at which animals have been developed to grow. For example, “in 1950, chickens required 70 days to reach slaughter weight. By 2000, the necessary time had been reduced to 47 days. And that 47-day-old chicken, at five pounds, is two-thirds bigger than a 70-day-old chicken from 1950.” Although these astronomical levels of growth are a dream to a money hungry factory-farming tycoon, the animals suffer considerably from the

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7 Moby. Park, Miyun. Gristle, 87.
8 Moby. Park, Miyun. Gristle, 82.
9 Marcus, Meat Market, 11.
unnatural efficiency of their growth. The chicken particularly has undergone most of the physical changes by way of modern breeding techniques. Chickens are typically slaughtered today at seven weeks, for the fact that if they slaughtered any later they would already die of heart attacks. “Ongoing selection for rapid growth is a severe welfare problem as it has resulted in poor bone health, leg disorders including deformities, lameness, tibial dyschondroplasia (TD), and ruptured tendons, and has been correlated with metabolic disorders such as ascites and sudden death syndrome.”10,11,12,13,14,15,16

Although the animals endure almost every detriment of the meat industry, it also economically affects the people in areas where factory farms are located. Both the animals as well as the people they employ are looked upon as a disposable means. The consumers of meat in the United States are not aware of the lies being fed to them by large corporate meat producers.

“Corporate livestock owners and management tout themselves as ‘saviors’ to the rural communities they target. Everyone is promised salvation: job creation for local inhabitants, increased tax revenues for local coffers, expanded markets for

family farmers, and increased purchasing power for hometown businesses, with high-tech production for consumers...However, the facts of the industry paint a different picture. Corporate livestock factories actually disable community development with self-serving contracts and tax breaks, market-monopolizing strategy, and few local purchases...While communities naturally want to attract jobs, wealth, and capital for investment, transferring...[farm animal] production from local facilities and accelerates the extraction of wealth and capital from rural areas.”

Ultimately, large corporations destroy the market for smaller farms to be involved in the production of meat. They rarely make the promises they set forth for the communities, such as the creation of jobs and fair share over the industry. The government enables the decisions of the larger corporations, thus allowing practically all of animal agriculture to be taken from the small, family run farms. Instead of upholding a commitment to economic benefits, the corporations provide many environmental damages to the communities.

As previously mentioned, the large corporations are able to keep the meat at such low prices by aid of the government. It is estimated that billions of dollars are given to the United States factory farming industry by the federal government. This enables the price of feed for the animals to remain at a low price. As well as federal government assistance, factory farms receive subsidies from taxpayer money, thus allowing them to sell their products at a much lower price than their true cost. “Taxpayers are unknowingly subsidizing factory farms that benefit from artificially low prices for grains used as feed for industrially raised farm animals. Basically, when the price of grain is lower than its

production cost, much of that difference is paid to grain farmers in the form of government subsidies that taxpayers cover. Taxpayers then buy grain at the unnaturally low market price, making their irresponsible and welfare-unfriendly practices even more profitable.”

Chapter 4: The Ethics of Factory Farming

The life of animals in factory farming is one of the most heinous, gruesome, and inhumane experiences a living being can ever face. The life of animals on farms was not always this way. Before the introduction of large-scale factory farming, family-owned farmers had a relationship with the animals, and viewed the animals as more than a means to an end. As stated by U.S. Congressman, Jim Moran of Virginia, “The vast majority of meat, milk, and eggs in America come from factory farms, which hardly resemble the bucolic family farms many Americans envision their food comes from. Instead, they are part of ‘agribusiness’ where animals are mass-produced for the slaughterhouse. And in the agribusiness, financial profitability takes priority over treating animals humanely.” With the introduction of CAFOs (concentrated animal feeding operations) as well, animals could now be processed at a higher rate, but at a considerable price for their welfare. The factory farm environment denies all animals of their instinctual behavior and needs. Large corporations in factory farming do not believe that they have any moral responsibility towards the lives of the chickens, pigs, and cows they process. They do not even see these animals as living beings, but rather just as a component of the machine. The life of a factory farm animal is viewed as disposable, for the livelihood of one animal poses no real threat or

affect on the efficiency or production as a whole. The treatment of animals on factory farms begs the question of what rights they have and what moral responsibility do we have towards them.

**Part 1: Chickens**

Chickens on factory farms face some of the worst conditions. In recent years, chickens have been genetically modified to grow at a faster rate in order for them to be slaughtered in a shorter period of time. “Aided in part by today’s ever-faster rates of growth, U.S. producers now raise more than 9 billion chickens a year, killing 1 million individual birds each hour to sate the average American’s 80 birds-per-year consumption habit.”

Chickens are used for two purposes: to produce eggs or to be used for meat. Chicks hatched from layer hens are sorted by sex, where males are either gassed or put through a grinder while they are completely conscious. Even worse, some hatcheries throw the chickens directly into trash, where they die from smothering.

Once the males are discarded, the females first have their beaks seared off. The industry refers to it as beak trimming, but it is much more invasive and pain inducing than simply clipping a nail. This is to ensure that the chickens will not peck at each other and severely hurt each other. They are kept in such confined spaces that they cannot get away and could potentially peck each other to death and develop cannibalism. During the beak searing, a chick is entirely conscious during this process. “A hot blade snips off the end of the beak, and simultaneously cauterizes the exposed blood vessels to minimize bleeding.” The practice of beak trimming is entirely inhumane and extremely painful for the animal. It is estimated

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that chicks suffer five to six weeks after break trimming and can suffer further pain if not done correctly. The typical hatchery worker makes close to minimum wage, and will sear hundred of chicks’ beaks every hour. Therefore, they are not careful, nor do they have time to ensure they will not make mistakes, which may result in the death of a chick from injuries. Along with beak trimming, hens may be subjected to forced molting. Forced molting is used to stimulate egg production. While manipulating the hens, their food and sometimes water is taken away for one to two weeks. During this time, weaker birds may die off and the birds that sustain such conditions lose a considerable amount of weight, up to 35%.

After seventeen weeks of age, chickens are transported to egg farms and placed in battery cages, where eight or more hens are packed into a space the size of a cabinet drawer. While in the battery cages, chickens face a number of physical and psychological traumas. If chickens were not kept in such contained spaces, they would not feel the need to peck at each other due to the high level of stress they are under, but it is an instinctual reaction when they are kept in such close quarters. “Artificial housing environments often prevent the expressions of certain natural behavior, including many that are behavioral needs. Behavior identified as important for the well-being of hens, includes nesting, perching and roosting, scratching and foraging, dustbathing, engaging in comfort behavior (such as wing-flapping and preening), exercising, and exploring.” The chickens spend the rest of their lives in the unnatural and uncomfortable battery cages, where they must stand,

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5 Marcus, Meat Market, 18.
6 Marcus, Meat Market, 18.
sleep, and function on a wire bottom. Whether the hens are asleep or awake, they experience pain from the wire constantly rubbing on their skin, which results in a loss of feathers and bruises. Under these conditions, the hens also experience foot and leg problems, and well as broken bones. The amount of eggs they lay causes calcium depletion and thus their chances of breaking a bone is much easier.\textsuperscript{8} Along with experiencing pain from their environment, the hens can face a number of health issues when laying eggs. The worst possible condition for a hen to is called prolapse. When a hen is laying an egg, the egg may stick the walls of the uterus, thus the uterus will be pushed out along with the egg.\textsuperscript{9} In a factory farm setting, these hens will receive no veterinary care if they experience health issues during laying. Not only is there no chance of veterinary care, but the hen’s distress cry will most likely not be heard amongst the thousands of other hens. Each year in the United States, more than two million layer hens die in agonizing pain from untreated prolapses.\textsuperscript{10}

Chickens raised for meat, unlike layer hens, have a considerably shorter life span. Broiler chickens are slaughtered after just seven weeks, and are kept in large sheds among 20,000 other chickens. They never see the light of day and are never exposed to fresh air, and spend what short lives they have in an environment saturated with urine and feces. After broiler chickens reach their market weight at seven weeks, they are forcibly handled and stuffed into small cages. During the time of transport, chickens are exposed to all weather conditions. “Given their predisposition to heart failure, it’s common for some birds

\textsuperscript{9} Marcus, \textit{Meat Market}, 20.
\textsuperscript{10} Marcus, \textit{Meat Market}, 20.
to die during transport, particularly during hot and humid weather.”\textsuperscript{11} Once the chickens reach the slaughterhouses, they are quickly processed. The chickens’ feet are shackled to a conveyor belt while being hung upside down. After a few moments, the chickens are dipped into a bath of electrified water, which the industry claims is to create a more humane process. “America’s chickens commonly experience a double horror. The stun renders their bodies momentarily limp, and their throats are then immediately cut. But the voltage used during the stun is usually not sufficient to induce lasting unconsciousness. These birds rapidly regain awareness, bleeding to death from a gashed neck.”\textsuperscript{12} Stunning levels are kept at such minimal levels to ensure that the bird does not experience cardiac arrest. Not that the industry cares about the well being of the bird, but if a bird does experience cardiac arrest they may convulse enough to break bones thus downgrade the meat resulting in a loss of profit.\textsuperscript{13} Aside from the horrors chickens face when being slaughtered, they face additional abuse from workers in the factory farms. “An investigation at one large Tyson facility found that some workers regularly ripped off the heads of fully conscious birds (with explicit permission from their supervisor), urinated in the live-hang area (including on the conveyer belt carrying birds), and let shoddy automated slaughter equipment that cut birds’ bodies rather than their necks go unrepaired indefinitely. At a KFC “Supplier of the Year,” Pilgrim’s Pride, fully conscious chickens were kicked, stomped on, slammed into walls, had chewing tobacco spit in their eyes, literally had the shit squeezed out of them,

\textsuperscript{11} Marcus, \textit{Meat Market}, 24.
and had their beaks ripped off.”14 Although many people are quite aware of these occurrences, there is absolutely no enforcement or legislation to protect these animals.

**Part 2: Pigs**

Before factory farming, and before pigs were ultimately domesticated, they had a very precise way of caring and nursing their young shortly after birth. Pigs would normally nurse their litter for three months. In the wild, mother pigs would build large nests to give birth to their piglets. The nest provides enough room for the mother and piglets to nurse and lie on a cushioned area without the risk of the piglets being crushed.1 Early farmers could mimic this behavior with the use of straw. The use of straw significantly improves animal welfare and keeps pigs from foot and joint injuries, as well as increasing immune response. But, factory farms were not willing to pay for the expense of straw. Pigs were kept on concrete floors but were still at risk of crushing their young. Therefore, the use of “gestation crates” came into play. Placed in the gestation crate are breeder sows. Breeder sows are typically eight months of age and spend their entire pregnancy in the gestation crate. “Nearly every large American pig operation uses gestation crates. The crates’ small size maximizes the number of sows who can be kept in a building. When each sow has been impregnated, they are moved into “farrowing crates.””2 The farrowing crates are designed in order for piglets to not get crushed by their mothers, and to allow them to nurse. However, the farrowing crates cannot prevent piglets from following their natural instincts. “The piglets instinctively crave the warmth and comfort of their mothers, and manage to edge themselves upward onto the exposed flooring inside the farrowing crate. Once a piglet

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wiggles into this flooring, he is likely to be accidently crushed or smothered by his mother." With such a low number of employees watching such a large number of pigs, it is no shock that the mortality rate of piglets is high. While being impregnated every five to six months, breeder sows must undergo the stress of constant nursing or pregnancy while remaining in a tiny crate their entire lives. Pigs are highly intelligent creatures and often become frustrated by their day-to-day conditions, losing control psychologically. As well as paying a psychological toll, the gestation crates physically wear down the breeder sows. While in the crates, a breeder sow will experience loss of bone density as well as the development of pus-filed sores from rubbing on the crate. She must sleep, eat, and nurse her young all within the confines of her crate. “Each year, about 35 percent of breeder sows are sent to slaughter, either because of health problems or because they are getting too old to breed efficiently. 6 percent are additionally found dead in the farrowing or gestation crates.” After a sow's piglets are taken away, she will be given hormone injections to speed up her cycle so she can begin pregnancy again. Aside from losing the psychological damage of such small confinement, pregnant pigs are often abused in the most heinous terms by the workers. “One worker said its necessary to “beat the shit out of [the pregnant pigs] to get them inside the crates because they don’t want to go.” Another employee at a different farm described the routine use of rods to beat the sows bloody: “One guy smashed a sow’s nose in so bad that she ended up dying of starvation.”

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5 Foer, Eating Animals, 184-185.
Piglets are born and slaughtered all inside of a factory farm. Piglets in this environment are born with many health issues and deformities including cleft palate, hermaphroditism, inverted nipples, no anus, splayed legs, tremors, and hernias.6 Just after two days, piglets experience multiple mutilations, which all occur without any anesthetics. Their tails and “needle teeth” are cut off, to keep the piglets from harming each other. A few days later, the male piglets will have their testicles torn out. “This time the purpose is to alter the taste of the meat—consumers in America currently prefer the taste of castrated animals.”7 Finally, they have a chunk of their ears cut off, which is cheap and efficient, in order to identify the pigs. Piglets are then weaned at around 15-17 days. They are forced onto solid food at this point, but their bodies cannot always process the change in their diets so rapidly. Thus, they are injected with medicine to prevent diarrhea. To fatten up the piglets at an even faster rate they are given food that includes dried blood plasma, but often suffer from damages to the mucosa of their gastrointestinal tracts.8 For the last remainder of their lives, the pigs are transported to “finishing sheds.” Until they reach market weight, which is about 260 pounds, they are never allowed outside, and must remain on the bare concrete floor. Among this time, they must sleep amongst their own filth along with many other pigs. Many pigs at this time do not always make it, where 39 percent of deaths are related to respiratory disease.9 Along with the horrible conditions in the overcrowded sheds, pigs face abuse at the hand of the employees. If a pig is not growing at a fast enough rate, factory farms will use their own type of euthanasia called “thumping.” This brutal and sadistic method is when a pig is picked up by its hind legs and repeatedly smashed into the

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6 Foer, Eating Animals, 186.
7 Foer, Eating Animals, 187.
8 Foer, Eating Animals, 187.
9 Marcus, Meat Market, 32.
concrete floor headfirst. If they are not dead once they are thrown into the chute, they must undergo the process again.\textsuperscript{10}

If the pigs manage to survive living in the finishing sheds, they are loaded onto trucks and sent to a slaughterhouse. The drive to the slaughterhouse is very brutal, where pigs are stuffed in at maximum capacity to reduce expenses. Every year, 80,000 pigs die during the trip.\textsuperscript{11} With lack of regulation, which will be explained later, the conditions of these animals bear no standard. As the pigs reach their final moments, they are hurried along in a line, and very often see what is going on ahead of them. “They often see the squealing animals ahead of them being stunned, cut in the throat, and hung upside down. Records taken from one U.S. slaughterhouse during the late 1990s indicates that, despite stunning pigs up to four different times before slaughter some of the pigs nonetheless remained conscious.”\textsuperscript{12} In the last stage of slaughter, a pig is dropped into a scald tank. At this time, it is assumed that the animal has bled to death but this is not always the case. “These animals face an agonizing death—the water is 140° Fahrenheit. A USDA Swine Inspection Module published in 2000 says: “A hog that is scaled alive dies from asphyxia and will frequently have a scarlet red appearance and have organs that are engorged with blood.”\textsuperscript{13}

The life of a pig in a factory farm is constant agony. Besides from what they must experience, from the time they are taken from their mothers, to their final moments before

\textsuperscript{10} Foer, Eating Animals, 187-188.
\textsuperscript{11} Marcus, Meat Market, 33.
slaughter, they normally face additional abuse from the workers for no absolute reason. The employees perform some of the most heinous acts of animal abuse ever documented. Undercover videotapes reveal that in some factories, workers sawed off pigs’ legs and skinned them while they were still conscious. At another facility, some employees were videotaped throwing, beating, and kicking pigs; slamming them against concrete floors and bludgeoning them with metal gate rods and hammers. At yet another farm, workers were documented extinguishing cigarettes on animals, beating them with rakes and shovels, strangling them, and throwing them into manure pits to drown. Workers also stuck electric prods into pigs’ ears, mouths, vaginas, and anuses. Under the lack of prosecution, every single one of these acts has no risk for enforcement or prosecution.

**Part 3: Cows**

Traditionally, dairy cows were allowed to graze outside of barns and today a very small number of dairy farms continue this. However, most farmers decided that factory farm operations for dairy were more economically profitable, where production could reach limits that were previously unattainable. As factory farming came into prominence, the introduction of “dry-lot” facilities became the standard for dairy cows.¹ The first type of dry-lot facility is when cows are kept in metal-roofed sheds. The cows are fed by way of conveyor belts, which decrease the cost of labor but decreases the interaction between workers and cows. Thus, many health problems go unnoticed.² In order to fight the cost of building the sheds, the dairy farms must then pack many cows into a given shed.

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¹ Marcus, *Meat Market*, 34.
are then chained and confined to small stalls.³ The second type of dry-lot is modeled after beef feedlots, with animals crowded into fenced outdoor areas. “The ground the cows walk upon is soot-like black. Cattle manure turns this color when it is incessantly trampled into soil and saturated with urine. The cows spend their days standing and lying atop this foul surface, and eating feed from troughs that line the fences.”⁴ Virtually all dairy farms in the United States now use dry-lot facilities in order to keep up with market shares.

Dairy cows follow a similar pregnancy cycle to that of humans, where they are pregnant for nine months. However, unlike humans, dairy cows must give birth every year. “The stresses of repeated pregnancies and the metabolic demands of milk production frequently lead to lameness or disease. Every year, more than one million dairy cows are slaughtered early because of health problems that arise from pregnancy.”⁵ Calves are often born with health issues as well. “Almost 9 percent of dairy calves die before weaning.”⁶ Within the first 48 hours of a calf’s life, they are fed a substance called colostrum, which is produced from the mother. But after two days, the mother then begins to feed her calf milk. This milk, however, must be processed for sale. Therefore, the calf is taken away and fed a formula consisting of substances from slaughterhouses, such as blood products and animal fat.⁷ The process of taking a calf away from the mother is not only extremely inhumane, but also very traumatic for a mother to experience. “A mother cow will bellow nonstop for a day or two, frantically looking for her calf.”⁸ Not only does this happen once, but it occurs

³ Marcus, Meat Market, 35.
⁴ Marcus, Meat Market, 35.
⁵ Marcus, Meat Market, 35.
⁷ Marcus, Meat Market, 36.
⁸ Marcus, Meat Market, 36.
about three times in a cow’s lifetime. Mother cows respond very emotionally, either through behavioral problems or through physical changes. “In most cases, cows go to slaughter either because they have fallen ill, or because their milk yields have declined to unprofitable levels. But in about 1 percent of cases, a cow goes to slaughter because her disposition has turned nasty.”

After being separated from their mother, a number of calves will be sold to the veal industry. Many people are not aware of the relation between the dairy and veal industry. Most male calves are subsequently sold to the veal industry because there is no use for them in dairy. There is a significant number of calves to be had by the dairy industry, thus the veal calves are sold at very low prices. “Dairy cows are not impregnated in order to produce yet more unwanted calves—they are pregnant to generate another year’s milk production. The male calves are therefore byproducts of the dairy industry, and the low prices these animals fetch reduce the veal industry’s costs and fatten its profit margins.”

Unlike the confinement which veal calves are under, calves raised for beef have better surroundings than most farm factory animals. They are born the healthiest because the beef industry is behind on the latest efforts of breeding, which the pig and chicken industry have already adopted. They also take a comparatively longer time to grow and therefore are not at risk for as many health problems. Beef calves, however, still undergo the traumatic experience of being separated from their mothers. These mothers can become very aggressive while their calves are being taken. “To reduce injury, many ranchers throw a hood over the mother’s head. The calf is then led aboard a pickup trick or escorted far

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away by cowboys on horseback. The hood is not removed from the mother until her calf is far out of sight.”

Unfortunately, a mother calf must experience this about ten times in her life.

After calves are taken from the mother, they are branded, dehorned, and castrated. Calves react strongly to the process of branding, when a hot iron is pressed against them. Their skin, however, is thicker than that of humans. Dehorning is very painful for the calf. Horns are like a fingernail but instead they hold many nerve endings. The final phase is castration, which is undoubtedly the most painful experience a calf can undergo in comparison to dehorning and branding. During castration, there is absolutely no use of anesthesia, due to the assertion of its cost. Ranchers have decided that the use of anesthesia is not required. "A dose of lidocaine costs about twenty-five cents, and it takes less than a minute to load a syringe and inject a calf.” The next phase of beef cattle is the feedlot. At this time, beef producers strive to make the cattle grow at a very fast rate. In order to do so, nearly all American cattle are injected with hormones. But the main method for fattening cattle is by feeding them corn. Corn is richer in calories than grass, but it also creates many problems for the cattle because it is not natural for them to consume a corn-based diet. "Corn-based feed also drives digestive tract pH down to abnormally acidic levels, which allow a variety of harmful bacteria to populate the digestive system. To deal with these bacteria, most large feedlots lace their feeds with antibiotics.” Like pigs, the transportation of cows to slaughter can be a dangerous journey. The cows are fattened to

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the highest capacity at this time and can risk injuring themselves on the trucks. Once the
cattle reach the slaughterhouse, the process occurs at a very fast rate. Cattle must
experience much abuse and inhumane conditions due to the speed at which
slaughterhouses function. “Today, the fastest American slaughterhouses kill 400 cattle per
hour on each line they operate, compared to the 1970s when only about 170 cattle were
killed per hour.”\textsuperscript{15} Thus, the employees can easily make mistakes. If an animal is not
stunned properly it can be conscious by the time it reaches butchering. Even the act of
stunning cattle is extremely brutal. “Rather than shooting a bullet, a captive bolt pistol
shoots out a rod that rams through the steer’s forehead, causing massive brain injury. The
rod then retracts back into the gun, prior to being into the next animal. When a captive bolt
pistol is properly used, the animal collapses in convulsions, and would quickly succumb to
brain injury even if his throat weren’t cut.”\textsuperscript{16} Although this is done to prevent the animal
from experiencing pain when its throat is slit, it is still a very risky and pain inducing
experience. “One slaughterhouse worker interviewed by the \textit{Post} said he saw a conscious
cattle make it all the way to the disemboweling machine.”\textsuperscript{17}

\textbf{Part 4: Additional Abuse}

Aside from the abuse occurring from the means of production in a factory farm,
animals very often experience additional abuse from the workers. In Gail Eisnitz book
\textit{Slaughterhouse}, she investigates numerous acts of gratuitous abuse experienced by the
animals at the hands of the workers. In her interviews, she seeks to understand why the

\textsuperscript{15} Marcus, \textit{Meat Market}, 47.
\textsuperscript{17} Erik Marcus, \textit{Meat Market}, 46.
workers would commit such despicable behavior towards an innocent animal. From one of her interviews, a worker describes how his mood changes when placed in such an environment. The workers explain that they have such a malicious attitude toward these animals because they do not view them as living beings. A worker named Donny Tice went as far to describe in full detail a deplorable act he committed onto a pig:

“One time I took my knife—it’s sharp enough—and I sliced off the end of a hog’s nose, just like a piece of bologna. So I took a handful of salt brine and ground it into its nose. Now that hog really went nuts, pushing its nose all over the place. I still had a bunch of salt left on my hand and stuck the salt right up the hog’s ass. The poor hog didn’t know whether to shit or go blind…I wasn’t the only guy doing this kind of stuff. One guy actually chases hogs into the scalding tank. And everybody—hog drivers, shacklers, utility men—uses lead pipes on hogs. Everybody knows it, all of it.”

This is only one isolated incident of the sadistic acts that occur in slaughterhouses. Undercover investigators have documented many incidents of abuse, for example at an industrial pig-breeding facility in North Carolina where workers were shown administering daily beatings, bludgeoning pregnant sows with a wrench, and ramming an iron pole a foot deep into mother pigs’ rectums and vaginas. There is no reason for such a vile act towards an innocent being. Although they are working on a factory farm, these workers

cannot even be considered “farmers.” They do not hold any relationship with the animals they are handling and producing. Foer believes that the relationship between workers and animals has become so inhumane due to the environment of a slaughterhouse. “The factory model has estranged them not only from how they labor (hack, chop, saw, stick, lop, cut), but what they produce (disgusting, unhealthy food) and how the product is sold (anonymously and cheaply).” These particular acts cannot be justified by any means due to the environment of a factory farm, and it goes without saying that not all workers are the same. But disturbingly enough, events like this are very common and very little is being done to stop it even with the public’s full awareness.

**Part 5: The Ethical Standpoint**

Why does modern industrial agriculture deem it acceptable to keep animals in this state? Or allow such heinous acts of abuse to continue? The meat industry works to conceal its true nature because their success depends upon it, as well as always having the support from consumers. “Faced with the onslaught of propaganda and the fact that the consumption of animal products is a respected and entrenched custom in our society, it is little wonder that few people have the temerity to challenge the basis of the entire system.” The meat industry works very hard to control the general populations opinion on meat. They never consider the unethical grounds under which their industry survives. “Killing, unless it is done as a merciful act, must involve deliberate withholding of sympathy

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from the victim.” The workers who perform such inhumane slaughter become indifferent to the animals they are killing. Ultimately though, it is likely that the behavior they develop in order to deal with their jobs affects their lives in other ways. Workers build up immunity to the pain and suffering they witness in these beings. Many consumers are aware of these conditions, yet they would rather turn the other way and ignore the obvious reality of where their food comes from. People do not want to know the grueling details of slaughter because they are unwilling to alter their lifestyle or stop their consumption of meat altogether. The realization of the exploitation of animals in the meat industry causes humans great disturbance. In order to handle and accept the suffering and pain these animals experience, humans must lie to themselves: “we assure ourselves with platitudes about the ‘necessity of meat’ in human nutrition, arguments about our ‘dominion’ over nature and the window-dressing provided by regulations designed to ensure humane slaughter.” Although slaughter can never be entirely humane for an animal, as the phrase humane slaughter virtually appears as an oxymoron, there are different ways to make slaughter more humane for an animal to decrease its overall level of suffering.

The objective of the meat industry is to breed, raise, and produce animals for a large profit. Their existence has been reduced to that of a machine, for our consumption. As Tom Regan states in *The Case for Animal Rights*, “Since animals exist for us, to benefit us in some way or another, what harms them really doesn’t matter—or matters only if it starts to bother us.” The meat industry believes that we do not owe anything to animals, and that we have no duty to protect them or change the way they are produced. They justify the

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abuse animals experience with a lack of regard to the pain they experience as well as regarding them as irrational beings. The meat industry does not view animal pain as a moral dilemma. Farm animals rarely hold sentimental interest by humans unlike dogs or whales, thus the duties towards them grow weaker and weaker. This is the theory of contractarianism according to Tom Regan. “Let those who are the victims of injustice suffer as they will. It matters not so long as no one else—no contractor, or too few of them—cares about it.” Regan believes that if people think factory farm animals lack a sense of rationality, why can’t the same argument be held in regards to children or the mentally challenged who also lack a sense of rationality. Many try to argue that animals also have less inherent value than humans based on their lack of reason, autonomy, or intellect. But as Regan argues, we can only make the same judgment in the case of humans who are similarly deficient. Again, we do not regard children or the mentally challenged humans as lesser beings than other humans, therefore, why not extend such rights to non-human sentient beings.

Chapter 5: Environmental Effects of Factory Farming

Part 1: A Global Issue

In the United States, most are under the impression that transportation is the leading cause of greenhouse gas emissions. This, however, is not true. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the animal agriculture sector is responsible for 18% of all GHG emissions, measured in carbon-dioxide

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Carbon dioxide emissions are the most powerful greenhouse gas, and have directly impacted global warming. Carbon dioxide is emitted in a number of ways from factory farming. For example, enormous amount of pesticides, fertilizers, and herbicides are required in order to produce the corn and soy diet of the animals. Additionally, the feed crops contribute 41 million tons of carbon dioxide each year. In order to power factory farms, “operations require vast amounts of fossil fuel-based energy to cool, heat, and ventilate the facilities, and energy is also used to operate farm machinery to cultivate and harvest feed crops, resulting in at least 90 million tonnes of CO2 annually worldwide.”

Factory farms used to be located within a close distance to where the animals were located and feed was grown. But today, the distance from animal confinement facilities to slaughterhouses has grown, in order to cut back on costs. Thus, “slaughtering animals and packaging and transporting animal products emit several tens of millions of tonnes of CO2 every year.” Animal production is now a leading cause of deforestation in parts of Central and South America. Areas of the rainforest are now being cleared for grazing and feed crop production, and thus release 2.4 billion tonnes of CO2 annually. Additionally, overgrazing ruins the soil and causes it to dry up which coincidently releases 100 million tonnes of CO2 in the atmosphere annually. As well as releasing a massive amount of CO2 into the atmosphere, factory farming is also responsible for the extensive amount of Methane (CH4) and Nitrous Oxide emissions. CH4 is about 20 times more powerful than CO2. According to

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2 Moby. Park, Miyun. Gristle, 55.
5 Steinfeld H, Livestock’s Long Shadow, 91
6 Steinfeld H, Livestock’s Long Shadow, 93.
the FAO, “animal agriculture is responsible for 35-40% of anthropogenic CH4 emissions.”

Ruminant animals such as cows and goats, and, to a lesser extent, monogastric animals such as pigs release methane during digestion of grasses and feed in a process called enteric fermentation. Methane is also released by manure as it decomposes.” Nitrous oxide is possibly the most dangerous emission from factory farming. It is 300 times more powerful than CO2 and in recent years has been found in larger quantities than ever before. “Global farm animal production, including growing feed crops, accounts for 65% of global N2O emissions.”

**Part 2: A Domestic Issue**

Factory farms in the United States not only destroy the businesses of local and family run farms, but they considerably damage the environment of the areas they inhabit. The primary cause of the pollution is from manure. “Today, a typical pig factory farm will produce 7.2 million pounds of manure annually, a typical broiler facility will produce 6.6 million pounds, and a typical cattle feedlot 344 million pounds.” Factory farms have no proper way of disposing of waste and no federal principles to protect the local areas. On traditional farms, the waste accumulated from the animals is recycled and used to replenish the soil. But at large factory farms, they cannot accommodate the amount of manure accumulated on a daily basis. Aside from there being simply too much of it, manure at factory farms contains a number of dangerous chemicals. The chemicals found in a pig factory farm include, “ammonia, methane, hydrogen sulfide, carbon monoxide, cyanide,

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7 Steinfeld H, Livestock's Long Shadow, 112.
8 Steinfeld H, Livestock's Long Shadow, 82-83.
11 Foer, Eating Animals, 174.
phosphorus, nitrates and heavy metals. In addition the waste nurses more than 100 microbial pathogens."\textsuperscript{12} In order to dispose of the amount of waste generated from factory farms, the waste is released in cesspools. “These toxic lagoons can cover as much as 120,000 square feet—as much surface area as the largest casinos in Las Vegas—and be as deep as 30 feet.”\textsuperscript{13} There is no federal law to prohibit the presence of these cesspools, despite the concerns of possible pollution to lakes, streams, ponds, and reservoirs.

\textbf{Part 3: A Health Issue}

The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimated that factory farm animals produce 500 million tons of manure annually.\textsuperscript{14} The people who live near factory farms normally make low income and do not have the means to fight such large corporations about the health issues they experience. Thus, they are easily exploited by the industry. Due to the large cesspools of manure that surround the slaughterhouses, fecal matter is present in the air or is sometimes sprayed directly into the air. The communities in these areas experience a significant number of health problems including nosebleeds, earaches, chronic diarrhea, burning lungs, and in some cases abnormally high levels of tension, depression, anger, and fatigue.\textsuperscript{15} Vast information about the health hazards of the cesspools of accumulated animal waste have been released and the neighboring people have fought back against their presence in the communities. But the meat industry has such an

\textsuperscript{12} Foer, \textit{Eating Animals}, 175.  
\textsuperscript{13} Foer, \textit{Eating Animals}, 177.  
\textsuperscript{14} Moby. Park, Miyun. \textit{Gristle}, 93.  
\textsuperscript{15} Foer, \textit{Eating Animals}, 178-180.
immense influence on the government’s regulatory power that very often the health risks will go unenforced. The neighboring communities are not the only potential victims at risk for health issues. It is estimated that noxious-smelling airborne ammonia can travel as far as 300 miles. Within the last decade it has been highly suspected that MRSA (methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus) can be produced from slaughterhouses. People living near the slaughterhouses began experiencing a growing number of outbreaks, which has lead many scientists to create this connection. The American Public Health Association recognizes and continuously emphasizes the dangers to public health associated with animal waste. But very little has been done by the government to avoid such risks.

Chapter 6: Laws, Regulations, and Alternatives

Part 1: Humane Society of the United States

The meat industry is still a very powerful and corrupt business in the United States, but its exploitation and abuse have not fully gone unnoticed. Non-profit agencies are now at the forefront battling against factory farming. The Humane Society of the United States is the largest animal protection agency that works to advocate laws to protect animals and prevent abuse, and strives to expose the truth behind factory farming to improve the welfare of farm animals. In 2004, Wayne Pacelle was appointed President and Chief Executive, and has testified before the U.S. Senate and Congress on animal welfare protection. Pacelle has worked diligently to combat the abuse endured in factory farming and has faced much backlash from the largest meat corporations. In 2008, Pacelle pushed

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16 Foer, Eating Animals, 176.
for Proposition 2, which mandated that California—the biggest agricultural state—ban the cruel confinement of egg laying hens, pregnant sows, and veal calves inside crates and cages by 2015. In response, meat production executives and shareholders donated nearly $5 million in one day to distort Proposition 2. Against the odds of its opponents, Proposition 2 won with nearly a 2:1 margin. Along with Proposition 2, California mandated AB 1437, which would also prohibit any eggs produced in confinement space to be sold in California. Overall, Proposition 2 was a victory for The HSUS and the welfare of farm animals.

Additionally in 2008, The HSUS led one of the largest private investigations upon The Westland Meat Company in California. In a very graphic video released by an undercover investigator, “workers are seen kicking cows, ramming them with the blades of a forklift, jabbing them in the eyes, applying painful electrical shocks and even torturing them with a hose and water in attempts to force sick or injured animals to walk to slaughter.” Westland Meat Company used to be the largest supplier of meat for needy families, the elderly and schools in more than 36 states. The HSUS stated that, “the practice of slaughtering downed cows is especially troubling now that the link between downed cattle and bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), also known as mad cow disease, has been firmly established.” The video made national headlines and led to one of the largest

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3 The Humane Society of the United States, *Rampant Animal Cruelty at California Slaughter Plant*
4 The Humane Society of the United States, *Rampant Animal Cruelty at California Slaughter Plant*
meat recalls in history by exposing the truth about the abuse of downed cows. Following the exposure of the abuse of farm animals in the meat industry, many major food chains and companies followed suit of the HSUS’s implementations. Companies such as McDonalds and Wendys announced that they would become gestation crate-free supply chains.

**Part 2: Temple Grandin**

Temple Grandin is a world famous doctor and animal science professor at Colorado State University. At an early age, Grandin was diagnosed with autism and therefore many of her surroundings made her feel threatened and created anxiety. Consequently, she was able to understand the stress under which an animal in a slaughterhouse experiences, which led to her work in animal-handling expertise. Grandin designed facilities in order to create more humane slaughter practices for cattle. In one of her cattle coral designs, “curved cattle chutes are used because they are more efficient for handling cattle. They take advantage of the natural behavior of cattle. Cattle move through curved races more easily because they have a natural tendency to go back to where they came from.” Temple Grandin’s design for cattle slaughter is to ensure a humane experience for the animal and to virtually keep them unaware of what is happening. In Michael Pollan’s *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*, he interviews Grandin and she gives a full description of the process a cow should experience before slaughter under her design:

“The animal goes into a chute single file. The sides are high enough so all he

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sees is the butt of the animal in front of him. As he walks through the chute, he passes over a metal bar, with his feet on either side. While he’s straddling the bar, the ramp begins to decline at a twenty-degree angle, and before he knows it, his feet are off the ground and he’s being carried along on a conveyor belt. We put in a false floor so he can’t look down and see he’s off the ground. That would panic him. Anyway, the conveyor is moving along at roughly the speed of a moving sidewalk. On a catwalk above stands the stunner. The stunner has a pneumatic-powered ‘gun’ that fires a steel bolt about seven inches long and a diameter of a fat pencil. He leans over and puts it smack in the middle of the forehead. When it’s done correctly it will kill the animal on the first shot. Just in case, they have another stunner in the bleeding room.”

Grandin’s revolutionary design of the slaughterhouse requires her to inspect each slaughterhouse to ensure that the National Beef Plant, who provides the meat for McDonald’s, is following her regulations. By the end of each inspection made by Grandin, she should be able to know whether or not a plant is abusing the animals and if the animals are experiencing a humane slaughter.

Part 3: Alternatives to Factory Farm Meat

Norwich Meadows Farm Over my spring break in March this year, I visited Norwich Meadows Farm in upstate New York. I met with the owner Zaid. I came into contact with Zaid because he provides Fordham’s CSA with fruit, vegetables and dairy products. Zaid stated that Norwich Meadows Farm began in 1998 after he graduated with an agriculture

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degree. Previously, he worked with Cornell University as a dairy specialist, where he
gained further knowledge about animal science and behavior. In 2001 and 2002, his farm
started by processing chickens and then began outsourcing for other types of meat. I was
interested to learn about the farm’s philosophy and process of producing meat at Norwich
Meadows. Unfortunately, when I got to the farm, there were no animals to be found. Zaid
explained that at this location, only chickens were being raised. But due to FDA regulations,
they believed his processing plant to be too close in proximity to the vegetables and
therefore Zaid could not produce chickens at this location any longer. Although they no
longer had chickens there, Zaid still works with other local farmers to process and sell meat
and ensures that they follow his philosophy. Norwich Meadow’s philosophy states:

“The animals and birds are raised on organic pastures and when
supplemental feeds are required non-GMO organic grains are used. None of
our animals and birds will ever be mistreated or physically abused. They will
never be given growth hormones, antibiotics or harmful feeds. Following a
natural way of life for the animal or the bird allows us to produce quality and
healthy meats.”

For Zaid, profit is not the only motive for his work. He believes it is important to maintain
animal welfare and educate people about the meat they are consuming. Zaid, along with his
wife, sell some of their products at farmer’s markets in New York City and Connecticut. He
stated that at times, people would show frustration over the price of a whole chicken that
sells for $26. He explained, however, that most people do not understand that when you

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philosophy/
are only paying $0.99 per pound for a Tyson brand chicken at WalMart, you are getting a product of much lower quality. The price of his meat is justified because of the conditions he raises the animals. After our interview, I asked Zaid to show me where he used to process the chickens and he explained the process. He kept them in a field and would rotate the tent they were under, allowing them to roam around the grass. Once they were ready for slaughter, he would put them in crates, bring them over to a metal cone, slit their necks quickly to kill them, and throw them into boiling water. He explained the process was very quick, and he kept the chickens from seeing the actual slaughter in order to maintain the most humane process possible. From understanding what factory farmed chickens experience, Zaid’s process seemed like the best possible scenario for any chicken whose fate was to end in slaughter.
In-Vitro Meat The term sounds like an idea out of science fiction and could possibly pose as the biggest threat to the largest meat corporations in years to come: In-vitro meat. In-vitro meat is the processing of meat products through “tissue-engineering.” Developed by Future Food Studio, the process involves taking cells from an animal and applying them to a protein enabling the tissue to grow. The cells and protein then continue to grow until it becomes a full piece of meat. The first process of in-vitro meat was successfully completed in August 2013 in London. Its first taste test was completed by Hanni Ruetzler, a food researcher from Future Food, and she stated, “There is really a bite to it, there is quite some
flavour with the browning. I know there is no fat in it so I didn’t really know how juicy it would be, but there is quite some intense taste; it’s close to meat, it’s not that juicy, but the consistency is perfect.”

As stated further by Future Food, “compared to the unnaturalness of industrial animal farming, cultured meat would be undoubtedly a progressive step in terms of health, animal welfare and ecology.” In-vitro meat appears as quite a viable option for meat in the future, and makes it possible to process meat without environmental degradation, a lapse of animal welfare, and an absence of potential health issues posed by unsanitary meat. Although in-vitro meat is still a relatively new and foreign concept, I believe that if it were to gain popularity and acceptance, it would certainly pose as considerable competition against the long reigning powerful and exploitative meat corporations.

**Vegetarianism** The most plausible alternative to factory farm meat is simply vegetarianism. Although some argue that there is a lack of protein and other essential nutrients in a vegetarian diet, this is simply not true. One can obtain all the protein and nutrients they need, and is less likely to suffer from high cholesterol, weight problems, diabetes, high blood pressure, and forms of cancer. When one is consuming meat, they are also consuming all of the chemicals that go into processing a factory farm animal. For example, international artist Moby states that, “when we eat chickens, in addition to DDT

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and, dioxins, and PCBs, we’re also ingesting arsenic, which helps to kill parasites they catch from overcrowded conditions in factory farms.”¹¹ Not only will a vegetarian be leading a healthier lifestyle, they will also be an informed consumer. The biggest issue facing our country is its ignorance about the meat industry. Factory farms will continue to exploit its consumers unless consumers exercise their rights and demand change to the way their meat is processed.

I decided to do my thesis on factory farming because it is a topic I am very passionate about. After witnessing the abuse of a cow at the Westland/Hallmark slaughterhouse in California on CNN in 2008, I was greatly affected by the actions of the workers towards these innocent creatures. From that day forward, my family and I decided to become vegetarians. I wanted to educate myself more about factory farming, so I began to read books about the treatment of animals and only become further disgusted and frustrated by the conditions they are in. After performing considerable research on factory farming for my thesis, I believe that our country is still very ignorant about where their meat is coming from and actively choose to remain this way. The majority of American consumers are not concerned about where their meat comes from because they are unwilling to change their ways. It is not difficult to learn the truth behind these powerful corporations that dominate the industry. Consumers will continue to be exploited by the meat industry if they do not make an effort to exercise their rights for better meat. The end of inhumane conditions, environmental degradation, and consumer exploitation by the meat industry is possible through knowledge. As Foer eloquently states, “Responding to the factory farm calls for a capacity to care that dwells beyond information, and beyond

¹¹ Moby. Park, Miyun. Gristle, 74.
information, and beyond the oppositions of desire and reason, fact and myth and even humans and animal.”\textsuperscript{11} I am hopeful that change will one day come, especially with the help from organizations such as the HSUS and other undercover investigators. But it is still frustrating to know that people would rather remain blind to the reality of factory farming. Real change will only occur once every consumer actively shows concern and works to change the welfare conditions for factory farm animals.

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\textsuperscript{11} Jonathan Safran Foer, \textit{Eating Animals}, 263.


