YES ON 3
PREVENT ANIMAL CRUELTY

Caging Animals on Factory Farms: Devastating for the Environment

Yes on 3 would protect rivers, air, and public health

Confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs) pack enormous numbers of animals in relatively small areas by confining egg-laying hens, breeding pigs, and veal calves in cages so restrictive they are rendered virtually immobile. This produces extremely concentrated amounts of waste that wreak havoc on the environment and public health in surrounding communities. Voting Yes on Question 3 would help reduce the worst environmental impacts of CAFOs.

Pollution

On traditional mixed (or diversified) farms, farmers balance the number of animals with the land's ability to absorb the nutrients in their manure. On CAFOs, this direct recycling of nutrients to replenish the soil and fertilize crops is absent because animals are confined in warehouses, rather than being raised with crops on the same farm.

Transporting waste to fields in need of fertilizer is expensive, so it's often intentionally over-applied to nearby fields or stored in giant lagoons. These practices frequently contaminate waterways and emit harmful gases. There's no requirement that the waste be treated before it's applied or stored. Of particular concern are pathogens and heavy metals in the fecal matter. In addition, enormous amounts of nitrogen and phosphorous from CAFOs leach into waterways and cause algal blooms. These blooms have decimated aquatic life in rivers and bays across the country.

The problems associated with excessive, concentrated animal waste are often most pronounced near operations that use cages or crates, which confine the maximum number of animals into a relatively small amount of space.

Climate change

Concentrated animal waste releases various greenhouse gases, including nitrous oxide and methane. In its landmark report Livestock's Long Shadow: Environmental Issues and Options, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations concluded that animal agriculture is responsible for more greenhouse gas emissions, measured in CO2-equivalent, than all forms of transportation combined.

Alternatives

In California's San Bernardino County, egg producer Hoover Ranch agreed to convert its caged-hen operation into a cage-free operation to alleviate some of the problems the facility caused for local residents, including intense odors and swarms of flies. An article in The Press Enterprise noted some of the benefits of converting to a cage-free operation: "In a cage-free environment, the chickens would live in the existing chicken houses, but on the ground instead of in the current set-up of double-stacked cages. Wet manure in the existing operation allows flies to breed. In the cage-free setting, foraging chickens will consume the fly larvae, according to a city staff report."

The article also notes that this conversion to a cage-free facility "should mean 60,000 fewer chickens than the 192,000 now in the houses." By eliminating the use of battery cages in egg CAFOs, fewer birds are confined in existing sheds, resulting in less concentrated waste at each operation.

Conclusion

The Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production released the results of a 2.5-year investigation into the problems associated with factory farming. The Commission found that the factory farming system "often poses unacceptable risks to public health, the environment and the welfare of the animals themselves." Requiring animals be given enough space to stand up, turn around and extend their limbs—as is mandated by Question 3—would be an important step towards lessening the environmental harm (as well as animal suffering) caused by CAFOs.

Vote Yes! on Question 3 to protect our environment

Citizens for Farm Animal Protection 617-522-2016 PO Box 470857 Brookline, MA 02447 citizensforfarmanimals.com