



# Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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## Press Statement

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### The Hidden Suffering of Poultry

Malaysians consume chicken meat and eggs on a daily basis yet hardly a thought is given to the horrendous conditions in the modern livestock raising systems known as 'factory-farming'.

Malaysia is largely self sufficient in poultry meat production with over 81% of the local domestic demand for meat and more than 111% of the country's demand for eggs met by the local poultry industry.

However few consumers are aware of the way in which most eggs are produced by hens crammed in small wire cage, sometimes in tiers in dimly lit sheds, without access to sunlight or natural surroundings, and so denied the ability to exercise even the most basic natural instincts. The extreme confinement denies or seriously restricts the birds' freedom to express patterns of behaviour.

Deprivation of basic needs and behaviour such as walking, turning, exploring, interacting with or avoiding others, or being able to lie in peace and comfort endanger the physical and psychological health of animals. Under such unnatural confinement the birds are under enormous stress resulting in feather pulling and pecking. Beak trimming or debeaking in poultry management is done to prevent such acts of frustration.

They are bred as egg producing machines, the aim being to obtain the optimum production from each bird regardless of its real welfare. And what happens to hens that no longer can produce eggs after about two years in the battery cages? They are then sent to slaughter to be turned into chicken soup and emulsified chicken products such as frankfurter and bologna and in canned products such as soups, sauces, stews and gravies. A tragic end for a hen who spends its life producing eggs to feed the masses.

The other purpose of a chicken is to produce excessive flesh for the meat industry called broiler chickens. But how many know about the short and miserable lives of broiler chickens? Most commonly they are crowded into thousands and confined along with their waste on small land area. Though not confined in cages, they also experience crowded confinement, poor air quality and stressful handling.

In addition to intense confinement, they are subjected to massive doses of antibiotics. They have the potential of exposure to various viruses and bacteria via the manure and urine in their environment.

When finally grown large enough, the birds are packed tightly into crates, stacked high on top of each other onto trucks, and transported over many miles through all weather extremes typically without food or water to the markets for slaughter.

Consumers are unaware about cruel practices being covered under the veil of secrecy that has protected animal abusing industries for a long time. These industries operate outside the public spotlight because the way they treat animals would not be condoned by those concerned about animal welfare.

Malaysia has the opportunity to lead the world when it comes to treatment of animals. Yet we are behind other developed nations shows how clearly change is needed.

It is about time the Ministry of Agriculture look into a Farm Animal Act prohibiting the rearing of birds in cages, crates or other forms of intensive confinement that violates the Animal Welfare Act 2010, with acceptance of best practices and continuance for changes in regulation with animal welfare being a strong driver for increased regulation.

Change is needed, not only for animals but for farmers who need to be able to plan for the future with certainty and confidence.

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