

BROILER CHICKENS

Broiler Chickens originate from the jungle fowl of the Indian Subcontinent. Their genetic makeup has altered significantly through selective breeding which began in the UK in the 1930s and the hybrid breed we see today became dominant in the late 1950's after a huge increase in consumer demand for more affordable meat.

Estimated that over 975 million are killed annually in Britain for their meat, being one of the most factory farmed animals on the planet.

The majority of broiler chickens are housed in large windowless sheds with between 20,000 to 50,000 birds inside. As the birds grow, conditions deteriorate and the sheds become over crowded. They enter the shed as day old chick and leave at 36 to 42 days to be slaughtered between 1.5KG and 3KG.

Sheds are cleaned out every 2 to 4 years.

The cramped chickens are unable to act out any of their natural behaviours and must compete for food and water. They become extremely frustrated and stressed which often leads to aggressive behaviour such as pecking and cannibalism.

Broiler chickens used for breeding (broiler breeders) are expected to live to adult hood so they are often starved to prevent fast weight gain. They are artificially inseminated repeatedly until reproduction slows down (10 months) and are then slaughtered. During this time they will produce around 140 chicks.

Commercial broilers have been bred specifically to grow as fast as possible, which causes their body weight to become too heavy for their hips and legs to manage. They are then unable to walk and become very inactive so many die of starvation or dehydration.

Reports found that over 100,000 birds die of heart failure or disease every day in Britain due to these intense farming methods. Common illnesses and disease include burns and blisters due to the build up of urine and faeces. Skeletal disorders and lameness due to their rapid growth rates. Keratoconjunctivitis which is a painful eye condition that occurs due to the build-up on ammonia and can lead to blindness. Bacterial



Rescue Broiler Chicks at Dean Farm Trust

infections such as Salmonella and Campylobacter which can often be carried between intensely farmed birds due to the poor sanitation conditions they are kept in. And Avian Influenza which is a highly contagious viral disease that can lead to thousands of birds being culled as a precautionary measure.

The catching and transport of birds prior to slaughter often causes considerable pain and distress. The birds will be caught and hung upside down by their legs, crammed into crates and loaded onto lorries. They often suffer from dislocated hips, bruising and broken wings or legs and even death.

The chickens are then transported on long journeys and will commonly suffer from heat exhaustion, stress, suffocation and shock.

On reaching the slaughterhouse, they are removed from their crates and hung upside down shackled by their feet on a moving line whilst conscious. Their heads and neck are dragged through an electrically charged water bath designed to stun the birds, rendering them unconscious. Their necks are then sliced and bled before entering a scalding tank which makes removing their feathers easier. Many routinely miss the water and have their throats slit whilst still fully conscious.

Dean Farm Trust promotes compassionate living

