

Humane housing for safe and comfortable livestock

Consumers depend on various agricultural producers to provide the fruits, vegetables and meat and dairy products they rely on for sustenance. The conditions in which livestock are sometimes housed and cared for is a cause of concern for many such consumers. However, farmers who understand that their livelihoods depend on the health of their animals often do their best to keep their livestock healthy and comfortable.

Animal agriculture is evolving as animal scientists, veterinarians and farmers seek ways to provide for animal health and welfare. At the same time, farmers are seeking ways to minimize the negative impact these changes can have on employees and the environment.

Indoor housing

Data published in 2016 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture found that indoor housing protects livestock from harsh external environments and serves to decrease exposure to parasites and diseases spread by insects, wildlife and other vectors.

Although some are quick to say that outdoor living is better and indoor conditions can be unsanitary, many studies have proven the opposite. Increased prevalence of infectious

disease and parasites are well-known risks associated with outdoor housing of livestock, says the USDA. This has been proven by studying both indoor and outdoor chickens, as well as swine.

Battery cages

Many people are concerned about the welfare of hens spending time in battery cages. These cages prevent hens from fighting with one another, but they also put the birds in very tight quarters. Battery cages were often coveted because their sloped floors allowed clean eggs to roll away into collection areas, making the process less labor-intensive.

Farmers are trying to find a balance between keeping eggs clean and birds safe while providing humane living conditions without affecting the cost of eggs. In some areas, such as the European Union, battery cages are no longer in use. Egg-laying hens in Canada also may find battery cages a thing of the past thanks to the a new NFACC code for the care and handling of Canada's hens.

In addition, Publix, Wal-Mart, Costco, Denny's, and more than 20 other major companies have stopped buying eggs from producers who use battery cages.

Group housing

Veal production has long been a point of contention among animal welfare activists. The traditional option has been keep calves alone in "veal crates," which are small and provide limited movement. Many veal farmers have slowly transitioned away from veal crates, says the organization Animal Smart. Group pens and indoor barns are climate-controlled and allow calves to stay together. Some farms even afford the calves some outdoor time for fresh air.

Group housing is more social and less restrictive for the calves. According to the American Veal Association, veal farmers spent more than \$50 million over 10 years to transition to these group housing systems. Calves can stand, stretch, lie down, groom themselves, and benefit from year-round ventilation to thrive.

Furthermore, milk-fed calves raised for veal are raised until age 22 weeks, and marketed at 500 pounds, which is much older and larger than many people likely know, according to AVA.

Great strides are being made to ensure that livestock are provided humane living

conditions and environments to keep them comfortable and safe.



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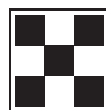
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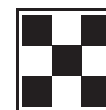
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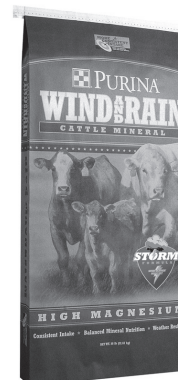
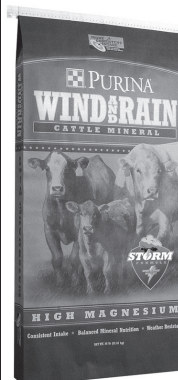
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