

NEWS RELEASE



27 June 2008

Compassion in World Farming
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CALLING TESCO SHAREHOLDERS AND CUSTOMERS

Compassion in World Farming is bringing Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's message to improve conditions for Tesco's chickens to the streets of Birmingham in demonstrations outside three of the company's stores today (27 June).

Campaigners will be calling on Tesco shareholders and customers to support Hugh's campaign by voting with their purses and ballot slips, demanding better lives for millions of chickens. Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall will today be accompanied by Compassion in World Farming staff at the Tesco AGM in Birmingham, urging shareholders to join them in voting for Hugh's resolution, which asks that Tesco upgrade its chicken welfare standards.

The peaceful protests will take place outside Tesco branches in Caxton, Knowle and Castle Bromwich and are part of a nationwide campaign by leading farm animal welfare charity Compassion in World Farming, which is calling on Tesco to stop selling eggs from battery caged hens and improve conditions for their meat chickens. Scientific evidence shows that keeping hens in battery cages causes serious suffering and that many intensive broiler chickens suffer from overcrowding, lameness and ammonia burns.

Eloise Shavelar, Campaign Coordinator for Compassion in World Farming said "Tesco competitors Sainsbury's and the Co-op are taking the welfare of chickens seriously by pledging to improve their standards for chicken and stop selling eggs from caged hens. Yet, Tesco, the UK's largest supermarket, is still refusing to budge,"

"EU law banning the barren battery cage is due to come into force by 2012, so why does Tesco continue to support a system which has been recognised as cruel, not only by science, but also by law?" continued Eloise.

Tesco need over 4 million hens to supply eggs for their stores each year so a cage-free commitment from them would be particularly far-reaching in the fight against factory farming.

Tesco are also estimated to sell over 100 million chickens a year. With 82 per cent of Tesco's fresh and frozen chicken being reared in standard intensive systems, this represents a huge number of chickens living in barren and crowded conditions, with many suffering from painful leg disorders..

Consumers can make a huge difference by buying free range eggs and higher welfare chicken. Look closely at the labels on products to ensure that you are not buying from factory farms.

“For chicken meat look for free-range, organic or indoor extensive, for eggs ideally look for free-range or organic, otherwise, barn production is a step forward.” advises Eloise Shavelar.

Notes

- 9.30 – 10.30 Caxton Tesco Metro: Needless Alley, New Street, Birmingham, West Midlands, B2 5AE
- 11.30 – 12.30 Knowle Tesco Metro: St John’s Way, Knowle, Solihull, B93 0LE
- 13.30 – 14.30 Birmingham Castle Bromwich Metro: Timberley Lane, Birmingham, B34 7EH

For further information:

Contact Emily Durrant, Media Officer, Compassion in World Farming on 01483 521952, emily@ciwf.org or out of office hours call 07771926005.

Eloise Shavelar will be available at the events on 07917 585807.

About the Demonstrations:

Compassion in World Farming has been demonstrating outside Tesco stores in Portsmouth, Axminster, Langport, Cardiff, Sheffield and Bristol with more scheduled to take place in the coming months. Campaigners have been talking to consumers about their choice of chicken and eggs and handing out free supermarket shopping guides to aid consumers when looking for higher welfare products.

Visit www.ciwf.org for more information or for up-to-date information on supermarket standards visit www.ciwf.org/supermarkets.

Background to Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall’s resolution

Over the last 3 months, Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall has been running a campaign trying to get Tesco to improve its chicken welfare standards. Hugh has now filed a resolution that will be voted upon at Tesco’s Annual General Meeting on 27 June 2008. Compassion in World Farming helped Hugh raise over £86,000 demanded by Tesco, in order for them to send out resolution documents to shareholders. That resolution essentially calls for Tesco to upgrade its lowest welfare standard for meat chickens to the RSPCA Freedom Food standard.

Background on Broiler chickens

For decades broiler chickens (chickens reared for meat) have been selectively bred to grow at a significantly faster rate than nature intended. Today’s broiler chicken will reach slaughter weight by 40 days – this is twice as fast as 30 years ago.

- Over 48 billion chickens are reared for their meat in the world every year
- Over five billion of them in the EU
- The majority of them are intensively farmed in windowless, barren and crowded sheds
- Most sheds house tens of thousands of birds for their brief lives

Why is fast growth a problem?

Meat chickens can suffer terribly from leg problems. They have been bred to grow faster to reduce the cost of chicken meat, but often grow so fast that their health suffers. Millions of birds go lame in the latter part of their short lives – their legs unable to support their meaty bodies. Each year millions more die of heart and lung problems connected with their huge demand for oxygen to fuel their rapid growth.

They suffer from overcrowding as they reach slaughter weight. This restricts exercise, which would be good for their legs and help prevent skeletal problems.

Crowding also results in the build up of ammonia from their excreta polluting the littered flooring, which can cause blisters on their breasts, feet and legs (hock burns).

Background on battery cages

Battery cages confine egg-laying hens in small wire cages. Under current EU law, each bird has an allotted floor space of less than a sheet of A4 paper. The conditions cause psychological and physical suffering leaving hens unable to exercise or to carry out important natural behaviours.

Recent scientific research published in the *Veterinary Record* found that eggs from battery cages were significantly more likely to carry salmonella than free-range or organic eggs. 23.4 per cent of caged hens tested positive for salmonella compared to 4.4 per cent in organic flocks and 6.5 per cent in free-range flocks.

An investigation carried out earlier this year by Advocates for Animals revealed a leading egg supplier (known to have supplied Tesco) keeping hens in conditions which breached Scottish animal welfare regulations.