

West Virginia Turkey Factory Farms Investigation, 2008

Excerpts From the Investigator's Log Notes

Thursday, September 4, 2008

The birds are in barns that are so full of dust and dander that it is difficult to breathe, even when standing on the outside of the barn [T]he door to the barn is opened, and the dirty air from the barn is blowing in your face. ... It was constant abuse all night. These men hit and smacked and abused these birds in what appeared to me to be retribution for the birds' struggling to get away out of apparent fear—and also as a means of entertainment.

Friday, September 5, 2008

The severe throwing of turkeys today was like nothing I have ever seen, even in my experience working in ... slaughterhouses. All the men threw the birds as hard as a man can throw anyone or thing weighing 60 to 80 pounds. They throw them like this instead of handing the birds gently to the man on the scaffolding who could more humanely place the bird in the appropriate coop. Sometimes they missed the coop they were throwing a turkey at, and the bird would fly full force into the side of the metal truck, hit it, and fall between the truck and the scaffolding to the ground, hitting bars and metal all the way. These animals fell 4 to 5 feet. I have never heard of or seen such abuses in my life.

Wednesday, September 10, 2008

I saw [two coworkers] kill at least two seemingly healthy turkeys today. They simply grabbed their necks and twisted them or stepped on their heads. The birds were then left to fall and flop around, bleeding from the mouth as they died; they looked to have suffered for minutes. [My supervisor] watched [my coworkers'] behavior with me. I had a conversation with [the supervisor] about the killing, and he said, "It does not really matter with these birds because they are not worth that much."

Thursday, September 11, 2008

[Two workers] said they used a 2-by-4 board once to kill several hundred turkeys at one time. They were both laughing at the time they were telling the story They were joking about killing these hundreds of birds as if they had gotten away with it. [Another worker] said that he had seen a worker ... kill two birds by injecting a substance into their brains with a syringe. One bird was injected with turkey semen and the other was injected with an unspecified acid.

Friday, September 12, 2008

Today, [a worker] said, "Eat shit and die, you fucking bird!" and shoved feces in a female turkey's mouth until the turkey choked and gasped and shook her head to get it out. [Another worker] was holding the bird down. [My supervisor] saw all of this but said nothing.

Wednesday, September 24, 2008

The debeaking [of turkey hens] is done with a pair of dull pliers. The top beak is cut off about half way back, leaving the nostrils. This causes the birds to bleed abundantly from the open wound. When the turkeys were done, they were placed back in the pen, and after a few minutes, there was a significant amount of blood on all of the birds. Most came from the birds shaking their heads in apparent pain and so flinging the blood around.

Monday, September 29, 2008

[One worker] threw one hen at the truck five times. The turkey hit the truck each time and then fell to the scaffolding or the ground. [My supervisor] was present and aware of [the worker's] actions for the entire length of time that [the worker] did this. I asked [my supervisor] if he was going to let [the worker] do so, and his response was, "He'll stop." He did not say anything else.

Monday, October 6, 2008

One turkey jumped back out of the coop and hit [a worker]. He injured the turkey by stepping on her neck and twisting her head all the way around, about 360 degrees. She was still conscious and moving her eyes and mouth, even though he had clearly broken her neck by spinning her head all the way around.

Friday, October 17, 2008

One turkey squatted in the catch pen [One worker] picked her up and threw her from the back of the pen to the front. It was about 6 or 8 feet. The turkey hit the shed floor, making a loud thud sound and causing her to bounce. [My supervisor] saw all of this and in typical form said, "Easy, easy." [The worker] said, "What!?" and did it in a laughing, sarcastic tone. [The supervisor] responded by saying, "You could break their legs throwing them like that." [The worker] in turn said, "Well, hell, she ain't usin' 'em!" laughing as he said it.

Monday, October 20, 2008

Some of the toms we loaded today were the very large ones weighing 70 to 80 pounds. They get very tired and exhausted and collapse when forced to walk long distances because of their unnaturally heavy body weight [T]he farm overseer ... said the turkeys carried "80 pounds on tooth picks"—referring to their legs. We had at least six turkeys die today because of exhaustion/heart failure.

Tuesday, October 28, 2008

[One worker] was pecked by a tom on the hand and became angry. He turned around and punched the tom very hard in the head. ... [The acting supervisor] witnessed [the worker] punch the turkey and did not say anything to [the worker], nor did he discipline or send [the worker] home. [The acting supervisor] actually laughed and thereby encouraged the behavior. A little later, [the worker] turned on two toms who were chasing him and kicked them both in the chest, knocking them back at least 5 or 6 feet [The acting supervisor] also laughed at this behavior.

Friday, November 7, 2008

The poults ... are sometimes in such weak condition that they are unable to stand or move at all. Others are so disoriented that they jerk themselves around and fall over and kick. None of these poults are given any medicine, just food and water like the other turkeys. ... Some of the poults' conditions would seemingly make it impossible for them to access the feed and water, and I never saw [the site supervisor] give them a drink or food by hand. I found poults ... who had died there. ... This afternoon we removed from the barn the cardboard boxes in which poults were sent to the rearing farm. As I moved the stack, I uncovered a box that had a dead poult inside it. His leg was between the two pieces of cardboard forming the wall and the floor of the box This baby must have not been removed from the box and starved or dehydrated to death or died from a lack of heat.

Tuesday, November 11, 2008

[A supervisor's assistant] picked up [a] turkey, holding her legs, and pulled her head down and back to break her neck. When he did this, her skin, which was black from scabs and appeared to be rotting, broke open, exposing the inside of her neck. The turkey flailed wildly, flapping her wings and scooting across the ground into a fence. [The assistant] remarked that he had about pulled her head "plum off."