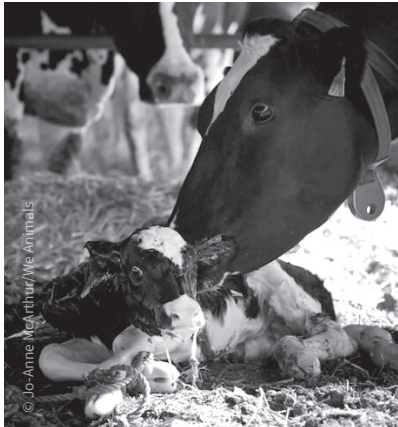


# How the Consumption of Milk, Meat, and Eggs Affects Female Animals

Female cows produce milk for the same reason women do: to feed their babies. On farms, calves are traumatically torn away from their mothers just after birth, causing both mother and calf extreme distress, so that the milk that was meant for them can instead be used for human consumption. In order to produce milk, cows must have recently given birth—so farmers forcibly impregnate them. After giving birth, they're hooked up to milking machines so that their milk can be collected and sold to humans. They lactate for 10 months and are then artificially inseminated again. Female calves born into the dairy industry end up being exploited for their milk just like their mothers.



Most female pigs used for breeding spend their entire adult lives confined to cramped metal crates. When they're old enough to give birth, they're usually artificially inseminated and imprisoned for the entire duration of their pregnancies in "gestation crates," which are too small for them even to turn around or lie down comfortably in. After giving birth to their piglets, mother pigs are moved to "farrowing crates," which are wide enough to allow them to lie down and nurse their babies but not to turn around. Piglets are separated from their mothers when they're as young as 10 days old. Once their piglets are gone, female pigs are impregnated again, and the



awful cycle continues for three or four years. Finally, they are slaughtered.

Most egg-laying hens are kept in battery cages—in which each chicken's allotted space is about the size of a sheet of paper—for their entire lives. The cages are stacked on top of each other in filthy warehouse-



style sheds that let in very little light and no fresh air, and the wire mesh rubs off their feathers and cripples their feet. Because of the terrible living conditions, chickens often die in these cages. A portion of the sensitive beaks of most female hens is cut off with a hot blade so that they can't hurt each other out of frustration during their intense confinement. Hens bred for egg production have a high rate of reproductive disease, such as ovarian cancer, because they've been manipulated to lay such a large number of eggs. When they no longer produce enough eggs to be profitable, they're killed, and their worn-out bodies are used to make cheap meat "products." Even "cage-free" hens are crammed together in giant filthy sheds, debeaked, and eventually killed.

**The meat, dairy, and egg industries are bad for women and other marginalized groups, too.**

## Access to Healthy Food and Resources

On average, women are poorer than men in every state, and like many issues involving poverty, food insecurity disproportionately affects women and children. Researchers have also found that Black Americans and Latinos are more likely than people of other ethnicities to live in "food deserts"—areas with little to no access to the

fresh fruits and vegetables necessary to a healthy diet. People living in food deserts often have no choice but to eat unhealthy animal-derived convenience foods (such as fast food or packaged, processed snack foods from gas stations or liquor stores). There's a correlation between food insecurity and increased rates of diabetes. And eating animal-derived foods puts people at a higher risk for diabetes as well as cancer, heart disease, and high blood pressure. In addition to lacking access to healthy foods, marginalized groups also have less access to healthcare resources.

But many affected communities are taking back their food systems and taking control of their health by going vegan with the help of organizations such as Food Empowerment Project and Grow Where You Are. Many organizations are now working to promote better access to fruits, vegetables, beans, and whole grains, in addition to teaching people how to grow their own organic fruits and vegetables in urban settings.



## Human Exploitation in the Meat, Dairy, and Egg Industries

The meat, dairy, and egg industries also exploit their workers, who are primarily people of color and are often immigrants (many of whom may be undocumented). Workers on factory farms earn very low wages, and union organizing is difficult. Workers are often forced to work 10 or more hours a day in filthy conditions. They have to keep up with increasingly faster slaughter lines and are often denied bathroom breaks by their supervisors in order to avoid slowing down the production line. It's not uncommon for some line workers to defecate or urinate in their pants. Some go to work in adult diapers, and others suffer from health conditions caused by holding their bladder for as long as possible.

Human Rights Watch reports that immigrant workers make up "an increasing percentage of the workforce in the industry"<sup>1</sup> and are particularly at risk, since they're

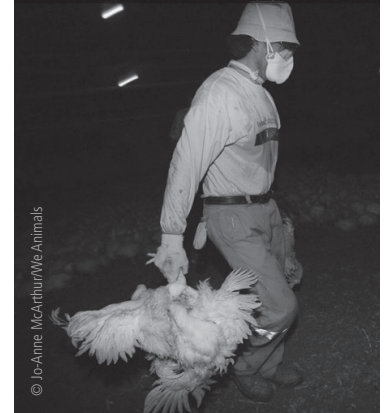
in danger of being deported if they speak up about inhumane conditions.

Workers in meat and poultry plants have the highest injury and illness rates of any industry. The industry refuses to make working conditions safer by slowing down line speeds or buying appropriate safety gear, which amounts to what Human Rights Watch calls

"systematic human rights violations embedded in meat and poultry industry employment."<sup>2</sup> According to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, slaughterhouse workers are more than three times as likely to sustain serious injuries on the job as are workers in other manufacturing fields.<sup>3</sup>

The long hours, low wages, and unsanitary and dangerous conditions can all take a toll on workers' physical and mental health: Slaughterhouse workers are increasingly being treated for post-traumatic stress disorder, and they leave the slaughterhouse floor each day with an increased risk of committing domestic violence, developing social withdrawal, engaging in drug or alcohol abuse, or experiencing severe anxiety.

Just like the sensitive animals who lose their lives in this corrupt industry, factory-farm workers aren't treated with the basic dignity that they deserve as living, feeling beings. Things change when people stand together and speak out. We must never be silent in the face of injustice.



<sup>1</sup>Human Rights Watch, "Blood, Sweat, and Fear: Workers' Rights in U.S. Meat and Poultry Plants," 24 Jan. 2005 <<https://www.hrw.org/report/2005/01/24/blood-sweat-and-fear/workers-rights-us-meat-and-poultry-plants>>.

<sup>2</sup>United States Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, "Meatpacking," accessed 26 Feb. 2018 <<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/meatpacking/>>.

<sup>3</sup>Human Rights Watch.