

# **The illegality of force feeding and the scientific report “Welfare Aspects of the Production of Foie Gras in Ducks and Geese”**

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# Defining Farm Animal Health and Welfare

- “Fit and feeling good” (prof. J. Webster)
- Sustained physical and mental health
- Absence of disease
- Absence of suffering (eg. fear, pain or exhaustion)
- Ability to carry out normal behaviour
- Comfort, companionship, security

# Council Directive 98/58

- MS must ensure the welfare of animals and that they are not caused any unnecessary pain, suffering or injury
- No animal shall be provided with food or liquid in a manner ..... which may cause unnecessary suffering or injury

# SCAHAW Report

“Welfare Aspects in the Production of Foie Gras  
in Ducks and Geese”

Dec 1998

Welfare indicators: measures of health, production,  
physiology and behavior (a holistic approach)

Assessing housing: a balance between design and  
performance and focusing on specific welfare  
problems

# Force feeding



Photo: L214

# Problems associated with force feeding

- It causes steatosis of the liver (a pathological condition - fat globules accumulate in the cells)
- Increases liver size causing pain and distress to the animal
- Locomotion is more difficult, panting and discomfort
- Higher mortality rates compared with non force fed animals
- If force feeding is continued it proves lethal

# Problems - continued

- Deprives the bird of an important behaviour, that is normal feeding
- Scar tissue in the oesophagus, stretched tissue, pain
- Handling by humans, insertion into the oesophagus, rapid intubation of a large volume of food
- Causes fear
- Animals clearly avoid the feeding tube



# Individual cages



Photo: L214



# Problems with housing

- Most animals are kept in small individual cages
- The animals cannot turn around, stand in a normal position, preen normally or spread their wings
- Ducks and geese are social animals - cages prevent them from interacting
- They cannot exhibit normal investigatory behaviour and exercise



Photo: L214

# Problems with housing

- No water for preening, bathing and swimming
- Slatted or wire mesh floors cause foot injuries
- They are kept in near darkness
- Prevented from engaging in natural behaviour





Photos: L214

# Conclusion

The Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare concludes that force feeding, as currently practised, is detrimental to the welfare of the birds

# Recommendations

- No feeding procedure that results in discomfort to the animals
- Small individual cages not permitted. Birds should be kept in small groups with adequate water and sufficient lighting





Photo: L214



# **Council of Europe**

## **Standing Committee on the European Convention for the Protection of Animals Kept for Farming Purposes**

### **Recommendation concerning muscovy ducks and hybrids of muscovy and domestic ducks**

Housing systems for ducks shall allow the birds to:

- stand with a normal posture,
- turn around without difficulty,
- defecate showing normal movements,
- flap the wings,
- show normal preening movements,
- perform normal social interactions,
- carry out normal feeding and drinking movements.

# Council of Europe - continued

These requirements shall apply for new accommodation or when existing ones are replaced, from 31<sup>st</sup> December 2004.

All accommodation shall fulfil these requirements by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2010.

# Lisbon Treaty 2009

- Recognizes animals as **sentient beings**
- Provides that the Union and the Member States **shall pay full regard to the welfare requirements of animals** in formulating and implementing the Union's policies on agriculture, fisheries, transport and research



Photo: L214