Co-op Members Revolt Against Leadership Over Frankenchicken Betrayal

Tuesday 22 August, 2023

22ns August 2023 - Co-op members descended on the company's Manchester HQ on Saturday after a shocking undercover investigation revealed suffering Frankenchickens on a Co-op farm, claiming the leadership are betraying Co-op members.

Members brought home-made placards to the protest, alongside large blood-splattered membership cards, and submitted hundreds of messages from Co-op members and shoppers on postcards.

Co-op member and protest organiser Hannah Dickson said: *"Co-op may claim that their members' vote was not binding, but the members are the lifeblood of the Co-op. When 96% of voters call for the supermarket to improve chicken welfare we expect something to be done. We voted for change expecting that deformed, sick and dying Frankenchickens would no longer be tolerated. Giving the birds more space is good, but these chickens have misery hardwired into their DNA ; even in perfect conditions they'll suffer. I am proud to stand up for animals, and I know our membership is behind us - when will Co-op listen?"*

Members were also armed with banners, donned the light-blue of the Co-op brand, and wore chicken masks.

In May Co-op members passed a resolution to consider adopting the Better Chicken Commitment (BCC) by a 96% margin. While they agreed to give their chickens more space, the Co-op board refused to stop selling fast-growing Frankenchickens, despite the breed being one of the main sources of intense suffering for chickens raised for meat.

The motion for the Co-op to adopt the BCC was headed by Co-op members from animal charity The Humane League UK. It was the only member-led motion which appeared at the supermarket's AGM in Manchester this year.

Aaron Parr is a Senior Campaigner with The Humane League UK and Co-op members who proposed the motion to give chickens better lives at the Co-op's May AGM. **He said:**

"I am thrilled that our campaign to give chickens better lives has taken on a life of its own, and that so many Co-op members are refusing to be ignored. Tens of millions of Frankenchickens are being farmed and killed to profit our Co-op, and the membership will not settle for anything less than justice. The protest in Manchester shows the appetite for change, and the Co-op board should count on this campaign going on for as long as animal cruelty is sold in at their stores. Ethical retail cannot involve breeding Frankenchickens."

However, while Co-op says the motion only required them to 'consider' signing the BCC, activists and members say they are playing language games.

Actor and campaigner Peter Egan has supported the Co-op campaign and narrated the investigation video. **He said**:

"Dozens of strong-minded Co-op members are taking to the streets to say no to Frankenchickens. The way these Frankenchickens are treated in Co-op's supply chain is inexcusable, and it's right for members to come together and fight for animals and their own democratic rights. Co-op is breeding sentient beings into lives of torment, disease and despair. No more excuses - Co-op must sign the BCC and become the ethical retailer it claims to be."

An estimated 51 million birds supplied to Co-op each year would benefit from these improvements if the board implemented the BCC. This would make the Co-op the third UK supermarket to make the pledge, after Waitrose and M&S.

Currently only 2% of Co-op's chickens raised for meat are reared to higher welfare standards, as opposed nearly 100% of their egg laying hens and pigs.

Fast-growing Frankenchickens make up around 90% of the over one billion chickens reared and killed for meat in the UK each year. As a result of their rapid growth they can suffer from a wide range of health

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and welfare issues including heart attacks, organ failure, lameness, bone deformities, muscle diseases, and burns. Over one million die of illness in the UK every week, excluding bird flu deaths.

Over 350 businesses in the UK and EU have committed to the BCC so far, including major and budget food companies like KFC, Nando's and Greggs.

Company Contact:

The Humane League UK

T. 07580293686
E. press@thehumaneleague.org
W. https://thehumaneleague.org.uk/

Additional Contact(s):
hyates@thehumaneleague.org.uk, 07580293686
mchalmers@thehumaneleague.org,uk, 07900955081

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