Foie gras: 'Sadistic' footage from French farm sparks fresh calls for a ban

Monday 7 March, 2022

March 7th - new footage from an intensive foie gras farm in South West France. Hidden cameras show ducks being force fed, choking on food and violently thrown into crowded battery cages. The farm is accused of breaking multiple French animal welfare laws.

The images, shot in November and December 2021, come weeks after the UK Government made a controversial decision to scrap a ban on fur and foie gras imports. Brexit opportunities minister Jacob Rees-Mogg is among several senior Tories to object to the move on the grounds of protecting personal choice. France, the largest manufacturer of foie gras, is one of the main exporters of the product to Britain which can be bought in certain high end restaurants.

Thousands of ducks are filmed squeezed into cramped battery cages with their feathers covered in their own waste. Workers can be seen gripping the ducks by the neck in a force feeding room and entering a feeding pipe into their throats to pump in vast quantities of food. Known as “gavage”, workers aim to swell the birds’ livers up to 10x its normal size leading to a fatty liver disease. The practice can cause internal bleeding and many of the ducks inside the cages have died. Workers were also filmed grabbing birds by the wings and aggressively throwing them into the cages.

Force feeding, labelled “sadistic” by some animal welfare charities, is illegal in Britain. Britain still imports and sells 200 tonnes of foie gras each year. In 2018 the government suggested a ban on foie gras imports could be one of the potential benefits of Brexit. An overwhelming majority of Brits (79% who expressed an opinion) want to see a ban. Petitions have gained over 280,000 signatures.

The footage was obtained by animal welfare organisation L214 in France and published in the collaboration with Open Cages: one of multiple British charities campaigning for a foie gras import ban. L214 has filed a complaint with the French judicial court for mistreatment on the farm.

British animal charities urge UK ministers to view the footage

Connor Jackson, CEO & Founder of Open Cages comments: “Foie gras isn’t just cruel, it’s sadistic. No one in their right mind could look at these images of helpless animals, trapped in tiny battery cages, choking on a feeding pipe, and be OK with it. On this farm, and others like it, there is a clear lack of interest in animal welfare: only in their diseased livers. Unsurprisingly, 79% of the public has made it clear they want a foie gras import ban. So rather than telling us that we want the “personal choice” to support this torturous industry, I want Jacob Rees Mogg and his friends to sit down and really look at these images. Either they refuse to face the reality, or they are OK with it. This is the cruelty they condone. If this Government betrays these animals now with a short sighted u-turn, I think the millions of animal loving British people will never forget it.”

Abigail Penny, Executive Director of Animal Equality UK, comments: “The UK’s Ministers need to see this footage for themselves and witness just how sickening the foie gras force-feeding process is. These terrified birds try so desperately and frantically to escape, but confined in cages they have nowhere to turn. As a nation, we can help the animals used and abused by this industry. We can stop their suffering by banning imports of this vile product. To backtrack on a ban would be the ultimate betrayal for hundreds of thousands of ducks and geese. Their lives are at stake and they are counting on us.

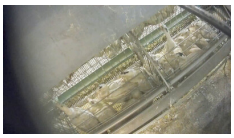
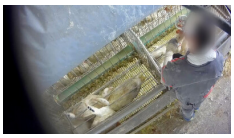
MPs including Sir Mike Penning, Henry Smith, Hilary Benn, Dr Lisa Cameron, Wera Hobhouse, Ben Lake, Caroline Lucas, Jim Shannon and the late Sir David Amess support the ban. It has been endorsed by celebrities including Thandiwe Newton, Dev Patel, Peter Egan, French ex-foie gras chef Alexis Gauthier, Dame Joanna Lumley, and Alan Carr.

Chris Packham has launched a petition “#DontBetrayAnimals” asking the UK Government to not overturn the fur and foie gras import bans.

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Media:











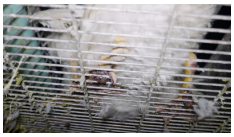
Photos from the investigation can be accessed here. Footage can be accessed here. Please credit L214.

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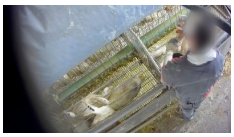












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