Lidl Chicken Farmer Joins Protests At Its Stores Following Undercover Abuse Video

Monday 10 July, 2023

This weekend - protests erupted at 30 Lidl stores across the UK accusing the retailer of animal cruelty after viral footage emerged 2 weeks ago from a chicken farm in Lincolnshire. The demonstrations are fronted by the farm's whistleblower who is speaking out against the sale of fast growing 'Frankenchickens.'

Demonstrations have taken place in London, Bristol, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Newcastle, Oxford, Sittingbourne, Penzance, Torquay, Guildford and Bournemouth.

Photos from the protests can be found here.
Please credit the photographers in the image descriptions.

Activists protesting at Lidl's flagship central London store were joined by Tomasz Herok, the former chicken farm worker who captured the recent undercover footage and passed it onto Open Cages. Tomasz says he witnessed many instances of cruel treatment.

Tomasz comments *"I'm protesting because retailers like Lidl are not telling the truth. I worked in one of Lidl's chicken supplier farms for 2 months last year, and I saw things I wouldn't want anybody to see - birds who were clearly run over simply because they got in the way of a forklift - dying and deformed birds tossed aside like rubbish - I don't know how Lidl cannot be moved by these images."*

Lidl faces the ire of animal welfare groups fighting to improve the welfare of the 1 billion chickens farmed for meat each year in the UK. The latest claim and counterclaim in the battle revolves around recent undercover footage passed onto Open Cages showing poor welfare standards and illegal cruelty on a chicken farm linked with Lidl.

The footage shows:

- Chickens run over and crushed to death. Workers admit on camera that the illegal abuse is routine and 'part of the job.'
- Major welfare problems. Dying and deformed 'Frankenchickens' are filmed being tossed like waste into wheelbarrows.
- The farm manager confirms that the chickens *'go to Lidl.'*

Lidl is being challenged to sign up to the improved welfare standards of the Better Chicken Commitment (BCC.) The BCC has been signed by hundreds of companies across the world including M&S, Waitrose, KFC and Lidl France. The standards prohibit the sale of fast growing Frankenchickens raised in overcrowded conditions which are typical practices in Lidl's chicken supply chain.

The Better Chicken Commitment is backed by the RSPCA and supported by the UK Government. In France, Lidl has signed up to the commitment but not in any other country it operates in. Activists say signing up to the welfare standard would alleviate many of the welfare problems witnessed by Tom.

Connor Jackson, CEO & Co-founder of Open Cages, the organisation behind today's protests:
"Lidl is the largest chicken retailer in all of Europe. And with great power comes great responsibility. We are all tired of seeing these horrendous videos of animal cruelty. But if Lidl were to sign the Better Chicken Commitment, they would not only improve the lives of millions of animals: they would influence the entire future of this industry. But if Lidl doesn't want to change, then we feel compelled to protest and inform British consumers about where Lidl's chicken really come from."

400,000 people have signed a petition asking Lidl to adopt the BCC.
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NOTES TO THE EDITORS:

Lidl's link to the footage

The farm in the footage is owned and operated by Hook 2 Sisters - a joint venture between 2 Sisters and PD Hook. 2 Sisters, as the largest chicken producer in the UK, processes and supplies Frankenchickens to major retailers like Lidl.

Upon being confronted by journalists, Lidl initially claimed it was not supplied by '*the supplier in question*.' However, new photos have confirmed this claim to be false.

Chicken from 2 Sisters is currently on sale in a number of Lidl stores under the 'Birchwood' label which promises high standards of animal welfare. Lidl also lists 2 Sisters as a supplier in its own internal documents.

[The chicken packages display the code 'GB 2037' - this is the identification code of the 2 Sisters slaughterhouse in Scunthorpe. It is also the exact slaughterhouse that the farm in the footage supplies.]

Therefore the claim is false: Lidl is supplied by 2 Sisters.

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