

Protests Erupt Nationwide As Morrisons Refuses To Improve Chicken Welfare Conditions

Saturday 30 April, 2022

Today, animal welfare campaigners dressed in butcher outfits descended on nearly 20 **Morrisons** stores across the country. Protestors displayed images of deformed 'Frankenchickens' and demanded their removal from the retailer's shelves.

The protests come as Morrisons launches a small range of chicken reared to higher welfare standards. Campaigners condemn this as a 'cheap gesture' as the retailer continues to source the vast majority of its chicken meat from intensively farmed Frankenchickens - birds genetically engineered to grow 400% faster than natural.

Unlike Morrisons, **M&S**, **Waitrose**, **KFC** and **Subway** are amongst hundreds of companies to have pledged to stop selling them.

Last year, undercover filming found 'monstrous and deformed' chickens collapsing in their own waste on four farms supplying Morrisons' welfare-assured Butcher's on Market Street meat label. On every farm, birds were surrounded by rotting bodies, suffering chemical burns from laying in their own urine and faeces and barely able to spread their wings amidst the crowded conditions.

Today, in cities such as London, Bradford, Glasgow and Bristol, the conditions were revealed to Morrisons' customers through demonstrations. Parodying the retailer's ad campaigns, a billboard truck claimed, "there's nothing Good about this chicken." Former chicken farmer Doug Maw led the protests in West Sussex following his dismissal from the company as a warehouse worker for urging better welfare standards.

Connor Jackson, CEO of Open Cages comments:

"Don't be fooled by the cheap gestures and PR spin. For years now Morrisons has sat on their hands and done the absolute minimum possible to improve chicken welfare, whilst pedalling out feel good marketing campaigns and wearing only the costume of a company that cares about animals."

"Morrisons say they never tolerate malpractice in their supply chain, but this has nothing to do with malpractice. Around 30% of Frankenchickens can barely walk because they can't handle the immense weight. Millions of these monstrous birds die from heart attacks because they can't handle growing 400% faster than natural, millions more have their necks broken to simply put them out of their misery. Morrisons tolerates this daily because the scenes we filmed are the norm in their supply chain. These are the expected consequences of the poor welfare standards that Morrisons has chosen."

Morrisons has said that procedures are now in place to "significantly reduce" the chances of the problems in the footage happening in the future. But experts like the RSPCA agree that these welfare issues will remain. Painful lameness, deformities, and heart attacks are known to be unavoidable for fast growing chickens.

Over 300 companies across the UK and Europe have signed the 'Better Chicken Commitment' (BCC) meaning that by 2026 they will sell only slower growing chickens reared with far more living space. Sainsbury's recently pledged to stop sourcing chickens from overcrowded conditions for all own-brand meat by 2023.

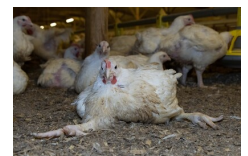
Mr Jackson continues:

"Let's remember what we're asking for: we simply want Morrisons to follow the hundreds of other companies who have already committed to taking Frankenchickens off the shelves. These practices are opposed by the vast majority of the British public, and Morrisons could make this pledge overnight if they spent as much time on their welfare standards as they did playing PR games."

Morrisons has not signed the BCC and falsely claims to "go beyond" it. The policy prohibits fast growing chickens and crowded conditions as a baseline. Other measures Morrisons has introduced, such as in house hatching, do not address either the speed of growth or crowded environment.

The Better Chicken Commitment is a set of science-backed improved welfare standards. In February,

Media:



Defra [endorsed](#) the policy and pledged to “prioritise” its implementation through subsidies.

Nearly a quarter of a million people have signed Chris Packham's [petition](#) asking retailers like Morrisons to sign up. A recent YouGov poll found that 78% of Brits [oppose](#) the use of farming practices which cause animals to suffer in order to produce cheap food. A majority strongly opposes them.

ENDS

Protest Photos:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1R31WG6l1G3svB5N3t4VohQECOKS55gfJ?usp=sharing>

Photos from Morrisons' chicken farms:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1uug5aLS71zufbHlge9Rpddb6kECJSMan?usp=sharing>

Credit: Open Cages

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