Shocking Footage: Lidl Accused of Animal Cruelty by UK Farm Whistleblower

Wednesday 21 June, 2023

Lidl denies accusations of animal cruelty after an employee of a chicken farm in Lincolnshire linked with Lidl covertly filmed the animals being repeatedly run over and crushed to death during transport whilst workers admit on camera that it's *'part of the job.'*

Tom Herok, the source of the footage, has gone on record to speak out against *'widespread animal cruelty'* within the UK chicken industry following a High Court dismissal to ban Frankenchicken farming.

Animal protection charity Open Cages has filed a criminal complaint against the farm for breaches of The Animal Welfare Act and both The Welfare of Farmed Animals and WATEO (Welfare Of Animals During Transport) Regulations.

Lidl - the largest chicken retailer in Europe - is facing a global meat scandal as this video becomes the 5th in recent months to question the supermarket's chicken welfare claims. The hashtag #LidlChickenScandal went viral on Twitter following the publication of the footage, with over 5 thousand consumers taking to social media to express their outrage at Lidl.

Photos & video:
Short summary clip
Full investigation video
Photos
Raw footage is available upon request
Credit: Open Cages

FOOTAGE SUMMARY:

- Mr Herok documented his employment as a farm worker on a Lincolnshire chicken farm between July and September 2022 using a hidden camera.
- The farm manager is filmed revealing that the farm supplied Lidl.
- From his first day of employment at the farm Mr Herok was warned he would see birds being *'run over.'* Workers repeatedly refer to the practice in advance, commenting *'it's part of the job and can't really be avoided.'*
- Workers are filmed collecting dozens of eviscerated birds inside the recently emptied barns. It's confirmed that they were *'run over'* and killed by a forklift whilst being transported.
- Some of the animals were found still alive with severe injuries. One bird can be seen crawling on the floor with broken legs. Another lies gasping with an open wound exposing their internal organs.
- An employee reveals that birds were again run over outside the barns in broad daylight after falling out of a transport crate. Numerous piles of dead bodies are dumped into heaps on the farm.
- Workers also reveal that the fast growing chickens - which are slaughtered at just 6 weeks old - suffer from '*broken legs', 'heart attacks', 'suffocation', 'arthritis', 'deformities'* and chemical burns from urine *'burning their feet all the time.'*

Tom Herok, a teacher of Philosophy at the University of Lancaster, reveals in a filmed statement with Open Cages that he embedded himself in the UK chicken industry for 5 months last year in order to investigate the welfare of intensively farmed 'Frankenchickens.'

Mr Herok comments: *"There is widespread animal cruelty within the UK chicken industry and retailers are hiding that from us. On numerous farms supplying retailers like Lidl I not only saw animals being carelessly crushed to death. I saw first hand the daily struggle of a Frankenchicken. It was my job to put thousands of them out of their misery."*

Tom has passed the footage onto Open Cages which is campaigning for major retailers like Lidl to sign the Better Chicken Commitment (BCC.) TV presenter and animal advocate Chris Packham has branded the footage as *'disgraceful'* and has also called on Lidl to sign up.

Media:





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The BCC is a set of improved chicken welfare standards backed by the RSPCA and supported by the UK Government. M&S, Waitrose, KFC and Lidl France are among over 550 companies to have signed up - but in all other countries Lidl has refused.

Lidl denies the claims, commenting: *“The farm and supplier in question does not supply Lidl. We take animal welfare extremely seriously and have long been committed to increasing welfare and traceability standards throughout our supply chain.”*

However, Lidl's own internal documents list 2 Sisters as a supplier. The footage itself shows a farm manager stating the birds *'go to Lidl.'* Additional footage from Open Cages shows chicken meat produced by 2 Sisters on sale in Lidl stores under the 'Birchwood' label.

Connor Jackson, Co-founder of Open Cages, comments:

“Lidl claims to have cut ties with this farm. But that won't solve the problem. These are the exact, ruthlessly intensive, and poor conditions on practically all Lidl chicken supplier farms because that's what Lidl demands in its own policies. That's why we have seen identical scenes of animal suffering in Lidl’s chicken supply chain all across the UK and the world, regardless of the company or region. This will continue behind the scenes until Lidl adopts Better Chicken Commitment standards."
END

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Credit: Open Cages

Full evidence linking the farm to Lidl can be provided upon request.

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