The truth behind pork production is that it is cruel and ethically indefensible, but we can only stop the horrendous treatment of pigs by taking action to end it. Visit farmsanctuary.org for more information and to find out what you can do to help.

Farm Sanctuary is the nation’s leading farm animal protection organization. Since incorporating in 1986, Farm Sanctuary has worked to expose and stop cruel practices of the “food animal” industry through research and investigations, legal and institutional reforms, public awareness projects, youth education, and direct rescue and refuge efforts. Farm Sanctuary shelters in Watkins Glen, N.Y., and Orland, Calif., provide lifelong care for hundreds of rescued animals, who have become ambassadors for farm animals everywhere by educating visitors about the realities of factory farming.

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ONE -WAY RIDE

After a life of confinement, most pigs will endure long, overcrowded transport in a tractor trailer to the slaughterhouse. Stress and overcrowding in transport trucks, coupled with highway accidents involving these trucks, kill more than 200,000 pigs every year.

Producers attempt to maximize profits by packing as many animals as possible onto each truck, further contributing to the animals’ stress and often causing many of them to become “downers”—animals unable to stand or walk when they arrive at the slaughterhouse. Nearly 400,000 pigs every year arrive at slaughter plants as downers who all too often become the victims of abuse as handlers try to unload them as quickly as possible.

A BRUTAL END

The federal Humane Slaughter Act mandates that pigs are to be stunned or rendered unconscious prior to slaughter. Improper stunning, however, can leave conscious animals hanging upside down, kicking and struggling, while slaughterhouse workers try to stick them in their necks with knives. If the worker is unsuccessful, the pig will be carried to the next station on the slaughterhouse disassembly line: the scalding tank. Designed to prepare hair for removal and disinfect pigs’ skin, the scalding tank boils alive any pig unfortunate enough to survive botched stunning and sticking.
Approximately 100 million pigs are raised and slaughtered in the U.S. every year. The vast majority are crowded by the thousands on factory farms.

**Breeding Misery**

Several million breeding sows on U.S. factory farms are subjected to some of the cruelest conditions in the industrialized agriculture industry, living most of their lives confined so tightly that they cannot walk or even turn around.

- Breeding sows are typically first impregnated at seven months of age and then confined in 2-by-7-foot gestation crates barely larger than their bodies. They remain in these crates during their four months of pregnancy.
- At the end of their gestation periods, the sows are moved to similarly confining farrowing crates to give birth and nurse their newborns. After nursing for a period ranging from 10 days to three weeks, the piglets are taken away to be raised for pork. (In a more natural environment, sows will nurse their piglets for up to 17 weeks.) With their movement severely restricted, sows in farrowing crates cannot interact in any meaningful way with their piglets.
- Because the industry pushes sows to produce as many piglets as possible — more than 20 piglets per sow each year — more than 10 percent of piglets die before weaning.
- Just four to eight days after weaning their piglets, the sows are typically returned to gestation crates and are re-impregnated (through artificial insemination) to maximize production.

**Cruel Confinement**

Confining sows their whole lives in gestation crates and farrowing crates prevents them from engaging in basic natural behaviors and leads to physical and psychological maladies.

- With no straw or bedding, most sows are forced to stand and lie on uncomfortable concrete or metal floors for their entire lives. Paired with a lack of exercise, this unnatural environment leads to muscle atrophy, skin wounds, abscesses, and crippling leg disorders.
- Their deprived environment causes chronic stress, anxiety and boredom, and the sows often exhibit abnormal coping behaviors, such as repetitively chewing on the bars of their crates.
- Recognized as inherently cruel, gestation crates are being phased out in the European Union. Several U.S. states have also recently enacted laws to phase out these cruel systems.

**Spent Sows**

While pigs in a more natural setting can live for about 10 to 12 years, the animals on factory farms live short, painful lives. After three to four years of breeding, the sows’ productivity drops off and they are sent to slaughter, sometimes barely able to walk due to their time in intensive confinement.

**No Green Acres**

Like their mothers, the offspring of breeding sows will only know pain and misery for their entire lives. Piglets who survive weaning are confined inside pens with concrete floors and metal bars where they never have a chance to root in the soil or feel the sun. At 6 months of age, they are sent to slaughter.

- Painful mutilations performed on piglets without pain killers include cutting off piglets’ tails to minimize tail biting (an abnormal aggressive behavior that results from overcrowding), cutting notches into their ears for identification purposes, and castrating males.
- Poor housing, unhealthy food, overcrowding stress, and noxious air inside these pig factories contribute to various maladies, including tumors, respiratory diseases, ulcers, and lameness, which can lead to death.

**Pollution and Human Health**

The air inside hog factories is so polluted with dust, dander and noxious gases from the animals’ waste that workers who are exposed for just a few hours per day are at high risk for bronchitis, asthma, sinusitis, organic dust toxic syndrome, and acute respiratory distress syndrome. Unlike these workers, the pigs have no escape from this toxic air, and roughly half of all pigs who die between weaning and slaughter succumb to respiratory disease.