

Hidden Video Released of Alleged Turkey Abuse at NC Butterball Facility

Mercy For Animals

RAEFORD, N.C., (PRNewswire) — While pro-factory farm lawmakers across the country have been working to pass legislation designed to sweep evidence of animal abuse at factory farms under the rug, the national animal protection charity Mercy For Animals has been documenting horrific cruelty to animals at Butterball — the world's largest producer of turkey meat. Using a hidden-camera, the organization secretly recorded baby turkeys at a Butterball hatchery in Raeford, North Carolina, being routinely mutilated without painkillers, ground up alive in a macerating machine, and carelessly thrown, dropped, and mishandled by Butterball workers.

Butterball is responsible for 20 percent of the 252 million turkeys killed each year in the United States. Butterball's hatchery in Raeford processes more than 300,000 turkey poults per week. Mercy For Animals has turned over its evidence to local law enforcement, which is currently considering criminal animal cruelty charges.

This isn't the first time blatant animal abuse has been exposed at Butterball. A 2011 investigation by Mercy For Animals caught Butterball workers kicking and stomping on turkeys, and bashing in their heads with metal pipes. That investigation led to a raid of the Butterball facility by state law enforcement officials and felony and misdemeanor animal cruelty convictions against five Butterball workers, including the first-ever felony cruelty to animals conviction related to factory-farmed poultry in U.S. history. Less than a year later, Mercy For Animals recorded nearly identical abuses at several more Butterball facilities.

Rather than strengthen laws to protect animals from egregious cruelty at Butterball and other factory farms, some state lawmakers are trying to quietly pass controversial "ag-gag" bills that would prohibit whistleblowers from working undercover at factory farms or slaughterhouses in order to document animal abuse and other crimes at these facilities. In North Carolina, where Butterball is headquartered, pro-factory farm legislators are now working to pass Senate Bill 648 to make video footage obtained through undercover investigations at factory farms inadmissible in court.

"This investigation graphically illustrates that a culture of cruelty and abuse continues to run rampant at Butterball facilities," said MFA's executive director, Nathan Runkle. "Lawmakers should be focusing on strengthening the state's animal protection laws and cracking down on repeat offenders like Butterball, not making animal abuse harder to expose. Consumers who buy Butterball turkey are supporting a company that beats, throws, and mutilates animals, and grinds them up while still alive. In a civilized society, this cruelty shouldn't be supported or tolerated."

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