

1 IN A **BILLION**

the humane league | united kingdom

The UK raises & slaughters around **1 BILLION CHICKENS** for meat every year *

The majority endure lives of misery & suffering.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Chickens' bodies are bred to produce as much meat muscle, particularly on the breast—for fillets—in as little time as possible. This leads to painful leg weakness and bone problems. As a result, many struggle to walk, suffering from pain, lameness and decreased energy levels. Despite what the industry argues, **it is not "normal" or "natural" for a young chicken to be sitting down to 'rest' most of the time.** Like other baby

animals, chickens love to explore and play, but are unable to. Along with cramped conditions, intensive chicken breeds are the source of the majority of welfare issues encountered in the industry. There is little value in improving chickens' living conditions with space and environmental enrichment, such as hay bales and perches, if their bodies render them so immobile they can **barely walk.**

CHICKENS ARE HIGHLY INTELLIGENT, SENSITIVE ANIMALS, but historically they have been viewed as lacking in intelligence—unable to experience pain, frustration or happiness. This may have played a part in making chickens one of the most intensively farmed and abused animals on the planet. However, studies have repeatedly demonstrated their capabilities for **self-awareness, learning, complex communication, and positive and negative emotions.** When given the chance, they will roam and play, perch up high, and forage around in the soil, **as their nature compels them to do.** The conditions they are raised in prevent them from doing so, leading to physical and **mental distress.**

FACTS



A UK study on lameness in broiler chickens showed that nearly a third of birds had poor walking ability and 3.3% were almost unable to walk. Lameness is a direct result of breeding for fast growth.



Sheds are typically **barren with birds crammed together,** housing 10,000 to 20,000 birds at a time. Each chicken only has the space of an A4 sheet of paper when fully-grown.



The litter under their feet soaks up faeces, and chickens often get **burns on their legs and breasts** from the ammonia from resting so long on the litter. These lesions, called hock burns and foot pad dermatitis, have been reported in up to 70% of broiler chickens.



The average slaughter age is just 35-40 days. For all intents and purposes, they are just **babies.**

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*Over 95% raised on standard intensive farms | britishpoultry.org.uk/what-is-free-range-and-organic/
All photos on page: Andrew Skowron/Open Cages. Photos are representative of a typical farm.

COMMON WELFARE ISSUES

linked to intensive breeds

GREEN MUSCLE DISEASE

The cells of the breast muscle become necrotic and die from lack of blood supply to the muscle fibres, creating areas of green, unsightly flesh that are dead and decaying. This is due to the fast growth of the breast muscle.

WOODEN BREAST SYNDROME

The breast becomes tough and wood-like. Research as to the exact causes is ongoing but it is linked to fast growth rates. This disease is increasingly common.



WHITE STRIPING

A result of intensive farming, white stripes run through the flesh, increasing the fat content and decreasing nutritional value. This is seen more in fast growing male chickens.

SUDDEN DEATH SYNDROME

Referred to as 'flip over' by producers, birds will suddenly start violently flapping their wings, extend their neck, squawk and die within minutes - a fate brought on by fast growth and stress.

WHAT WE'RE ASKING FOR

6 essential measures

1 USE BREEDS WITH BETTER WELFARE.

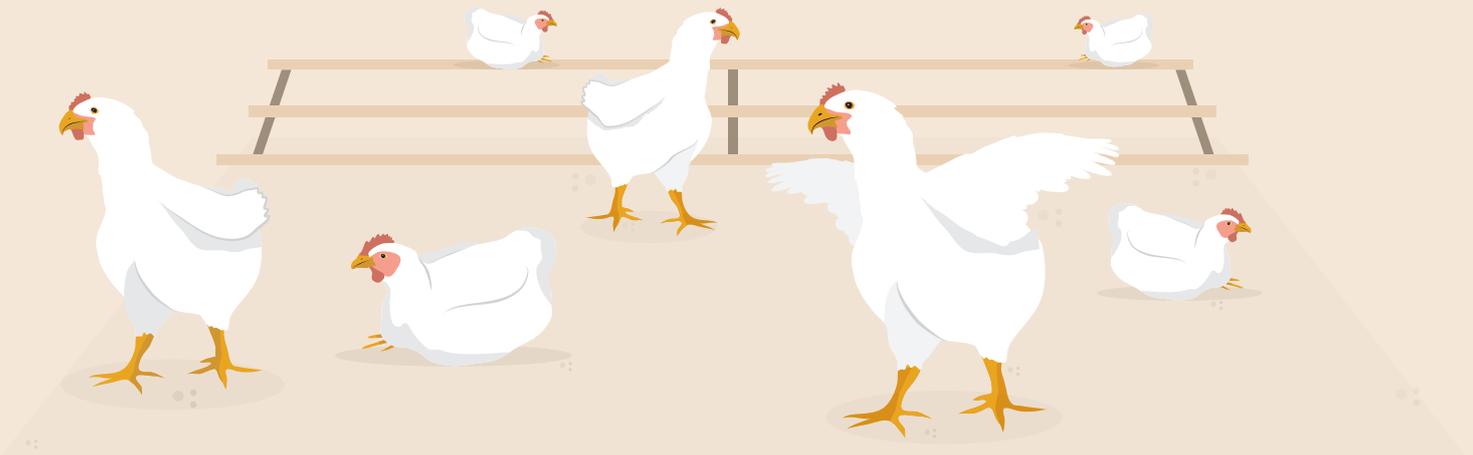
Intensive breeds are at the core of health and welfare problems. By transitioning away from the common intensive breeds, many of these can be improved.

2 IMPROVE AIR QUALITY, LIGHT, & ENRICHMENT.

Chickens should be provided with perches, to satisfy their natural impulses. Housing must give natural light to a specific, measured standard.

3 GIVE BIRDS MORE SPACE.

Chickens should be stocked at a maximum of 30kg/m² (approx. 14 birds per m² at a slaughter weight of 2.2 kg). More space allows movement and better quality of life.



4 REDUCE DISTRESS AT SLAUGHTER.

Current stunning and slaughter methods are highly distressing. In waterbath stunning systems, birds are hung upside down while fully conscious, legs in metal shackles causing pain and distress. Rather than effectively being stunned to avoid the pain of a neck cut birds often receive an insufficient stun. Controlled atmospheric killing (CAK) offers the opportunity to vastly reduce suffering by ensuring effective stunning and less handling.

5 IMPLEMENT THIRD-PARTY CHECKS AND PUBLIC REPORTING.

We're asking for greater transparency in the industry, ensuring the public is kept informed of progress towards achieving corporate welfare commitments and farms are audited to ensure compliance of standards.

6 COMPLY WITH EU ANIMAL WELFARE LAWS.

All EU animal welfare regulations must be adhered to, even when chicken is produced outside of the EU and imported into the UK.