

INCIDENT STATEMENT RE ANIMAL CRUELTY AT MOUNTAIRE FARMS

May 1, 2015

A Compassion Over Killing (“COK”) investigator garnered work on the “live hang” processing line at Mountaire Farms of North Carolina (“Mountaire”) in Lumber Bridge, North Carolina, located at 17269 NC 71 Hwy N for 19 work days in March and April, 2015. This facility slaughters and processes broiler chickens. The investigator used a covert camera to document the conditions for and treatment of the animals at Mountaire, as described below in detail.

I. MOUNTAIRE FARMS

Mountaire operates a broiler chicken slaughterhouse in Lumber Bridge, Robeson County, North Carolina. The investigator was given a variety of tasks during his employment at Mountaire, including but not limited to working on the live hang line, disposal of dead birds, and working in the truck unloading area.

A list of employees is as follows:

- [REDACTED] – Supervisor
- [REDACTED] – Line leader, mid-20’s, Hispanic male, documented engaged in throwing birds.
- [REDACTED] – Worker, late 40’s or early 50’s Hispanic male, documented throwing birds.
- [REDACTED] – Worker, Hispanic male, approximately 5’4” tall, witnessed punching a bird.
- [REDACTED] – Worker, overweight Hispanic male, approximately 5’9” tall, documented forcibly opening a bird’s mouth and sticking his finger in it.
- [REDACTED] – Worker, Hispanic male, approximately 5’7” tall, documented slamming birds on shackles.
- [REDACTED] – Worker, mid-30’s Hispanic male, approximately 5’6” tall, documented punching birds on hanging line and ripping out feathers.
- [REDACTED] – Worker, mid-20’s Hispanic male, approximately 5’9” tall, documented moving birds with a shovel and pressing a bird between his hips and the conveyor belt.
- [REDACTED] – Worker, mid 20’s Hispanic male, documented throwing birds into shackles.
- [REDACTED] – Worker, mid 30’s African American male, documented throwing birds in cargo loading area.

II. DOCUMENTED AND WITNESSED INSTANCES OF INHUMANE TREATMENT OF ANIMALS

A. Overview

The following is a summary of incidents of improper and inhumane treatment of animals at Mountaire. The COK investigator personally witnessed each of these incidents, and additionally documented a majority of them. Each incident listed was documented, unless otherwise indicated.

1. Live Birds in Dead Piles

Live birds are routinely tossed aside carelessly into piles of dead birds, apparently because the workers think or assume they must be dead, without taking the care to ensure these birds are not simply crushed by the dead birds, abandoned without food or water, or otherwise left to suffer and die among dead birds. This is also against the industry's National Chicken Council animal welfare guidelines.

2. Throwing Live Birds

Multiple workers throw birds, sometimes several feet across a room. This is clearly egregious and inexcusable animal cruelty. It also violates the National Chicken Council standards, and workers were apparently specifically told not to do this. Yet, the practice continued.

3. Shackling Cruelty

Related to the throwing of live birds, much of the cruelty to these animals surrounded the shackling process, where the birds are taken from a conveyor belt and hung by workers upside down by their legs on metal shackles. Pushing, punching, throwing, and other rough handling was a routine sight in the shackling process, which is clear egregious animal cruelty, against both company policy and National Chicken Council standards.

4. Other Abuse and Neglect

These animals suffered due to the abuse and neglect of Mountaire's process in other ways as well. For example, improper shackling position, rough handling, and mishandling of the birds constituted additional violations of law.

B. Specific Incidents

1. Live Birds in Dead Piles

Incident 1: March 18, 2015; Video 28:11-28:22

Live bird who had been thrown aside among pile of dead birds near conveyor belt documented. This bird was lying on his/her back, but visibly breathing.

Incident 2: March 18, 2015; Video 28:22-28:30

Live bird with apparent leg injury who was thrown off the conveyor belt.

Incident 3: March 25, 2015; Video 29:35-30:19

Live bird in dead pile. Worker throws dead bird next to live one.

Incident 4: March 26, 2015; Video 30:05-30:49

Pile of dead birds also contains several live birds within the pile. Workers, one of whom is [REDACTED], throw dead birds on top of live one.

Incident 5: March 27, 2015; Video 31:16-31:25

Dead pile contains at least one live bird.

Incident 6 (Multiple instances): March 30, 2015; Video 32:08-32:40

Live birds among dead birds on the floor.

Incident 7 (Multiple instances): March 31, 2015; Video 32:44-32:57

Live birds on the floor next to dead ones.

Incident 8 (Multiple instances): March 31, 2015; Video 32:57-33:08

Pile of over 100 birds contained about 10 live birds. Workers were throwing additional dead birds into the pile as the investigator was cleaning and by the time he finished, he counted 164 dead birds.

Incident 9: April 10, 2015; Video 35:13-35:21

Live bird lying on his or her back in dead pile.

2. Throwing Live Birds

Incident 10 (Witnessed) (multiple instances): March 17, 2015

The investigator witnessed workers throwing what they apparently thought to be dead birds. Some of them hit the wall before falling onto the floor. He witnessed that some of these thrown birds were still alive.

Incident 11: March 18, 2015; Video 14:14-14:19

██████████ is documented throwing a bird several feet back onto the conveyor belt.

Incident 12 (Witnessed): March 18, 2015

The investigator witnessed the worker next to him slamming a bird against the railing of the conveyor belt before hanging him/her.

Incident 13: March 19, 2015; Video 14:20-14:32

Worker ██████ throws an escaped bird on top of a shipping container.

Incident 14: March 23, 2015; Video 5:13-5:28

Worker throws a bird who had fallen off of the conveyor belt back onto the belt.

Incident 15: March 23, 2015; Video 14:32-14:41

Worker ██████████ throws a live bird who was on the floor back onto the conveyor belt.

Incident 16: March 23, 2015; Video 14:41-14:58

Worker ██████████ throws another live bird back onto the conveyor belt after dead birds were thrown at the live one.

Incident 17: March 24, 2015; Video 14:58-15:08

Worker ██████████ holds a bird by the neck and then throws the bird back onto the conveyor belt.

Incident 18 (Multiple Instances): March 25, 2015; Video 15:08-15:35

██████████ grabs birds by their necks and throws them onto the conveyor belts. He also uses a pole with a hook on the end to fish a bird from under the conveyor belts. He then throws the bird back onto the conveyor belt. He then throws live birds back onto the conveyor belt by their necks.

Incident 19: March 26, 2015 (Multiple Instances); Video 30:30-30:46

Worker ██████████ throws live birds back onto the conveyor belt, at least one by the neck, while other workers continue to throw birds into the “dead on arrival” pile.

Incident 20: March 26, 2015 (Multiple Instances); Video 30:46-31:16

Worker [REDACTED] throws multiple birds onto conveyor belt, at least one by his/her neck.

Incident 21: March 27, 2015; Video 31:39-31:53

Line leader [REDACTED] throws a live bird off the conveyor belt.

Incident 22: March 27, 2015; Video 31:53-32:08

A worker throws a bird to the ground.

Incident 23: March 31, 2015; Video 16:04-16:07

Bird thrown several feet onto conveyor belt.

Incident 24: April 1, 2015; Video 23:32-23:57

Worker throws a bird that had escaped the container back on top of the container.

Incident 25: April 2, 2015; Video 18:24-18:28

[REDACTED] throws live bird back onto conveyor belt.

Incident 26: April 3, 2015; Video 19:45-19:58

Worker picks up a bird and throws him or her to the side onto the floor.

Incident 27: April 3, 2015; Video 20:06-20:08

Worker throws a bird onto the conveyor belt.

Incident 28: April 8, 2015; Video 24:00-24:04

Bird is thrown approximately 15 feet into the air and onto a raised platform.

3. Shackling Cruelty

Incident 29 (Multiple Instances): March 17, 2015; Video 13:42-14:14

Worker [REDACTED] documented punching birds on the hanging line and ripping out the feathers of a shackled bird.

Incident 30 (Witnessed): March 18, 2015

The investigator witnessed workers jokingly hitting the shackles of the line across from them in order to prevent the workers across from them from successfully hanging a bird.

Some of these shackles, when hit by the workers, will move sideways and come into contact with birds in adjacent shackles.

Incident 31: March 25, 2015; Video 6:12-6:18

Worker attempts to throw a bird onto a shackle one-handed. The bird bounces off the shackle and lands back on the conveyor belt.

Incident 32: March 30, 2015; Video 32:01-32:04

A bird's head caught above the bottom bar connecting the shackles for each foot.

Incident 33: March 30, 2015; Video 15:55-16:03

Worker hangs bird roughly, and then pulls the wings of another bird who is already shackled.

Incident 34: April 2, 2015; Video 16:08-16:17

Worker throws bird hard into shackles and bird bounces off. Worker then picks bird up from floor to hang.

Incident 35: April 2, 2015 (Multiple Instances) (Partly documented, partly witnessed); Video 16:18-18:23

Workers documented attempting to throw birds into shackles one-handed from several feet away. Some of these birds bounced off the shackles when thrown and some landed with just one foot in the shackles. Investigator witnessed [REDACTED] talk to the workers that were throwing the birds. After [REDACTED] left, they no longer threw any birds.

Incident 36: April 3, 2015; Video 18:28-18:39

Bird falls from conveyor belt, gets picked up and thrown back on belt by worker.

Incident 37: April 3, 2015 (Multiple Instances) (Partly documented, partly witnessed); Video 18:39-18:44

Worker documented slamming a shackle with a bird in it against the railing. Investigator witnessed the same worker do this with other occupied shackles at least 5 other times.

Incident 38: April 3, 2015 (Multiple Instances); Video 18:44-19:21

Worker [REDACTED] throws two birds into shackles one handed. One bird bounced off the shackles. [REDACTED] throws the bird back onto a conveyor belt. [REDACTED] throws another bird back onto the conveyor belt.

Incident 39: April 3, 2015 (Multiple Instances); Video 19:31-19:45

Worker pushes two shackled birds and then throws a bird into the shackle.

Incident 40: April 3, 2015 (Multiple Instances); Video 19:58-20:08

Worker roughly hangs birds.

Incident 41: April 3, 2015 (Multiple Instances); Video 20:09-20:16

Worker hangs and then pushes two birds.

Incident 42: April 7, 2015 (Multiple Instances); Video 21:31-23:29

Worker throws a bird in shackles and hits the bird to force the legs further into the shackles. He then pulls another bird. Worker throws bird back onto conveyor belt and then roughly throws another bird at the shackle. Worker [REDACTED] fixes bird with only one foot in shackles by slamming the other foot in violently. [REDACTED] later punches/pushes several birds as they go by in shackles. [REDACTED] later rips feathers out of four separate shackled birds' backs to throw feathers at coworker. Worker then hangs birds roughly in shackles and hits several with a hammer-fist to force them deeper into the shackles.

Incident 43: April 7, 2015 (Multiple Instances); Video 23:29-23:32

Worker pushes bird. Worker grabs bird who is already in shackles and slams bird forward.

Incident 44: April 9, 2015; Video 24:04-24:08

Worker backhands shackled bird.

Incident 45: April 9, 2015; Video 12:32-12:45

Workers use metal saw to cut off stuck shackles. Birds still on conveyor belt and in shackles below. Sparks fall on birds.

Incident 46: April 9, 2015 (Multiple Instances); Video 25:11-25:53

Worker [REDACTED] slams several shackles with birds in them.

Incident 47: April 10, 2015 (Multiple Instances); Video 25:53-26:49

Line leader, [REDACTED], throw many birds into the shackles one-handed.

Incident 48: April 10, 2015; Video 26:49-26:52

Worker [REDACTED] pushes a shackled bird.

Incident 49: April 10, 2015 (Multiple Instances); Video 26:52-27:00, 13:31-13:41

Worker has an apparent difficult time hanging bird, yanks bird off shackles. Worker slams shackles. Bird goes by several workers hung improperly with the head at the top and nobody corrects.

4. Other Abuse and Neglect

Incident 50: March 25, 2015; Video 30:19-30:30

Bird in shackle ends up on wrong side of guard railing; hits wall as exiting room.

Incident 51 (Witnessed): March 27, 2015

Investigator witnessed worker [REDACTED] punch a bird while he/she was in a shackle. The punch made contact with the bird and he saw the shackle shake following the impact.

Incident 52 (Multiple Instances): March 31, 2015; Video 24:15-24:26

Birds hitting against the partition at the end of the line due to the movement of the conveyor belt.

Incident 53: March 31, 2015; Video 33:32-33:40

Live bird with his/her head caught under a board at the end of one of the conveyor belts. The partition was moved and the bird fell off the conveyor belt onto the floor.

Incident 54: March 31, 2015; Video 34:00-34:14

A shackled bird is caught on the wrong side of a guard railing. This bird was squeezed between the railing and several pipes as the shackles moved across and out of the room.

Incident 55: April 3, 2015; Video 34:34-34:37

A bird goes by whose upper body is stuck on top of the lower bar of the shackles.

Incident 56: April 9, 2015; Video 24:26-24:39

Worker [REDACTED] forcibly opens a bird's mouth and sticks his finger in it.

Incident 57: April 9, 2015; Video 24:39-25:08

Worker [REDACTED] uses shovel to push birds to other side of conveyor belt.

Incident 58: April 9, 2015; Video 25:08-25:11

Worker [REDACTED] presses bird between his hips and conveyor belt.

Incident 59: April 9, 2015; Video 12:53-13:05

One bird with his/her head caught above the bottom bar of the shackle. This should be corrected so the head hangs down, but it was not fixed and the bird exited the room like that.