

Opinions

Find out where your chicken sandwich originated

An environmental viewpoint



Candice Carr
Environmental Columnist

Meat eaters seem more likely to eat a burger from McDonald's than sustainably-raised and humanely-killed local beef. It worries some that there is not a larger demand for good meat like Warren Wilson beef. It seems that there are those that believe that eating animals is wrong and those who feel that it is okay to eat meat but they just don't want to know about how the "dirty work" is done. What is missing is more of the conscious and aware meat-eaters.

A bunch of vegetarians are not going to create the demand for healthy, well-raised animals. A poll

conducted by the Opinion Research Corporation of Princeton, N. J. shows that 93 percent of Americans are opposed to the suffering of animals raised to be our food and 90 percent specifically disapprove of the of the extreme confinement of animals on the massive factory "farms" that produce most of America's meat.

But they are still buying the same old tortured, antibiotic-fed, sad and abused flesh in the supermarket. Increasingly, there are alternatives like Earth Fare, but that is not going to be enough to change the way things are in the industry.

I write this article now because of the newly opened Chick-fil-A on campus. This chain, like all fast food joints, is clearly for people who do not care what they eat, or have no idea and do not want to have an idea of how the animal they are eating lived or died.

Chick-fil-A doesn't have any vegetarian options. Their fries even have beef fat in them. The conscious consumer could not spend money there, given the current realities of the poultry industry. I myself am not opposed to eating meat, although I used to be vegetarian. It is the methods and mass production of the factory farms and slaughterhouses that are so terribly disgusting and sad.

A typical complex consists of three to five long metal warehouses side by side, each packed with birds from floor to ceiling, in cages many tiers high, so that they become covered with one another's fecal matter. A broiler chicken house holds 20,000 birds, while a hen house for egg production holds 80,000-125,000 hens.

Each 16-inch-high cage holds three to nine hens. They do not

have room to spread their wings, and spend their very short lives on wire mesh surrounded by cages of other chickens on all sides, with the lights on in the warehouse 23 hours a day.

Most are in chronic pain for at least the last part of their lives due to extreme genetic selection for weight gain, which gives them bad joints. The extreme confinement is also a factor. All birds are de-beaked to prevent them from pecking at one another. Their feed is laced with antibiotics and pesticides to lessen the flies and consequences of the horrible overcrowding.

Often their own waste is recycled back into their feed, too. The poorly ventilated warehouses often result in deaths, especially if the fans stop working. In a classic example from Union County, N.C., over half a million chickens died in a heat wave.

Sick birds are often either beaten to death with a piece of pipe or just left to suffer and die. Weaker hens are often crushed by larger ones. An operation with 100,000 broiler chickens kills 250 birds a day. The

decomposing remains overflow trash cans and are piled outside the poultry sheds. These carcasses are eventually burned, buried or dropped down feed chutes.

The waste from these houses of torture and death is a huge environmental hazard that kills wildlife and fish as well as leaching into groundwater. Every day, a typical slaughter plant kills over a quarter-million chickens and uses two million gallons of water.

When the level of egg production drops too low to make a profit, all of the birds are slaughtered and sent away to be turned into pet food, chicken soup and feed for animals on fur farms.

Workers in this industry often suffer from pain and limb damage from repetitive motion, and are usually not unionized.

So, we say, what about free-range hens? Well, there are no regulated standards for using that term. Many of those advertising such farms are blatantly lying. Many "free-range" hens spend their lives in conventional battery cages, are force molted and de-beaked.

Force molting is when hens are

deprived of food for days so that they shed all of their feathers and stop laying eggs, in order to drive up the price of eggs. Male chicks are considered useless, and at both factory and "free-range" farms are stuffed into trashcans alive to suffocate, thrown alive into the grinder or sold to laboratories.

When people eat chicken from these factories, they are ingesting the vaccinations the birds have received, the antibiotics, pesticides in the food, not to mention the genetically engineered seed that grew the plants used to make their food.

Many also believe they are eating the bad karma that the meat carries because of the incredible injustice in its life. Animals have emotions. They have the capability to be happy or sad in their life. It is something to take into account.

It might be sort of funny to see the cow with the "Eat more chikin" sign, but the reality of the industry will sure wipe the smile off.

All of the information in this article is from *United Poultry Concerns (UPC)* and *People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)*.

Letters to the Editor

Practice tolerance

Dear Editor,

My name is Molly de Mattos. I am a junior full of shame directed toward the actions of my peers. I am an athlete and a lesbian, and I am having trouble understanding both sides.

As a thrower for our incredible team, I want to make it clear that I have never felt threatened by my coaches or teammates, and I don't think that will ever change. I have never felt uncomfortable around my fellow athletes as a whole until the incidents that have occurred this year.

Being an athlete at a school with students that don't support sports as much as they should, I try to attend all athletic events to stand behind my colleagues. This year might be different. How can I support a basketball team that has players that don't see me as an equal because of my sexual preference?

On the flip side, I feel ashamed of being an athlete when I am around other students. Most schools see their athletes as examples of the university. They wear their uniforms and jackets with pride. Here, it seems the only people behind sports are some professors, fraternities and sororities and other athletes.

I am proud of my athletic ability, and I am proud that I am not ashamed of my sexuality. So why do I feel so oppressed by my peers? The vandalism in Founders Hall says it all. I am hated as a homosexual to the point where my life is threatened and I am unwanted as a scholar athlete.

I have worked hard my entire life as an athlete to understand who I am as a human being. I am strong in mind and body and I demand respect for both.

I have the honor of throwing with the best throwers in the Big South Conference under the direction of the best throws coach (in my opinion) anywhere. I have stayed quiet about all this foolishness for long enough. We, as a community, as a campus and as human beings must be more open to everyone.

Don't hate me because I am an athlete. Don't hate me because I am a homosexual. Don't hate me because I am not scared of you. To the graffiti people, "fags" won't die and

Cheney a danger

Dear Editor,

Seemingly overlooked in the media evaluation of Dick Cheney is his effect in securing the votes of the extreme right for the Republican ticket. The national press has asked Cheney about his congressional voting record on issues ranging from Head Start to cop-killer bullets. Cheney liberally alters his position on each controversial vote, except his vote against a resolution in favor of freeing Nelson Mandela.

In defending his Mandela vote, Cheney invokes "communism." Mandela a communist? Hardly — then or now. Why does Cheney continue denigrating Nelson Mandela? Because Nelson Mandela is black. Cheney's stance reassures and secures the votes of the bigots and racists of the extreme right.

Cheney creates a buffer between the extreme right and George W. Bush. Thus, Bush frees himself to appeal to fiscally conservative white middle class voters whom otherwise will not tolerate bigotry. With Cheney, Bush gets the vote of the extreme right and finesses the vote of otherwise sensible, kind conservatives. The vote of both groups is essential to his campaign success.

Perhaps the effect of this plan is what Bush means when he talks about "soft bigotry." But in whose cynical lexicon is bigotry ever "soft?"

The bigotry of the Republican party is as masterfully pernicious and present today as it was in 1988 when the elder George Bush invoked Willie Horton, an antic for which the Bush's campaign adviser Lee Atwater later apologized, but Bush never did.

Like father, like son. The fruit doesn't fall far from the tree.

Roy B Conant, President
RC Company, Inc.
Portland, Ore.

Jen Jahnke
Senior, art

Donors needed immediately

Dear Editor,

I have recently had a double-lung transplant (May 20, 2000). I was very grateful to be lucky enough to get a second chance. However, three people who were waiting for new organs were scheduled for their surgery, but all three got cancelled because of lack of blood from donors.

Please consider donating blood anywhere locally around where you live, and please encourage friends or family to donate also.

One donation could save two to four lives. I thank you, and I am sure whoever would receive your blood would be just as thankful, if not more so.

Thank you for your time, and please consider being a donor.

Daniel C. Wine
Hacienda Heights, Calif.

Meal plan issues

Dear Editor,

I have to agree with Sean Clancy's Oct. 12 column "A meal in the life of a college student."

All on-campus students are required to get a meal plan. Mine cost around a thousand dollars. The meal plan covers about four months — approximately \$250 a month.

I spent some time off campus where my monthly grocery budget was \$150 a month, and I ate much better than I ever had on campus. I don't understand why the food is so disappointing in the cafeteria, and it makes me angry that the staff does not seem to care about quality of the food they serve.

It seems that by requiring the on-campus students to pay for the cafeteria food, the school has taken away the accountability of the cafeteria. After all, why listen to the customers if they have to pay whether they like the food or not? Perhaps changing the meal policy of the school would result in a little more attention to customer satisfaction.

Daniel Roberson Holton
Sophomore, undeclared

Thorough article

Dear Editor,

Many thanks for the cogent and thorough article about the course on the death penalty at the College for Seniors. Lauren did a fine job in reporting, and also in melding student opinion with the class speakers and class participation.

It was very refreshing to have two students in our class, and we welcome student members in any of the subsequent classes (2:30-4:30 Wednesdays for the next three weeks). This is a current and controversial topic. Student input is desirable. Thanks again, Lauren.

Ellie Zitin
College for Seniors

Unnecessary use?

Dear Editor,

The choice to reproduce a large picture on the front page with the words "fags will die" disturbs me, to say the least. Have you not empowered the homophobic vandals that have done the graffiti by enlarging and printing it up so that it is the first thing hundreds of people see when they look at the paper?

The words in the picture are larger than any other word or phrase on the page. Was it really necessary to show the graffiti, which we could have all easily pictured in our heads since we have seen its kind before, because you needed to prove that it existed?

Such sensationalism is an abuse of the power of the press. The copy that has been given to LGBT issues in the past few weeks' papers is not fair; it is exploitative of problems on campus. I fail to see how the recent articles have in any way helped the issues. They seem only to have made them worse by increasing the us/them divide that already exists between LGBT and Straight community members.

Why does it take extreme circumstances and controversy for LGBT issues to get press? Is the *Blue Banner's* purpose to inform and raise awareness or is the goal merely to entertain?

Daniel Roberson Holton
Sophomore, undeclared

The Blue Banner welcomes letters and comments regarding the content or quality of this publication. Letters should not exceed 300 words. Letters for publication must also include the author's signature, class standing and major or other relationship to UNCA. All submissions are subject to editing for length and content. The deadline for Letters to the Editor is noon on Tuesday. Please send letters to: The Blue Banner, Karpen Hall 244, One University Heights, Asheville, N.C. 28804, submit a letter via the Blue Banner Online, or e-mail banner@unca.edu.

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