



PHOTO BY KATIUSA CLSAR

Questions arise regarding whether or not meat could truly be labeled as humane.

## Meat cannot claim to be humane under current law

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Rolling through the meat section in the grocery store, some labels catch the consumer's eye by claiming to be "humanely raised meat."

While holding the meat, a carcass of a once living and breathing sentient being, the question arises: What does humane-raised meat even mean?

The United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Safety Inspection Service does not currently have a definition for "humanely raised." This department holds the responsibility of ensuring the accuracy of food labels, yet no clear definition can be found for the label.

The U.S. government provides an ambiguous provision for "humane" killing of animals in the meat industry, which is the Humane Methods of Livestock Slaughter Act. This act focuses on how farms or factory

farms should kill the animals, but does not set guidelines on how to raise animals in a healthy environment.

The vague rules for slaughter established by the act state the slaughter must be "rapid and effective" such as "a single blow or gunshot or an electrical, chemical or other means." This demonstrates how elusive companies can be when choosing a method of slaughter and still be labeled as humane.

A farm worker could shoot a cow in the head with a stun gun, which shoots a bolt into a cow's head, between their eyes, instantly stunning it while the cow is on a conveyor belt and still be considered humane under the HMLS Act. This tends to be one of the most popular methods. Animals could also be electrically stunned and labeled as humane, according to the act. If properly stunned electrically, the animal's body will suffer from a seizure before death. Electric stunners tend to

be used on pigs in farms, according to an article written by Temple Grandin for Colorado State University.

Interestingly, the HMLS Act does not apply to chickens or other birds. Avian animals have no protections or guidelines on how to be killed or kept.

TryVeg, a nonprofit activist organization, reports more than 8 billion chickens are slaughtered annually in the U.S. for consumption. One of the most well known methods consists of shackling chickens upside down while their throats are slit, although some birds miss the blade and instead end up being scalded alive, according to TryVeg. Its website, TryVeg.com, offers videos of such things happening inside farms.

Another method for chicken slaughter consists of stunning the birds by running them through a vat of electrified water, this method considered the most "humane" compared to alternatives. The re-

sults of this stunning do not guarantee every chicken will be properly stunned resulting in some birds being boiled alive.

Videos posted by People for Ethical Treatment of Animals, Mercy For Animals and TryVeg show undercover footage of chickens and turkeys having their heads stomped on, chickens being boiled alive and baby male chicks being ground alive as well. Since birds are not protected under the HMLS Act, this is legally considered humane in the U.S.

The Animal Welfare Institute reports animal welfare and environmental claims such as "sustainably farmed" or "humanely treated" are approved without supporting evidence. Eighty percent of claims by meat producers have no proof.

According to a study by The Humane Society of the United States, 95 percent of the 280 million hens in the U.S. are confined in battery

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