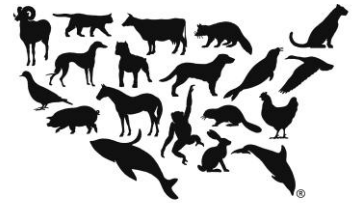


Undercover at Smithfield Foods



THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES

BACKGROUND:

Murphy-Brown is the livestock production subsidiary of Smithfield Foods and is the world's largest pork producer. According to its website, Murphy-Brown owns approximately 888,000 sows and brings a total of 17 million pigs to slaughter annually. The company owns 450 factory farms across 12 states, 275 of which are used for breeding.

For a month at the end of 2010, an HSUS investigator worked inside a Smithfield/Murphy-Brown breeding facility in Waverly, Virginia where more than 1,000 sows suffer in [gestation crates](#)—small, metal crates barely larger than the animals' bodies which virtually immobilize them for every moment of the day.

In January 2007, Smithfield pledged to phase out its use of gestation crates by 2017, but in 2009 the company backtracked on its self-imposed phase out timeframe. Other large pork producers, like Maxwell Foods, don't use gestation crates at all and Cargill is already 50% gestation crate-free.



Blood-coated gestation crates at Smithfield/Murphy-Brown in Waverly

Additionally, seven U.S. states and the European Union have outlawed gestation crates, and New Zealand and Australia are phasing out their use of these restrictive crates as well. Numerous major companies have adopted policies to reduce or eliminate their use of pork from suppliers that use gestation crates, including Burger King, Wendy's, Quiznos, Sonic, Harris Teeter, Safeway, Winn-Dixie, Carl's Jr. and Hardee's.

The three largest fast food chains have expressed concerns about gestation crate confinement: **McDonald's** asserts, "We continue to find evidence that supports our long-standing position to support suppliers who are phasing out sow gestation crates in our supply chain"; **Wendy's** has stated that it "agrees that the recent industry efforts to move away from single sow gestation crates is the right way to go"; and **Burger King** notes, "Our corporate conscience drives our commitment to animal welfare. For almost a decade, we have used our purchasing power to encourage positive steps in ... the production of cage free animal products."

In addition to major companies supporting a phase out of gestation crates and legislation being passed outlawing them, a poll funded by the American Farm Bureau concluded that only 18% of Americans think gestation crates are humane. And a recent 2.5 year [study](#) by Iowa State University found that not using gestation crates can actually *decrease* production costs by up to 11 percent.

SPECIFIC FINDINGS:

The HSUS investigator documented the misery of sows confined in gestation crates, and documented other abuses beyond the extreme crate confinement. Specifically, the investigation revealed the following:

- Breeding sows were crammed inside “gestation crates” so small the animals could barely move for virtually their entire lives. Frustrated by this extreme confinement, sows engaged in “stereotypic” behaviors, which indicate poor welfare, like bar biting and head swaying. Some sows had bitten their bars so incessantly that blood from their mouths coated the fronts of their crates.



Sows develop open wounds from gestation crates

- Sows suffered from open pressure sores and other ulcers and wounds that developed from their unmitigated confinement and their inability to change positions in the crate. Abscesses sometimes formed from simple scratches due to ever-present bacteria. The investigator never saw a veterinarian at the operation. A barn manager told the investigator to ignore a sow with a basketball-sized abscess on her neck, and then cut the abscess open with an unsterilized razor.
- Employees jabbed a lame sow's neck and back with gate rods to force her to move.
- Three times, the investigator informed employees that a pig was thrown into a dumpster alive. The animal had been shot in the forehead with a captive bolt gun, which is designed to render an animal unconscious, and was thrown in the dumpster still alive and breathing.
- Employees mishandled piglets and tossed them into carts.
- Some piglets born prematurely in gestation crates fell through the slats and died in manure pits.

EXPERT OPINIONS:

Although all of the acts of cruelty recorded by The HSUS are indefensible and ought not to have occurred, Smithfield's use of gestation crates represents to most pressing problem from an animal welfare perspective. The practice has been widely condemned by the scientific community. For example:

- Renowned animal scientist **Dr. Temple Grandin** stated, “Gestation crates are a real problem. ... Basically you're asking a sow to live in an airline seat. ... I think it's something that needs to be phased out.”
- **The European Commission Scientific Veterinary Committee** wrote, “Since overall welfare appears to be better when sows are not confined throughout gestation, sows should preferably be kept in groups.”
- **Dr. Bernard Rollin** at Colorado State University has said, “Research has confirmed what common sense already knew — animals built to move must move.”
- **The Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production**—which included the former U.S. Agriculture Secretary—found that gestation crates (and similar extreme confinement systems) should be phased out.

In fact, Smithfield seems to agree. In a [recent annual report](#), the company noted that its 2007 decision to phase out gestation crates by 2017 “was made as a result of the desire to be more animal friendly.” And Smithfield CEO [asserted](#) at the time that phasing out gestation crates is “the right thing to do.”

CONCLUSION:

Especially now that Smithfield had record profits in the 3rd Quarter of 2010, The Humane Society of the United States urges the company to honor its original commitment to phase-out of gestation crates by 2017 at the latest. Further, we hope that Smithfield will develop a timeframe for ending the use of gestation crates at all contract breeding facilities, so that ultimately, no Smithfield pork will come from pigs who were bred under the abusive conditions documented at the Waverly facility.