

# Stop (Saying) Factory Farming

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Advocates fighting for farmed animals should be proud as we have come a long way in educating the public about the horrors of animal agriculture. Just a couple of decades ago, the only soy milk was in powder form; if you wanted a vegan cookie, you had to bake it yourself; and vegans often ventured into restaurants with trepidation for fear of their sanity— and leave hungry. Now, there are vegan chain restaurants and vegan doughnuts alongside national media stories about caged hens, immobilized sows, and overcrowded cows. The fact that animals suffer to produce meat, dairy, and eggs is quickly becoming common knowledge. Vegan is now a household word.

Much of this progress is the result of the strategic denouncement expressed by the powerful term, “factory farming.” For decades, animal activists have inscribed the motto “End Factory Farming” into brochures and splattered “Stop Factory Farming” on protest signs with red letters dripping like blood. This incriminating term conjures images of endless rows of animals in barren cages; filthy, windowless warehouses; and animals suffering and dying on manure covered concrete doors – images that are increasingly familiar and available to us through social media.

The ubiquity of these images and conditions associated with “factory farming” has spawned a pervasive condemnation. Everyone, it seems, can rally together and agree that we must stop factory farming. But this rallying cry has created an unforeseen consequence, one that animal exploiters are taking full advantage of. Producers who sell the flesh and fluids of animals can simply state that their product is *not* factory farmed; it’s organic . . . local . . . humane . . . cage-free . . . (insert any number of misleading labels here). In fact, I have seen websites that state claims like (paraphrasing) “We are against factory farming, buy our pork.” Likewise, when consumers hear these offensive two words, they are now thinking, “Oh, but my meat (or dairy or eggs) isn’t factory farmed, I buy it at Whole Foods” (or “it’s organic,” or “it’s free-range,” etc.).

## WATCH YOUR LANGUAGE

I so often hear farmed animal advocates say, “99% of meat, dairy and eggs are factory farmed.” Again, now a consumer will think that their humanely labeled animal products are the 1% that we have told them is acceptable because it is not factory farmed. Do animal rights activists actually believe that 1% of animal agriculture is somehow pampering the animals with comfortable, relaxed, happy lives where there is no separation of families, no painful body mutilations, and no terrifying slaughter? It is simply untrue. ALL animal farming is “factory” farming. As long as animal bodies are commodified, there is exploitation and suffering.

## DANGEROUS COMMON GROUND

The popular reprobation of the term factory farming has inadvertently created a demand for products labeled with euphemistic terms associated with “alternative, small-scale” animal farming. This was not the initial intention of the term. Many groups originally used the term for the purpose of ending all exploitation and killing of farmed animals, as they do today.

But there has been a shift in the last few years, a shift toward “humane” animal farming, and now everyone, it seems, can get behind ending factory farming: the animal rights activist as well as the consumers and producers of meat, dairy and eggs. This is unintended and dangerous common ground whereby the rhetoric of the animal rights movement has been appropriated by our opposition to promote the very products we seek to condemn. Now when we are denouncing animal products with the term factory farming, we are ironically repeating the marketing slogans of an increasing sector of the meat, poultry, egg and other animal industries.

The term factory farming has come to imply that only the conditions the animals are kept in are of importance, and that taking an animal's life, the slaughter itself, is unproblematic. The marketing experts of the animal farming industry brandish this term to make people believe that as long as it isn't a "factory" or an "industrial" setting, so as long as it's not a mega-size farm, as long as the animal had some kind of minimal improvements, then it's okay to slaughter the animal for the enjoyment of the "conscientious" consumer.

Many organizations want to "end factory farming" but still promote the killing of young animals for human consumption. These organizations support smaller farms with supposedly better conditions, but as I reveal in my books *The Ultimate Betrayal* and *The Humane Hoax*, no label tells the whole story and "alternative" farming can be just as bad and in fact, no different *and even worse* from so-called factory farming for the animals and the environment.

## NOT VEGAN

The term factory farming no longer implies a vegan message. It no longer necessarily suggests a desire to stop the exploitation and killing of farmed animals, and those who work towards this important goal must abandon the term, or we risk inadvertently repeating what has become a marketing slogan of our opposition. Instead, we should be more specific and use the term animal agriculture, animal agribusiness, or simply animal farming. This encompasses all farming of animals. We must be careful to speak in ways that express the truths that all animal agriculture is exploitive, all animal farming is abusive, and there can never be a humane way to breed, confine, and kill animals for their flesh, milk, and eggs. Let's shift our language, and the consciousness around this issue, and push beyond "humane" exploitation. It's time to retire the term factory farming.

What do we want? To Stop Animal Farming! When do we want it? Now!