

Inside the Industrial Turkey Machine

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October 2020

Thousands of turkeys inside a factory farm. The heat causes them to pant. Canada, 2020.



An investigator documents the crowded conditions inside a turkey factory farm.

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In 2019, Canadians ate 6.3 million whole turkeys. We also know that Canadians waste an astounding 40% of our food. In 2019, U.S. consumption of turkey was 5.3 billion pounds. And this number floors me: **656,309,000 turkeys were slaughtered worldwide in 2018.**



It is particularly hot in this building which houses thousands of turkeys. As a result, the turkeys pant and some drool.



One of many turkey carcasses on the floor of a factory farm.



Turkeys crowded inside a factory farm.

I've met rescued turkeys and I absolutely revel in their curious and funny natures. They come running to you for company. They like to talk at you – a lot. If only we knew precisely what they were saying! We do know they have easily distinctive and understood calls: the gobble, the spit and drum, the cackle, the warning yelp, the purr. My favourite interactions with turkeys are when they let me stroke the feathers on their abdomen and under their wings. They love it, and start to preen themselves with pleasure.



A member of a crew of investigators and filmmakers documents the animals and conditions inside a turkey factory farm. The turkeys at this farm are bred for the plate. They are massive and hobble awkwardly under their weight. These birds don't get to walk much at all, being so packed into these warehouses. And unlike their wild counterparts, they can no longer fly. In fact they can't even mate naturally thanks to their genetic alterations and massive size. Did you know that the males must be masturbated – by us – and the females artificially inseminated?

You'll see how dusty and unclean these warehouses are in the photographs. I can't bring myself to call them farms. They are industrial machines. Production facilities. You'll see the deaths, cramped confinement and injuries. What you can't see is the heat. Poor ventilation in these warehouses leads to the birds panting and drooling.

It's a nightmarish way to exist for any living being.



Investigators document thousands of turkeys inside a factory farm.



A turkey suffering from bumblefoot.

I face these animals, and think about how we expect them to surrender their very lives so that we can give thanks around a table. I also think about how we scrape our uneaten food into the bin, and wonder how much turkey will end up as the 40%.

Thanksgiving is just around the corner.

Simply, I would like to make a proposal: **Will you give thanks this year without the killing?**



An investigator illuminates a dumpster filled with eggs and dead turkeys at a turkey factory farm.