

The Final Ride: Horrifying Truths about Farmed Animal Transport

From [Chelsea Pinkham, Animal Place Sanctuary](#)

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The lives of animals on commercial farms are horrendous. But one of the most horrendous parts of animals' lives on farms occurs just before they are killed. It's the suffering they face on the transportation trucks that haul them to slaughter. And new numbers are showing that the death tolls on these trucks are higher than we could have ever imagined.



A pig finds themselves on the truck to slaughter. Pigs are highly stress-prone animals, and the most common cause of pig death in transport is heart failure.

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A new Guardian [investigation](#) analyzed publicly available data to find that over 20 million farmed animals die during transportation in the United States every year. **And these are only the reported cases.**

20 million chickens, 330,000 pigs, and 166,000 cattle were reported as dead on arrival or soon after they arrived at slaughterhouses in the US every year. 800,000 pigs (over 2,000 pigs per day) were listed as “downed” upon arrival to slaughterhouses. This means the animals were too sick, injured or weakened to walk to their own deaths. ***So how does this happen?***

It all starts with numbers. The animal agriculture industry has transportation down to a science. Instead of “how can these animals be transported safely,” the question is, “How many animals can fit on a single truck without undergoing substantial loss of product (animal lives)”?

If as many animals as possible can be crammed into a single transport truck and only a small percentage of lives are lost, farms will still see more profit than if a small handful of animals were transported and all arrived safely. ***The number of***

animal deaths while still yielding a profit are known as “acceptable losses”. For chickens, this number typically falls around 0.2%. When you consider that around 9 billion chickens are slaughtered in the U.S. every year, these numbers are astronomical.



“Acceptable loss” of chickens in transit is around 0.2% for the industry.

So how do these deaths occur? Catching and loading are the beginning of an animal’s stressful journey to slaughter. Mammals like cows, pigs, sheep and goats are typically rounded up into small pens and forced upward onto truck ramps. For animals who’ve been handled minimally during their lives, this is very frightening. Electric prods are common in forcing animals to move forward and up the ramps. Shouting, clapping, and waving flags can also be used to frighten animals into entering the trucks.



Turkeys are heavy birds with fragile legs. Injuries occur easily when turkeys are loaded roughly.

For birds, this process is even worse. Chickens and turkeys are caught by “bird catchers”, farm employees whose sole job is to load birds into transportation crates. These employees are often paid “per piece” rather than per hour. This means that the faster they load the birds, the higher their hourly rate becomes. Birds are lifted by the legs, often several birds being

carried by a single person. This careless handling can break sensitive legs. Birds whose legs are stuck in the plastic grating can be injured upon loading.

For so many animals raised on commercial farms, the day they are loaded onto the trucks to slaughter is the *first day they see the sun*. This is extremely overwhelming. **Can you imagine a pig who has spent her entire life in a metal stall too small to turn around, suddenly surrounded by other pigs, shouting human voices, a loud diesel truck engine, and the bright sunlight? When this truck pulls onto the highway, can you imagine the sudden feeling of motion, the deafening sound of cars whizzing by, and the tumbling into other confused animals?**

If this scene would be overwhelming for a human, an animals' experience would be tenfold. Animals' senses such as hearing, sight and smell are incredibly powerful. They make stressful experiences far more impactful. **Death by stress is not uncommon in many animals.**

For the animals unfortunate enough to survive the loading process, the grueling journey now begins. In the United States, mammals can be transported for up to [28 hours straight](#) with no food, water or rest. *This law doesn't even apply to birds.* **Worst of all, an exemption can be provided with nothing more than a written letter of permission.**

Shockingly, there is not a single law in the United states to protect farmed animals from extreme weather conditions during transportation. *In the eyes of the industry, business must continue as usual.* Mortality rates increase during rainy season and extreme heat events. **But as long as deaths stay in the "acceptable loss" range, the industry does not fret.**

In many states, it's illegal to leave a dog in a car on a hot day. So why is it acceptable to force farmed animals through such extreme suffering?

The [most common causes of death](#) of cows on transport journeys are heatstroke, physical trauma and respiratory diseases. For pigs, it is heart failure, caused directly by stress. Animals who survive this unimaginable ordeal arrive directly at the slaughterhouse where they will be killed.

We believe that this is unacceptable. *We believe that animals deserve better.*

We ask that you keep the suffering of farmed animals in mind when making food choices. A plant-based diet is easier and more convenient than ever. *The easiest way to help animals is to stop eating them.*



Sheep are prone to stress and overheating. The ride to slaughter is brutal and dangerous for them.

To learn more about the cruelty behind animal agriculture, we invite you to see our immersive experience, the virtual Museum of Animal Farming. [Click here to launch the museum now.](#)