

Foie Gras: Cruel to Ducks and Geese



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Foie gras – or “fatty liver” – is made from the grotesquely enlarged livers of ducks and geese. The birds are force-fed until their livers swell to as much as 10 times their normal size. Force-feeding begins when the birds are about 12 weeks old. Ducks continue to be force-fed for 12 to 15 days and geese for 15 to 21 days. During this time, geese are usually confined to pens or group cages and ducks are often crammed into individual cages which are so small that the birds cannot even stand up or stretch their wings.

Two or three times per day, the birds are restrained while up to 2 kilos of grain and fat are forced down their throats with an auger in a feeding tube. The massive amounts of food can rupture the birds' internal organs, and regular insertion of a feeding tube damages their oesophagi, making each force-feeding more painful than the last. Their grossly swollen, fat-laden livers cease to function normally, allowing toxins to build up in their systems causing further sickness and distress (the liver effectively serves as the body's sewage treatment plant). Many birds suffer from skeletal disorders, respiratory problems and other serious illnesses.

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Force-Fed to Death

Barrels overflow with birds who died from force-feedings.

Birds' necks are sometimes punctured by the feeding tube.



At a farm that PETA US investigated in New York's Hudson Valley, so many ducks died when their internal organs burst from overfeeding that workers who killed fewer than 50 per month were given a bonus. Similar abuse has been found during investigations of European farms.

"My view on the production of foie gras is clear and supported by biological evidence. This practice causes unacceptable suffering to these animals."

– Christine Nicol, Professor of Animal Welfare, Bristol Veterinary School, University of Bristol

In addition to ruptured stomachs and liver disease, many ducks suffer from foot infections, kidney necrosis, spleen and kidney damage, bruised and broken bills and tumour-like lumps in their throats. One duck had a maggot-infested neck wound that was so severe that water spilled out of it when he drank. Because male ducks' livers grow larger than those of females, only males are used by the foie gras industry. Female hatchlings are thrown alive into electric mincers.

Foie gras production is so cruel that it is prohibited in more than 15 countries, including the UK and Ireland. High-profile stores such as Selfridges, Harvey Nichols and House of Fraser have removed foie gras from their shelves, and Prince Charles has banned foie gras from Royal menus. Celebrity chef Wolfgang Puck refuses to sell foie gras, as do many restaurants and all major supermarkets.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Never buy foie gras. Urge restaurant owners, gourmet food shops and caterers to sell vegan pâté instead.
- Contact PETA for more information on undercover investigations of foie gras farms.

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