

# PETA and KFC

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May 5, 2003

Jonathan D. Blum, Senior Vice President  
Yum! Brands, Inc.

5 pages via fax: 502-874-8315

Dear Mr. Blum:

Thank you for your May 1 fax describing KFC's new animal welfare program. I appreciate your keeping PETA apprised of your plans and hope that you will continue to do so. I attempted to call you to discuss the practical implications of your news release.

Let me be perfectly frank. Although we hope that the National Council of Chain Restaurants and Food Marketing Institute (NCCR/FMI) guidelines will address the areas of most egregious abuse, we must disagree with your assertion that the new standards discussed in KFC's news release are "substantive and comprehensive." Of course, if the FMI/NCCR guidelines address our eight key issues, your pledge to implement them internationally, with announced and unannounced audits and a reasonable plan to sanction violations, will certainly end our campaign.

However, your news release causes us to worry that the FMI/NCCR guidelines for chickens will fall far short of the science on the issue of farmed-animal welfare. Specifically, we have a number of serious concerns about the guidelines that Yum! has publicized thus far, as well as about your request that the government review PETA's gas killing proposal. Allow me to elaborate.

First, since your panel includes seven people, your assertion that three of your advisors have approved these standards seems to mean that only the two panel members representing the chicken slaughter industry, which has thus far claimed, at every turn, that there were no problems to address, and one other, presumably not among the four animal welfare experts recommended by PETA, are going along with this. As you know, four of the five animal welfare experts on your panel have published studies, developed animal welfare standards, or made public statements that support the changes requested by PETA. Our enquiries indicate that at least three of the animal welfare experts cited in paragraph two of your news release and prominently on your Web site were not even consulted about these "new guidelines."



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KFC seems to view animal welfare as a public relations issue and not a substantive concern that must be addressed using the best research available. We suspect that you may even be considering disbanding your animal welfare panel, since its members have not been asked by KFC to meet at all this year and you did seem only to have consulted the chicken-industry members when making these decisions. Since the science of factory-farmed animal welfare is rather new and constantly evolving, it would be a terrible mistake to stop analyzing the science and considering improvements.

In the area of gas killing, for example, your panel of recognized animal welfare experts agrees that gas killing is indeed the most humane method of slaughter for chickens. Your request that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Department of Labor review PETA's gas killing proposal is confounding, primarily because some of the world's foremost experts on bird welfare are on your own animal welfare panel and it is they who have told us that gas killing is the most humane method of slaughter and that it poses no carcass-quality concerns (and is, in fact, better for carcass quality than present methods). As for worker-safety concerns, any familiarity at all with the technology (or our report), would have abated them.

This method, in fact, would remove workers from the blades and stun baths that injure so many of them and would also save them from many of the repetitive stress and motion disorders that plague poultry shacklers. None of this requires review; this is the latest science, which Yum! has been claiming to be studying for the past two years. Finally, as Bruce Friedrich mentioned in an emergency e-mail message to you after he spoke with the AP about your statements on the issue, carbon dioxide killing, although clearly preferable to current methods, is not a humane method of slaughter and is not the method recommended in our report, which is the report that your news release says you are submitting for review.

PETA's proposal, which has been in your possession for two years now, is based on the scientific research of panel member Dr. Ian Duncan, who knows much more about gas killing than any USDA representative. Dr. Temple Grandin, your lead panelist, has told the Associated Press and PETA that gas killing poses "no problem at all in terms of meat safety." Dr. Mench, the foremost U.S. expert on humane treatment of chickens, also agrees that gas killing, using a nitrogen or argon and oxygen blend, is the most humane method of killing birds. However, none of these experts, nor the other member of your panel who has shown a real interest in bird welfare (i.e., Ms. Douglass), was consulted about your requests to the USDA. Why KFC would bypass its own experts in favor of going to a government body that is widely known to be dominated by industry groups and notoriously slow to embrace new developments is confusing at best, suspicious at worst.



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Furthermore, the Senate and House Agricultural committees, with whom you have suggested an interest in meeting, are not experts in the field of animal welfare and have never issued an opinion or submitted a bill or done anything else that would in any way help farmed chickens. They also have no administrative authority over slaughterhouses.

In addition to your own panelists, Dr. Raj Mohan from Bristol University in England, who has studied gas killing technology more than anyone else in the world, has told PETA (just this past Friday) that he would be willing to work with Yum! to implement humane gas killing and to disabuse you of any concerns that you might have. Additionally, it has come to our attention that a U.S. chicken company, Gold 'n' Plump Poultry, is presently using gas killing to kill chickens in a manner similar to PETA's proposal. The only obstacle to the implementation of this technology by Yum! is the will to do so.

To summarize: If you believe that there are any obstacles to implementing gas killing technology on the scale required by KFC, the world's foremost experts in poultry welfare stand ready to assist you. This is the very least that KFC can do if it expects to be taken seriously on the issue of chicken welfare. As you are also under attack by human rights organizations because of the treatment of migrant workers and others, you only stand to gain by implementing a system that is also so much kinder to slaughterhouse workers.

As for the guidelines that you have issued, to say that they are "substantive" is inaccurate, based on what you shared in your news release. As released this past Thursday, not one of the guidelines proposed has a single number or statistic attached to it, and not one calls for a single specific improvement in the life of a single animal. For example, Guideline D, "Appropriate Comfort and Shelter," states, "Animals should be housed in shelters that are clean, comfortable, well-ventilated, and protective. Temperature, humidity, ammonia levels and physical surroundings should all be maintained so as to minimize discomfort and injury to the birds." Were you to follow the latest science on farmed animal welfare, this would be significant; but based on the Chicken Council and KFC's assurances all along that nothing was wrong, forgive us for wondering whether you actually will.

So, how many parts per million of ammonia will KFC allow chickens to breathe? How much space will KFC require for each bird? What temperature will KFC require? And what will KFC do when suppliers fail audits? These are just a few examples of the unanswered questions surrounding these supposedly "substantive" guidelines.

It appears, too, that these "guidelines" apply only in the U.S. We'll be the first to praise KFC for implementing the latest science in the U.S. when it does so, but there must be a pledge to extend the guidelines worldwide. More than half of the 730 million chickens killed for KFC each year are killed overseas, as



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you know and as we have discussed, and even if these new guidelines were significant, they would do nothing for that large number of KFC animals. When KFC does adopt “substantive and comprehensive” guidelines, it must phase them in internationally. Otherwise, they will solve only a portion of the problem.

With all that said, allow me to restate the eight recommendations that PETA has for KFC; if the FMI/NCCR guidelines address these issues, your pledge to implement them will end our campaign. Keep in mind that these are specific, science-based guidelines that will make concrete improvements in the lives of birds. These recommendations are as follows:

- Replace electrical stunning and throat slicing with gas killing, in accordance with the latest science, as discussed above. Experts agree that gas killing causes less suffering for birds than KFC’s present method of snapping chickens’ legs into metal shackles, slicing their throats open, and sending them to the scalding tank, often while they are still conscious.
- Install cameras in slaughterhouses to enforce humane standards. Cameras should be installed at key points for animal handling, including unloading areas, the point of entry into the “stun” bath, the point of entry into the scalding tank, and places where chickens have their throats slit. Our recent report of sadistic cruelty in the Tyson plant at Grannis makes this all the more imperative.
- Switch to humane mechanized chicken-gathering. Studies have shown that when using manual methods, there are four times as many broken legs, more than eight times as much bruising, and increased stress.
- Use genetic selection for leaner and less aggressive birds. Breed leaner, healthier, and less aggressive birds instead of breeding the biggest, fattest birds possible. The welfare implications of fast-growing, aggressive birds are discussed in our report on broiler breeders.
- Stop forcing rapid growth and using drugs for nontherapeutic purposes. This results in more metabolic disorders, painful chronic lameness, and an increased mortality rate.
- Give broiler and breeding chickens more living space. Presently, bird fatality and injury rates are enormous, based in part on the fact that the birds simply do not have enough space to survive. Experts agree that increased living space would decrease these problems.
- Include sheltered areas and perches in chickenhouses. This would enhance the birds’ living space, give the animals some exercise, reduce stress and aggression, and allow them to engage in some of their natural behaviors.
- Allow birds the opportunity to fulfill their natural desire for activity. For example, provide the birds with whole green cabbages suspended in the air to peck at and eat. The cabbages stimulate healthy activity, dispel boredom, strengthen leg muscles, and provide nutrients without



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adding to the weight problems of these birds. Providing bales of hay for the birds to peck at and climb on would give similar results.

Until KFC addresses each of these issues and pledges to make improvements on them—not overnight, but within a reasonable time frame—PETA will continue its campaign. Obviously, you could push the entire industry to come along with you by facilitating such changes through the FMI/NCCR standards that are due to be released within weeks.

Again, thank you for staying in contact with us; I hope you will continue to update PETA on animal welfare developments and will continue to make an effort to improve the lives of the animals who are killed for your restaurants.

I will call you within a week to discuss the points in this letter at greater length.

Sincerely,

Steven J. Gross, Ph.D.  
Consultant

cc: Cheryl Bachelder, President, KFC  
David Novak, CEO, Yum! Brands  
Bruce Friedrich, Director of Vegan Outreach, PETA  
Temple Grandin, Ph.D., Colorado State University  
Adele Douglass, American Humane Association  
Joy Mench, Ph.D., University of California, Davis  
Ian Duncan, Ph.D., University of Guelph  
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