

## **What the Investigator Saw**

### Eyewitness Testimony From PETA's Investigation Into a Pilgrim's Pride's Chicken Slaughterhouse

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PETA's investigator spent eight months at a Pilgrim's Pride chicken slaughterhouse in Moorefield, W. Va., and documented hundreds of acts of egregious cruelty to animals. The following are excerpts from the investigator's affidavit:

- "I was employed as a live hanger in the receiving room, also referred to as the 'hang pen.' I worked daily from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. alongside eight other live hangers. ... Our job was to pick up live chickens from the conveyor belt and secure the legs of these chickens in shackles hanging above the conveyor belt, which transport the fully conscious animals to the 'kill room.'"
- "On a daily basis, there were instances in which too many chickens were dumped from the crates to the conveyor belt at the same time. Sometimes, this would cause animals at the bottom of the pile to suffocate. Other times, the live hangers, frustrated by the unmanageable number of birds, would discard live chickens from the line by haphazardly throwing them against the wall of the hang pen or onto the floor. On other days, the conveyor belt was set to move too quickly, and therefore, live chickens were discarded in the same indiscriminate manner described above. Management rarely made any effort to reduce the numbers of birds entering the hang pen or to slow the speed of the conveyor belt. ... In some instances, live chickens were discarded in the manner described above, in part, merely to create extra work for an unpopular person who had been assigned to [pick them up]."
- "The chickens who were discarded and not picked up from the floor and shackled were thrown into a large bin, or hopper, located just outside the door to the hang pen. Often, the chickens were still alive when tossed into the hopper, and as a result, I witnessed many instances in which chickens were suffocated as the hopper filled with bodies."
- "During my employment, I witnessed and recorded on video *hundreds* of instances of behavior by the live hangers that can be described not only as intentionally and unnecessarily cruel to the chickens, but also as the actions of depraved individuals with violent tendencies. Simply stated, the workers abused the chickens as a means to alleviate boredom or vent frustrations."
- "On the morning of November 13, 2003, approximately 150 to 200 live chickens were slammed against the wall by [numerous employees]. After we returned from a half-hour lunch break, many of the birds were still alive."
- "On November 17, 2003, [an employee] twisted the neck of a live chicken until the head popped off; he then used what remained of the bloodied body of the chicken to write graffiti on the wall."
- "On November 17, 2003, [an employee] intentionally squeezed two live chickens so hard that feces squirted out of them. [He] directed the feces into the eyes of seven other live chickens, exclaiming, 'They shit all over us every day.'"

- “On November 17 and December 19, 2003, and January 29, 2004, [an employee] used a concrete-filled coffee can to crush live chickens, and the chickens did not die instantaneously.”
- “On December 22, 2003, [an employee] placed a live chicken on the floor and jumped on the bird; the bird exploded under his weight, and her intestines were visible.”
- “On January 7, 2004, [two employees] used a live chicken as a football, repeatedly ‘punting’ her against a wall.”
- “On January 7, 8, and 13, 2004, [an employee] used a rubber hose to beat live chickens.”
- “On January 14, 2004, [an employee] plucked feathers from live chickens in order to make ‘snow.’”
- “On January 28, 2004, [an employee] placed three live chickens on the floor and then, in turn, jumped on each of them, causing the birds to explode, while exclaiming, ‘I like to hear the popping sound they make.’”
- “On February 10, 2004, [an employee] used a can of red spray paint to spray paint into the mouths and eyes of live chickens.”
- “On April 9, 2004, [an employee] placed a latex glove over the head of a live chicken and watched as the chicken gasped for air and then died.”
- “On April 9, 2004, [an employee] picked up a live chicken and intentionally broke off the top section of her beak by pulling the beak up toward her head.”
- “[O]n April 13, 2004, [an employee] was frustrated because three seasoned live hangers were not present and there were two new employees. As a result, operations that day were not smooth, and as an expression of anger and irritation, [he] began to punch live chickens as they passed by him on the conveyor belt and in the shackles; [he] also intentionally broke the wing of one chicken.”
- “On April 27, 2004, [an employee] beat live chickens with a heavy metal rod.”
- “During the eight-month term of my employment. . . [my supervisor] visited the receiving room once or twice daily and had direct knowledge of both the inappropriate methods used to handle and kill the birds and the use of birds to tease and ‘amuse’ the live hangers. [My supervisor] not only witnessed many of these acts (as well as the blood-drenched walls and floor that could only be attributed to the abuse), but also condoned them, as evidenced by his instruction to the live hangers on April 23, 2004, when he ordered: ‘Don’t kill the birds in the improper way, because we have inspectors here today.’”
- “In addition to the acts of intentional cruelty noted above, I witnessed and documented severe lesions on the feet of chickens. I observed this condition on a daily basis. These lesions—ammonia burns—develop when birds are raised in densities that are too high, with poor-quality litter and inadequate ventilation. While the company acknowledged the severity of the problem as early as September 10, 2003, in the minutes of the monthly meeting held for employee representatives and management . . . the birds continued to arrive at the plant with severe burns throughout my employment.”