



Instructor Introduction

The Story Behind Factory Farming (Grades 6-8)

Students will learn about factory farming, including the history of the industry, the concerns for the health and welfare of animals raised for food, and the impact of factory farming on human health and the environment. Students will learn that consumers educated about factory farming have the power to make healthier and more humane choices for themselves. Students will assimilate their findings into a final project designed to share with the public and help educate the community.

Excerpts from the MSPCA's *Statements of Belief*:

“The Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals believes that farm animals are creatures of intrinsic value, complexity and dignity. The MSPCA further believes that the billions of animals raised each year in the United States for food, clothing, and other products are entitled to live their lives free of unnecessary pain, suffering and stress, as well as to a humane death.

While the MSPCA recognizes the need to find economic and efficient means of raising livestock, the Society condemns those practices--many of which are associated with intensive confinement systems--that cause needless pain, suffering and stress to the animals involved.

The MSPCA believes, instead, that good animal husbandry should be based on humane stewardship of livestock. The Society believes the humane ethic should be applied to all farm animals.”

Educating students about factory farming empowers them with knowledge to make healthier and more humane consumer choices for themselves and their family. The goal of this lesson is NOT to convince students to become vegetarian or vegan, but to consider all aspects of the factory farming industry when choosing their foods. There are many smart choices consumers can make to help raise awareness about factory farming practices, therefore facilitating positive change within the industry, such as:

- eating less meat, eggs, and dairy
- choosing free-range and organic meat, eggs, and dairy
- supporting local farmers by choosing their products
- educating others about factory farming practices and the available alternatives
- choosing to adopt a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle

The MSPCA believes that the most successful strategies to facilitate change are carried out through education with a respect for others and the law. We understand that there are organizations and individuals who condone unlawful activities and use shock as their primary means of teaching others about inhumane practices. As an organization, the MSPCA believes that the best and most successful strategies are respectful.

Humane Education Lesson Plans

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Lesson Introduction

- 1) Animal welfare
- 2) Human health
- 3) Environmental health

More and more consumers are becoming aware and increasingly concerned with how farm animals are treated. Industrial type farm settings, commonly referred to as factory farms, have replaced traditional, more natural farm settings in order to produce the highest output at the lowest cost. While there is a need to find economic and efficient means of raising livestock, animal welfare organizations oppose practices which cause needless pain, suffering and stress to the animals involved.

Animal welfare

Factory farms use crates and cages that either totally isolate individual animals from others or crowd many animals together in order to save space. Factory farms are also characterized by the manipulation of diet in ways that interfere with the animal's good health. One example of this is adding Vitamin D to an animal's diet so that it can live without sunlight exposure. Often, animals are handled in stressful or injurious ways. Many surgeries are performed without the use of anesthesia, such as clipping the beaks of hens so that they don't peck each other when confined in cramped cages. Selective breeding practices, which produce characteristics desired by farmers, often increase animal suffering. This happens when animals, including broiler hens and pigs, are bred to gain weight at such a fast rate that most cannot walk or stand.

Human health

While there are undoubtedly nutrients in animal-derived foods that are beneficial to the human diet, the majority of Americans consume more meat, eggs, and dairy than is necessary to sustain health. In fact, the typical American diet is so high in fat, cholesterol, and sodium that we have some of the highest incidences of heart disease, osteoporosis, diabetes, and cancer in the world. Simply decreasing the amount of animal product in our diets would increase health and lessen the need for factory farming as an industry.

Another concern regarding factory farming in terms of human health is the overuse of antibiotics and artificial growth hormones. To keep animals from getting sick when living in overcrowded and unhealthy conditions, farmers sometimes pre-treat them all with antibiotics. With repeated exposure to an antibiotic, its effectiveness is decreased. Artificial growth hormones are sometimes used as well, to increase the rate at which an animal gains weight and body mass. These antibiotics and growth hormones are absorbed by our bodies when we consume meat, eggs, or dairy from animals treated with them.

Overcrowded conditions have helped pave the way for several new diseases, including “Mad Cow Disease”, “Avian Flu” and “Swine Flu.” In fact, the unsanitary environment of factory farms has led the general public to be told to expect raw meat and eggs, and unpasteurized dairy, to be contaminated with bacteria, viruses, or parasites.

Environmental health

Because there is such a high demand for animal agriculture, many valuable natural resources have been depleted across the globe. Generally speaking, raising animals for consumption isn't very efficient. The amount of grain that needs to be fed to one cow during its life would feed many, many more people than that one cow would feed. Because the industry is inefficient by nature, the vast majority of grain harvested in the U.S. is fed to farm animals. To create more farmland to grow grain for these animals, many forests, wetlands, and other natural ecosystems and wildlife habitats around the world have been turned into crop and grazing land.

In addition, the waste produced by livestock is extremely high- more than 130 times greater than that produced by humans. This waste has contaminated groundwater, streams and rivers, as well as the ozone layer. The World Health Organization estimates that all forms of transportation combined, world-wide, have a lesser negative impact on the environment than does raising livestock.



Humane Education Lesson Plans

Lesson Title: The Story Behind Factory Farming (Grades 6-8)

MA Curriculum Strands: (depending on depth of research and grade level)

Comprehensive Health Frameworks

Standard 3 NUTRITION: Students will gain the knowledge and skills to select a diet that supports health and reduces the risk of illness and future chronic diseases.

Standard 8 DISEASE PREVENTION AND CONTROL: Students will learn the signs, symptoms, and treatment of chronic and communicable diseases, and will gain skills related to health promotion, disease prevention, and health maintenance.

Standard 12 CONSUMER HEALTH AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: Students will acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to obtain, manage, and evaluate resources to maintain physical and mental health and well being for themselves, their family, and the community.

Standard 13 ECOLOGICAL HEALTH: Students will gain knowledge of the interdependence between the environment and physical health, and will acquire skills to care for the environment.

Standard 14 COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC HEALTH: Students will learn the influence of social factors on health and the contribution of public health, and will gain skills to promote health and to collaborate with others to facilitate healthy, safe, and supportive communities.

Science Frameworks

Biology 6-8 (Changes in Ecosystems Over Time)

17. Identify ways in which ecosystems have changed throughout geologic time in response to physical conditions, interactions among organisms, and the actions of humans. Describe how changes may be catastrophes such as volcanic eruptions or ice storms.

18. Recognize that biological evolution accounts for the diversity of species developed through gradual processes over many generations.

Earth and Space Science 9-12 (Energy Resources in the Earth System)

Energy resources are used to sustain human civilization. The amount and accessibility of these resources influence their use and their impact on the environment.

Social Studies Frameworks

US History II (Industrial America and Its Emerging Role in International Affairs, 1870-1920)

2. Explain the important consequences of the Industrial Revolution. (H, E)

- the growth of big business
- environmental impact

Lesson Summary:

Students will learn about factory farming, including the history of the industry, the concerns for the health and welfare of animals raised for food, and the impact on human health and the environment. Students will learn that consumers educated about factory farming have the power to make healthier and more humane choices. Students will assimilate their findings into a final project designed to share with the public and help educate the community.

Lesson Time:

1-2 class periods to present lesson
2-3 class periods of guided research
2-3 hours independent research
2-3 class periods to synthesize materials and create/
present projects

Materials:

- white board and markers
- list of appropriate books, web pages, and organizations for students to reference
- printed articles for students (optional)
- materials and equipment for creating final projects

Presentation Outline:

Factory farming is a major industry in America, accounting for the vast majority of the meat, milk, and eggs produced in the nation. Factory farming is also responsible for the bulk of waste produced and the hazardous effects on human health and the environment. From the use of antibiotics, growth hormones, and inappropriate feed, many cows, chickens, pigs, and other livestock raised for their meat tend to have questionable nutritional value. Additionally, the industry has questionable standards of care for the animals raised. Many animals are caged in inadequate housing with tight spaces and little to no daylight exposure. Despite all this, factory farming remains a successful industry because the majority of the public is not aware of its harmful effects.

The concerns around factory farming tend to focus around three major issues:

- 1) Animal welfare
- 2) Human health
- 3) Environmental health

This lesson will introduce all students to basic information behind each of these major topics. After a lesson introducing the material, students will be assigned to one of three groups (or several sets of three groups) to learn more in-depth about one aspect of factory farming (the three concerns listed above).

Students will be given a list of appropriate resources, materials, and professional contacts to use as they investigate their theme more closely. After 2-3 class periods of guided research and 2-3 hours of independent research at home, students will assimilate their findings into a project. These projects can include: research article, pamphlet, video-recorded PSA, webpage, poster, kids' book, or short story.

The goal is to create an effective and respectful project with the information they learn, to inform the public about how their consumer choices make a difference.

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RESOURCES

Note to Educators: Please be aware that there may be information and images contained in the following resources that might be disturbing to some students. Though we have chosen resources we believe to be the most comprehensive and educational, rather than simply shocking, we ask that you carefully review them and select those that are most appropriate for your students based on their age and maturity level.

Professional Organizations

Farm Aid: www.farmaid.org

Farm Sanctuary: www.farmsanctuary.org

Humane Farm Animal Care: www.certifiedhumane.com

The Humane Farming Association: www.hfa.org

Webpage Articles

American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals: www.asPCA.org/fight-animal-cruelty/farm-animal-cruelty

Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations: www.fao.org/climatechange/49380/en/

Green America: www.coopamerica.org/pubs/realmoney/articles/lessmeat.cfm

Humane Society of the United States: www.hsus.org/farm

Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals: www.mspca.org/advo_faranimals

Sierra Club: www.sierraclub.org/factoryfarms

World Society for the Protection of Animals: www.wspa-international.org/wspaswork/factoryfarming
and www.wspafarmwelfare.org

Articles in the Media –listed chronologically

➤ *The New York Times* (www.nytimes.com)

“Humanity Even for Nonhumans” By Nicholas D. Christoff (April 9, 2009)

“As More Eat Meat, a Bid to Cut Emissions” by Elisabeth Rosenthal (December 4, 2008)

“The Barnyard Strategist” by Maggie Jones (October 26, 2008)

“Kosher Wars” by Samantha M. Shapiro (October 12, 2008)

“Rethinking the Meat-Guzzler” by Mark Bittman (January 27, 2008)

“Our Decrepit Food Factories” by Michael Pollan (December 16, 2007)

“Trying to Connect the Dinner Plate to Climate Change” by Claudia H. Deutsch (August 29, 2007)

“Being Nice to the Bacon, Before You Bring It Home” by Paul Vitello (April 1, 2007)

➤ *The Boston Globe* (www.boston.com/bostonglobe)

“Going Native” by Erica Noonan (Feb 21, 2008)

“To Get to the Other Side” by Diana Burrell (Jul 25, 2007)

Research Papers –listed chronologically

“Eating our Future: The Environmental Impact of Industrial Animal Agriculture” by the World Society for the Protection for Animals, 2008

www.wspa-usa.org/download/140_eating_our_future_nov_08_.pdf

“Putting Meat on the Table: Industrial Farm Animal Production in America” by The Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production, 2008

www.pewtrusts.org/uploadedFiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/Reports/Industrial_Agriculture/PCIFAP_FINAL.pdf

“Livestock’s Long Shadow” by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, 2006

www.fao.org/docrep/010/a0701e/a0701e00.htm

“Diet, Energy, and Global Warming” by Eshel and Martin, University of Chicago, 2005

hope.simons-rock.edu/~geshel/papers/nutri/nutri3.pdf

Books

[Animal Liberation](#) by Peter Singer

[Animal, Vegetable, Miracle](#) by Barbara Kingsolver

[Dominion: The Power of Man, the Suffering of Animals, and the Call to Mercy](#) by Matthew Scully

[The Ethics of What We Eat: Why Our Food Choices Matter](#) by Peter Singer and Jim Mason

The Face on Your Place: The Truth About Food by Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson

Farm Sanctuary: Changing Hearts and Minds about Animals and Food by Gene Baur

Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal by Eric Schlosser

The Omnivore's Dilemma by Michael Pollan

The Pig Who Sang to the Moon by Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson

Righteous Porkchop: Finding a Life and Good Food Beyond Factory Farms by Nicolette Hahn Niman

Slaughterhouse: The Shocking Story of Greed, Neglect, and Inhumane treatment Inside the US Meat Industry by Gail Eisnitz

So You Love Animals by Zoe Weil

Videos and Film

“Babe” – 1995

“Charlotte’s Web” – 2006

“Death on a Factory Farm” – HBO Documentaries, 2009

“Fast Food Nation” – Fox Searchlight, 2006

“Food, Inc.: How Factory Farming Affects You” – 2009

“The Meatrix” series (www.themeatrix.com) – 2003

“Pig Business” – 2009