



Animal Welfare Institute

900 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, Washington, DC 20003 • www.awionline.org
telephone: (202) 337-2332 • facsimile: (202) 446-2131

April 2, 2010

Mr. Jim Perdue
Chairman, CEO
Perdue Farms, Inc.
31149 Old Ocean City Rd
Salisbury, MD 21804-1806

Dear Mr. Perdue:

I write on behalf of the Animal Welfare Institute (AWI), a national non-profit organization working to alleviate animal suffering since 1951. AWI demands that Perdue cease false and misleading advertising and labeling claims that certain of its chicken products are “Humanely Raised” or “Raised Cage Free.” Through such claims, Perdue seeks to convince consumers that Perdue raises its chickens under animal care standards that exceed the typically abysmal quality of care prevalent in the conventional chicken industry. Perdue’s lip service to humane treatment, by way of these nearly meaningless claims, is merely an attempt to lure the growing number of consumers who seek a better alternative to factory-raised chicken.

“Humanely Raised”

On February 17, 2010, Perdue Farms, Inc. announced the introduction of product packaging bearing the term “Humanely Raised” alongside the “USDA Process Verified” shield for release in grocery stores. The “Humanely Raised” claim blatantly misleads consumers about Perdue’s treatment of the chickens raised for sale under the claim.

Based on publicly available information, Perdue brand chickens are raised according to minimal industry standards for welfare, as devised by Perdue and the National Chicken Council, a private industry group. These standards are not humane under any reasonable consumer understanding of the term, as they are among the least demanding in the industry.

On information and belief, Perdue chickens raised for packaging under the “Humanely Raised” label are confined in windowless sheds with less than one square foot of space per bird. They have no access to fresh air or sunlight during the duration of their lives and are exposed to up to 20 continuous hours of artificial light to further an unhealthy rate of growth. Broiler chickens are bred for rapid growth that allows the birds to be slaughtered at 42 days of age but results in health problems like lameness, heart attack, and even sudden death.

This paltry approach to husbandry satisfies National Chicken Council poultry welfare criteria because it represents conventional industry practice, but it is not what any reasonable consumer

would consider to be humane. These guidelines fail to provide any meaningful improvement upon conventional husbandry.

By placing the term “Humanely Raised” on its packaging and promotional materials, Perdue communicates to consumers that Perdue chicken is, in fact, “humanely raised” as that term is commonly understood. This misleading claim is made all the more powerful by its juxtaposition with the imprimatur of the “USDA Process Verified” shield. Consumers will not understand that the Process Verified shield does not signify an objective determination by USDA that Perdue chicken is produced in a humane manner. USDA does not have a set of independent standards for certifying meat as humanely raised. Rather, the Department has merely verified that Perdue has met the “process” set forth in the poultry industry’s own minimal, so-called animal welfare standards, as devised by the company and the National Chicken Council.

Perdue has demonstrated little transparency with regard to its poultry husbandry guidelines. Perdue’s website states:

Products carrying the Humanely Raised claim are verified to come from birds raised in accordance with the Perdue Farms Poultry Welfare Program, which ensures humane treatment of chickens from hatching through processing. The program is based on the poultry welfare guidelines of the National Chicken Council and Perdue’s own best practices... (<http://www.perdueverifiablygood.com/usda.html>)

Although the National Chicken Council guidelines can be accessed online, Perdue’s own guidelines are not publicly available. Three attempts to obtain these guidelines from Perdue corporate communications and customer service failed to yield a substantive response. Perdue cannot market its product as “Humanely Raised” while preventing consumers from learning the truth about how the company defines “humane.”

“Raised Cage Free”

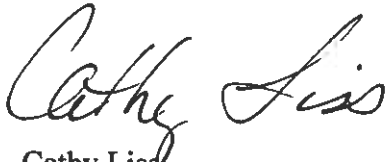
Perdue’s new label and promotional materials also deceive consumers by boasting the term “Raised Caged Free.” Broiler chickens are not and have never been raised in cages under any typical industrial or small-scale production systems in the U.S. Industrial meat birds are predominantly raised in concentrated housing units such as large sheds.

Perdue’s “Raised Caged Free” claim serves no other purpose than to capitalize on the popularity of the “cage free” label for eggs by exploiting the average consumer’s unfamiliarity with modern animal husbandry. The claim, as used by Perdue, implies that the chickens are raised under conditions that exceed the norm, which consumers will interpret to be cages. The term suggests a desirable feature of the product that is, in fact, illusory.

AWI demands that Perdue stop misleading consumers and remove the “Humanely Raised” and “Raised Cage Free” labels from its packaging and promotional material immediately. We encourage Perdue to take meaningful steps toward ensuring the welfare of its chickens. Until then, Perdue must stop obscuring informed choice in the supermarket.

Please reply to the undersigned by no later than April 20, 2010 with a statement indicating Perdue's intentions to comply with this demand. If we do not receive a satisfactory response by that date, we will undertake such further legal actions to protect consumer choice and animal welfare as we believe appropriate under the circumstances.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cathy Liss". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Cathy Liss
President

