

Modern shooting estates: where factory farming meets blood sports



Each year millions of pheasants are purpose-bred to satisfy the bloodlust of recreational shooters. Denied their freedom, the birds lead short, unnatural lives before being blasted from the skies.

Killing animals for fun has no place in a civilised society.

Game Shooting is Fowl Play!



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The pheasant shooting industry keeps no proper records, but it is reliably estimated that around 30 million pheasants are bred to be shot every year.

From cage to carnage

On huge shooting estates in the British countryside, pheasant chicks are reared inside crowded sheds holding hundreds of birds. At a few weeks of age, they are transferred to outside pens that can house many thousands. Here they are fattened up. After being released into the wild, they continue to be fed until the day of the shoot when 'beaters' are employed to scare them into the sky so that they can be used as living targets.



Mutilation

The cramped, unnatural conditions in which they are kept cause the birds to peck at each other through boredom and frustration. In an attempt to reduce the impact of such aggression, gamekeepers fit various devices that limit the

pheasants' vision and prevent them from pecking their cage-mates. These include freakish masks, beak clips and plastic 'specs'. The birds may also have the tips of their beaks burnt or sliced off.

Wildlife at risk

Gamekeepers set traps and snares to kill stoats, weasels, foxes and other natural predators. Birds of prey are sometimes illegally killed. The indiscriminate devices also catch hares rabbits, hedgehogs and even cats and dogs.



The overcrowded cages are a breeding ground for parasites and infectious disease, which can threaten wildlife when the pheasants are released. There are also concerns that the unnaturally large concentration of birds disrupts the balanced ecosystem, puts other species at risk and causes soil erosion and crop damage.

Countless pheasants die from predation, sickness and under the wheels of vehicles before shooters even have a chance to gun them down.

More money than morals

Game shooting is big business. Shooters may pay £1,000 or more per day and kill up to 500 birds - far too many for them to eat. They are killed for pleasure. Many shot birds die slowly from their wounds, unretrieved. Estimates indicate that fewer than half of the purpose-bred birds end up being eaten. A leading country magazine has reported that at the end of a day's shoot, dead birds may be left to rot in specially dug pits.



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