



ASSAULT AND BATTERY

THE NIGHTMARE EXISTENCE OF EGG-PRODUCING 'GAME BIRDS'

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All images taken from video footage by Animal Aid, except where indicated.

SUMMARY

- Scores of thousands of egg-laying pheasants and partridges are confined for the whole of their productive lives in the kind of battery cages that are being outlawed for poultry hens across Europe because they are considered to be inhumane.
- Animal Aid's undercover evidence demonstrates that the caged birds suffer a high incidence of emaciation, feather-loss and back and head wounds. Many of the pheasants lunge repeatedly at their cage roofs in a forlorn attempt to escape. The stress engendered by the unnatural conditions also produces high levels of bird-on-bird aggression. The majority of birds shot for 'sport' in Britain are pheasants – and nearly all of these pheasants are purpose-bred.
- There is no law specifically governing 'game bird' production, only a self-serving industry code of practice. The government – as part of its Animal Welfare Bill proposals – is getting set to adopt this industry code. It would thereby legitimise the most brutal form of factory farming on behalf of an industry dedicated to producing millions of birds every year so that they can be shot down principally for sport. Many shot birds are not eaten.
- Three executive council members of the Game Farmers' Association – the body that maintains the industry's code of practice – are exponents of cages.
- The leading lobby group, the British Association for Shooting and Conservation, has publicly condemned the cages but refuses to name and shame those who use them so that its members can operate a boycott. It even advertises two of the cage users on its website trade directory.
- Animal Aid filmed barren cage units at the following establishments during the 2005 breeding season:

G & A Leisure, Bettws Hall Hatcheries, Bettws Cedewain, Powys
(filmed late April and again in early June)

Heart of England Farms, Henley Road, Claverdon, Warwick (filmed early June).

Hy-Fly Game Hatcheries, Pilling Lane, Poulton-le-Fylde, Lancs
(filmed late April and early June)

Pye Hall Game Farm, Eye, Suffolk (filmed late May)

THEY SAID IT!

'...HARDLY
ANYBODY
EATS THEM'

'Compared with shooting or fishing, foxhunting is a kindly, compassionate sport. Millions of pheasants are bred each year specifically for killing, and thousands of them are wounded rather than killed outright... Pheasants are eatable, but hardly anybody eats them. When did you last see a pheasant on sale at Tesco's? Landowners say they cannot

even give them away, and huge numbers of them end up buried in mass graves.'

Journalist Alexander Chancellor, in the course of describing a day's hunting with his friend, former Daily Telegraph editor, Charles Moore.

The Guardian, December 18, 2004

'The issue of battery-type cage laying systems concerns the very soul of driven shooting. Your readers need to ask themselves if they wish their sport to become an industry and if it is possible to claim that game is "wild, natural and free-range" if it becomes dependent on battery farming.'

**Christopher Graffius, Director of Communications,
British Association for Shooting and Conservation.**

Shooting Times February 10, 2005

'...WILD,
NATURAL
AND FREE-
RANGE?'

'THE ANSWER
IS OBVIOUS...'

'If you don't want the negative publicity spawned by battery cage rearing systems, then the answer is obvious: don't use such methods.'

**Columnist, Alasdair
Mitchell. Shooting Times**

February 10, 2005





INTRODUCTION

A LIFE OF INCARCERATION

Hundreds of thousands of pheasants and partridges killed every year in Britain by 'sport shooters' come from breeding birds who spend their lives in the kind of barren cages that countries across Europe are phasing out for battery hens because they are considered to be inhumane.

The British 'game bird' industry has tried to conceal the scale of cage use and the names of the producers employing the units. But Animal Aid has conducted undercover filming at four businesses where thousands of male and female egg producers are incarcerated in the metal pens. Many of the birds were highly agitated and suffering bloody head and body wounds. Serious feather-pecking was another common feature.

GOVERNMENT SLEEPWALKS INTO GIVING OFFICIAL APPROVAL

Three of the four cage-using companies we filmed are run by members of the Game Farmers' Association's (GFA) executive council. The GFA promotes a Code of Practice that serves as the industry welfare norm – given the absence of any formal legal framework governing how the birds should be treated. This same GFA code may well be adopted by the government under its new Animal Welfare Bill proposals.

Animal Aid first exposed the use of cages for pheasants and partridges when our undercover footage – shot last year at a large-scale game bird producer in Powys, Mid Wales – was shown in November 2004 on national television.

BAD TEMPERED INDUSTRY DEBATE

The scenes of highly agitated and damaged birds provoked an immediate, often bad tempered, debate within the industry. The GFA defended the system, whereas the key shooters' group, the British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC), declared that such units were 'indefensible' and 'incompatible with the values of BASC and the future of gameshooting'. It described the scenes revealed in the Animal Aid footage as 'awful' and 'appalling'.

INTRODUCTION CONT'D

Our new footage demonstrates that the cage system for egg-producing game birds is becoming deeply rooted within the production process. It is also clear that the main cage exponents are using their GFA executive council positions to defend these systems.



G & A PHEASANT WITH CUMBERSOME FACE MASK

FITTED WITH FACE MASKS

The cages – which allow each bird only a fraction of the minimum space formally recommended for breeding birds by BASC – are essentially small metal boxes with a mesh roof and wire mesh floor. They are elevated about one metre from the ground and arranged in long rows. Other than a narrow overhead metal strip, the birds are open to the

elements and are subjected to after-dark artificial lighting in order to extend their laying period.

One male and around eight female pheasants are typically incarcerated in each cage. They are fitted with oppressive face masks in an attempt to limit the aggression engendered by the stressful conditions. Some of these devices are fastened into the nostrils, which – according to the veterinary scientific literature – results in a high incidence of infectious sinusitis.

ILLEGAL MUTILATION

Worse still is a type of mask – used by two of the producers we filmed – that covers much of the front of the face and is held in place by being driven through the birds' nasal septums. This mutilation is against the law with respect to commercial poultry.

The partridges are housed in pairs – one male and one female – inside boxes that are proportionately smaller. One of the producers we filmed operated around 4,000 breeding cages; another had more than 1,600.

INTRODUCTION CONT'D

INJURED AND FEEBLE

Many of the birds – filmed in Suffolk, Lancashire, Warwickshire and Powys – were thin and weak, as well as showing evidence of injury and major feather loss. Their head wounds were caused by repeatedly leaping at the cage roofs in an attempt to escape. We also found numerous dead birds –



HY-FLY PHEASANT DEAD IN HER CAGE

partridges, in particular. We visited two of the establishments twice between the end of April and early June. The birds' condition had deteriorated markedly between the first and second visits.

Less than a month after Animal Aid's November 2004 exposé of battery cage production, the GFA issued a statement insisting that, where 'raised laying units' are used, the GFA 'requires that they should be enriched'. Its definition of enrichment is the provision of a perch, a separate nesting area, Astro Turf over part of the mesh floor and litter in which the birds can scratch.

HYPOCRISY OF THE GAME FARMERS' ASSOCIATION

The statement went on to declare: 'Game farmers using raised laying units who wish to retain the support of the GFA must, by the start of the 2005 laying season, show good intent towards meeting the minimum standards of enrichment set by the association. They must comply fully with these standards by the start of the 2006 laying season.'

None of the units at which Animal Aid filmed in the second half of the 2005 laying season had shown any outward sign of 'good intent' in meeting the 'enrichment standards'. All cages were thoroughly barren – without perches, Astro Turf, or litter. It would appear that those GFA council members operating battery cages have failed to obey the terms of their own edict.

INTRODUCTION CONT'D

FACTORY FARMING FOR THE FURTHERANCE OF 'SPORT' SHOOTING

What should be remembered when following these developments is that the battery cages are used to confine breeding birds, whose offspring will be shot primarily for sport and not food. The government department responsible for food and the environment (DEFRA) is clear on this point (Launch of the Draft Animal Welfare Bill, Annex I, p94, DEFRA July 2004). And even that staunchly pro-hunting organ, *Country Life*, has stated in a main editorial (February 1, 2001) that mass over-production has meant that some shot birds end up being shovelled into the ground in specially dug pits.

The most consistent industry estimates suggest that a maximum of 40% of the roughly 35 million birds released every year in Britain are recovered. An even smaller percentage is actually eaten.

While the GFA has been, in Animal Aid's view, cynical and inept in its handling of the battery cage scandal, the shooters' lobby group, BASC, has been more adroit in its efforts to conceal its own culpability.

SHOOTING LOBBY GROUP DUCKS FOR COVER

The furore caused by the November 2004 screening, by BBC1's *Countryfile* programme, of Animal Aid's battery cage video nasty prompted genuine alarm

within BASC's upper reaches. While intensive production of pheasants has been continuing apace for some years – through the use of industrial hatcheries, crowded fattening sheds and massive 'release pens' – the adoption of metal battery cages is a development, its council recognised, that could not be plausibly defended in public.

There is also a sense that BASC's old self-delusional PR message

© KEVIN HILL



INTRODUCTION CONT'D

(that game production and shooting is natural, wholesome and environmentally enriching), was dealt a devastating blow by Animal Aid's footage of caged-up birds, frantic and bloody, leaping dementedly at the roofs of their metal prisons.

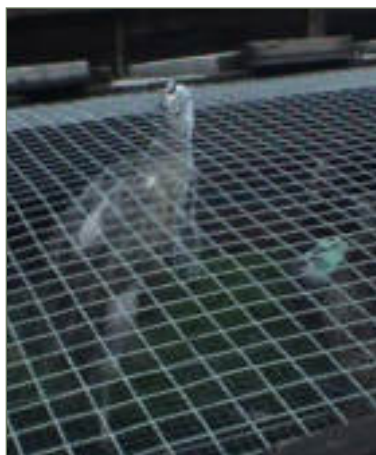
Whatever the reason for, and the extent of, the BASC council's discomfiture, a statement was issued in February 2005 declaring its unequivocal opposition to battery cages. The announcement provoked widespread media coverage – to which the pro-shooting press responded by registering its own embarrassment that another of shooting's dark secrets had been exposed, and by attacking BASC for allegedly lining up alongside Animal Aid against its own community of 'sport shooters'.

GRAND INDUSTRY GATHERING PRODUCES ... SILENCE

Then, in March 2005, BASC brought together the GFA, the Countryside Alliance, the Country Land and Business Association, a representative of the French government (the French having invented the barren cage system for game birds) and representatives of other shooting organisations. Their declared objective was to 'find a way forward'. Since then, no public utterances from them have been heard on the issue.

NAME AND SHAME

Moreover, despite advising its 122,000 members to 'check the provenance' of the birds they kill – or grow on for others to kill – BASC has refused to 'name and shame' the offending producers. In fact, on its own website trade directory, it promotes two of the battery cage operators.



HEART OF ENGLAND PHEASANT ATTEMPTS TO ESCAPE
THROUGH RIGID MESH ROOF.

INTRODUCTION CONT'D



MASKED-UP G & A PHEASANT

THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

DEFRA has indicated that it is also troubled by the earlier evidence on cages that Animal Aid brought forward. It suggests that, at some unspecified time, it might conduct a 'scientific survey' of battery cages. Meanwhile, it is shaping up to adopt the GFA's production code of practice – which contains nothing to discourage their use – as the basis of new laws for game bird production. These will be laid down in an Animal Welfare Bill that is expected to come before parliament in the autumn.

BAN WITHOUT DELAY

Our evidence makes clear that no amount of spin or 'scientific' data manipulation can obscure the fundamental reality about battery cages for 'game bird' production: they are vicious, cruel and indefensible contraptions. They offend and embarrass even shooting's leading representative body. They must be banned without delay.

Animal Aid filmed barren cage units at the following establishments during the 2005 breeding season:

G & Leisure, Bettws Hall Hatcheries, Bettws Cedewain, Powys
(filmed late April and again in early June)

Heart of England Farms, Henley Road, Claverdon, Warwick (filmed early June)

Hy-Fly Game Hatcheries, Pilling Lane, Poulton-le-Fylde, Lancs
(filmed late April and early June)

Pye Hall Game Farm, Eye, Suffolk (filmed late May)

THE CAGES: PHEASANTS

Pheasants selected for breeding in barren cages will live out their whole 'productive' lives of two years inside the containers. Eight to ten females are confined with a single male inside what is essentially a galvanised steel box fitted with a wire mesh sloping floor and a flexible net roof. The ground space of each cage is roughly equivalent to the size of a standard door. The cages are elevated on metal legs about one metre from the ground.



THIS HEART OF ENGLAND MALE PHEASANT IS DEVOID OF BACK FEATHERS AND HAS A RAW HEAD WOUND CAUSED BY LEAPING AT THE RIGID MESH ROOF.

'SCALPING'

The solid sides prevent adjacent cocks from seeing each other and the flexible roofs are intended to minimize damage to the head as the captives – particularly when stirred by the arrival of farm workers – repeatedly leap upwards in an attempt to escape. The raw abrasions caused to their heads by this activity are known in the trade as 'scalping'.

THE CAGES: PHEASANTS CONT'D

NIGHT LIGHTS

The cages are terraced and can cover acres of ground with servicing gaps between rows. Each row shares a common watering system and necklaces of lights to prolong the breeding and laying activity. Eggs roll across the sloping floors to external collecting trays. Hens will normally lay an average of 35 eggs in a season that begins on April 1 and is complete by the end of July. However, the cages' after-hours artificial lighting is likely to boost egg numbers considerably.

A FRACTION OF THE PREVIOUS SPACE ALLOWANCE

Intensive breeding of pheasants and partridges predates the advent of battery cages. But the new elevated box system for breeding birds is markedly more oppressive than the 'traditional' high throughput egg-production units.



The latter comprise a wire-topped grass run with an area in which to shelter. BASC, with such 'traditional' systems in mind, recommends a space allowance per bird of 4.5 square metres. The new battery cages, according to BASC, provide less than a third of one square metre for each bird.

A few weeks before the start of the mating season, the dead and 'spent' birds are replaced and the cycle begins again.

A RAGGED HY-FLY MALE PHEASANT

THE CAGES: PARTRIDGES

While male pheasants are naturally polygamous – with one cock controlling a 'harem' of eight to ten females – partridges pair up and remain monogamous. As a consequence, battery cage operators confine one male and one female to a compartment within a standard cage that has been divided into six walled sections. Whereas, in the wild, partridges choose a mate for breeding, cage operators throw a male and a female together randomly.



HY-FLY PARTRIDGES

RANDOM PAIRING

A French producer we spoke to (their British counterparts were unforthcoming) confirmed that, when one of the paired partridges dies, another is selected to replace him or her.

The Game Farmers' Association chairman claimed in a letter to *Shooting Times* magazine (Tim Robbins, Feb 10 2005) that 'raised pair boxes have been the method of choice for partridge egg production, here and abroad, for several decades'. But this was countered in the same Letters Page by BASC's Director of Communications, Christopher Graffius, who declared that: 'It is wrong to say that a barren 18 inch square metal cage in which two partridges are confined for three years is the same as a traditional partridge box. The latter has a run and a dusting area and laying stock are confined for three months before release into the wild or a large flock pen.'

OPEN TO THE ELEMENTS

Some of the battery cages filmed by Animal Aid had a narrow, overhead metal panel. Other than this minimal protection, the birds – confined to the cages every month of the year – are open to rain, snow, hail and driving wind, as well as to the heat of high summer. Additionally, their feet have no respite from the coarse mesh flooring on which they must stand and through which their waste falls and gathers in a putrid mess on the ground below.



HEART OF ENGLAND



PYE HALL



G & A LEISURE



RY-FLY

THE CLAIMED ADVANTAGES OF THE CAGED SYSTEM

Inevitably, game producers who have adopted the battery cage system set forth a number of alleged benefits over the 'traditional' method of intensive egg production. The cages are said to be economically advantageous (they squeeze more breeding birds into a given area), logistically more convenient (at the end of each breeding season, the older-style breeding pens have to be dismantled, cleaned and reassembled on fresh ground).

The caged birds are also said to be subject to less disease (because they are not tramping through their own and others' faeces for months at a time), and they are also less likely to be taken by predators.

DISEASE RISK

The starting point in dismantling these arguments is to make the obvious case that pheasants and partridges do not belong in cages or pens or sheds. They are there only so that they can be grown on to be shot for pleasure.

Any supposed economic and logistical gains provided by the caged systems are likely, in any case, to be short-lived.

As students of intensive farming will know, nothing can be gained in the long run by attempts to extract more profit from animals by depriving them of everything that makes their lives bearable. Imprisoned animals who are crowded and stressed will break down physiologically and mentally and be subject to disease epidemics. These can be devastating not only to the immediate animal victims but – economically speaking – to the farmers themselves and to the general public who, directly or otherwise, are required to meet at least some of the cost. This could be by way of environmental clean-ups, or – where disease



THE CLAIMED ADVANTAGES OF THE CAGED SYSTEM CONT'D



A CAGE DEATH AT 5 & A LEISURE.

outbreaks spread from game birds to other animal production sectors – through compensation payments.

In July 2005, for instance, came news that Newcastle Disease had been detected on a pheasant-rearing farm in Surrey, resulting in the destruction of 9,000 birds. The disease, caused by a deadly virus, has the potential to affect almost all avian species, both commercial and wild. Most vulnerable are chickens, turkeys, pigeons and parrots.

SUBSIDISING THE WEALTHY

The public, it should be noted, is already subsidising wealthy shooting estates through their taxes. These payments (awarded, for instance, because the estates plant crops in which the birds can hide and from where they are beaten into the sky to be shot) are set to increase.

BLAMING THE FRENCH

The other main 'justification' offered by cage operators is that the units are used by some French producers, who export eggs and young chicks to Britain. British producers must, therefore, follow suit in order to compete. This doesn't work either. An inhumane activity is not made acceptable because others indulge in it. Or as *Shooting Times* columnist, Alasdair Mitchell, put it (ST, February 10, 2005): 'True, the dastardly French may undercut our home markets. But just because others have lower standards doesn't mean I have to sink down to their level.'

FROM BIRTH TO BULLET



ON THE BACK OF A LORRY...

Other Animal Aid reports (notably *Fowl Play*, September 2004) have detailed the rearing of 'game birds' from the egg stage onwards. With around 35 million pheasants now released for shooting every year in Britain, the production process has become increasingly large-scale and industrialised. See www.animalaid.org.uk for full background, including a 5-minute introductory film.

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SHOT ...

© KEVIN HILL



DOWNED...

© KEVIN HILL



... AND CLUBBED TO DEATH

BATTERY CAGES:

HY-FLY GAME

ONE

Hy-Fly Game, Hy-Fly Game Hatcheries, Pilling Lane, Poulton-le-Fylde, Lancs, FY6 0HH

Hy-Fly Game is owned by Ray Holden, a member of the executive council of the Game Farmers' Association. Holden is also a columnist with *Shooting Gazette*. Hy-Fly has around 3,840 barren cages for partridge pairs. It also operates 100 barren cages for pheasants, each containing one cock and eight hens.

FILMED: APRIL 30 AND AGAIN JUNE 1, 2005

First visit: Some pheasants have been feather-pecked on their backs. Others have also lost their flight feathers. Several are leaping at their cage roofs.

A number of partridges are shoving their heads through the narrow aperture at the bottom of their cages where the eggs roll out onto a pan for collection.

Second visit: More pheasants are leaping and driving their heads into the mesh roof. They are looking considerably thinner than when first filmed. Several have drooping wings and their backs are stripped of feathers. An uncollected dead bird is filmed in a cage.

The beaks of both male and female pheasants are fitted with a large flat, looped ring that appears to be plugged into the nostrils.



DEAD PARTRIDGE READY FOR DISPOSAL

Whereas, on the earlier visit several partridges were pushing their heads through the gap where the eggs roll out, this time we find numerous uncollected dead partridges lying in the pans. We film a dozen – to the left and right – going up the 'lane' between two rows. Bearing in mind that biosecurity rules demand the prompt collection of dead animals, evidence of such an attrition rate during our short visit is alarming.

BATTERY CAGES:

HY-FLY GAME



NO ESCAPE FOR THESE PHEASANTS...



BLEAK OVERHEAD VIEW OF HY-FLY CAGES



DEATH COMES EARLY FOR THESE CAGED BIRDS.

BATTERY CAGES:

G & A LEISURE

TWO

G & A Leisure, Bettws Hall Hatcheries, Bettws Hall, Bettws Cedewain, Powys, SY16 3DS

Bettws Hall – part of G&A Leisure – is run by Gwyn and Anne Evans. Gwyn Evans is a member of the GFA's executive council. The business is advertised on the BASC website trade directory.

There are 1660 barren cages for pheasants – measuring 1.93m x 1.52m x 46cm deep. Each contains eight hens and a cock. The cages cover about two acres of ground. The development has been created without planning consent and is currently the subject of a retrospective application lodged with Powys County Council.

Bettws Hall was the focus of Animal Aid's original investigation into barren cages, and it was the images of Evans' birds – highly-agitated, damaged and fitted with masks that penetrated the nasal septum – that sparked the current industry debate. Gwyn Evans denied to the press that the film was shot at his farm. He further claimed that, 'They [Animal Aid] are extremists who don't understand the ways of the countryside'.



FEMALE WITH DRESSING TO COVER RAW BACK

BATTERY CAGES:

G & A LEISURE



NO WAY OUT...



JUST PART OF THE G & LEISURE INSTALLATION OF CAGES

FILMED: APRIL 29 AND AGAIN JUNE 2, 2005

First visit: The nasal septum penetrating masks are no longer evident. Two other types are in use – a large and cumbersome black plastic device covering most of the front of the head and, a flat black ring that fits into the nostrils.

Numerous birds are making desperate lunges at the roof. Some are wearing large dressings on their backs to protect wounds caused by feather-pecking,

BATTERY CAGES:

G & A LEISURE

TWO



ESCAPEE PHEASANT CAN GO NOWHERE WITH MISSING TAIL FEATHERS AND DAMAGED RIGHT FOOT



THE CUMBERSOME MASKS ARE INTENDED TO REDUCE DAMAGE CAUSED BY STRESS-RELATED AGGRESSION.



TWO FEMALE PHEASANTS IN ONE CAGE WITH YOUNG DRESSINGS

or by being trampled by the male. There is the melancholy sight of an escapee male hobbling on top of the cages, one foot clenched tight and all his tail feathers missing. His chances of survival, even if he were able to fly off, are remote.

Second visit: Many of the cages previously occupied are now empty. Does this signify a retraction of the business, or a high level of mortality? The birds are in far poorer condition than in April and are greatly agitated. More are also wounded and missing feathers on their backs, chests and tails. Some are bloodied. They are wearing the same masks as on the April visit.

BACKGROUND ON G & A LEISURE

Gwyn and Anne Evans have been in the 'game' industry since the late 1980s but have completed a massive expansion since 2000. Trading as G & A Leisure Ltd, they have developed a hotel and restaurant at Bettws Hall with its 2,000 acres of shoot. Shooting with G & A is also available over the border in Shropshire – at Delbury and Kempton. The company, additionally, owns the Brigands Hotel and the 10,000 acre shoot near Machynlleth. This year, in the shooting press, it was reported that G & A acquired the prestigious Molland Shoots near South Molton in North Devon.

BATTERY CAGES:

G & A LEISURE



TAILLESS PHEASANT WITH RAW BACK-END

An American agency, Chris Batha of South Carolina, offers shooting jaunts on behalf of G & A, to groups of eight guns. The cost is \$11,840 per person, with 300 bird-targets provided on each of four days.

In addition to the acres of battery cages, Bettws Hall has an incubator house and three large rearing sheds, each as long as a football field.

BASC claims to be unequivocally opposed to battery cage breeding of game birds, stating that such systems are incompatible with its values and with the future of game shooting. Yet it allows G & A to advertise Bettws Hall on BASC's website trade directory. Furthermore, although it was advised by Animal Aid that the barren cages had been developed at Bettws Hall without planning approval, BASC declined to oppose the retrospective planning application.

BATTERY CAGES:

HEART OF ENGLAND FARMS

THREE

Heart of England Farms, Henley Road, Claverdon, Warwick, CV35 8PP

Heart of England is operated by Ole Gronning. He uses battery cages to confine both egg-laying pheasants and partridges. Some of the pheasant cages were part-constructed with plywood rather than being all-metal. More significantly, the mesh roofs were hard and rigid, resulting in substantial head injuries when the birds repeatedly leapt upwards in their attempts to escape. The condition of some of the Heart of England Birds was the worst of all those Animal Aid filmed.

FILMED: JUNE 12, 2005

The majority of the pheasants in the metal cages are fitted with one of two types of mask – one that curves down over the face; the other, a thick, black plastic device. However, one of the birds we film has been forced to wear the face mask that is attached by driving a pin through the nasal septum.

Most of the females and many of the males are suffering extensive feather loss, while around three in ten females are wearing wound dressings on their back.

Within the main enclosed area of metal pheasant pens, there is the smaller row of battery units constructed with wood. They are the same size as the metal boxes and hold the same number of birds. The wooden units, with their harsh mesh roofs, cause 'scalping' to the birds' heads when they repeatedly and

frantically leap up to escape. We film cage after cage of thin, ravaged birds. We also find evidence of stereotypical (pointless, repetitive) pacing, which is indicative of a major mental disorder.

The birds in these wooden battery cages are the most damaged of all those we filmed.



FITTED WITH NASAL SEPTUM-PIERCING MASKS

BATTERY CAGES:

HEART OF ENGLAND FARMS



PHEASANTS MAKE REPEATED ESCAPE ATTEMPTS.



EGGS AND DEBRIS IN THE COLLECTION PANS (LEFT)



DRESSING FOR BACK YOUNDS



RIGID MESH ROOF TO PHEASANT CAGES LEADS TO 'SCALPING' WHEN BIRDS TRY TO ESCAPE



MALE WITH OPEN SCALP WOUND AND MISSING FEATHERS

BATTERY CAGES:

PYE HALL GAME FARM

FOUR

Pye Hall Game Farm, Pye Hall, Eye, Suffolk, IP23 7NJ

Pye Hall Game Farm is owned by Terry Sizer, a member of the GFA's executive council. The British Association for Shooting and Conservation allows Pye Hall to advertise on its website Trade Directory.



PARTRIDGES LOST IN THEIR PRISON

Pye Hall was the subject of a 2004 League Against Cruel Sports (LACS) undercover investigation. LACS investigators reportedly found – in the company's rearing sheds – 'overcrowding, cannibalisation and cold indifference to animal suffering'. The farm's customer list is said to have included Madonna and Guy Ritchie. Since the LACS report, Pye Hall has taken delivery of barren cages for breeding partridges.

FILMED: MAY 31, 2005

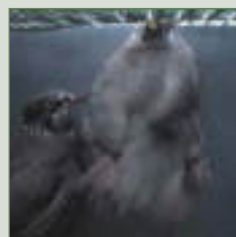
The cages for partridges cover an area that is probably the equivalent of two football pitches. The birds are highly agitated and vocal – many are leaping and driving their heads into the hard mesh roofing. Their living space, as usual, is cramped and bare. There are duckboards for workers and muck-filled puddles underneath cages.



PARTRIDGES DESPERATE FOR FREEDOM

BATTERY CAGES:

PYE HALL GAME FARM





ACTION

Worryingly, on many commercial shoots, pheasants and partridges are regarded as feathered targets, not food. Many people who shoot even decline to take home their traditional brace of birds...

In some areas, over-supply has led to shoots being forced to give away their bags or, worse still, bury their surplus...

Comment, *Country Life*, February 1, 2001

WE CALL UPON THE GOVERNMENT TO BAN,
WITHOUT DELAY, THE USE OF BATTERY CAGES
FOR THE PRODUCTION OF 'GAME BIRDS'.

Their poultry trade equivalent are now being phased out for battery hens across Europe, because they are deemed to be inhumane.

The British Association for Shooting and Conservation – the largest shooting lobby group – has declared that battery (or 'barren') cages for breeding pheasants and partridges are 'indefensible' and 'incompatible with the values of the BASC and the future of game shooting'. It has asked members who operate – or patronise – shoots to 'check the provenance' of the birds they grow on or kill. And yet it makes that task virtually impossible by refusing to name battery cage operators.

WE CALL UPON BASC PUBLICLY TO NAME
AND SHAME ALL USERS OF BATTERY CAGES.

This includes producers operating in Britain, as well as those in France or elsewhere, who provide British shoots with eggs, chicks or poults.

FROM CAGE TO GRAVE



THE CAGES...



... AND HATCHED PHEASANTS READY FOR DELIVERY



THE CROWDED SHEDS AND THEIR VICTIMS...



READY FOR THE KILL...



MANY SHOT BIRDS ARE NOT EATEN, SOME ARE DUMPED...



A NATURAL HISTORY OF PHEASANTS AND PARTRIDGES

... AND HOW THEY WENT FROM WOODLAND TO CAGE

Long before humans began to incarcerate and mass-produce wild birds, pheasants and red-legged partridges roamed free in areas of Europe and Asia – engaging in their natural behaviours of making nests, foraging for food and caring for their young. A small minority still live this way in Britain.

Among the arguments given in favour of battery cages is that the birds are well-fed, sheltered and protected from predators. This narrow view of animal welfare does not take into account the serious psychological damage that can result from denying birds their basic needs – just as denying humans meaningful contact with other humans can lead to mental illness. To understand exactly why battery cages are so detrimental, it helps to know a little more about the natural history of pheasants and partridges.

THE MATING SEASON

Pheasants organise into 'harems', in which one male will defend a small group of females, with whom he will breed. These clusters form during the spring, when the birds are emerging from their woodland wintering areas. At around the same time, the males will fight for control of valued breeding territories.

The female groups will visit several of these territories before choosing a strong male. They must choose well, because he will be enlisted to ward off other males – allowing the females to concentrate on building up the fat reserves they will need later in the year.

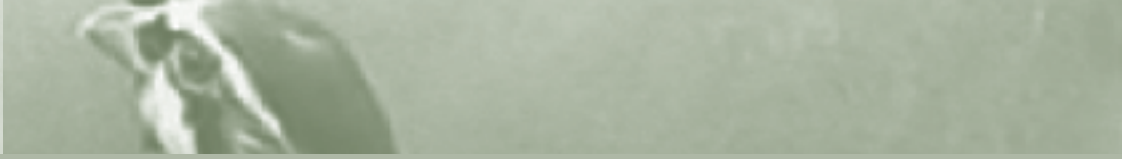
The 'protection' afforded by battery cages absolves the males of their main responsibility – the defence of the harem. It is highly likely that the male will seek to express his aggression in other ways. The raw wounds observed on the females by our undercover investigators support this. Equally, some of the males – particularly the smaller ones – showed signs of having been seriously wounded by their female cage mates.

Partridges also form mating groups in spring, but they bond in pairs of one male and one female. The male will perform a courtship display, followed by both birds engaging in a ritual involving pecking at nearby objects.

In a factory farm, mating pairs are forced together – without the natural courtship rituals. The psychological effects are potentially very serious. Our investigators observed numerous dead birds on just one day at an intensive partridge breeding unit – most likely killed by their cage mate. If another bird is put in the cage as a replacement, her fate may be the same as her predecessor.

CARING FOR THEIR YOUNG

Over the summer, both species make ground nests in the long grass or woodland. The female will lay around ten eggs in each clutch, which she will incubate for 25-30 days. After they hatch, the mother will lead her chicks away from the nest to an area of long grass or crops, where they will survive mainly on insects. Within two or three weeks, the young will have reached adult size.



While the pheasants will live in relatively small groups, the young partridges will go on to join large groupings that can consist of 200 birds or more. Complex social organisation exists within these communities and partridges use a range of communications that are still poorly understood. Clearly, these sophisticated social systems are in stark contrast to the battery cages, in which a single breeding pair is imprisoned.

THE HISTORY OF INTENSIFICATION

It is believed that both species were brought to Britain by waves of successive invaders, including the Romans and the Normans. At first, the birds were allowed to live naturally on the woodland edge. They could enjoy a full life; their main danger coming from predators – including humans.

Humans have hunted birds since they themselves lived as wild animals, but the advent of the Industrial Revolution saw the development of powerful technologies that enabled new levels of cruelty. Wealthy estate owners used the newly-laid railways to travel to each other's country estates – their impact made all the worse due to the killing power of modern weaponry.

A fashion developed for 'big bags', and providing one's guests with plenty of animals to slaughter became the sign of a good host. The lords and ladies maintained large areas of woodland to home these birds. They would employ gamekeepers whose role was to protect the 'game' birds – a job which included setting vicious traps for predators and dealing with any commoners hunting on the estate.

Social changes and the mass-uptake of cheap private transport have opened up the shooting world to a much greater number of people. The desire for big bags, meanwhile, prompted extreme developments in bird breeding.

Departing from the shooting of truly wild birds, a system developed which involved exploiting chicken hens' natural instincts to incubate eggs. The young would then be abducted and reared so that they could be killed by shooters.

The system further intensified, with wooden pens being constructed to house breeding birds. No longer could the animals live the way their ancestors had for countless thousands of years. Foraging for food was replaced by scrabbling for the daily feed. Evading predators was replaced by an existence behind wire mesh – or being trapped by it if the predator managed to get inside. Caring for their young disappeared completely, with eggs being stolen as soon as they were laid.

In recent years, the breeding systems have spiralled out of control. A profit-driven 'arms race' between game farms has resulted in technological escalation at the expense of animal welfare. The cages have shrunk and more birds are crammed into smaller spaces. These conditions engender violence – a problem the game farmers seek to tackle through the use of punishing devices that limit the birds' vision and their ability to peck.

Battery cages are an entirely alien environment for any animal. The natural behaviours of pheasants and partridges make these systems psychologically damaging – which can frequently lead to violence and death. Even if the mental disorders caused by a denial of liberty did not spill over into physical injury, the negative mental impact alone would be sufficiently serious to make the cages morally unjustifiable.



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