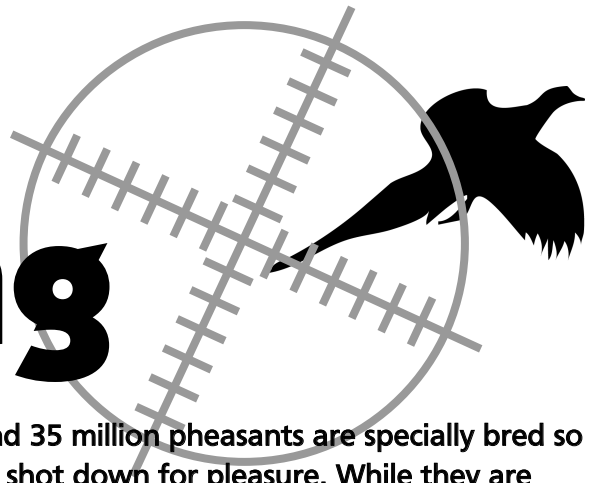


Pheasant Shooting



Every year around 35 million pheasants are specially bred so that they can be shot down for pleasure. While they are imprisoned, the birds endure crowded conditions, stress and disease. Once they are released, many of the birds die from predation, starvation, disease, and from being hit by vehicles and other causes - before they can even be shot.

The pheasant shooting season runs from 1st October to 1st February. Many of the birds who are shot are not even eaten.

Rearing the birds . . .

The pheasant eggs are collected from battery units - consisting of small metal boxes that hold groups of breeding birds. Once the eggs have hatched, the chicks are reared inside crowded sheds, often holding hundreds of birds. At a few weeks of age, they are transferred to outside pens that can house a thousand or more birds. They are then released into keepered woods where they continue to be fed until the day of the shoot. The job of the gamekeeper is to feed the birds so they come readily to his call and to kill any other wild animals or birds who threaten or compete with the pheasants.

The Problem: Cruelty

The most intensive breeding farms keep up to eight female pheasants and one male in a single metal box. The crowded conditions make them frustrated, so they peck at each other causing bloody wounds.

Their Solution: More Cruelty!

The gamekeepers fit them with cumbersome masks, which are designed to stop pecking injuries, but are very painful in their own right.



. . . and shooting them

On the day of the shoot, gunmen line up along the wood where the pheasants have been reared, while 'beaters' flush the birds out and scare them into the sky so that they can be used as flying targets. Although the intention is to shoot the birds dead in flight, the nature of the spread-shot cartridge used means that a quick death is far from guaranteed. Many birds either fly on, wounded by lead shot, or fall to the ground alive. Downed birds are supposed to be retrieved by dogs, who take them to the shooters who club them over the head or break their necks. Many wounded birds, however, are never recovered and suffer a long lingering death.

The shooting lobby say that pheasants are killed for food, but pheasant meat is not popular. It is reported

that unwanted pheasants are buried in pits.

'I recently saw a pheasant shot and wounded 40 yards above

the ground. The 2lb bird, flapping and shedding feathers, hit the ground with an audible thump. It couldn't fly but tried to run. A dog grabbed it by the wing and dragged it across the field and through a dense hedge. The bird and wing parted company. The dog looked momentarily confused, but then thankfully grabbed the body. The bird continued to flap around at the gun's feet awhile, while he waited for his next shot. Eventually he picked up the bird by the feet and repeatedly swung its head against a fence post.'

Theo Hopkins in the Daily Telegraph, 16 March 2004.



Wildlife slaughter . . .

An estimated 4.5 million mammals and birds of prey are killed every year by gamekeepers in this country in the name of game bird protection.

The gamekeeper's job is to keep the pheasants alive long enough for them to be shot. This unnaturally large population of pheasants - protected by the gamekeepers - attracts wild animals who see them as food.

Stoat caught in a Fenn trap.



To preserve their valuable 'game birds', gamekeepers set traps and snares to kill stoats, weasels, foxes, polecats and other natural predators. Sometimes protected species, such as badgers, otters, wild cats, kestrels and owls, fall victim to these snares and traps. These indiscriminate devices also catch hares, rabbits, squirrels, hedgehogs, deer and sometimes domestic cats and dogs.

Snares are particularly cruel because the animals caught in them are not killed outright. If snared around the neck, they may be slowly choked to death as the wire tightens.



A protected Kestrel caught in an illegally set Fenn trap.

. . . & other victims

Partridges and ducks

Red legged partridges and ducks are shot in large numbers for sport. They are bred intensively, in a similar manner to pheasants.

Grouse

About half a million grouse are shot every year during the grouse shooting season which runs from 12th August (the 'Glorious 12th') to 10th December. The birds are not hand-reared like pheasants; instead their numbers are maintained by the gamekeepers who 'control' predator species and maintain the grouse moors.

Wildfowling

As many as a million wildfowl, including ducks, are shot every year for sport. The wildfowlers hide under cover



Mallard ducks are shot for sport by wildfowlers.

on wetlands, and wait for the birds to fly into their feeding grounds. Plastic decoy ducks are often set out to entice the birds to land. As the birds come in to settle, the shooters take great pleasure in shooting them out of the sky.

The facts

- 35 million pheasants are bred each year.
- Around 16 million of these are shot each year (the remainder are lost through a combination of disease, predation, car accidents and other causes).
- 8000 tonnes of poisonous lead shot is rained down on the countryside each year.
- 4.5 million wild animals are killed each year in the name of gamebird protection.
- There are around 300 game farms in England & Wales alone.

Get Active!

YOU can help stop this cruel sport

- Contact Animal Aid for a free Stop Shooting Action Pack.
- Write to your MP calling for a ban on breeding pheasants for sport shooting.
- Order some free leaflets from Animal Aid to give to friends and family members.
- Order a free poster from Animal Aid to put on a school or library notice board.