



CAWF
Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation

Frankenchickens: The Animal Welfare Case for Slower Growing Breeds



More than one billion chickens are reared and slaughtered for meat in the UK every year. Most are breeds that have been selectively bred to grow extremely quickly, reaching slaughter weight in 6 weeks or less.

These fast-growing chickens – sometimes referred to as “Frankenchickens” – can suffer serious health and welfare problems because their bodies grow at such an unnatural rate.

Chickens should not be bred to grow so quickly that their health and welfare suffer. Moving towards slower-growing breeds would improve the lives of millions of animals every year.

What are ‘Frankenchickens’?

‘Frankenchicken’ is a term used to describe fast-growing breeds of chicken reared for meat.

Over recent decades, broiler chickens have been selectively bred to grow bigger and faster, maximising production while using relatively little feed.

Around 30 years ago, it took approximately 10 weeks for a chicken to reach 2kg. Today, chickens can reach around the same weight in six weeks or less. Modern broiler chickens can grow four times larger than chickens did in the 1950s.

This rapid growth comes at a significant cost to their welfare. Their bodies can struggle to cope, with lameness and other serious health problems increasingly associated with fast-growing breeds.



The Scale of the Issue



1 BILLION+

broiler chickens are raised and slaughtered in the UK every year.



6 WEEKS OR LESS

to reach around 2kg, compared with around 10 weeks 30 years ago.



4x LARGER

Modern broiler chickens can grow four times larger than chickens in the 1950s.

For more information visit
www.conservativeanimalwelfarefoundation.org

The Animal Welfare Concerns

Rapid Growth Can Cause Pain and Lameness

Fast-growing chickens have been selectively bred for production efficiency rather than their health and welfare.

Their bodies grow at such an unnatural rate that they can suffer serious health problems, including lameness and difficulties walking or standing.

Chickens should not be bred to grow so quickly that their own bodies struggle to cope



Chickens Need to Behave Like Chickens

Chickens are active and inquisitive animals. They are naturally motivated to peck, scratch, perch, explore and dustbathe.

In lower-welfare intensive systems, overcrowding can restrict chickens' ability to move freely, stretch their wings and exercise. Many birds also have little environmental enrichment and are kept inside buildings with artificial rather than natural light.

Animal welfare is not simply about keeping an animal alive. Chickens should be able to move comfortably and express their natural behaviours.



Intensive Conditions Can Cause Further Suffering

Broiler chickens can be kept at stocking densities of around 16–19 birds per square metre.

Large numbers of birds produce large quantities of waste. Chickens can suffer from painful hock burns, associated with ammonia from faeces on shed floors.

Crowded conditions can also restrict birds' ability to move freely and carry out natural behaviours.



What Needs to Change?

CAWF supports the Better Chicken Commitment, which calls for higher welfare standards for broiler chickens, including the use of slower-growing breeds, more space, natural light and environmental enrichment.

CAWF also supports improvements to the law governing the handling and transport of chickens to slaughter, including better catching and loading practices, limits on journey times, improved temperature controls and appropriate space allowances.

With more than a billion chickens raised and slaughtered in the UK every year, improving broiler chicken welfare has the potential to prevent suffering on an enormous scale.



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