

Nandos, Lidl and Asda Chickens Come Home to Roost After Animal Advocacy Group Goes Undercover

Animal Equality published footage showing chickens destined for Nando's, Lidl and Asda were being kept in appalling conditions. One month later, has enough been done to ensure animal welfare and food hygiene standards are met? FRANCES RANKIN reports

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Featured image: A chicken with a deformed bill appears unwell while living at a farm supplying Nando's, Lidl and Asda. (c) Animal Equality International

Charity Animal Equality have said the farm that supplies chicken to Nandos, Lidl and Asda is not doing enough to secure the welfare of chickens, after [footage](#) filmed by undercover investigators has revealed [cruel and dirty conditions](#).

Animal Equality a month ago published video including one clip showing a chicken lying on its back and exposing a purple, apparently swollen underbelly. The international animal advocacy charity claims the bird is unable to walk and is forced to sit in ammonia soaked litter, which causes burns.

The upsetting footage shows another chicken seemingly struggling to support its own body weight. Others sit close to the ground, lethargic and blinking or breathing slowly as if ill. The charity described birds being kicked, carried around flapping after their necks were snapped and dying on their backs unable to reach water.

Dr. Toni Shephard, UK Executive Director of the charity said:

“When Faccenda received our footage showing suffering and neglect on their farm, they said they would be investigating the farm and it would not be restocked with birds until they were satisfied that welfare standards had improved. But how can you assess welfare standards when the sheds are empty?”

“Quite disappointingly, Faccenda gave the farm the all-clear just a week after our expose, conveniently timed for when the sheds were due to be re-stocked anyway. This leaves us questioning how rigorous the investigation was, particularly as there were no birds on the farm at the time.”

Dead chicks in bins

Cambria Farm in Taunton supplies Faccenda, the second-largest chicken supplier in the

country, and houses over 150,000 chickens in four giant sheds.

Modern breeds of chicken are used because they gain weight very quickly. This leads the young birds to struggle to support an adult-sized body on small legs and puts their hearts under huge pressure.

The film shows farmers dumping buckets full of dead chicks in bins and wheelbarrows. One clip seems to show a chick dumped on the pile of bodies still breathing. Workers were also filmed picking up chickens and throwing them into crates.

Dr. Shephard, said:

“The birds were just a few days old when we first filmed, yet already hundreds of chicks were dying every day and the bins outside the giant sheds were full of tiny bodies, still with their yellow baby feathers.

Appropriate action

“Just a couple of weeks later, the skips were fuller still and many of the birds were suffering from painful lameness. By our last visit, the sheds were so crowded it was difficult to walk through them.”

Animal Equality has passed the evidence on to the [Animal and Plant Health Agency](#) (APHA) for further investigation. An APHA spokesperson said “appropriate action is taken” where welfare regulations are breached, but were unable to comment on individual cases.

The charity says this footage shows clear breaches of the government’s welfare code which states that injured or sick birds should be “immediately be removed to a hospital pen and treated or humanely killed”.

Defra’s welfare code also states no animal must be transported in a way that may cause injury or unnecessary suffering to the animal. The undercover footage shows workers at the farm carrying birds by one leg and violently catching and crating the birds.

An independent vet

A spokesperson for Faccenda told *The Ecologist* the company is taking the complaints “seriously” and have had multiple vets visit the site to investigate the allegations, but have now decided to recommence activities on the farm.

They said this will occur with, “additional monitoring and ongoing support from our vet to ensure adherence to standards and practices.”

Paul Vaughan-France, owner of the farm, had told *The Times*:

“I will take the images as good feedback and will do everything I can to work on every aspect of my husbandry. I have had an independent vet on site to review my practices and he is satisfied with his findings.”

A spokesperson for Nandos said:

“The farm in question is being thoroughly investigated by both parties and we have been assured that it will meet Red Tractor standards before it will be allowed to supply chicken again. We intend to remain close to the situation to ensure that happens.”

A spokesperson for Asda said the company “take animal welfare very seriously” and have “strict processes in place to ensure all of the farms that supply Asda meet our own high standards and are Red Tractor approved.” They said:

“We have addressed this matter with our supplier who have conducted a full investigation following these allegations.”

A Lidl spokesperson said:

“Lidl UK takes the issue of animal welfare very seriously and were in close communication with the supplier on this matter, whilst their investigations carried out.

“We have a code of conduct in place with all of our suppliers, with agreed expectations regarding responsible business practices, which may be audited by an independent third party at any point.”

Frances Rankin is a multimedia journalist based in London. She also contributes to [DeSmog UK](#) and can be found on Twitter at [@FranRankin](#)

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