



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Over 82,000 Say “No” to Slaughtering Chickens Even Faster**

***Animal welfare, consumer safety, and worker safety supporters voice opposition to inhumane, unsafe proposal as USDA comment period closes***

**NEW YORK**— A coalition of animal welfare, consumer safety, and worker rights organizations announced today that more than 82,000 concerned members of the public, workers and allies have raised their voices against faster slaughter lines in poultry plants.

The organizations are urging the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) to reject a recent proposal from the National Chicken Council (NCC) that would allow poultry processing facilities to have the unrestricted ability to run their line speeds faster than the current, already excessive, rate of 140-birds per minute. Submitted in September 2017, the NCC’s proposal faced immediate backlash, prompting FSIS to open a public comment period from October 13 until December 13, 2017.

This proposal, in addition to violating current federal law, would place worker safety, animal welfare and consumer safety in peril. The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals® (ASPCA), the Animal Welfare Institute, Compassion Over Killing, Food & Water Watch, Mercy For Animals, and the National Employment Law Project join tens of thousands of their supporters in opposition to the proposal. The organizations collected consumer and worker comments via their respective online petitions and also directed consumers to [comment directly with FSIS](#) during the comment period.

Commentary from organization representatives can be seen below:

“Faster slaughter speeds mean more suffering. Already, hundreds of thousands of birds are unintentionally boiled alive each year because rapid slaughter lines fail to kill the birds before they are dropped into scalding water,” said **Deborah Press, Director, Regulatory Affairs, ASPCA Government Relations**. “If FSIS approves this proposal, it will sacrifice animal, worker and consumer welfare in the name of fatter poultry industry profits.”

“Absent from the NCC petition is any mention of how the proposed change will impact the billions of birds killed every year,” said **Dena Jones, Farm Animal Program Director, the Animal Welfare Institute**. “Allowing faster line speeds will only further stress a production system that is already operating beyond the limits of worker health and safety and humane animal handling.”

"As documented by countless undercover investigations, inhumane handling and abuse are already rampant in poultry slaughterhouses, even at current line speeds, which kill two birds every single second," said **Erica Meier, Executive Director, Compassion Over Killing**. "Speeding up these slaughter lines will further exacerbate the suffering of billions of animals who are exempted from even the bare-bone basic protections of the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act."

"The National Chicken Council is looking out for industry profits, not food safety, worker safety or animal welfare," said **Wenonah Hauter, executive director of Food & Water Watch**. "The USDA must reject this petition and preserve the cap on line speeds that protects both consumers and slaughterhouse workers."

"Consumers have a right to know where their food comes from and how animals inside factory farms and slaughterhouses are routinely abused," said **Vandhana Bala, general counsel of Mercy For Animals**. "Undercover investigations have revealed the horror of chicken slaughter: Birds scalded alive in hot water tanks and workers ripping off the heads and legs of animals while they're still conscious and able to feel pain. We urge the USDA to deny this dangerous and cruel request meant solely to line the pockets of a multi-billion dollar industry at the expense of animal welfare and food safety."

"The evidence shows that poultry workers face harsh and dangerous working conditions, with injury rates 60% above the national average for all private industry, and illness rates more than five times as high," said **Deborah Berkowitz, Senior Fellow, National Employment Law Project**. "Recent studies from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), for example, found alarmingly high rates of carpal tunnel syndrome among poultry line workers. In one study, 34 percent of workers at a poultry processing plant had carpal tunnel syndrome, and fully 76 percent had evidence of nerve damage in their hands and wrists. In another study, 42 percent of workers at a processing plant had carpal tunnel syndrome. The faster the line speed, the greater the risk of harm. The break-neck pace and myriad other safety hazards facing poultry workers also result in extremely high numbers of very serious injuries."

The ASPCA, along with six other animal welfare organizations, filed additional [separate comments](#) to the USDA FSIS in opposition to the NCC's proposal on Sept. 20, 2017.

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#### **About the ASPCA®**

Founded in 1866, the ASPCA® (The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals®) is the first animal welfare organization in North America and serves as the nation's leading voice for animals. More than two million supporters strong, the ASPCA's mission is to provide effective means for the prevention of cruelty to animals throughout the United States. As a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation, the ASPCA is a national leader in the areas of anti-cruelty, community outreach and animal health services. For more information, please visit [www.ASPCA.org](http://www.ASPCA.org), and be sure to follow the ASPCA on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

### **About the Animal Welfare Institute**

The Animal Welfare Institute ([www.awionline.org](http://www.awionline.org)) is a nonprofit charitable organization founded in 1951 and dedicated to reducing animal suffering caused by people. AWI engages policymakers, scientists, industry, and the public to achieve better treatment of animals everywhere—in the laboratory, on the farm, in commerce, at home, and in the wild. For more information, visit [www.awionline.org](http://www.awionline.org).

### **About Compassion Over Killing**

Compassion Over Killing (COK) is a nonprofit animal protection organization working to end the abuse of farmed animals through undercover investigations, litigation, corporate outreach, public education, and other advocacy programs. <http://cok.net>

### **About Food & Water Watch**

Food & Water Watch champions healthy food and clean water for all. We stand up to corporations that put profits before people, and advocate for a democracy that improves people's lives and protects our environment. [www.Foodandwaterwatch.org](http://www.Foodandwaterwatch.org)

### **About Mercy for Animals**

Mercy For Animals is one of the largest and most effective international charities focused exclusively on preventing cruelty to farmed animals and promoting compassionate food choices and policies. MFA has conducted more than 60 undercover investigations of factory farms and slaughterhouses, worked with many of the largest food companies to reduce the suffering of billions of animals in 90 countries, and secured dozens of unprecedented animal cruelty convictions of farm owners, managers, and workers, including the first-ever felony conviction for abuse of factory-farmed birds. Learn more at [MercyForAnimals.org](http://MercyForAnimals.org).

### **About NELP**

NELP is a non-profit law and policy organization with 45 years of experience providing research, advocacy, and public education to advance the employment and labor rights of our nation's workers, particularly low wage workers such as poultry workers. We work together with local, state, and national partners to promote policies and programs to create good, safe jobs and ensure that work is an anchor of economic security for all of America's working families. [www.nelp.org](http://www.nelp.org)

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