

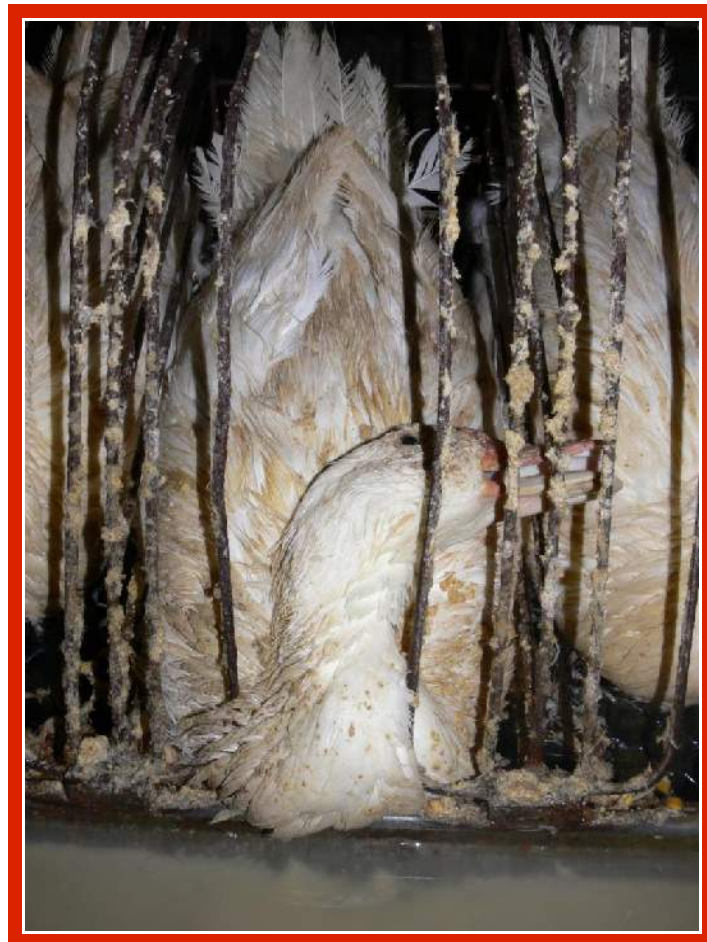
The Life of a Foie Gras Duck



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Ducks are gregarious, affectionate birds. An estimated 500,000 of them are intensively farmed and force fed in Canada for the production of foie gras or “fatty liver” every year.

Male moulard ducks are the preferred species. At approximately 12 weeks of age the birds begin a regiment of force-feeding. This brutal practice is done to the birds twice a day for two to three weeks.



Each duck is confined to an individual metal crate so restrictive they are not able to stand fully or even stretch their limbs. This crating system keeps the birds' heads exposed so they may be quickly force fed and prevents them from moving and burning calories. All of the birds are extremely overheated from the unnatural caloric consumption and pant continually. The rooms the birds are held in are also incredibly hot and humid. Fans and sprinklers must run continually or the birds would quickly overheat and die. These fans make the room very loud and contribute to what must be a horribly frightening environment for the birds.

CETFA's Head of Investigation conducted a month-long investigation at Canada's second largest foie gras facility, located in Quebec. There she saw first-hand the fear response of birds raised in such conditions. When workers would approach the birds and especially when the massive metal force-feeding vat was rolled in, the panting birds would open their mouths wider. The worker stated this was because of their fear, that the birds were experiencing a “panic attack”.

The metal force-feeding vat was filthy and covered in dried cornmeal.

While the foie gras industry states strict adherence to health codes and the “*latest and most improved equipment available*” the birds were in fact in terrible body condition.



Many were covered in regurgitated cornmeal. Their eyes were badly infected and many had a thickening of the sclera (the eye's attempt to protect itself in an unhealthy environment). Some of the birds had opaque eyes – a sign that they were already beginning to go blind. All of the birds appeared traumatized. Some pecked incessantly at their neighbour who was similarly confined so unable to avoid the pecking; some sought comfort from one another by attempting to hide under the other's head.

The birds ahead of the worker with the force feeding vat clearly experienced intense panic, attempting to get as low in their crates as possible or straining against the crate, trying to escape. It was all for naught as the worker mindlessly grabbed the head of each, squeezed the sides of his bill together until it was forced open and rammed the unlubricated metal tube directly down his

throat. A lever was then pushed and the pasty cornmeal was forced down the bird's throat. So much was given at each feeding that it began to bubble up through the birds' nostrils. The worker stated that he'd received no training other than watching another worker force feed. He stated that birds sometimes die in his hands as he's force-feeding them.

As the worker moved down the line with the force-feeding vat the birds who had just received the slurry would shake their heads vigorously as though attempting to suppress the urge to vomit.

This purpose of this process is to produce a severely diseased liver – a condition called *hepatic lipidosis*. It causes the liver to increase in size from 10-12 times. The condition is fatal if the birds' aren't slaughtered young.



Diseased foie gras liver on left; healthy, normal liver on right

As Dr. Ian Duncan, Professor of Animal and Poultry Sciences at the University of Guelph stated: *"You're introducing a pathological state in the bird. You're actually making the animal feel sick."*

Mortality in the foie gras industry is as high as 10% and the potential for severe physical trauma and injuries to the birds is also high. Documented pathologies in birds that have been force-fed include:

- ruptured livers
- bruised and broken bills
- bursting of the birds' stomachs
- tumours in the birds' throats
- bone fractures

The emotional suffering of the birds is enormous but rarely spoken of. The birds exhibit strong fear responses at the mere presence of humans. And they are completely deprived of all natural duck behaviours such as normal feeding and foraging, swimming and social behaviour.

The production of foie gras has been made illegal in 13 countries. Even the US is ahead of Canada with the state of California banning production and sale of foie gras by 2012. New York, Chicago, Oregon, Illinois and Massachusetts have all proposed similar legislation.

The European Union's commission advisory group on the Food Chain and Animal and Plant Health has deemed foie gras production to be inherently inhumane.

Noted avian and poultry researcher Dr. Mohan Raj, at the University of Bristol stated: *"Force feeding of ducks and geese is one giant leap backward in human civilization. It is a cruel practice that must be stopped immediately."*



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