

LIVE-SHACKLE SLAUGHTER

IS THE MOST COMMON METHOD FOR SLAUGHTERING CHICKENS IN THE US.

The live-shackle slaughter process is terrifying, stressful, and cruel—causing excruciating pain to the chickens who are forced to endure it. It is also hazardous for the people who work in slaughterhouses.

THE CRUEL PROCESS

1



Chickens are packed into crates on factory farms at around 7 weeks old.

2

Crammed on top of one another, the chickens are driven to a slaughterhouse.

3

When they arrive, the birds are dumped from the crates onto the slaughter line.

4



Workers at the slaughterhouse grab each bird by their legs and slam them into metal loops (shackles), which are moving swiftly overhead.

5

Hanging upside down in these shackles, the chickens are moved to an electrified water bath where their heads are submerged into water.

6

Electricity runs through their bodies into the shackles, which is meant to stun and immobilize each bird.

7



Once immobilized, each chicken is pulled past a blade that slits their throat.

8

The chickens are then dipped into a scalding tank of water to remove all of their feathers.

Images 1 and 4 are courtesy of Jo-Anne McArthur and Animal Equality and are representative of slaughterhouses.

KEY STEPS

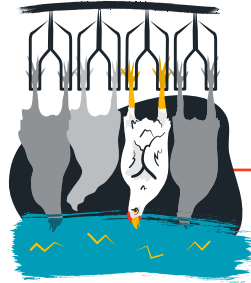
SHACKLING



The rate that chickens are shackled is known as the “slaughter line speed”. Many slaughterhouses in the US operate at **175 BIRDS PER MINUTE**, or about 3 birds per second.

Each worker must hang **dozens of birds per minute** to keep up with standard slaughter line speeds. Chickens are slammed into shackles at high speed, even when their legs cannot easily fit. This can break or dislocate their legs. Broiler chickens, bred to grow abnormally fast, often have leg deformities so they may already be in pain before being shackled. Unlike humans, chickens don’t have a diaphragm. When hung upside down, their organs press down on their lungs, making it **difficult for them to breathe.**

ELECTRIFIED WATER BATH STUNNING



Studies estimate that more than **400 MILLION CHICKENS PER YEAR** in the US may be conscious when their throats are slit.

Birds are excluded from the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act in the US—so it is not required that they be properly stunned before being killed. While the process should cause the chickens to lose consciousness, in practice, **water bath stunning leaves millions of birds awake through slaughter each year.** The amount of electricity needed to properly stun them varies from chicken to chicken. Too little electricity, and a chicken may be paralyzed but conscious, able to see the blade coming toward them. Too much electricity will burst the chicken’s blood vessels causing muscle bruising, which consumers don’t like. Since slaughterhouses aim to maximize profits, a lower setting is selected, **erring on the side of killing conscious birds.**

BLADE AND SCALDING TANKS



More than **500,000 BIRDS** are boiled alive each year, having reached the scalding tanks without first being killed.

Smaller chickens may not be submerged into the electrified water bath. Others may wake up from an ineffective stun. **These birds will see and feel the pain of the blade slitting their throats.** Some chickens may still be able to move when they reach the automated blade, and avoid it entirely. Workers are in place as “backup cutters”, slitting the throats of chickens by hand if needed. But with up to 175 chickens per minute, many are missed entirely. When this happens, the chickens are **submerged into the scalding tank**, a vat of boiling water that removes feathers, **while still alive and conscious.**

BILLIONS OF CHICKENS ARE KILLED BY LIVE-SHACKLE SLAUGHTER EACH YEAR IN THE US



THE IMPACT ON WORKERS

Workers must hang birds in near total darkness, because this is thought to keep the birds as quiet and still as possible. They must quickly grab birds by their legs from waist level and slam them into shackles at head level, which is exhausting work. Each worker must grab and shackle dozens of chickens per minute to keep up with line speeds. They move so quickly that they may catch their own fingers in the shackles. The birds, desperate and scared, will peck and claw at workers' hands and faces while they are lifted, potentially cutting them. Flailing birds create a large amount of dust in the air and shed mites from their skin. They may spray urine or feces in the faces of workers out of fear and in desperation to escape. Workers face elevated risks for diseases and infection from the dust, mites, and feces getting in their eyes, lungs, and cuts from the pecking and scratching chickens.

Ending live-shackle slaughter and moving towards CAS is part of The Humane League's advocacy for industry-wide adoption of the Better Chicken Commitment (BCC), the leading set of standards for broiler welfare.

AN ALTERNATIVE TO LIVE-SHACKLE SLAUGHTER

An alternative method called **CONTROLLED ATMOSPHERE SYSTEMS (CAS)** avoids the most terrifying and painful aspects of live-shackle slaughter. It leaves 100% of chickens unconscious before any humans handle them at the slaughterhouse, so none have to experience painful shackling, electrocution, their throats being slit, or the horrors of being boiled alive. The industry must take steps to end live-shackle slaughter, to spare billions of chickens each year from an unimaginably frightening and painful death.

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