Factory-Made Eggs

Male chicks are discarded into heavy-duty plastic bags and left to suffocate.

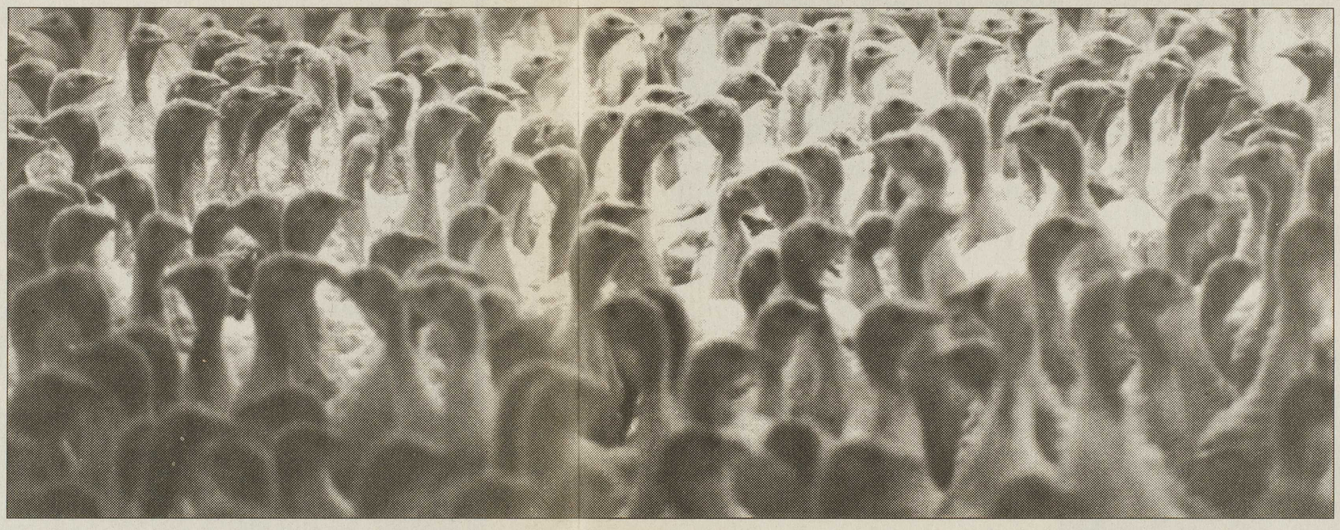
Eggs are taken from the hens and placed in an oven to hatch. After hatching, half of the chicks, the males, who don't lay eggs, are literally thrown away. At one such hatchery "chick-pullers" weeded males from each tray and dropped them into heavy-duty plastic bags (photo left). The guide explained: "We put them in a bag and let them suffocate. A mink farmer picks them up and feeds them to his mink."

In automated buildings such as these (photo right), some 285 million hens produce virtually all the commercial eggs in the U.S.A. Under natural conditions, chickens can live as long as fifteen to twenty years; in the modern egg factory, hens live less than two years warehoused in battery cages stacked from floor to ceiling. All their natural instincts are thwarted by being crammed, five birds per 16"x18" cage. They are unable to stretch their wings, turn around or groom themselves. When they are worn out, they are shipped to the slaughterhouse, where 70% of the hens arrive with broken bones, to then be dismembered and turned into soup.

Laying hens are so crowded, they can neither move nor spread their wings.

In poultry, cannibalism resulting from overcrowding is controlled by routine debeaking. This began around 1940, when a San Diego poultry farmer found that if he burned away the birds' upper beaks with a blowtorch, they were unable to pick and pull at each other's feathers. His neighbor caught on to the idea, but used a modified soldering iron instead. A couple of years later, a local company began to manufacture the "Debeaker," a machine that sliced off the tips of birds' beaks with a hot blade.

The beaks of many birds are sloppily cut. An excessively hot blade causes blisters in the mouth. A cold and/or dull blade may cause the development of a fleshy, bulb-like growth on the end of the mandible. Such growths are very sensitive. Some debeaked birds do not grow to full size because "beak tenderness" makes it difficult for them to eat and drink.



Turkeys are mass produced by methods similar to those used with broilers.

Flipped Out and Flipped Over Heart Attacks

A "genetic marvel," the agribusiness chicken now swells up to market weight on half the feed and in half the time it did fifty years ago. It is also a metabolic basket case. Some birds jump into the air, emitting a loud squawk, then fall dead from "flip-over syndrome," a sort of heart failure attributed to their abnormal growth rate.

Bred for their chunky bodies, many birds can barely walk on their flimsy, underdeveloped feet and legs. In the broiler sheds, they squat most of the time or breast-stroke their way, lizard-like, across the excrement-soaked floor.

Factory-Made Birds

The stress in the broiler houses is so horrendous, many do not even survive the six weeks to slaughter.

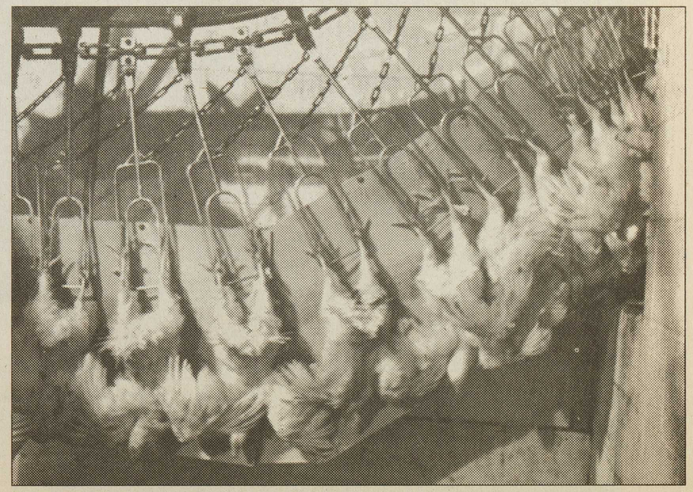
The early life of broiler chickens is similar to that of their cousins in the egg business. After hatching, chicks are frequently debeaked and then taken to the broiler house.

The birds reach a market weight of about four pounds in six weeks. During the last few weeks in the broiler house, when crowding is most severe, many farms use dim lights or near darkness to reduce fighting. When the birds are to be transported from the crowded, ammonia laden "warehouses" to the slaughterhouse, crews of "catchers" wade in. In the dead of night they grab the drowsy birds, breaking many bones in the process, and throw the hapless chickens into crates to be stacked on the trucks outside.

Over 240 million turkeys are mass produced each year in the USA by methods similar to those used with six billion broilers.

"In their behavior toward creatures, all men were Nazis. The smugness with which man could do with other species as he pleased exemplified the most extreme racist theories, the principle that might is right."

—Isaac Bashevis Singer, from "Enemies, A Love Story"



Birds pinned upside-down on the killing line. Their heads will be dragged through an electrified water-trough prior to having their throats slit.