



2022

Count Your Chickens Report

Company Progress Toward Better Animal Welfare





Are Companies **Being Transparent** About Animal Welfare?

More than ever, American consumers want to know where their food comes from. Accordingly, they expect companies to be transparent in their welfare and sourcing standards regarding their products and held accountable for the commitments they make. In recent years, many consumers have paid increasing attention to the treatment of animals raised for meat. Consumers have voiced concerns about animal welfare, and in response, many companies have committed to eliminating the cruelest practices from their supply chains.

But which companies are **demonstrating progress** on their animal welfare commitments?

This report examines which food companies are leading the industry by demonstrating progress toward their promised welfare improvements for chickens and which have not yet shown progress to their customers. For consumers to make informed decisions about which businesses they want to support, companies must uphold their welfare commitments and publicly demonstrate progress toward them.

What Happens to **Broiler Chickens**?

Each year, over nine billion chickens raised for meat (known as “broilers”) are killed in the United States—more than 16 times the number of pigs, cows, and laying hens combined.

The lives of broiler chickens are brief yet filled with tremendous suffering. Standard practices in the chicken industry fall dramatically short of consumers’ expectations for how animals should be treated and would in fact disturb most people.

The overwhelming majority of broiler chickens in the United States have been selectively bred for extremely rapid growth, which frequently results in immobility and

organ dysfunction, such as pulmonary hypertension and heart disease. Birds are locked in crowded sheds, where they spend their days sitting in their own excrement and inhaling irritating ammonia-laden air. Continual contact with wet, corrosive litter causes painful sores and feather loss.

When they are five to seven weeks old, chickens are shackled upside down by their legs while conscious and dragged through a pool of electrified water, which does not consistently stun the animals and causes painful shocks. A blade then slits their throats. Next, they are dunked in scalding water to remove their feathers, sometimes while the birds are still alive and able to feel pain.




How Is This Allowed to Happen?

The chicken industry benefits from a lack of transparency about the cruelty to which these animals are subjected during routine operations. By keeping customers in the dark, the industry has been able to avoid public accountability for years.

Many corporations adhere to welfare standards established by the National Chicken Council (NCC), an association representing companies that account for 95 percent of all broiler chickens raised and slaughtered in the United States. These guidelines simply codify standard factory-farming practices and are woefully inadequate to prevent the worst suffering for chickens.

Furthermore, no federal laws in the United States govern the treatment of broiler chickens, who are exempt from the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act. Dozens of undercover investigations into the broiler chicken industry have revealed tremendous suffering and pain. But investigations alone won't be able to help these animals.

What Is Being Done?

 In response to overwhelming pressure from consumers and animal advocates over the past several years, hundreds of restaurants, foodservice companies, manufacturers, and hospitality brands have promised to meet a set of higher welfare standards called the Better Chicken Commitment (BCC). In doing so, these companies have publicly recognized the need to improve treatment standards above and beyond the requirements of the NCC.

These BCC policies are time-bound with deadlines to meet improved standards between 2024 and 2026. The earliest adopters of the BCC published their policies in late 2016, giving themselves eight to 10 years for implementation.

Companies who published commitments frequently won praise from customers, NGOs, and the media.



Better Chicken Commitment Standards

Version 1:

By 2024, we will source only chicken certified by Global Animal Partnership (GAP) and require all chickens to be processed in a manner that avoids live-dumping and live-shackling and instead utilizes a pre-shackle, multistep controlled-atmosphere processing system that's widely hailed as more humane.

Version 2:

By 2024, we will require our chicken suppliers to do the following for 100 percent of our products:

1. Reduce stocking density to a maximum of six pounds per square foot, and prohibit all forms of broiler cages.
2. Provide birds an improved baseline environment* including the following:
 - a. At least three inches of friable litter covering the whole floor of the house, managed to maintain dry, friable condition and prevent caked or wet areas.
 - b. A minimum of eight hours of continuous light (≥ 50 lux) and six hours of continuous darkness daily (< 1 lux).
 - c. One or more types of functional enrichment (such as perches, platforms, or straw bales) that multiple birds can use at any time. The enrichments must be available by the time birds are 10 days old and maintained thereafter, dispersed throughout the house and available to the entire flock, with at least one enrichment for every 1,000 square feet or one enrichment per 1,000 birds.
3. Process chickens in a manner that avoids pre-stun handling and instead utilizes a multistep controlled-atmosphere processing system that induces an irreversible stun.
4. Demonstrate compliance with all standards via third-party auditing and annual public reporting on progress toward this commitment.

And by 2026:

5. Use only BCC-approved breeds that demonstrate higher welfare outcomes.[†]

*Adapted with permission from Global Animal Partnership's 5-Step® Animal Welfare Rating Standards for Chickens Raised for Meat, copyright 2018 Global Animal Partnership.

[†]Breeds that have been approved for use to meet the BCC: JA757, JA787, JA957, JA987, JACY87, or Norfolk Black; Rowan Ranger, Rambler Ranger, Ranger Classic, Ranger Premium, or Ranger Gold; Redbro M; Cobb-Sasso 200 (CS200); Cooks Venture Pioneer; or others that pass the breed welfare outcome assessments by either the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) or Global Animal Partnership (GAP).

Are Companies **Demonstrating Progress** Toward Their Commitments?

With just a few years until the promised BCC implementation deadlines, many major companies have made impressive strides toward improving broiler welfare in their supply chains. Some have begun reporting their current progress and are working with key stakeholders to ensure further improvements.

But others have not demonstrated transparency. Some companies have failed to publicly report any progress toward implementing the critical changes they promised. Others have removed parts of policies or even taken entire policies offline. These companies remain behind on the issue of public transparency and are not inspiring trust in consumers about their broiler welfare commitments.

Progress Leaders



The following companies are **leading the industry** and reporting measurable progress toward their broiler welfare goals:

- Albertsons
- Applegate
- Blue Apron
- Blue Sushi Sake Grill
- ButcherBox
- Cafe Spice
- Campbell Soup Company
- The Cheesecake Factory
- Chipotle Mexican Grill
- Elio North America
- Farmer's Fridge
- IKEA
- Natural Grocers
- Shake Shack
- Sprouts Farmers Market
- Square Baby
- Sweetgreen
- Thrive Market
- Unilever
- Whole Foods Market

Early Adopters Without Public Progress



The following companies have **failed to report measurable progress** toward their broiler welfare goals despite being among the first companies to establish policies:

- Aramark*
- Boston Market
- Compass Group
- Delaware North
- Sodexo
- Starbucks

*Recently committed to progress reporting; yet to report any progress.

Policy Removers



The following companies have **failed to report measurable progress** toward their broiler welfare goals and have **removed their previously public policy commitments**:

- Pret A Manger
- Tender Greens
- Zoup!

What Happens Next?

Businesses understand that their customers care deeply about how animals are treated. This core concern has fueled public demand that has prompted many companies to commit to improving their standards for broiler chickens. While a number of leading companies are taking the initiative to demonstrate transparency and communicate their progress to the public, others are lagging. It's time for all companies that have adopted BCC commitments to be accountable to their customers by demonstrating transparency and publicly reporting on their progress.

Consumers need to speak up for animals and make their voices heard so companies know how much their customers care about animal welfare. Companies should report their progress, which will inform customers and enable them to seek out and support welfare-minded businesses.



Chicken Producers

In response to the growing demand for broiler chickens raised with higher welfare standards, a number of suppliers have stepped forward to provide broilers aligned with the BCC:



Perdue Farms

- "26% of chickens have enrichments, such as boxes, perches, platforms and pecking objects with natural light and outdoor access."
- "8% of our chickens are rendered insensible using controlled atmosphere stunning."
- "We have farms certified to raise GAP 2, GAP 3 and GAP 5 birds."
- "39% harvested under 6 lbs per square foot."



Wayne Farms

"To help customers meet 2024 commitments, Wayne Farms introduced Global Animal Partnership (GAP) Step 2 rated products at the end of 2017 under the NAKED TRUTH® Premium Chicken brand. ... Chickens for NAKED TRUTH are processed using a multi-stage, controlled atmosphere stunning system."



Mary's Chickens (Pitman Family Farms)

"We will continue to offer only chicken that is certified and labeled by Global Animal Partnership (GAP). ... And we will continue to process all our chicken using a multistep controlled-atmosphere processing system. In taking these steps, Mary's is proud to offer current and future customers products that meet both versions of The Better Chicken Commitment."

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The following reflects published statements as of May 30, 2022.

Albertsons	<p>BCC Version 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • >85% GAP-certified <p><i>Note: Albertsons aims to have at least 50% of its O Organics fresh chicken certified to GAP-3 standards by 2024.</i></p>
Applegate	<p>BCC Version 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% meets standards for litter requirements, lighting, enrichments, stocking density, and third-party auditing.
Blue Apron	<p>BCC Version 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 95% meets standard for stocking density.
Blue Sushi Sake Grill	<p>BCC Version 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 79% meets standard for stocking density. • 100% meets standard for litter and lighting.
ButcherBox	<p>BCC Version 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% GAP-certified • 75% meets standard for CAS.
Cafe Spice	<p>BCC Version 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% GAP-certified
Campbell Soup Company	<p>BCC Version 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13% meets standards for litter and enrichments. ○ 76% GAP-certified for Pacific Foods brand <p><i>Note: In 2017, Campbell published a full BCC policy. In 2021, the company backtracked by limiting the scope of its time-bound policy commitment to address only litter and enrichments. Campbell should be held accountable to its original, full policy.</i></p>
The Cheesecake Factory	<p>BCC Version 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 34% meets standard for stocking density. • 18% meets standard for environmental enrichments. • <1% meets standard for CAS. <p><i>Note: The Cheesecake Factory's broiler welfare policy has a deadline of 2025. Additionally, The Cheesecake Factory reports, "34% of our supply comes from slower growth breeds and/or practices." This does not meet the requirements of the BCC standard.</i></p>
Chipotle Mexican Grill	<p>BCC Version 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14% meets standard for CAS.
Elior North America	<p>BCC Version 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2% meets BCC standards for stocking density, lighting, litter, enrichments, and CAS.
Farmer's Fridge	<p>BCC Version 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% GAP-certified

IKEA	<p>BCC Version 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21% meets standards for stocking density, lighting, litter, enrichments, CAS, and breed. <p><i>Note: IKEA's broiler welfare policy has a deadline of 2025 and has a global scope.</i></p>
Natural Grocers	<p>BCC Version 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • >90% meets BCC standards for stocking density, enriched environment, CAS, and third-party auditing. <p><i>Note: Policy applies to fresh and frozen meat departments where chicken is the main ingredient.</i></p>
Shake Shack	<p>BCC Version 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% meets standard for litter. • 30% meets standard for lighting.
Sprouts Farmers Market	<p>BCC Version 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • >17% GAP-certified • >17% meets standard for CAS. <p><i>Note: This policy applies to Sprouts Butcher Shop fresh chicken and one-pan meals, full-service case, and rotisserie chicken. Sprouts Farmers Market's broiler welfare policy has the following deadlines:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2024: BCC standards for lighting, litter, and enrichments • 2025: BCC standards for stocking density • 2026: BCC standards for CAS
Square Baby	<p>BCC Version 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% GAP-certified • 100% meets standard for CAS.
Sweetgreen	<p>BCC Version 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% meets standards for stocking density, litter, lighting, enrichments, and third-party auditing.
Thrive Market	<p>BCC Version 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% GAP-certified • 75% meets standard for CAS.
Unilever	<p>BCC Version 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.2% meets standard for stocking density. <p><i>Note: Policy is global.</i></p>
Whole Foods Market	<p>BCC Version 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% GAP-certified • 81% meets standard for CAS. <p><i>Note: Whole Foods Market's policy applies to chicken sold in fresh meat department and found in prepared-foods items made in store. The CAS policy deadline is 2026.</i></p>