

WHITE STRIPING AT WHOLE FOODS

EXPOSÉ OF WHOLE FOODS' LIES AND
SALE OF FAT-STREAKED MEAT



MERCY FOR
ANIMALS

ABOUT THIS INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

In February 2025, Mercy For Animals supporters and volunteers surveyed Whole Foods locations across North America for evidence of **white striping disease* in chicken meat**, a muscle disorder plaguing chickens bred for extreme growth. The findings are alarming and highlight the urgent need for Whole Foods to fulfill their promise to stop sourcing ultrafast-growing birds. This exposé addresses the disturbing truth behind white striping, the prevalence of signs of muscle abnormality in Whole Foods' chicken supply, and Mercy For Animals' recommendations for the company.

MORE ON WHITE STRIPING

Whole Foods [reports](#) that as of 2023, over 95% of their chicken meat still comes from Franken chickens—birds who have been selectively bred to grow unnaturally large and fast to produce as much meat as possible in very little time. Because of the industry's extreme breeding practices, most chickens raised for meat reach, on average, 6.54 pounds in 47 days—hitting market weight **six times faster** than they did in 1925.

Franken chickens' abnormal growth contributes to high rates of muscle diseases, the effects of which are often visible to the naked eye in chicken meat. One common disorder, white striping, occurs when muscle fibers starved of oxygen die and are replaced with fat. White striping is visible as white lines of fat across the breast.



Image source: Richard A. Bailey et al., "The Genetic Basis of Pectoralis Major Myopathies in Modern Broiler Chicken Lines," *Poultry Science* 94, no. 12 (October 2015): 2870–9.

****White striping disease is tied to animal suffering due to fast growth but isn't detrimental to human health. Mercy For Animals is unaware of any health risks posed by eating chicken meat with white striping.***



Typical Factory Farm
Photo: Andrew Skowron | HIDDEN | We Animals Media

UNNATURAL GROWTH, UNBEARABLE SUFFERING

Breeding for extreme growth leads to more than just striped meat; it also causes profound suffering. **Bred to grow at an abnormally rapid rate, these chickens experience severe physical distress.** Frankenchickens' underdeveloped bones and joints frequently can't support them, so the birds often collapse. These young chickens commonly endure lameness, heart disease, and organ failure. Tragically, many struggle to walk or even hold themselves up long enough to reach food and water.

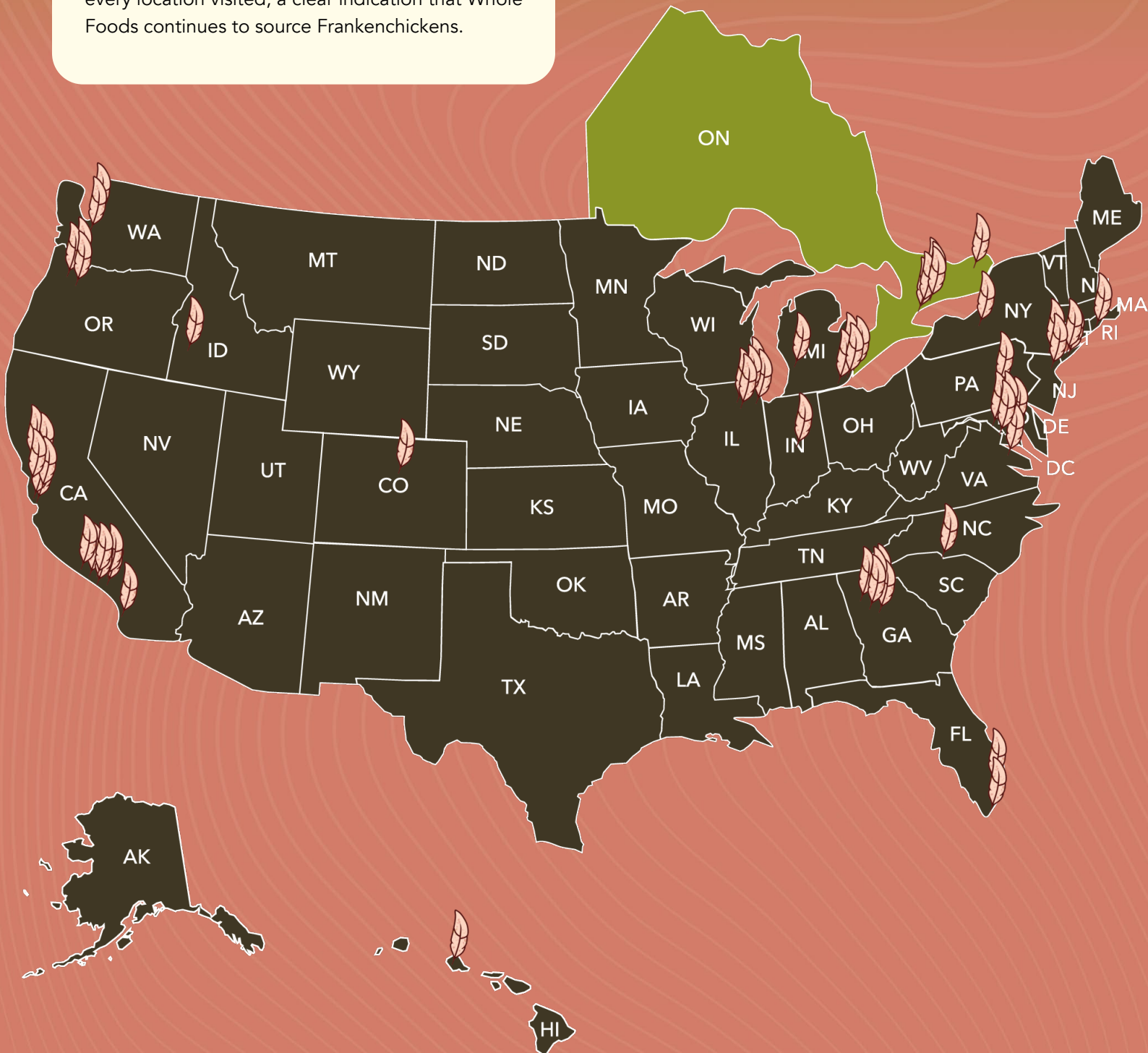


METHODOLOGY

In February 2025, Mercy For Animals activated their network of supporters and volunteers across the United States and Canada to investigate chicken products at local Whole Foods stores. Volunteers meticulously inspected the refrigerated meat sections, documenting instances of white striping in chicken products with photographic evidence.

THE DISTURBING FINDINGS: 100% OF LOCATIONS SURVEYED SELL CHICKEN MEAT WITH WHITE STRIPING, COMMON IN MEAT FROM FRANKENCHICKENS.

Participants investigated chicken products at **88 Whole Foods locations** in North America. The stores surveyed span **52 cities across 18 U.S. states and six cities in one Canadian province.** Meat with clear signs of white striping was found at every location visited, a clear indication that Whole Foods continues to source Franken chickens.



EXAMPLES OF THE WHITE STRIPING DOCUMENTED ACROSS NORTH AMERICA ARE BELOW.



Captured at a Whole Foods store in Los Angeles, CA



Captured at a Whole Foods store in Boise, ID



Captured at a Whole Foods store in New York, NY



Captured at a Whole Foods store in Honolulu, HI



Captured at a Whole Foods store in Chicago, IL



Captured at a Whole Foods store in Ottawa, ON



Captured at a Whole Foods store in Boynton Beach, FL



Captured at a Whole Foods store in Alexandria, VA



Captured at a Whole Foods store in Kentwood, MI

WHOLE FOODS' LIE

And How the Company Profits off Deception

In a 2016 [press release](#), Whole Foods announced a commitment to ending their sale of meat from ultrafast-growing chickens by 2024 and expressed support for transitioning to higher-welfare breeds. The commitment responded to “unresolvable welfare issues inherent in fast-growing breeds of chicken,” according to the company. Disappointingly, as of 2023, the company has made less than 5% progress toward their goal of sourcing only higher-welfare breeds. Research shows that replacing Frankenchickens with higher-welfare breeds is one of the chicken welfare standards with the most potential to reduce animal suffering. While Whole Foods has made improvements to chickens' living environments and progressed toward a less cruel slaughter method in their operations, the welfare benefits of these changes are limited if Whole Foods continues to use fast-growing breeds whose genetics doom them to suffer.

Evidence of white striping at all Whole Foods stores surveyed across North America is clear proof that the company lied and broke their promise to animals and consumers.

Despite branding themselves as an ethical leader in animal welfare that prioritizes high-quality food, Whole Foods continues to profit from inhumane breeding practices. The company engages in “humanewashing” by projecting a false image of animal care while neglecting their pledge to stop selling meat from fast-growing birds. Unlike Applegate, Natural Grocers, Aramark, and other industry leaders that have set clear roadmaps outlining how they will eliminate cruel breeding practices from their operations, Whole Foods is leaving the public wondering whether they have any plans to do the same.



Photo: Benjamin Blomstedt | We Animals Media
Typical Factory Farm

THREATS TO ANIMAL HEALTH

Factory farms create environments that facilitate the spread of disease, and the genetics of Frankenchickens exacerbate the danger. Selective breeding for unnaturally rapid growth causes Frankenchickens to suffer from weakened immune systems, making the birds highly susceptible to avian influenza and other deadly diseases. Whole Foods continues to prioritize profit over animal health, benefiting from a broken system that puts birds at a higher risk for disease.

WHAT SHOULD WHOLE FOODS DO NEXT?

As a market leader, Whole Foods must be held accountable and honor their commitment to removing the most severe animal cruelty from their supply chain.

Whole Foods must publish an incremental time-bound plan in the form of annual percentages toward fulfilling their abandoned promise to stop selling birds bred to suffer.



HOW YOU CAN HELP

Visit WholeFoodsChicken.com to take action urging Whole Foods to address the worst form of cruelty in their operations.