

New York must join in banning cruelty to farm animals

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Nine years ago I attended a seminar on legal issues related to industrial farming and became a vegetarian.

I learned about battery cages, gestation crates and veal cages. I saw how confinement crates and cages deprive calves, pigs and chickens of the ability to move about and engage in natural behavior. I saw how gestation crates cause pregnant pigs untold suffering for nearly their entire four-month pregnancies. And I learned about how battery cages confine hens, and make it impossible for them to spread their wings, turn around and clean themselves. I learned that male chicks at egg farms are fed into wood chippers and used for fertilizer. I wanted no part of that cruelty.

Since then I've realized

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that simply opting out of industrial animal processing does not make the cruelty any less real. Turning your back on the suffering of helpless animals does not make it go away. It continues unabated. Calves are still taken from their mothers within days of birth, and are crammed into crates, tethered by their necks to await fattening and slaughter without the ability to move freely — or take a single step. Laying hens are still confined in cages and spend their entire productive lives in an area no larger than a sheet of copy paper.

Gandhi said that "the greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated." We can do better in New York.

Florida voters recently

banned gestation crates in a 55 percent-45 percent vote. Arizona voters banned both gestation crates and veal crates in a 62 percent-38 percent vote. Oregon's legislature banned gestation crates, and Colorado's legislature banned both gestation and veal crates. This past November, California voters bravely passed Proposition 2 and banned gestation crates, veal crates and battery cages by a 63.5 percent-36.5 percent vote, despite extensive industry efforts to maintain the practices. And just last month, Maine banned both veal and gestation crates. The entire European Union has also banned both veal and gestation crates.

Now it is our turn. Legislation has been introduced in the New York State Assembly that would phase out pig gestation crates, veal crates and hen battery cages by

2015, and would criminalize the cruelty. The Assembly Bill is A08163. Pick up your telephone or open your e-mail and write to your Assembly members and implore them to add their names to this bill as a co-sponsor. Ask them to do all that they can to see this bill makes it through committee as written and that it is not watered down by big agribusiness interests. Pick up the phone or open your e-mail and ask your state senator to sponsor identical legislation in the Senate. Then ask them to do all they can to see that this bill does not succumb to the lobbyists and henchman of the farm interests that seek to maintain both the cruel conditions and their bottom lines at the animals' expense.

The writer is a Valley Cottage resident.



File photo/The Journal News
Free-range chickens roam at Ryder Farm in North Salem.