

Food for Thought

**By Reg P. Wydeven
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Last week we spent Thanksgiving with our closest family friends. Our host, Gregg, prepared a smorgasbord of delicacies, including mouth-watering turkey, juicy tenderloin and succulent ham. He also had cheesy corn, green beans with bacon and deviled eggs. It was the most delicious Thanksgiving meal I've ever had. If you were a vegan, however, your choices would have been limited.

The holidays, and Thanksgiving in particular, are pretty hard on animals. By my count, four different animals contributed to my gluttony. While PETA would have been bummed about my feast, there was some good news for animal lovers last week.

First of all, the city of West Hollywood voted to approve a local ordinance banning the sale of clothing made from the skin or pelt of animals with hair, wool or fur. The City Council voted 3-1 to approve the ordinance, which is believed to be the first of its kind in America.

The no-fur ordinance is not the first animal-friendly law in West Hollywood. Other ordinances ban the declawing of cats, and formally recognize pets as "companions" while their owners are identified as "guardians."

While favorable to animals, West Hollywood still doesn't allow its residents to keep domesticated chickens. If it did, McDonald's restaurants may be interested, as the restaurant chain will now be looking for a new source of eggs for their highly popular Egg McMuffins.

The fast food juggernaut used to get its eggs from Sparboe Farms, the country's fifth largest egg producer. In a statement last week, however, McDonald's officials announced that they "will no longer accept" Sparboe Farms eggs after learning that the company was cited by the Food and Drug Administration for "significant...and serious violations" in the production of eggs. The FDA cited at least 13 violations at five different Sparboe locations of the recently enacted federal egg rule meant to prevent dangerous salmonella outbreaks.

The egg rule came about as a result of last year's salmonella outbreak that affected more than 1,900 people and was traced to Wright County Eggs. The outbreak caused a huge health scare and led to more than a half-billion eggs being destroyed. So long as egg whites and yolks are cooked thoroughly enough to be hard, salmonella bacteria is easily killed. McDonald's reassured its customers by pointing out that all of its eggs are thoroughly cooked before being sold.

In addition to McDonald's, Target also announced that it would stop selling eggs from Sparboe, including pulling its eggs off their shelves immediately. The retailer carried Sparboe eggs at its Super Target stores nationwide, but dropped them after they were "made aware of the unacceptable conditions in the company's egg laying facilities."

The conditions were exposed by Mercy for Animals, an animal rights group, in an undercover video shot over the summer inside Sparboe facilities in three states. The video was taken on a one-hour guided tour of the Sparboe facility in Vincent, Iowa, which is the source of all eggs for McDonald's restaurants located west of the Mississippi. The video shows unsanitary conditions in the factory and repeated acts of animal cruelty. Mercy for Animals initiated its investigation in an effort to show a link between "factory farms," or large scale, low-cost egg producers, and health hazards.

Sparboe vows to improve their practices so they'll never have egg on their face again.

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