

DELIVERING BETTER

The painful truth behind food deliveries

August 2022



New Zealanders care

about the welfare of animals. They are increasingly choosing to buy cage-free eggs and free-range meat.

Throughout the pandemic, meal kits and food brands who deliver have had significantly increased sales, all while hiding the truth about the suffering of chickens due to the abnormal breeds used.

Around the world, food businesses are listening to the concerns of their consumers. More than 500 have already committed to improving the living and slaughter standards chickens face on the farms in their supply chain.

Whilst some food brands in Aotearoa have committed to these standards, most food businesses are lagging behind and some are keeping their heads in the sand.

**We stand with you to
fight for better.**

Shockingly,

the vast majority of the chickens raised for meat in Aotearoa come from industrial farms that use chickens selectively bred to grow unnaturally fast, reaching a size larger than a natural adult chicken in just six weeks.

Because of their **abnormally fast-growth**, these birds face many avoidable health problems such as heart disease. A Ministry for Primary Industries study has found that up to a third of chickens suffer from painful lameness¹.

Due to the unnatural breeding and terrible living conditions, **every year around 2,000,000 birds die before they reach slaughter at six weeks²** - either on the shed floor, or removed and killed by a worker. This is according to the industry's own figures.

They are packed into sheds so tightly that, at the end of their life, **they are left with roughly the size of an A4 page to exist in**. The litter is never changed in their short lives, forcing them to live in their own excrement - ammonia fills the air and with legs that struggle to hold their weight, they often suffer from burns to their skin from the excrement left on the ground.

What is the solution?

Food brands who care about animal welfare, must address the underlying issues with chicken farming by shifting to using breeds of chicken who grow more naturally. A set of minimum standards developed by over 30 leading animal protection organisations, known as **The Better Chicken Commitment**, has become the global standard for chickens raised for food. These standards have now been adapted for the Australia-New Zealand region by a coalition of organisations including Animals Aotearoa, SPCA New Zealand, Veterinarians for Animal Welfare Aotearoa, World Animal Protection, Compassion in World Farming, The Humane League, and six others.

¹ Ministry for Primary Industries. New Zealanders' views of the primary sector. (2017)

² <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/in-depth/455865/pressure-on-takeaway-chains-as-domino-s-ditches-fast-chickens>.

In New Zealand in 2017, The Ministry for Primary Industries issued a report on New Zealanders' views on farmed animals.

Over 95% of respondents agreed

“It is important that the welfare of farmed animals in New Zealand is protected.”



The Better Chicken Commitment:



1. Use healthier breeds with better welfare

Abnormally fast-growing breeds are at the core of many health and welfare problems for chickens raised for food. By transitioning away from these manufactured breeds, many welfare problems can be improved or avoided altogether.



2. Provide more space

Chickens should be stocked at a maximum of 30kg/m² (approximately 14 birds per m² at a slaughter weight of 2.2 kg). More space allows for more movement and better quality of life.



3. Improve their living conditions

Chickens should be provided with perches to help satisfy their natural instinct to perch off the ground and helps their skin health by removing contact with dirty litter. Housing must give natural light and enrichments for them to peck at.



4. Reduce stress at slaughter

In the current waterbath stunning systems, birds are hung upside down while fully conscious, causing pain and distress. Due to the variation of size, some birds receive an insufficient stun and have their necks cut while fully conscious. Controlled Atmosphere Stunning (CAS) vastly reduces suffering by ensuring effective stunning and less handling.



5. Implement third-party checks and public reporting

Greater transparency is needed in the chicken industry, ensuring the public is kept informed of progress towards achieving corporate welfare commitments and farms are audited to ensure compliance with standards.

[See the full Better Chicken Commitment and the signatories.](#)

These standards ensure chickens have significantly better welfare with the overdue shift to healthier, more naturally-growing chickens.

Why the industry term 'free-range' doesn't actually mean higher welfare

A number of the companies ranked have committed to only sourcing so-called 'free-range' chicken - an industry-made standard, not endorsed by any independent animal welfare group, which unfortunately carries very little value to the welfare of the animals.

Here's why:

- Free-range chickens are the same unnaturally fast-growing breeds, with the fast growth being the primary cause of chickens' suffering;
- Whilst called 'free-range', due to the difficulty abnormally fast-growing chickens have in holding their own body weight or walking, studies show that many chickens never actually get outside;
- Although the stocking density inside on a free-range farm is lower than the minimum legal standard on fully-indoor chicken sheds, it fails to meet the more meaningfully determined standards of the Better Chicken Commitment.

Life on a 'free-range' farm in New Zealand

Bred to grow abnormally fast, this young chicken hatched just five weeks ago...

Her heart and other organs are underdeveloped, so she struggles to breathe.

She's crammed in with 36,000 other birds; living in a space the size of this page.

She is on a free-range farm, but her legs aren't strong enough to make it outside.

She can't escape the faeces-filled litter, where the ammonia burns her skin.

... her life is filled with unimaginable chronic pain and suffering.





Change is happening...

in 2021, Domino's became the first company in New Zealand to commit to the Better Chicken Commitment and in July 2022, they were joined by ready-meal brand SwoleFoods.

Consumers around the world are using their purchasing decisions to 'vote' for better welfare standards for chickens, and across Europe, the UK, the US and Canada, companies are signing up to the Better Chicken Commitment.

There are more than 500 food-business commitments to the Better Chicken Commitment globally. These higher welfare standards are becoming the industry standard in progressive countries.

However, New Zealand food brands have been slow to follow global progress when it comes to improving conditions for chickens bred for meat, with some failing to communicate or provide transparency about the welfare chickens in their supply chain.



"We can either wait, and have to join in the future, or we can be the ones that lead the way and do the right thing, because that's the right thing to do."

- Domino's New Zealand General Manager
Cameron Toomey



"At SwoleFoods, a huge part of our menu is made with dishes including chicken and hence we are happy to support this movement to ensure the ingredients we use are supplied using the best practices possible."

- Swolefoods Director
Taran Machra

The Ranking

Committed to the BCC



Communicating on the BCC



Failing to communicate on the BCC



The Double-standards List

It is particularly disappointing that all food businesses marked with a 'double-standards' stamp, are operating in New Zealand and have committed to the BCC overseas, but not here!

They clearly recognise that their overseas customers deserve and want higher welfare for chickens, so **why the double-standard for us?**





This report was published in August 2022. It is correct to the best of our knowledge, as of August 3, 2022. These companies' status will be regularly updated at this [link](#).

The food business logos are used for commentary purposes and Animals Aotearoa is not affiliated with the organisations. This report is intended to provide more transparency for key stakeholders and consumers alike, to find out which delivery companies are taking action or lagging behind on the Better Chicken Commitment.

If you have any questions regarding this report, please contact corporaterelations@animalsaotearoa.org.