

July 21, 2004

Lonnie "Bo" Pilgrim, Chair
Pilgrim's Pride Corporation
110 S. Texas St.
Pittsburg, TX 75686
903-856-7505 (fax)

Dear Mr. Pilgrim,

In January, we asked you to consider a new technology called controlled-atmosphere killing (CAK), which would spare billions of birds killed by Pilgrim's Pride from the most stressful and excruciating of slaughter experiences: the process of first being hung upside-down by their legs and then proceeding down a line that may result in their being immersed, while still fully or partially conscious, in a scald bath. We were disappointed not to hear back from you, because our research and consultation with experts confirm that CAK is the only way to alleviate the enormous suffering now experienced by birds during the slaughter process.

Obviously, we take great pains to properly research these matters, but we don't do so simply as a hypothetical exercise. Since Pilgrim's Pride did not respond, we decided to take a closer look at how your company treats animals during the slaughter process. As the saying goes, "a picture is worth 1,000 words," and it is an understatement to say that the pictures of Pilgrim's Pride's treatment of chickens are as appalling as one could possibly imagine. The results of our investigation will prove to your company that CAK is a moral imperative.

Our video footage of the Moorefield, W.Va., Pilgrim's Pride slaughterhouse shows **fully conscious chickens' being violently kicked, stomped upon, and slammed into the floors and walls by workers on a routine basis**. Eyewitness testimony from the facility reveals further torture by employees in various forms, including **ripping birds' beaks off, spray painting their faces, twisting their heads off, spitting tobacco into their mouths and eyes, and breaking them in half—all while the birds are still alive**. Top poultry-welfare experts from around the world who have viewed the footage agree that this treatment of chickens is not only cruel, but completely reprehensible (references available upon request). Sadly, the incidents in the enclosed video represent only a small portion of the abuse we documented. And while nothing can undo the pain and suffering caused by these disgraceful acts, you do have the ability to implement CAK and prevent such abuses from continuing.

We also documented evidence proving that **these animals' intense suffering starts long before they reach the slaughterhouse**. On a daily basis, our investigator found severe ammonia burns on the feet of incoming chickens at the plant (see enclosed photos), and the problem was openly acknowledged in the minutes from plant meetings. Experts agree that this condition is caused by overcrowding and poor litter quality on the farm. In other words, excrement from birds crammed so tightly together in poorly ventilated sheds results in high levels of ammonia, which burns painful lesions into their feet.

Pilgrim's Pride is legally obliged to abide by state cruelty-to-animals statutes, so we have presented the case to the local prosecuting attorney for consideration. But the evidence should also serve as a slap-in-the-face reminder that you urgently need to implement a



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strong set of animal-welfare standards—otherwise, nothing will change. For a company that thrives on forcing animals to endure filthy, overcrowded conditions on farms and painful killing methods in slaughterhouses, it is incomprehensible that there is **absolutely nothing** about welfare in your employee handbook. Sadly, it is also entirely consistent with the disregard for animals we documented.

The fact is that **every single abuse in the enclosed video could have been avoided** had you adopted CAK when we first wrote to you about it. CAK not only ensures that birds are painlessly put to sleep *before* they reach the hanging area where this cruelty was documented (thus making it impossible for workers to intentionally cause pain and suffering), but also quickly pays for itself within a mere 3.5 to 4.5 years of purchasing the required machinery. We enclose a report with scientific references about CAK for your review.

We renew our call for Pilgrim's Pride to implement CAK, and until it can do so, we ask that you immediately install video-surveillance cameras at key handling points in all your slaughterhouses, especially in the live-hang areas. Cameras serve as a deterrent to cruel and illegal acts. Various institutions, including law-enforcement agencies, have found the mere presence of cameras to have an inherent corrective effect on behavior. The gathered footage could also be used during independent audits to see exactly how chickens are being treated and help identify areas for improvement.

The public will be shocked to see the grotesque abuses inflicted on these gentle chickens by Pilgrim's Pride employees. **If you care one bit about your company's reputation, you will develop a strong set of welfare standards for all your farms, immediately place surveillance cameras at all your slaughterhouses, and commit to permanently phasing in CAK.**

Should you wish to discuss the matter, I can be reached at 757-622-7382, extension 8013; via fax at 757-628-0784; or via e-mail at CemA@peta.org. My colleague Dr. Steven Gross, PETA's corporate affairs consultant, will be in touch with you soon to follow up on this matter. Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,



Cem Akin, Research Associate

cc: O.B. Goolsby Jr., President and Chief Operating Officer

enclosures: Video titled "Cruelty to Chickens at Pilgrim's Pride"
Photos of ammonia burns on chicken feet
Report titled "The Case for Controlled-Atmosphere Killing of Poultry in Transport Containers Prior to Shackling as a Means for More Humane Slaughter Than Electrical Stunning"