



Video footage allegedly shows, from left: a heap of live poultry; a chicken being smashed against a wall; and another being kicked across a room

Peta

Kentucky Fried Carnage? Fast-food giant in a flap after 'torture' exposé

BY DAVID USBORNE
in New York

WITH A casual wink and a cheeky smile, Kentucky Fried Chicken's founder, Colonel Harland Sanders has urged generations to sample his "secret recipe". Little did customers know that live birds were smashed against walls, spat on and tortured before being turned into Popcorn Chicken and Oven Roasted Twisters.

Kentucky Fried Chicken is now being billed Kentucky Fried Carnage. In a shocking video, animal rights activists yesterday exposed the grim reality of how the company's chickens were being treated at an American poultry plant.

It is difficult to watch the film, shot by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (Peta), and not be revolted.

It is not the first time that KFC, the fast-food chain launched by Col. Sanders in the 1950s and now established in 80 countries, has run into trouble with Peta. Last year the group sued KFC for improper treatment of its chickens and campaigned for a consumers' boycott. At the time, KFC pledged to ensure that its suppliers treated birds humanely.

The latest video, revealed yesterday, was taken by an undercover investigator for Peta over several months inside a

COLONEL SANDERS' BIG IDEA: A BRIEF HISTORY OF KENTUCKY FRIED CHICKEN



- KFC Corporation, based in Louisville, Kentucky, was founded in 1939 by Colonel Harland Sanders.
- There are more than 11,000 KFCs in over 80 countries and territories around the world.
- KFC is part of Yum! Brands, Inc., which also owns Taco Bell and Pizza Hut.
- KFC boasts of a 'secret recipe', a 'blend of 11 herbs and spices', developed by the Colonel when he ran a restaurant and motel in Corbin, Kentucky.
- Pamela Anderson and comedian Richard Pryor are among celebrities who have spoken out against KFC. The Dalai Lama requested the company not open an outlet in Tibet.

West Virginia plant owned by Pilgrim's Pride, the second largest processor of chickens in the United States and a supplier to KFC. In a letter to Yum! Brands, which owns KFC, and forwarded to news organisations, Peta says its investigator witnessed workers "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."

The group is pressing the au-

thorities in West Virginia to prosecute employees in the Pilgrim's Pride plant shown in the video abusing the birds, as well as its managers. For its part, Yum! Brands told *The New York Times* that it "will require that the employee or employees responsible will be terminated".

Other shocking undercover videos have been shot on Peta's behalf at chicken plants in countries around the world - including in Britain.

After viewing the grainy black-and-white footage taken

inside its West Virginia plant, named KFC's "Supplier of the Year" in 1997, officials at Pilgrim's Pride said they would open an immediate investigation. The company, which saw its share price drop by 7 per cent in early trading yesterday, said it was "appalled" by what it saw. In one shot, workers jump on live chickens with their entire body weight, sending blood and innards splashing on the lens of the hidden camera.

First details of the tape were reported by *The New York*

Times yesterday. The undercover investigator, who asked to remain anonymous, told the paper that he had witnessed "hundreds" of acts of cruelty inside the plant. Mostly, the workers appear to have been acting either out of sheer boredom with their jobs or out of anger with management, sometimes for making them work too many hours. The acts of cruelty, some of which are shown on the tape, include spitting juice from chewing tobacco into the eyes of birds, squeezing them as tight-

ly as possible to spray faeces over other birds and ripping off the heads of birds to write graffiti with their gushing blood.

"I have visited many poultry slaughterhouses, but I have never seen cruelty to chickens to the extent shown on this videotape," Dr Donald Broom, professor of animal welfare at Cambridge University, told the *Times*. "It would be grounds for a successful prosecution for cruelty to animals in most countries".

The tape was to be posted on a Peta website called www.kentuckyfriedcruelty.com.

One sequence filmed on 6 April this year, shows workers amusing themselves by throwing 114 birds against a wall, their stunned bodies collecting beneath it. At one point a supervisor walks past and shouts "Hold your fire" so he can safely pass. Once out of the way, he tells the workers to "carry on".

It was in response to the earlier pressure from the animal rights group, that KFC posted a pledge on its website that it was "committed to the humane treatment of animals".

It added that it had created an advisory council of veterinarians to monitor the issue and would "only deal with suppliers who provide an environment that is free from cruelty, abuse and neglect".

Pilgrim's Pride would seem to fall some way beyond the boundaries of this promise.