ANIMAL WELFARE COMMITTEE REPORT

March 11, 2025



Illustration by Olexa Hewryk

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By Sarah Chandler, for the Animal Welfare Committee

The Park Slope Food Coop Animal Welfare Committee is a nine-person committee that creates guides, articles and tips about the treatment of animals in the production of products sold by the PSFC. Our goal is to provide transparent, factual information for members about the animal-based products sold in the Coop, as well as plant-based alternatives and products that might have been tested on animals. We have guides for beef, chicken, pork, fish, milk, butter and plant-based milks and egg replacements,

and a guide to cosmetic and household products. We are working on a variety of more complex product guides, such as yogurt, ice cream, cheese and pet food.

To create our guides, we start our research by getting product lists from buyers and surveying Coop shelves. We then develop a series of questions to ask farmers and producers, based on known animal welfare issues for that species, as outlined by organizations devoted to the humane treatment of animals, as well as questions that have been raised by PSFC members.

> WE CREATE PRODUCT GUIDES SO MEMBERS CAN LEARN ABOUT THE TREATMENT OF ANIMALS AS THEY ARE MAKING THEIR FOOD CHOICES.

We ask about the animals' living conditions, what they are fed, breeding practices, body modifications (for example, partial or complete amputation of tails, beaks or horns), and slaughter practices. Based on these interviews and/or surveys with farmers and producers, and information from product websites, we create product guides so members can learn about the treatment of animals as they are making their food choices.

There are many limitations to this work: We cannot always get a response from producers; we don't have the capacity to independently verify the claims a farmer or producer makes; and in many cases the producers themselves have no way of tracking animal welfare because they source from a huge number of places (tracking pet food sources is a particular challenge).

We continuously look for ways to provide more information to the membership about animal welfare issues relating to Coop products. To that end, in December of 2024, we hosted Andrew deCoriolis, the Executive Director of Farm Forward. Through campaigns, publications and consulting, Farm Forward advocates for safe, healthy and humane animal farming. They work closely with food companies, universities and city

municipalities to help them improve the welfare of animals in their supply chains. For example, Farm Forward leads the development of the Good Food Purchasing Policy (GFPP)'s animal welfare standards for municipalities and public school systems. In 2024, Farm Forward released the results of a comprehensive investigation into Alexandre Family Farms, a leading certified organic, humane and "regenerative" dairy company, which uncovered systematic animal abuse and likely violations of several certification standards.

> "HUMANEWASHING" IS AN EFFORT TO MARKET ANIMAL PRODUCTS TO CONSCIENTIOUS CONSUMERS THROUGH DECEPTIVE PACKAGING AND LABELING BY CREATING THE ILLUSION OF GOOD ANIMAL WELFARE PRACTICES.

During our meeting, we asked Andrew questions about how our committee can better inform PSFC members about animal welfare issues related to the products we carry and at the point of purchase and how to educate ourselves about current standards and labels and improve our guides. Farm Forward has recently been working on a campaign to end "humanewashing" on food labels. "Humanewashing" is an effort to market animal products to conscientious consumers through deceptive packaging and labeling by creating the illusion of good animal welfare practices. Labels such as "Cage Free," "Humanely Raised" and "Natural" are examples of humanewashing: These labels are not standardized, are often self-certified, and do not require third parties to validate animal welfare conditions. Since product labels can't be trusted to provide an accurate view of animal treatment, our committee works to provide members with the best information we have about the products the Coop sells.

We have gotten feedback from many members who assume that animal-based products at the Coop are procured because they have higher animal welfare standards. Buyers carefully consider every item that is carried at the Coop, but when it comes to animal welfare, many products we carry may not be the best options available. We will continue improving how we inform the membership in 2025 (and beyond), and we

encourage everyone to educate themselves about the products they purchase from the Coop.