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With a New Afterword by the Author

Slaughterhouse is the first book of its kind to explore the impact that unprecedented changes in the meatpacking industry over the last twenty-five years—particularly industry consolidation, increased line speeds, and deregulation—have had on workers, animals, and consumers. It is also the first time ever that workers have spoken publicly about what's really taking place behind the closed doors of America's slaughterhouses.

In this new paperback edition, author Gail A. Eisnitz brings the story up to date since the book's original publication. She describes the ongoing efforts by the Humane Farming Association to improve conditions in the meatpacking industry, media exposés that have prompted reforms resulting in multimillion dollar appropriations by Congress to try to enforce federal inspection laws, and a favorable decision by the Supreme Court to block construction of what was slated to be one of the largest hog factory farms in the country. Nonetheless, Eisnitz makes it clear that abuses continue and much work still needs to be done.

Slaughterhouse: The Shocking Story of Greed, Neglect, And Inhumane Treatment Inside the U.S. Meat Industry Details

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Sarah says

This is not an easy read. Although it is on my top 5 list of books that have touched me the most, it is also the book that changed my life. I do not recommend it unless you're truly prepared for what the book is about. When I think about the day I finished reading it, I realize how much I appreciate the hardships Gail A. Eisnitz had to go through to make this book happen. Although it is a hard read, it was a necessary read for me to understand what really goes behind the doors of the U.S. Meat Industry. I will always be grateful to this author.

J.T. says

This one's a life changer. If it were required reading in highschool I'm fairly certain we'd have a nation of vegetarians. I tend to read a lot of books dealing with animal welfare, and many of them are dry and factual. This one reads like a thriller while simultaneously informing.

Andrew Collins says

For anyone who does not know anything about what happens in slaughterhouses (spoiler: animals are slaughtered) this book would represent a strong and much needed dose of reality. Reading this book would be a good start, but should not be the last one a sincere, thinking and moral human being should read.

For anyone who already has some notion of what happens in slaughterhouses (spoiler: it really is worse than you thought) this book will most likely end up being avoided. Willful ignorance is morally very dangerous, but for many people it is an acceptable way of living their lives.

For anyone who truly knows what goes on and has made a decision to do something about it they will unfortunately find sufficient wiggle room for justifying to themselves a personal decision to "always buy free-range."

As a vegan--which is far more than merely following a strict vegetarian "diet", I cannot give this book a high rating. The author successfully pulls together all the facts necessary to make a strong case for abolition, but at every opportunity actively avoids doing so.

Similar to "Food Inc" this book helps the myth of "happy meat" (See <http://www.humanemyth.org/>) live another day.

Todd Myers says

Modern day look into slaughterhouses, not only what is done to the animals, but how the workers are treated as well. This modern day true to life version of The Jungle is a must read, for those that truly wish to be informed of what is going on and where their food comes from and how animals are treated in factory farms and slaughterhouses. Think the USDA and government has your best interests in mind? This book will change that for you, it's all about production and profit, screw the consumer, workers, and worse of all screw the animals! That is the cold hard truth!

Lindsey Benage says

Yet another life changer on this topic...

I can say that for me I didn't really learn anything new about the torturous ways we treat animals many call food but that is solely due to the fact that I have read numerous books on this topic. For many who haven't they will find numerous examples they likely were not aware of in regards to the treatment of animals in factory farms.

For me, because of the numerous books I have read about the treatment of animals, the most interesting part of this book was discovering the involvement of the USDA with factory farming. I did already know some of the ways the USDA has not only encouraged factory farming throughout the years but has also turned a blind eye to what was really happening but, I discovered so much more in this book. This book does a wonderful job explaining the various ways that the USDA has COMPLETELY ignored the way factory farming was treating animals and our health. The author walks the reader through this topic with numerous examples backed up with factual example after factual example. If you believe that the USDA is interested in American's health and protecting it you will be appalled by the decades of examples of exactly the opposite.

Elizabeth says

I had a rude awakening very recently concerning the health hazards as well as the immorality of eating meat, and as a result, i've been seeking out information on the meat industry and animal rights. This book is more or less the top of the stack as far as I'm concerned, being a new convert to vegetarianism. It exposes the gross crimes committed against animals every day *by the thousands* as they're drug through the slaughterhouse, being skinned, mutilated, tortured, beaten, shocked, and scalded while **still alive**. Federal legislation "requires" humane slaughtering practices, but these are largely ignored as a result of USDA pressure and power over the meat plants and employees. The industry, being concerned only with the amount of production, looks the other way while innocent animals are subjected to gruesome and painful deaths so that we can put dinner on the table. The corruption doesn't just affect the animals; non-enforcement of health standards and practices in the slaughterhouses and packaging plants leaves us with meat products that are more often than not contaminated with fecal matter, bacteria, etc etc etc. Gail Eisnitz courageously investigates and uncovers these and other horrific injustices in the meat industry and presents them to us. Even if you're not particularly interested in animal rights, the governmental corruption this book demonstrates is absolutely astonishing, and the health risks being sold to us at the meat counter are of interest to ANYONE. You'll need a strong stomach to read this one, but it's absolutely worth it.

pinktheory says

If everyone read this book, they would go vegan or at least vegetarian. But of course, many won't read this book. Why? I don't know. Because they like steak, because ignorance is bliss, or because they just don't care. This book chronicles the author's altruistic efforts to expose the inhumane treatment in slaughterhouses across the country. Her book covers 3 main aspects of slaughterhouses: (1) the inhumane treatment of animals (2) the terrible working conditions for slaughterhouse workers and (3) the corrupt role of the USDA and how this affects meat as food.

She interviews many slaughterhouse workers obtaining firsthand information on how animals are treated. Through Gail, we learn of cows being skinned alive, pigs being scalded alive and baby calves trying to escape their mother's womb as she is being torn open and killed. These examples are just a few that she uncovers. She also reveals just how badly humans are treated in these plants. These workers work in very horrible, dirty and dangerous conditions. Hate your job? Think about having to go to work every day and being scared that a 1500 lb cow may fall and crush you to death or that you may stab yourself while trying to kill an animal that is kicking you because it was not properly stunned. Or having to work long hours without a bathroom break and having to relieve yourself in your clothes. Many workers that are hired in slaughterhouses are immigrants. They are often afraid to speak out about bad working conditions for fear of losing their job because to them, seven dollars an hour is big bucks compared to the three dollar a day they may have been making.

At the root of all this are people in the government who are deeply invested in the success of these slaughterhouse plants. So what if your meat has some feces on it? The USDA's solution to this problem is not to improve meat and slaughterhouse inspections but rather to just tell consumers to cook the shit out of their meat to ensure safety (pun intended). Though cooking the hell out of your meat still does not guarantee that the contaminant won't find its way onto your kitchen counter, your fingernails, the sink...you get the picture. Having poop in your meat still doesn't turn you off from it? Gail interviews many families whose children were afflicted with E coli (this is due to poop in meat). She describes in great detail what happens to these children's bodies as the E. Coli takes control over it. This was another part of the book that was very difficult to read. But the truth is that E coli breakouts from contaminated meat still occurs and takes with it our most vulnerable: the elderly and children. The USDA uses a stamp of approval that indicates "wholesome" meat but the fact is that "wholesome" may mean you are eating poop, diseased and contaminated meat, rust, urine...the list goes on. Gail's book shows that the USDA does not care about all this because of their corrupt ties to the meat industry.

My review only scratches the surface of what Gail's book reveals. Open your mind, do the research and go vegan.

Lucy White says

I read this about a year after I went vegan.. it shocked me, and I cried through a large proportion of it. Shocking, but everyone must read it. Great account of untold horrors in the animal agricultural industry. Go vegan, please.

Aaron the Pink Donut says

A very hard book to read but very informative and well researched. I am reasonably knowledgeable about the litany of Auschwitz like horrors that permeate the modern, industrial farm factory, but this book enlightens me to a few practices I wasn't aware of. The edition I read was a slightly revised version from 2006 that included a new afterword. The use of Horse meat for human consumption and the classifying of Rabbits as poultry were news to me. Every one really should read this book. Yet another prime example of how deregulation mixed with greed undermines the safety of the public. Horrible.

Peacegal says

If you read only one book about the meat industry, make it this one. *Slaughterhouse* is a book about the other reality behind our demand for cheap meat, and lots of it: horrifically abused animals, permanently disabled workers, and dangerously dirty product. While animals are a point of focus of this book, I wouldn't call *Slaughterhouse* an animal rights or vegan work. Rather, it's an overall study of the modern day meat-processing factory—but don't be surprised if the animal rights and vegan arguments of others make more sense to you after closing the back cover. Even those who don't feel a whit of conscience about the animals' ordeals will be affected by the stories of children who suffer tremendously after being poisoned by pathogen-infected meat.

Much of Eisnitz's work focuses on her investigations of alleged abuses of the federal Humane Slaughter Act. What she finds are not only violations, but cruelty so severe as to be not only inhumane, but inhuman. While intentional violations of the federal Meat Inspection Act carries heavy penalties, violations of the Humane Slaughter Act carry none at all. Eventually, the author concludes:

"Only when I'd seen the mockery meat inspection officials had made of their primary mandate—ensuring meat and poultry wholesomeness—did I really understand just how low a priority humane slaughter was."

But what of the meat industry's much-ballyhooed veterinarians and consultants? USDA inspector Dave Carney gives a more sobering view:

"[Vets are] reduced to paperwork. The physical location of the plants where the animals are stuck and bled is a very uninviting work environment, the vets hardly ever go there."

Another inspector adds:

"Most [vets] are from foreign countries. They've never had a job as good as this one, and they don't want to rock the boat."

Most animal industries, indeed, like to boast that they have veterinarians on staff, playing on the public's images of Dr. Doolittle and James Herriot. But really, as Carney points out, think about irony of vets who took a vow work to save animal life working in a place whose whole reason for existence is to kill as many animals as possible. The main purpose of vets in a slaughterhouse is to glance carcasses for visible signs of disease, not to tend to living animals.

Another passage makes reference to a consultant with a “national reputation as a slaughter expert.” Although her visits to check up on animal handling practices were supposed to be unannounced, a slaughter plant worker confirmed they had two days advance notice to amp up the power on the stunners and get rid of metal pipes and other objects used to beat uncooperative animals. While the author does not name names here, it’s pretty easy to guess who this nationally-known slaughter expert is.

Of course, all of these sloppy slaughter practices take a human toll as well, as was documented later, and perhaps more famously, by Eric Schlosser in *Fast Food Nation*. The slaughterhouse employees’ accounts of slavish conditions will truly make you ponder if anything has improved since *The Jungle*. And as for the consumer who ultimately gets the meat, I leave you with this quote from Tom Devine, legal director of the Govt Accountability Project:

“Twenty years ago...it wasn’t a reckless, foolhardy act for a family to eat medium-rare hamburgers or steak for Sunday dinner. Something has drastically changed if the USDA is warning people that federally approved beef has to be cooked to a crisp in order to avoid food poisoning tragedies. So, what’s changed? Obviously, the meat’s a lot dirtier.”

Ashley says

cannot overstate how important this book is, how urgent it is that this story--these facts-- be addressed

Amanda says

So painful to read...but also so necessary. Go vegan and quit making excuses!!!!

P.S. Winn says

This is an important book to read especially now that the President of America wants to roll back regulations. In a meatpacking plant things are going on that are hard to believe and should never happen. This book will shock most people, but most of all it should enrage you and make you want to find ways to stop the atrocities.

Miss Scarlett says

Slaughterhouse is AMAZING!!! I have never cried while reading a book until I picked this one up. My Environmental Ethics professor gave me his copy in college in 2002. I started to read it and finished it in a matter of days. This book is approachable because it is easy to read and understand. Eisnitz doesn’t get bogged down in Philosophical arguments, but simply presents information. If you want to know about slaughterhouse conditions then you HAVE to read this book. If I wasn’t vegetarian before reading this book I probably would have stopped eating meat the moment I closed it. In fact, I read this book right around the time I became vegan and I imagine this book helped form that idea.

Lisa Vegan says

I highly recommend it but this is a very disturbing book. One would have to have no ability to empathize with humans or animals to not feel devastated after reading this book. It's about the completely horrible conditions for both the farmed animals who are killed and for the slaughterhouse workers also.
