

20<sup>th</sup> February 2003

Dear Commissioner,

RE: Broiler Chickens

I am writing to bring to your attention the lack of EU legislation on the welfare of broiler chickens. Each year, 4,400 million broilers are reared in the EU, nearly all of which are reared in huge, windowless sheds on factory farms, with a capacity for around 30 - 40,000 chickens.

In addition to such untenable conditions, modern broilers have been subject to a selective breeding process to reach their slaughter weight in just 41 days - twice as fast as 30 years ago. Such unnatural rapid growth means that their legs fail to support them, buckling under the strain of supporting such an overdeveloped body. The heart and lungs cannot keep pace either and subsequently, tens of millions of broilers - in the UK alone - die of heart failure. Furthermore, the EU's Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Welfare reported that the breeding broilers are often fed on severely restricted rations.

In light of this, I urge you to propose a strong Broilers Directive which would prohibit overcrowding, the use of fast-growing breeds as well as restricted feeding regimes for broiler breeders at the earliest opportunity.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Caroline Lucas MEP