

END THE CAGE AGE FOR DUCKS & GEESE



The life of ducks in natural conditions

Ducks evolved to eat, swim, clean, play and rest in water. The many species of ducks are sociable and gregarious, living in large flocks and foraging together. They are highly communicative, using both their voice and body language.

During the mating season they form into pairs and the mother duck spends time and care in making a nest for her eggs. She is very protective of her ducklings, who continue to rely on her for warmth in the early days. She teaches them about which foods are good to eat and keeping safe from predators.



Female muscovy duck and her young

The life of geese in natural conditions

There are many species of wild geese. Geese mate for life and in the breeding season will move off to establish a territory and a nest. They are conscientious parents and young goslings remain with their parents until they are old enough to fly and fend for themselves, which is usually at around three months of age. Outside the breeding season, geese form large flocks. Communication is important for geese and they have a range of calls which vary according to gender, social context, the age of the bird and their location.



Wild goose on tranquil lake. The contrast to the life of a goose caged for foie gras production could not be greater.

The life of ducks and geese in EU foie gras production

Around 40 million ducks and geese are farmed for foie gras ('fatty liver') in the EU every year. Over 90% of these are ducks. Most of the ducks and geese are imprisoned in cages for the last two weeks of their lives so that they can be force-fed — a practice which is intrinsic to current foie gras production.

Caging animals and force-feeding them are both inhumane.

The massive amounts of food the birds are force-fed make their livers swell to as much as ten times their natural size, causing appalling suffering and a mortality rate 10-20 times higher than if they were not force-fed. Force-feeding is done two to four times a day, causes the birds stress and can inflict painful injuries to the head, beak and oesophagus.

EU legislation requires that when ducks or geese are housed, floors are of a suitable design not to cause discomfort and are covered with suitable bedding material, litter is provided for enrichment and barren environments are avoided.

Yet too often these rules are ignored during the force-feeding period. Ducks are routinely housed in completely barren cages with bare mesh flooring with only the space of 2 A4 sheets of paper. The birds develop posture and gait abnormalities, wing lesions and sores on their feet.



Caging and force-feeding ducks causes them great suffering.

EU legislation to End the Cage Age for ducks and geese

Compassion in World Farming urges the Commission and all the member states to introduce and enforce legislation that explicitly bans both the farming of ducks and geese in cages and the intrinsically cruel practice of force-feeding animals.

We call for a phase-out in the use of all cages in EU animal agriculture by 2027.

This could be included in a revision of Directive 98/58/EC on the protection of animals kept for farming purposes. The Directive stipulates that “the freedom of movement of an animal ... must not be restricted to cause unnecessary suffering”. It also states that “where an animal is continuously or regularly confined, it must be given the space appropriate to its physiological and ethological needs in accordance with established experience and scientific knowledge.”

Confining ducks and geese in cages does not fulfil these requirements.

Additionally, Article 13 TFEU requires “the Union and member states, since animals are sentient beings, to pay full regard to the welfare requirements of animals.”

Force-feeding animals for non-medical purposes, as practised in current foie gras production, is explicitly prohibited by specific laws in six of Austria’s nine provinces, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway and Poland. Based on the established interpretation of their general animal protection laws, it is also banned in Ireland, Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands and the UK.

The vast majority of EU citizens demand reform for farmed animals; the 2016 Eurobarometer poll on animal welfare shows that 94% think protecting the welfare of farm animals is important. Since then the recent [End the Cage Age European Citizens’ Initiative](#) has gathered well over the required one million validated signatures from across the EU.

It is time to End the Cage Age.

Compassion in World Farming EU
eu.office@ciwf.org
+32 2 709 1330 | www.ciwf.eu
Follow us on Twitter: [@ciwf_eu](https://twitter.com/ciwf_eu)

COMPASSION
in world farming 
ciwf.org