

The Honorable Anna C. Verna
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COPY: Jack Kelly, Council-At-Large
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Dear Ms. Verna,

Please accept my support of Council Member Jack Kelly's proposed legislation to ban foie gras production in Philadelphia. I sincerely hope Philly joins Chicago and other cities that disapprove of gorging birds to the brink of death.

Foie gras is derived from the fatty, diseased livers of ducks and geese. The "delicacy" is banned in over 12 countries and more than 300 U.S. restaurants. Veterinarians, ethicists, religious, political, and business leaders (including restaurant chefs and farmers) advocate an end to the brutal practice known as "oral gavage." To make foie gras, ducks or geese are attached to a pressurized pump. Several times daily, liquid feed is shoved 12 inches down their throats via a metal rod.

Feeding sheds house about 1,000 ducks, with seven ducks squeezed into each small cage. According to a former employee of Elevages Perigord — Canada's largest producer and the subject of a 2006-2007 cruelty investigation — "The notion the ducks enjoyed forced feeding was utterly ridiculous. As soon as they received a dose, they'd frantically shake their heads, trying to spit out food and often vomiting... During the last few days, most couldn't lift their heads and many died."

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals cites documentation from veterinarians that "the birds' livers become so enlarged, [they]... have literally exploded from these forced feedings. The results of necropsies reveal ruptured livers, throat damage, esophageal trauma, and food spilling from the dead animal's throat and out of [his] nostrils."

Some ducks never make it to the feeding sheds. Inside hatcheries, day-old ducks are sorted by sex. Males are de-beaked and de-toed with ordinary scissors. Females, whose vein-encased livers generate poor quality meat, are discarded in garbage bags and gassed with carbon dioxide or suffocated.

Sick birds make sick people. A report in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences cited a link between foie gras and Amyloidosis, a disease associated with rheumatoid arthritis, Alzheimer's disease, adult-onset (type-2) diabetes and tuberculosis.

In a 2005 Zogby poll, 79% of Illinois voters favored a ban on foie gras production. I urge Philadelphia to become the next city to outlaw blatant animal abuse. Please reflect the public trend in conscientious consumption and lead the way for foie gras bans nationwide.

Thank you,