Millions of Chickens Gassed as Food Supply Chain Collapses

As COVID-19 deaths in the United States finally pass the 1 million mark, another population will see a decline of twice that many. Delmarva Poultry Industry Inc announced that poultry plants in Delaware and Maryland will "depopulate" (humanely kill) 2 million chickens due to a lack of workers at processing plants. Typically depopulation is used when there is an infectious disease outbreak. Allen Harim, the poultry processor planning on depopulating its birds, informed growers of the decision in a letter circulated on Facebook.

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> *When we started noticing the downward trend in attendance, we reduced the number of eggs set and chicks placed. Unfortunately, reduced placements will not make an impact for another six weeks, and with the continued attendance decline, and building bird inventory daily, we are forced to make a very difficult decision.*
>
> *Starting Friday, April 10, we will begin depopulating flocks in the field. If your flock is chosen, we will reach out to you and provide further details. Growers, whose flocks we depopulate, will be fairly compensated by Allen Harim.*
>
> *Michele V. Minton, Director of Live Operations*

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Allen Harim was previously in the news in February when one of their plants was shut down for failing to comply with regulatory sanitary conditions requirements. The plant was closed for four days before it reopened.

The depopulation of healthy birds due to a lack of processing capabilities further supports the full-page ad placed in the New York Times, Washington Post, and Arkansas Democrat-Gazette by Tyson Foods.

> *Millions of animals – chickens, pigs, and cattle – will be depopulated because of the closure of our processing facilities. The food supply chain is breaking…”*
>
> *John Tyson, CEO of Tyson Foods*

The USDA is purchasing 3 billion dollars in produce, dairy, and meat from farmers in attempts to reduce food waste and stabilize the markets. Even with these measures, meat prices will likely rise from 1% to 3% as a result of the pandemic shutdown.

Sources:

- *2 million chickens will be killed in Delaware and Maryland because of lack of employees at processing plants* – CNN
- *Allen Harim chicken plant reopens, yet ‘sanitary conditions’ that closed it remain unknown* – Poultry Producer
- *Tyson Foods chairman warns ‘food supply chain is breaking’ as coronavirus forces plant closures* – CNBC