CAFO
(Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations)

The Tragedy of Industrial Animal Factories

Foreword
from the Award-Winning Book CAFO
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FOREWORD

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This book, along with its photo-format companion volume, CAFO (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation): The Tragedy of Industrial Animal Factories, has been a long time in the making. It is not the first of its kind. Our foundation, the Foundation for Deep Ecology, has published several large-format books and companion readers over the last seventeen years documenting various ecological outrages. These volumes have exposed the fallacies and outright pathologies of industrial agriculture and industrial forestry (Fatal Harvest, The Fatal Harvest Reader; and Clearcut); mega-scale dam building for hydroelectricity (Patagonia Sin Represas); public lands livestock grazing in the American West (Welfare Ranching); ill-conceived fire suppression policy (Wildfire and The Wildfire Reader); motorized recreation (Thrillcraft); and mountaintop-removal coal mining (Plundering Appalachia). With The CAFO Reader, we again turn our attention to the horrors of industrial food production, this time with a focus on factory “farms,” which are of course nothing of the sort, having little connection with honorable agrarianism and everything to do with cruelty and environmental abuse in the pursuit of corporate profit.

Through the years, as editors and producers of these books, we have come to recognize a common thread that ties them together. Wherever we look closely at the most egregious assaults on the Earth’s beauty and integrity, we find that the abusive behavior flows from a root cause: a technological and industrial approach to production, land management, recreation, or other economic activity. Time and again we are struck by the fact that this reductionist, narrow, techno-industrial paradigm when applied to a production system ends up diminishing nature, accelerating its demise, and unbalancing ecosystems.

In short, we conclude that within this fundamental industrial framework lies the answer to why the world is falling apart and why
we find ourselves, one and all, ensnared in the massive social and ecological unraveling we call the “ecosocial crisis.” For it is not only natural systems that are in crisis—as manifest in burgeoning rates of extinction, collapsing fisheries, and a rapidly warming planet—but also human societies that depend on healthy ecosystems. Around the globe, natural and human communities are in decline or in some state of crisis, collapsing or having already collapsed. Industrialism, the godchild of this mechanistic worldview, lurks behind every tree and is responsible for the deeper and deeper hole we humans are digging for ourselves.

In The CAFO Reader, we recognize the logic of industrialism applied to domesticated food animals. The result is a tragic, pathetic, and inhumane method of raising animals in factory farms to produce meat, milk, eggs, leather, fur, and nonessential culinary luxuries such as liver pâté. Living creatures are treated as machines, reduced to “units” in an assembly line of protein production by corporate food purveyors, with the individual animal’s suffering ignored. This is the kind of atrocity for which the word evil seems too meek and mild.

After reading this book, a reasonable person might assume that agribusiness’s unethical treatment of farm animals could sink no lower. Unfortunately, the future bodes otherwise, for on the horizon we see cloning and genetic engineering emerging in full force from a Frankenstein laboratory owned and operated by giant corporations looking to make their breeding and raising of commercial/industrial animals ever more “efficient.” Thus the ecosocial crisis deepens. At every juncture, the subjugation of nature by human culture is exacerbated, and the factory “farm” becomes yet another symptom of the machine mind that seeks to engineer the world—including living creatures—in service of human aims and corporate interests.

It is time to call this cold and calculated evil system by its real name: industrial animal concentration camps. This is a much more accurate term than the seemingly innocuous and technical acronym CAFO, for concentrated animal feeding operation. As you read through this book, consider how you can contribute to the abolition of this ungodly industry and its despicable treatment of other sentient beings. These concentration camps for animals simply have to go, and it will take the same kind of creative, uncompromising social change
movement built by those visionaries who worked to abolish slavery, racism, torture, and other relics of inhumanity over the last two hundred years. Please lend your voice and your votes, your personal economic choices and your heart to this effort. It is quite possible to banish these animal factories from the face of the Earth; it only takes the will and determination of citizen activists.

We spent a number of years researching and assembling this book as a tool to inform the broader public of where most meat comes from and how it is produced. Now we need an army of activists who will make it a principle textbook, who will become articulate on this issue so they can forge arguments, alliances, and strategies to campaign for a change in social norms that ultimately eliminates these food animal factories. For anyone who takes up this noble cause, we can guarantee that this kind of activism will pay your rent for living on the planet.