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Dutch shops ban 'anaemic veal' over animal rights concerns

Animal-rights group Wakker Dier in The Netherlands -- which country is also Europe's largest veal-producers with 1,5million veal calves a year -- says they launched the campaign urging consumers not to buy this veal 'because pale veal is raised by keeping the calves deliberately ill, fed on a low-iron milk diet and kept stabled in small cages. They never see the light of day'...

Dutch supermarkets Jumbo, Plus, Aldi, Lidl, Boon, Coop, Dekamarkt, Hoogvliet, Nettorama, Poiesz, Sanders, Emté, Spar en Vomar have all undertaken to stop selling the pale veal within the next few months - also because the Wakker Dier publicity campaign created a high level of consumer awareness, and people stopped buying it.

Supermarket chain managers who were convinced almost immediately after viewing the publicity material from Wakker Dier, Dirk, C1000, Super de Boer, AH, Bas, Digros and Deen, stopped selling the pale veal within weeks from the start of the campaign in September 2008.

"We are happy that with this campaign, nearly all the anaemic veal has now disappeared from our supermarkets," said a spokesman for Wakker Dier.

Naming and shaming:

However, they're still naming and shaming the ones who haven't yet complied -- noting that two supermarkets, Jan Linders and Boni, are still stocking the veal - and it's also still being sold to the hospitality industry and in small butcheries who buy their veal from just two large veal producers.

Culinary fashion

How did this 'pale veal' craze start exactly? There are no health benefits from pale veal at all - it's merely a culinary fashion, traced back to Europe's top chefs who, some ten years ago, started demanding pale veal instead of the usual pink meat.

A Happy Cow and calf, frolicking in green fields...

Wakker Dier 's campaigns are gaining widespread support in Europe because they are totally non-violent: they simply bombard consumers and companies with hard facts, statistics, and very striking photographs and YouTube videos showing the extreme happiness with which Dutch cows, for instance, greet the annual opening up of their winter-stable doors each spring, and the carousing in the green fields which takes place that one day. (**see the video above of this annual happy event**).



Wakker Dier Animal Rights NL

Pale veal is 'manufactured' by keeping the young animals penned up and fed on a low-iron milk diet for six months. A Dutch animal rights campaign has managed to get this veal out of most supermarkets now.

Vote it up!

This is the way healthy veal calves should be raised, says Wakker Dier - and many Dutch consumers agree with their contention that young steer-calves should be allowed to stay with their mothers in the green fields until they are strong and tall, instead of being penned indoors during their brief lifetimes; taken away from their mothers when only a week old; and then kept deliberately anaemic on a low-iron milk diet...

Eggs from battery hens:

Wakker Dier has already booked considerable success in their other company-targetted fact campaigns for the rights of millions of other farm animals, too. And since the Dutch are the largest producers of agricultural products in Europe, their campaign usually has a very powerful effect on animal-rights throughout Europe at the same time.

In 2004 all the supermarkets also stopped selling eggs from battery hen-factories; and in 2008 they managed to end the castration procedures without anaesthesia of an annual 7-million Dutch pigs in the country's many piggeries.

Their gruesome films showing the inhumane force-feeding of geese and ducks just to obtain foie gras pate, and the campaign to keep the Dutch cows in grass fields for nine months of the year -- instead of in stables throughout the year -- have also had a powerful effect in The Netherlands.

Wakker Dier says that the 'anaemic' or paler-tinted veal comes from calves with an Hb (blood-iron) content of around five - as compared to healthy animals with a 7 to 10 count.

Anaemic animals are sick animals:

"European scientists established that any animal with a blood-content of less than 6 Hb was suffering extreme anaemia 'comparable to levels associated with poor welfare because normal activity is difficult or not possible and other functions are impaired'.

The veal calves' all-liquid diet which is deficient in iron and fiber is a major cause of poor welfare in itself. The European Union's Scientific Veterinary Committee's 1995 Report on the Welfare of Calves cited much scientific literature and concluded that a diet deficient in roughage and iron can lead to serious maladies for the calves and cause abnormal gut development (Stevenson, 1999)." From [this fully referenced report](#):

The Dutch Advertising Code Commission also confirmed late last year after a court challenge by Wakker Dier that the pale-veal industry's advertising campaign was false because these animals were not healthy. "The Hb content of such calves is so low that the animals can be classified as ill,' the council ruled, ordering the industry to stop the advertising campaign. Within a month of this ruling, Dutch supermarkets Dirk, C1000, Super de Boer and Deen stopped selling it.

Albert Heijn Holdings backs campaign

In January, the internationally-known Albert Heijn Holdings Supermarkets also issued a joint statement with the largest veal-producer in the world, the Van Drie company in the Netherlands, that they would actively start campaigning against the practice of raising anaemic veal throughout Europe.

However - Wakker Dier's peaceful campaigners aren't quite done with the veal-producers as yet.

They explain that the suffering of veal-calves is still being perpetuated by the industry. In order to continue producing milk, a cow must have one calf a year. Their male calves thus are merely the 'waste-products' of this process: taken away from their moms within a week, they spend the only six months of their lives penned up in a cage, and fed on a low-iron milk mix, destined to become 'anaemic veal' and never seeing the light of day.

600,000 of the more than 1,5-million calves raised for veal in The Netherlands are also imported from dairy farms in Poland and Lithuania when they are only a week old - and Wakker Dier also wants these animal transports of live small calves stopped.

Wakker Dier says these animals are "always sick and listless, never get to run around in green fields, never drink from their mothers for longer than a week, always live in bleak stables and spend a very miserable, all too brief life."

Until this campaign was launched six months ago, an annual 1,5million Dutch veal-calves were kept deliberately anaemic by feeding them low-iron artificial 'milk'. Now, the world's top veal producer has stopped the practice - and it is hoped, others will follow soon, forced by market forces because producers stopped buying pale veal.

Only two companies in The Netherlands used to produce veal this way; and their products are exported throughout Europe. Van Drie of Apeldoorn, the market-leader in this field, and Alpuro. One-fifth of all the veal products sold in Europe come from Van Drie - and now this company has stopped producing anaemic calves. The other company will be forced to switch to pink veal as the consumer demand for pink veal now grows dramatically.

I often hear Dutch shoppers asking specifically for 'pink veal, not that horrid white stuff,' so the campaign is also hitting every household.

Peter's Farm - a better way to raise veal

Wakker Dier still isn't happy with the way 'pink veal' is produced either, however: the animals are still kept indoors, they point out, and are still taken away from their mothers within a week of birth.

They point out that some 'pink' veal which presents itself as 'animal-friendly' is produced under the [Peter's Farm](#) label -- however, claims Wakker Dier, 'these calves still suffer the same fate, except that they aren't anaemic any longer.' [see](#)

Watch Peter's Farm film:

This is vehemently denied by Peter's Farm, whose spokesman says that their 'calves live in herds, have the freedom to choose for themselves when and how much they wish to eat and whether they wish to walk, stand, lie down, play or sleep.'

They say that the world-famous Agricultural University of Wageningen in The Netherlands carried out a study of the natural behaviour of calves on a Peter's Farm: "The conclusion of this research is that the calves on a Peter's

Farm are held under much friendlier welfare conditions than calves in other systems."

They also point to a report by the Dutch Royal Society for the Protection of Animals, which said it was 'positive about the Peter's Farm development and looked forward to the further development of the system.'

See Peter's Farm Live Cam here

- it's not exactly a 'happy frolic in green fields with mom' the way Wakker Dier would want -- however these animals clearly do look much happier and are much healthier looking than those sad little faces peering out of small dark pens on the "pale-veal farms' ... [\[b\]see the Live Cam here\[/b\]](#)