

It's festival time. Each year this period of my life gets taken over with festivals almost every weekend — some are fun things, such as the Living Green Festival (LGF) in Canberra and the Cruelty Free Festival in Sydney, which gives me an opportunity to catch up with friends old and new. There are other festivals I attend in my work capacity as a community organiser for Amnesty International. Regardless of the reason why I'm there they always are an interesting (and sometimes challenging) experience, providing an opportunity to talk to people about issues they are interested in learning more about but have little knowledge of; and those just looking for an argument.

The third instalment of the LGF in Canberra in mid-October was, once again a great day. A Poultry Place had a photo exhibition — Faces of Freedom — on display at the main entrance (pic below left), which contrasted the appalling farm conditions chickens, ducks and turkeys are kept in throughout Australia to the conditions they enjoy when they come to live at A Poultry Place. The exhibition got some great reaction and it is encouraging that such festivals continue to attract people who want to learn more, and not just cater to the converted. Apart from being part of a panel discussion of local animal rescue organisations, I was free for the day which allowed me to wander around catching up and chatting with people I knew and complete strangers, who tracked me down wanting to talk about A Poultry Place.

One of the conversations I had during the day at the LGF regarded eggs. Over the years many people have asked what I do with them. I have a policy of not allowing the animals to breed as there are far too many animals needing refuge already than to add to the population so eggs are collected in the morning and evening. This particular person thought it was wrong that I 'stole' the eggs from the females and proceeded to tell me so. Her position was if a bird decided to sit on the eggs I should not deny that to them. I asked her how many poultry she had in her care — her answer "none". I told her, politely it was her attitude which sees people end up with unwanted animals and then expect sanctuaries like A Poultry Place to solve the 'problem' by offering them refuge because some of those hatched can't stay as they are roosters and the neighbours will complain about the crowing etc etc etc. It's one of the frustrations of this work. As if to verify what I had said to her within days I began receiving requests from people who had picked up A Poultry Place leaflets at the LGF, about taking in animals — all of whom were roosters of course.



Some like Gregory Peck (pic above right) have arrived, others haven't as I have not heard back from people when I've told them the conditions of me accepting their 'unwanted' boys — that is,

they agree to not hatch anymore chicks given there is a 50:50 chance some of the chicks will be roosters. Of course not everyone is like that. "Hi there my friend Tiffany has directed me to you guys. I was so upset last night when I found out my neighbours planned to kill their two roosters this week. They got them from a hatching program at the school. They are so beautiful and don't deserve to die. They are a year old. Is there any way you could possibly take them? I do cat and dog rescue and have too many animals for them to be safe at my house. I'm sorry to ask you this as you must get inundated with queries, warm regards." These guys are scheduled to arrive here next weekend.

A family of Indian runner ducks (pic below left) has also joined us. They came via a young couple from Sydney who had these guys for almost two years but got to a point that they needed to rehome them due to moving to another property where they felt it was difficult for them to meet the ducks needs. The couple were determined to see them placed in an environment where they could safely live out the rest of their lives and I agreed. A few days later they arrived with the ducks and a huge duck pond, which will be permanently set up here in the next month or so.

Once again the landscape of sanctuary has change as I managed to add onto the section of A Poultry Place known as Roosterville with the addition of a new secure area (pic below right) for a flock of roosters. It has meant that Roosterville has doubled in size during the past four months. I



know, unfortunately though, that it will still inevitable be inadequate to cope with the demand of roosters needing homes.

I thought that this would be the final stage of Roosterville. But of course my prediction was to be proven to be false within a fortnight as some friends called to ask if I wanted an old wire and steel trailer cage cover. Now it just so happens that many years ago I was given an old trailer, which has sat unused in the paddock as it is not roadworthy and this unwanted trailer top, fits perfectly onto the old trailer and so a(nother) new project exists = the construction of yet another safe night house for a flock of roosters, who will eventually share the Roosterville paddock with the four flocks of guys residing there already.

The week before last week within a 24 hour period came the news that some of Australia's largest poultry producers had been fined for misleading consumers about how their chickens and ducks were fined.

On Thursday, October 31 The Federal Court ordered Baiada Poultry and Bartter Enterprises, the

processors and suppliers of Steggles branded chicken products to pay a total of \$400,000 in penalties for engaging in false, misleading and deceptive conduct when it described on product packaging and in advertising that its meat chickens were 'free to roam in large barns'. The Court declared that prior to day 42 of a growth cycle (which could be up to 56 days) the companies' chickens were, in fact, kept at such stocking densities that they did not have a largely uninhibited ability to move around at will in an aimless manner. The Australian Chicken Meat Federation Inc (ACMF), the peak industry body for Australia's chicken meat industry, was also ordered to pay \$20,000 in penalties. The Court declared ACMF engaged in false, misleading and deceptive conduct, when it claimed in publications on its website that meat chickens produced in Australia were 'free to roam' or able to 'roam freely' in large barns.

The following day the Federal Court fined Luv-a-Duck \$360,000 for engaging in misleading conduct and making false representations by using wording such as "grown and grain fed in the spacious Victorian Wimmera Wheatlands"; and/or 'range reared and grain fed' (which mainly appeared as a logo) on its packaging, website, brochures. The ACCC argued that these descriptions represented Luv-a-Duck's duck meat products were or will be processed from ducks that spent at least a substantial amount of their time outdoors; were raised in a spacious outdoor environment; and were of a different quality than duck meat products processed from barn-raised ducks, when this was not the case. Federal Court Justice Davies stated it was reasonable to infer that Luv-a-Duck's representations "...would have been an inducement to consumers to prefer Luv-a-Duck's products and give Luv-a-Duck a competitive advantage in the industry." Luv-a-Duck is Australia's second largest producer. It is important to remember that Australia's largest duck producer Pepe's was fined \$400,000 last year for similar misleading claims.

As I've said before while these fines do not alleviate the suffering any of the chickens or ducks used the poultry industries endure it brings to public attention how these birds are raised. There is a huge lack of awareness about the practices used by these companies, and by revealing the advertising as false, it gives animal activists an opportunity to shine a light on the cruelty that is taking place. Every little step forward counts in this battle. ●

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