

# FACT SHEETS

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# Changing the Food System for 40 Years

By Harry Rhodes

For 40 years FACT has worked to change the industrial factory farm system. While the system has not improved as much as we would have hoped for, there have been many successes resulting in more animals being raised humanely, and people having more choices for accessing safe and healthy meat, dairy, eggs, and poultry.

FACT works both on the macro and micro scales. On the macro level FACT advocates to change governmental policy. Much of our policy efforts focus on making meat and poultry safe and healthy to eat.

Our work leading the Keep Antibiotics Working (KAW) coalition has led to positive national policy changes. By working closely with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to reduce the overuse of antibiotics in animals raised for food, most chickens today are raised without antibiotics. Furthermore, medically important antibiotics are no longer used as growth promoters in animals and sales have decreased since 2010.

**But that is not enough. Our newest KAW strategic plan calls on the FDA to adopt policies that will reduce antibiotic use in animal agriculture by 50% by 2025, using 2010 as the base year.**

We at FACT believe that more federal and state funding should go to farmers who are raising animals humanely for food. We work with partners throughout the country, such as the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) and The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), that are working to change the priorities of The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). We have heard directly from many farmers that the lack of capital, and the challenge of land ownership, are often preventing them from scaling up their operations.

**We call on the government to change its priorities and focus on supporting sustainable and regenerative farming instead of large industrial farms.**

On the micro level, FACT has worked directly with thousands of humane farmers for the past 40 years. We believe that by supporting family farms, one by one, we can make a true impact on our farming system. From creating the Nest Eggs program in the 1980's to our current Fund-a-Farmer grants program we have helped and supported hundreds of farmers who are raising animals for food humanely.



FACT offers welfare-oriented livestock and poultry farmers a suite of services that are designed to empower and expand humane farming practices and support them in every aspect of their business. Some of the highlights include:

- \$856,714 awarded directly to individual farmers in 44 states from 2012-2022.
- 735,000 animals supported by FACT funding.
- Directly support farmers who identify as Black, Indigenous or People of Color, women-owned operations, beginning farmers and ranchers, and first generation farmers.

**We believe that there is an alternative to factory farms. That alternative lies in individual farmers and ranchers who are caring for their animals humanely.**

We believe that there is an alternative to factory farms. That alternative lies in individual farmers and ranchers who are caring for their animals humanely so that the food we eat from these animals is healthy and nutritious. That alternative is supported by policies that promote sustainable

and regenerative farming, where animals are raised in healthy conditions and do not need to be pumped with unnecessary antibiotics to keep them from getting sick.

FACT has been promoting these alternatives for 40 years and we are committed to continuing this work until our vision becomes a reality. All food-producing animals will be raised in a humane and healthy manner, and everyone will have access to safe and humanely-produced food.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Harry Rhodes".

Harry Rhodes  
Executive Director  
July 2022



# Celebrating 40 Years with FACT Supporters

By Charlotte Isles, Development Associate

**FACT is incredibly lucky to have so many longtime and loyal supporters.** We have over 570 people who have been consistently donating to FACT since 1990 or earlier. We reached out to a couple of these donors to ask them their thoughts on our work.

Barbara Ingersoll has been a FACT donor since 1987. Born in New York City, she now lives in Charles Town, West Virginia. She said, "...once I knew of FACT's mission, I immediately began to offer monetary support and any moral support I could provide. I consider FACT's mission to be of great importance, not only for now and not only for the animals. FACT envisions and works to create a world in which we can all live in greater harmony and health."

Caring for animals has been in Barbara's family for generations. Her great grandfather was a master brewer and drove a wagon pulled by horses. Barbara said he cared for these horses as if his life, or at least his livelihood depended on their wellbeing. This respect for animals and the responsibility for their care was passed down to her father, who after spending time on a farm where he upgraded the animal care there, went on to expand and improve animal control services in his county of residence.

Barbara said, "Since my father was willing to defend his beliefs with his work, his money, and – if need be –

with his fists, I followed in his footsteps and I know he'd be a supporter of FACT, if he were still alive."

Another longtime supporter is Judy Larson from New Canaan, Connecticut who has been donating to FACT since 1990. She is a home designer and renovator and works with her husband who is a builder. She said, "I have long felt so badly about how food animals are treated in factory farms—especially pigs, who are so intelligent, and, from what I understand, kind animals. FACT is one of the first organizations that I recall focused on the treatment of farm animals."

Judy believes that it was Disney movies, starting with Bambi, that taught her compassion for animals and gave her a clue to the fact that animals are conscious and sensitive beings who are not objects to be used for our pleasure. Today, she makes every attempt to eat food raised in a compassionate way and of course always looks for cage free, pasture-raised, Certified Humane products.

We would like to thank Barbara and Judy and all our supporters. **FACT would not have been able to accomplish all that we have without the generosity and loyalty of our donors. Both our longtime and new supporters are critical to making this important work possible.**

## FACT Board Members

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*Crow Fly Farms in North Carolina*

# Healthy Soil for Healthy Animals

By Larissa McKenna, Humane Farming Program Director

One of FACT's guiding principles is that all farm animals deserve to be cared for in a healthy and humane manner, with compassion and respect. To achieve this, we partner with and invest in livestock and poultry farmers to help them raise their animals outdoors on well-managed pasture.

Many animal welfare benefits are associated with regenerative, pasture-based systems. Animals living and cared for on well-managed pasture can move freely and engage in natural behaviors. This means that pigs can root around and wallow in the mud; chickens can spread their wings and bathe in the dust; and cows can socialize with their herd mates and spend most of their time grazing on native grasses. Pasture-raised animals have also shown lower stress, disease and lameness, as well as greater fertility and fewer reproductive problems.

But what makes this entire production system possible? The answer lies beneath our feet – soil. Healthy soil is fundamental to humane farming. The role soil plays in animal welfare may not be completely obvious, so let's dig a little deeper.

Healthy, productive soil is highly active. It maintains a complex ecosystem of its own, teeming with root and plant matter – both living and decomposed – as well

as bacteria, fungi, earthworms and a multitude of other organisms. The soil feeds pasture plants with nutrients essential for growth. Soil also has specific characteristics to the region it is located, which is why planting native grasses is important – the soil is designed to nourish what is found locally. Eventually these forages and grasses provide ruminant animals with the nutrients they need to thrive. To ensure a high level of welfare for animals to graze and live on pasture, we need to care for the soil as well.

Pasture-based animal production helps improve soil health and fertility if managed properly. One effective approach farmers take is "Management Intensive Rotational Grazing." Using this practice, farmers

frequently move – or rotate – their animals to new pasture. In order to have many parcels of fresh grass available, farmers use fencing to subdivide larger areas of pasture into smaller "paddocks." The animals are allowed to eat the plants in that particular paddock. As they graze, they distribute their manure across the land, which in turn fertilizes the soil. These

nutrients are eventually cycled back to the pasture plants.

An important variable in this system is knowing when to move the animals to the next paddock. This must be done before the plants are grazed too short.

**FACT is helping farmers improve both animal welfare and soil health by focusing our efforts to have more animals raised outdoors, and by properly managing the land they call home.**

In fact, most successful graziers will allow at least half of the leaves on the plants to remain uneaten and grass to remain several inches high. If pasture is “overgrazed” and too much of the green vegetation is consumed by the animals, root growth is severely stunted. Without healthy roots, the plants will not be able to bounce back and grow new leaves. The soil will ultimately suffer as well. Deep roots keep the soil from becoming too wet by drawing up excess water. This helps prevent run-off and soil erosion.

When the farmer determines that the plants have been sufficiently grazed, but not overgrazed, the animals are moved to the next paddock. Reaching a sufficient grazing level on a paddock may take several hours or several days, depending on the paddock’s size, the time of year, the amount and quality of available plants, and the herd size. The used paddocks then can rest, recover, and regrow so that they are ready for grazing later in the season. This feedback loop between the animals, the plants, and the soil can reap many benefits if managed properly.

Through our grants, scholarships, webinars, and mentorship program, FACT is helping farmers improve both animal welfare and soil health by focusing our efforts to have more animals raised outdoors, and by properly managing the land they call home.



*Sweet Seasons Farm in Alabama*



## FACT’s Humane Farming Mentorship Program in Action

Our Humane Farming Mentorship Program is in full swing! This year we have a robust group of 22 pairs of farmers from all parts of the country participating as mentors and mentees (the term we use for someone who is being mentored). This is our biggest group ever and we are really enjoying having such an engaging and enthusiastic cohort.

FACT works with farmers from coast to coast. Even before pandemic travel restrictions put a crimp in our style, many of the relationships were long distance by default. Folks have learned how to make good use of phone, text, email, and video calls to stay in touch.

However, if farmers are in close enough proximity and can make it work, we encourage them to meet in person. A farm visit is invaluable in many cases. We offer funds to offset travel costs to make this possible.

In late March, one of our mentorship pairs had the opportunity to do just that. Mentor James Maginot from Beyond Organics Farm in Winslow, Arkansas visited his mentee, Patty Christ from Sorensen Ranch, LLC in Bradford, Arkansas. Both James and Patty are no strangers to FACT’s programs – James has served as a mentor in the past and Patty is a past Fund-a-Farmer Grant recipient.

James currently raises grass fed/grass finished beef cattle, pastured broiler chickens and laying hens, and Livestock Guardian Dogs. Patty raises beef cattle and is participating in our program for help with pasture planning and development, and rotational grazing.

In their report from the field, they told us that they packed a lot into their day together, including a comprehensive farm tour, pasture mapping, grazing planning, animal frame scoring and body condition scoring, forage varieties, and manure observation. They were busy planning, talking, brainstorming, and envisioning. It was a very productive day and laid a great framework and foundation for their continued relationship – and perhaps another visit in the future.

**Learn more about our mentorship program on our website: [foodanimalconcernstrust.org/mentorship](https://foodanimalconcernstrust.org/mentorship). 5**

*Sorensen Ranch in Arkansas*



# FACT is Calling for a 50% Reduction in Antibiotics Used in Food Animals by 2025

By Steve Roach, Safe & Healthy Food Program Director

Goals are important. They guide our efforts and help us stay accountable. That's why Keep Antibiotics Working (KAW) and FACT have set a target for reducing antibiotic overuse on farms. **We are calling for a 50 percent reduction in use of antibiotics in U.S. food animal production from where it was in 2010.** KAW, of which FACT is a member, is a coalition of organizations that fights against the spread of antibiotic-resistant "superbugs" resulting from the overuse of antibiotics on farms.

We feel this is a realistic goal based on steps already taken by chicken producers in the US, impacts of previous U.S. regulations, and by what has been done in other countries. Since most of the antibiotics in U.S. food production go to pigs and cows, meeting our targets will require changes in these two sectors to reduce their overuse.

This means stopping doing things that make animals get sick like weaning baby animals from their mothers too early and too quickly. KAW developed this goal through a strategic planning process we carried out earlier this spring.

KAW has repeatedly called for federal agencies to set a target for reducing antibiotic overuse in food

production. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) have for over a decade taken steps aimed at improving how antibiotics are used on farms to reduce the risk of antibiotic resistant superbugs, but neither agency has been willing to state what will be the outcome of these efforts. They won't even say that a goal of these efforts is to reduce the use of antibiotics on farms and feedlots. This is in contrast to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) which has set targets for reducing the amount of antibiotics used in human medicine. FACT and our allies in KAW decided that if the agencies responsible for the safety of the food system will not set a goal then we will.

**The FDA is certainly hearing from big agriculture and the animal drug makers who are fine with the current level of antibiotic use. We need to make sure they hear a different message.**

In 2017, after more than a decade of pressure from FACT and KAW, the FDA prohibited the use of medically important antibiotics to make animals grow faster and began requiring a veterinarian's order for their use. This led to a 23%

reduction in use using figures from 2010, measured through sales of antibiotics for use in food animals. So, we are already almost halfway to our goal of a 50% reduction. 2010 was chosen as the base year as it reflects antibiotic use when the FDA first started reporting data.

Comparisons with major animal producers in Europe indicate that the US uses two to six times as much antibiotics to produce a pound of pork or beef than are used in other major livestock producing countries. Jennie-O Turkey, a major turkey-producer, recently reported reductions in its use of antibiotics by 50% in one year by taking steps to reduce skin infections which were the major reason for antibiotic use. The U.S. chicken industry already uses less than one tenth the antibiotics used in pigs and cattle.

With over 80% of antibiotics in food animals going to pigs and cows, there will need to be reductions in use in these species to get to FACT's target. This can be done by making simple changes that increase the health and welfare of baby pigs and calves. Weaning pigs later has been shown to reduce treatment by antibiotics by half. Similarly keeping cattle out of feedlots until they are older keeps them healthier and reduces the need for antibiotics. Much of the antibiotics used in animals is to prevent not treat disease in high risk animals. The way to eliminate this use is to stop putting animals in situations that create a high risk of disease. FACT promotes raising animals in ways that keep them healthy. Reducing crowding, smaller farm sizes, gradual weaning, and access to outdoors are achievable and reduce the need for antibiotics.

This target was set as part of KAW's strategic plan for the next three years. During these three years, we will be working to increase pressure on the FDA to adopt this target and, more importantly take additional steps to reduce antibiotic overuse such as prohibiting or restricting use in animals that are not sick.

We have identified additional ways to put pressure on the FDA and the USDA but we need your help. **If you have not already done so please sign up to receive our action alerts at [foodanimalconcernstrust.org/take-action](http://foodanimalconcernstrust.org/take-action) and take action when we ask. The FDA is certainly hearing from big agriculture and the animal drug makers who are fine with the current level of antibiotic use. We need to make sure they hear a different message.**



## Leave a Lasting Impact with a Planned Gift to FACT

We would like to invite you to create a lasting legacy by including FACT in your estate plans. Through a gift in your will, you can make a generational difference to our work expanding humane farming and providing wider access to healthy, humanely produced food.

Bequests are simple and straightforward. If your needs or circumstances change, you can change your bequest beneficiaries at any time.

Please take a look at the planned giving page on our website [foodanimalconcernstrust.org/planned-giving](http://foodanimalconcernstrust.org/planned-giving) for common types of bequests, along with sample language to consider or share with a trusted advisor.

You can also contact us for more information at [info@foodanimalconcerns.org](mailto:info@foodanimalconcerns.org) or by calling 773.525.4952.

If you have already included a gift for FACT in your will or trust, we would love to hear from you. Please get in touch with our Executive Director, Harry Rhodes at [hrhodes@foodanimalconcerns.org](mailto:hrhodes@foodanimalconcerns.org) or by calling the number above.

Together we can achieve our vision that all food-producing animals will be raised in a humane and healthy manner, and everyone will have access to safe and humanely-produced food.



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FACT is pleased to share that we have the Platinum Seal of Transparency from Candid (formerly GuideStar), a nationally recognized charity watchdog. You can rest assured that FACT maintains a high level of accountability and transparency.

**Contact Us**

773-525-4952

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*High Hog Farm in Georgia*

