

Millions of Pounds of Pesticides Sprayed on Crops to Feed Animals in Factory Farms

[Millions of Pounds of Pesticides Sprayed on Crops to Feed Animals in Factory Farms](#)

Millions of pounds of toxic pesticides sprayed on feed crops for factory farm animals in the U.S. are threatening human health and wildlife and plants by destroying their native habitats, according to a new report by World Animal Protection and the Center for Biological Diversity.

by [The Defender Staff](#)

March 14, 2022

Millions of pounds of toxic pesticides sprayed on feed crops for factory farm animals in the U.S. are threatening human health and wildlife and plants by destroying their native habitats, according to a new [report](#) by World Animal Protection and the Center for Biological Diversity.

The report, “Collateral Damage: How Factory Farming Drives Up the Use of Toxic Agricultural Pesticides,” exposes factory farm meat as a “major driver of pesticide use.”

An [estimated](#) 99% of animals raised for food in the U.S. come from factory farms, including about 70% of cows, 98% of pigs, 99% of turkeys, 98% of chickens raised for eggs and more than 99.9% of chicken raised for meat.

This expansion of industrial factory farms is not only “perpetuating enormous cruelty and suffering” for the billions of animals confined in them, the report stated, but it’s also pushing key ecosystems to the brink of collapse.

More factory farms mean more land converted to large, industrial corn and soy monocultures, researchers said. The majority of these crops don’t go to feeding humans, but instead are grown to feed animals in confinement, propping up Big Ag’s industrial livestock production model.

Researchers found from 2018 to 2019, an estimated 2.6 million acres of American grasslands were plowed to grow just a handful of crops: corn, soy and wheat.

According to “Collateral Damage”:

“An enormous portion of our agricultural lands, roughly one-third, are used for mass-producing corn and soy, the vast majority of which is not for human consumption. Globally, roughly 67–77% of soy produced is used as feed for livestock, and 36–45% of the corn produced in the U.S. is used as feed.

“Not only are our existing agricultural lands heavily used to produce just these two crops, but worse, wildlands are continuing to be converted to cropland in order to grow more.”

Using data from 2018, the most recent year it was available, researchers found that an “estimated 235,976,274 – $\frac{1}{4}$ billion – pounds of herbicides and insecticides were applied in the U.S. just to the corn and soybeans grown for farmed animal feed.”

These pesticides include [paraquat](#), [glyphosate](#), atrazine, [chlorpyrifos](#) and bifenthrin – all of which are being applied in massive amounts to corn and soy in the U.S., Latin America and Asia.

The result is a “global pesticide market [that] continues to grow in tandem with the industrial factory farming industry,”

researchers said.

Dumping massive amounts of toxic pesticides into the environment [threatens](#) delicate ecosystems, often killing beneficial insects, aquatic life and other species, many of which are already endangered.

“Foxes and bats, migratory birds, bumblebees, and prairie butterflies, are all imperiled by grassland conversion and industrial agriculture,” the report noted.

No species are spared when toxic pesticides are continually dumped into the environment, researchers said, citing a 2005 [study](#) that estimated 72 million birds are killed each year by pesticides.

According to the authors of the new report, agricultural pesticides affect humans, too, as they often pollute surface and groundwater which can lead to contaminated drinking water.

Science shows preserving wildlife and [biodiversity](#) is key to the planet’s health, the researchers said, noting that biodiversity [promotes](#) clean air, fresh water, healthy soil and crop pollination.

Eating less meat and dairy, and more plants, helps protect biodiversity, the authors said, but it’s also important that when people do eat animal products, they choose products made from animals raised outdoors and on pasture.

In addition to making dietary changes, researchers also called for holding large corporations accountable, particularly those that are perpetuating biodiversity loss by profiting off industrial agricultural systems that harm human health and the planet.

“Protecting biodiversity and wild animal habitats requires reimagining how we are producing and consuming protein, including by ending the factory farming of animals for meat

and dairy,” the report concluded.

©March 2022 Children’s Health Defense, Inc. This work is reproduced and distributed with the permission of Children’s Health Defense, Inc. Want to learn more from Children’s Health Defense? [Sign up](#) for free news and updates from Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. and the Children’s Health Defense. Your [donation](#) will help to support us in our efforts.

[Connect with The Defender](#)

cover image credit: [hpgruesen](#) / pixabay