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Animal Outlook Calls on NYC Mayor to Shut Down Live Animal Markets Following Disturbing Undercover Investigation

Public records and new footage reveal severe animal cruelty, public health hazards, and more than 2,000 sanitation violations and penalties across multiple facilities

New York, NY — April 24, 2026 — Animal Outlook, a leading animal protection organization, is calling on New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani to shut down the city's live animal markets after a comprehensive undercover investigation documented shocking animal welfare abuses and serious sanitation violations that pose risks to public health.

The investigation, which includes undercover video recordings from three locations in New York City and two additional facilities on Long Island, reveals a disturbing pattern of animal cruelty and unsanitary conditions. The footage shows severely ill and emaciated birds crammed into overcrowded cages, workers violently grabbing chickens by their legs and throwing them into carts, and animals having their throats slit in full view and without prior stunning. The investigation also documented offensive odors emanating from these facilities, where workers routinely use public sidewalks and city drainage systems to wash away chicken blood and viscera.

Among the most disturbing findings captured on video were

- Severe overcrowding of chickens crammed into small wire cages with no room to move or spread their wings.
- Birds with extensive feather loss from pecking and stress
- Inhumane throat slitting of conscious birds in back rooms without proper stunning
- Workers roughly handling birds, throwing them, and piling them into shopping carts before taking them to the slaughter room
- Birds forced to stand on wire cage floors that injure their feet and prevent natural behaviors
- Birds removed from cages and deprived of access to food or water
- Chickens huddled together, visibly shivering and suffering in damp conditions
- Multiple species—chickens, ducks, rabbits, and various breeds from different farms—housed in close proximity, creating conditions ripe for disease transmission

The animal welfare violations are compounded by a troubling record of regulatory failures. Evidence gathered by the Humane Society of New York through Freedom of Information Law requests, and reviewed by Animal Outlook, reveals that state regulators have cited the live markets for more than 2,000 violations between 2022 and 2025, most in New York City. Some facilities have been fined up to \$3,000 for repeated violations.

Documented sanitation violations include: active rodent infestations with fresh droppings in employee break rooms and near chicken feed, feces-laden bird cages with missing catch pans allowing waste to accumulate on floors, and brown, murky stagnant water pooling inside and outside facilities. Slaughter and evisceration rooms have rough, pitted floors holding standing

pools of blood and water, while core equipment—saws, scalders, and bowls—is rusted, corroded, cracked, or jury-rigged from traffic cones, making it impossible to sanitize. Critical infrastructure is failing: sinks and scalders leak onto floors, drains are clogged with feathers or missing covers entirely, backflow prevention is absent, and sanitizing solutions are visibly murky or improperly concentrated. With flies swarming, birds roaming loose, doors left open and unscreened, and chicken being thawed in standing water, these facilities operate in a state of chronic, systemic filth that puts both workers and consumers at grave risk.

"Live animal markets are operating with impunity. Repeated deficiencies affecting animals, consumers, workers, and adjacent communities are documented in inspection reports month after month and year after year. Penalties are insufficient and markets whose licenses have been revoked, as uncommon as this is, have been able to stay in business. It's clear that the current regulatory system has failed. The animals and people of our state deserve so much better. These markets should be closed," says Elinor Molbegott, Legal Counsel for the Humane Society of New York.

John Di Leonardo, an anthrozoologist and executive director of Humane Long Island, has rescued dozens of chickens, ducks, turkeys, rabbits, quails, and partridges from New York City's live animal markets. He describes the suffering he has witnessed inside these facilities: "The birds we rescue from live markets are among the most traumatized animals we've ever encountered. Many arrive with broken bones, necrotic infected wounds, and severe respiratory disease. Most have had the ends of their beaks and toes severed. Many of them are still babies—just weeks old, still peeping the way chicks do—yet they are already injured, terrified, and too weak to stand. Some are so badly wounded that the only kindness left to give them is a peaceful death. And the reality is that just moments before we rescued them, these same birds—some barely able to stand—were still being offered for sale. What we see through rescue is only a small glimpse of what's happening behind the doors of these markets every day. The suffering we encounter isn't rare. It isn't accidental. It's systemic."

There is growing momentum in the New York State Legislature to address this crisis. Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal and Senator Luis Sepúlveda have introduced Bill A2421/S5017, landmark legislation that would prohibit the operation of establishments licensed by the Department of Agriculture and Markets where animals are slaughtered or butchered for food. The bill would also establish a task force to comprehensively examine the public health risks and animal welfare concerns associated with live markets.

"The evidence is overwhelming and undeniable," says Ben Williamson, Executive Director of Animal Outlook. "These live animal markets are sites of routine animal cruelty and public health hazards that have operated hidden in plain sight for far too long. Despite hundreds of documented violations from state inspectors, nothing has changed. The animals continue to suffer, and New Yorkers continue to be exposed to serious health risks. Mayor Mamdani has the authority and the responsibility to protect both animals and public health by shutting down these operations immediately. We cannot wait for another year of violations, another investigation, or another legislative session. The time to act is now."

Animal Outlook is urging concerned citizens to contact Mayor Mamdani's office to demand immediate action on this issue.

For investigative footage, please visit: animaloutlook.org/nylivemarkets

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Animal Outlook is a nonprofit animal protection organization working to end the abuse of farmed animals through undercover investigations, litigation, corporate outreach, public education, and other advocacy programs. <http://animaloutlook.org>

The Humane Society of New York, founded in 1904, is a not-for-profit animal protection organization, operating a low-cost veterinary hospital and an adoption center to provide homeless animals with a safe, loving refuge until they can be placed in carefully screened homes. We also promote the humane treatment of animals through outreach and education. Our primary goals revolve around one unifying principle: animals deserve protection, compassion, care, and respect. <https://humanesocietyny.org>

Humane Long Island is the region's leading animal advocacy and rescue organization, rescuing farmed and exotic animals from Manhattan to Montauk. We've helped shut down slaughterhouses and exotic animal petting zoos, stopped the expansion of live slaughter markets and predatory mall aquariums, and ended the massacre of thousands of native waterfowl and deer—all while distributing thousands of plant-based meals to people in need.