

Tyson's chicken cams will be monitored for animal cruelty

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(Photo: Tyson Foods)

Tyson Foods said Wednesday that it will open the video streams of its poultry farms to an outside company to validate that no animal cruelty is taking place.

Cameras are already in action to monitor all 33 of the food giants' poultry facilities around the U.S., but they haven't been available for viewing by outsiders.

Now, Arrowsight, a remote video auditing firm, will monitor each site's eight to 15 cameras, which are on a several-minute delay, according to Tyson. The videoing chronicles the chickens' arrivals on trucks until right before they're slaughtered. If the monitors see a breach of the company's policy on humane treatment — say, someone removing chickens from their coops by their wings — they'll report it to Tyson.

The Springdale, Ark.-based company declined to say why the video feeds aren't being made available for viewing by the public.

Tyson started installing video cameras more than a decade ago to monitor animal handling in its plants, the company said.

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"Tyson Foods is taking significant steps towards living out its purpose and being an industry leader in animal welfare practice," said Justin Whitmore, the company's chief sustainability officer. "This is all part of our broader sustainability approach that covers economic, social and ecological factors."

According to the food and beverage consulting firm the Hartman Group, 47% of consumers say it is very important that companies avoid inhumane treatment of animals.

The Humane Society of the United States had a mixed reaction.

"It's positive Tyson is looking at the core forms of animal cruelty in its production systems for chickens, but we are disappointed that the company is sidestepping other tangible steps that are core to any strong animal welfare plan," said Matt Prescott, the organization's senior food policy director. "Burger King, Popeye's, Subway, Sodexo, Aramark and dozens of other major poultry buyers have made specific pledges mandating better conditions for birds. The company can and should align its production practices with the pledges of the food retail sector."

Last month, Tyson announced it was [getting rid of antibiotics](/story/money/business/2017/05/01/poultry-giant-tyson-boot-antibiotics-chicken/100970854/) in its chickens. Other companies getting rid of antibiotics in its birds include Perdue, Pilgrim's Pride, [KFC](/story/money/business/2017/04/07/kfc-nix-antiibiotics-chicken-2018/100142496/), McDonald's and Chipotle.

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