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# LETTERS FROM READERS

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## International Respect for Chickens Day

To the editor:

May 4 is International Respect for Chickens Day, a day to appreciate the much-maligned *Gallus domesticus*, rather than eating her or her eggs.

Most chickens in the U.S. are factory farmed and live a brief, highly tortured existence of weeks, while they could live roughly eight years, and egg producers generally kill male chicks at birth. They are variously gassed, suffocated or even mechanically pulverized or buried alive. But the damage starts even earlier. Decades of selective breeding have given the plump domestic chicken an epidemic of musculoskeletal and cardiac problems that cripple many birds, even by the time they are slaughtered as juveniles.

Backyard chickens fare little better, since they are born with the same losing genetic cards. Indeed, many are incubated and

shipped by the same breeders that supply factory farms. And given the high death rate during postal shipping, breeders often use male chicks as packing material, substituting flesh for styrofoam, with crass disrespect for life. When you know these truths, the shrill peeping of chicks in the post office sounds more like distress than springtime.

But if one day without chicken eggs or flesh on May 4 sounds too difficult, then I make one humble request. All year long, just refer to chickens as “she” or “he” respectively, not “it.” Let your children know that chickens are not dumb rocks – not “it”; that they’re social, affectionate animals; and they merit our respect.

Ultimately, Respect for Chickens Day is a matter of humanity, and so self-respect, too.

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