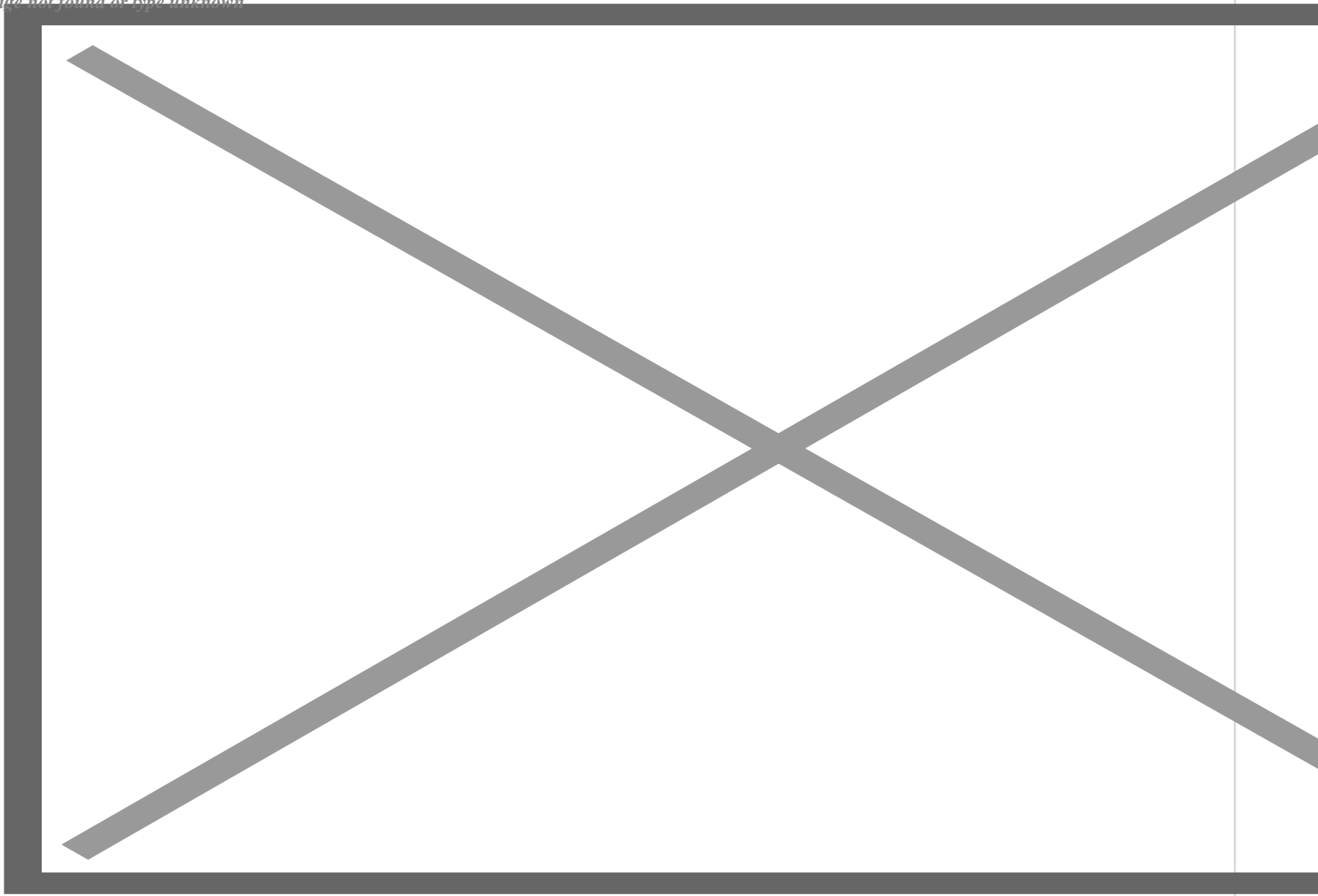


Carl Icahn pressures McDonald's to take its pigs out of small crates

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??McDonald's is facing the most high-profile attack on its animal-welfare policies to date.?

New York, February 23 (RHC)-- Activist investor Carl Icahn has proposed two new board members for McDonald's, escalating his demands that the company force its pork suppliers to stop keeping sows in individual pens so small they can't lie down or turn around.

With Icahn teaming up with the Humane Society of the United States, McDonald's Corp. is now facing the most high-profile attack on its animal-welfare policies to date.

The burger chain's board responded that it expects that, by the end of the year, 85% to 90% of its U.S. pork will come from "sows not housed in gestation crates during pregnancy." While that's progress from when McDonald's announced a move away from crated sows in May 2012, a caveat earlier in the statement specifies that the policy applies to "confirmed pregnant sows," leaving some wiggle room for the chain and its suppliers.

The animal-welfare statement on its website also says McDonald's is guided by an industry standard that moves sows into so-called group housing after they're confirmed as pregnant. What's not explicit is that sows can be crated from the time of their insemination until the pregnancies are confirmed, or about five weeks of their 16-week gestation period.

McDonald's, which doesn't own the pigs at issue, says it's holding true to its decadelong pledge and that Icahn's push to be completely cage-free is a new demand that's currently impossible for suppliers to meet. "We disagree with this inaccurate characterization of our industry-leading pledge and subsequent progress we've seen the industry make at scale, including that an estimated 30-35% of U.S. pork production has moved to group housing systems," the company told Bloomberg News in an emailed statement. It didn't respond to direct questions about whether gestation crates are still used early in the sows' pregnancies.

Icahn charges that crates engender "unnecessary suffering," justifying a push into the boardroom, and his cause is drawing support from some other investors who look at its environmental, social and governance policies. Beef, easily McDonald's most important product, is a major source of global greenhouse-gas emissions. Restaurant workers have demanded higher wages and sued over sexual harassment and discrimination. Animal-welfare advocates want it to wield its huge buying power to end gestation crates, just as it helped galvanize the restaurant industry in 2015 to transition to cage-free eggs.

"Many global investors will welcome this move," said Jeremy Collier, chairman of FAIRR, an investor network that focuses on ESG issues in the food industry. With California and the European Union considering bans on the practice, "slow progress to phase out gestation crates is as much an investment risk as it is an animal-welfare issue."

<https://www.radiohc.cu/index.php/en/noticias/internacionales/287170-carl-icahn-pressures-mcdonalds-to-take-its-pigs-out-of-small-crates>



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