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Thanksgiving Miracle: Utah Farmer Releases Turkeys to Whistleblowers Facing Felonies for Investigations of Factory Farms

While Smithfield demands prison for Utah activists, this turkey farmer is helping them rescue more animals

[PHOTOS/VIDEO](#) -- [LIVESTREAM](#)



NOVEMBER 23, 2020, MORONI, UTAH - As seen on [Facebook livestream](#), factory farm investigators who have been labeled “[terrorists](#)” by the FBI for their investigations into Utah factory farms, and a Utah turkey farmer who owns one of the largest operations in the nation, have come together to send 19 very fortunate turkeys to animal sanctuaries this

Thanksgiving. The collaboration is the result of an unlikely friendship struck between Wayne Hsiung, the Buddhist co-founder of the animal rights network [Direct Action Everywhere \(DxE\)](#), and Rick Pitman, the Mormon owner of Pitman Family Farms and Norbest, based in Moroni, Utah. The animal rights supporters provided food and holiday gifts for the employees of the plant and other locals. Pitman, in turn, plans to release 14 turkeys to the activists in an act of holiday compassion.

Six activists affiliated with DxE, including Hsiung, were charged with multiple felonies and face years in prison after [removing a sick bird](#) from a Norbest farm in 2017. But rather than continuing their fight in court, the two sides decided on a dramatically different path this Thanksgiving: cooperation and compassion.

The cooperation is particularly powerful in contrast with the response of other industry voices in the state. Smithfield Foods -- already the subject of nationwide ire due to widespread COVID outbreaks at company slaughterhouses, with [workplace safety fines in excess of \\$100k](#) -- responded to a separate DxE investigation of its own facilities by seeking unprecedented racketeering charges against the nonviolent animal rights activists at DxE. The result of those charges was a [nationwide FBI “pig-hunt”](#) in pursuit of the two dying piglets activists rescued from Circle Four Farms. While three activists agreed to terms that would dismiss the charges, contingent on a gag order preventing them criticizing Smithfield online, two defendants have refused the offers and plan to go to trial.

The rescued birds were immediately taken to animal sanctuaries, where they will live out their lives in peace. DxE hopes the collaboration with Norbest can set out a different path this holiday season, one where all parties work together to promote transparency and compassion.

“With so many scary things happening in the world around us, the least we can do is to treat one another with kindness and understanding -- especially during the holiday season” said Hsiung. “From activists to farmers and everywhere in between, ordinary people want animals and our environment to be protected, and they’re willing to fight for it.”

Investigators with [Direct Action Everywhere \(DxE\)](#) enter farms, slaughterhouses, and other agricultural facilities to document abuses and rescue sick and injured animals. DxE’s investigatory work has been featured in [The New York Times](#), [ABC Nightline](#), and a [viral Glenn Greenwald exposé](#). DxE activists led the 2019 grassroots effort to [ban fur products in California](#). Activists have been [subjected to FBI raids](#) and [felony prosecutions](#) for these investigations and rescues. Visit Direct Action Everywhere on [Facebook](#), at [directactioneverywhere.com](#), and on Twitter [@DxEverywhere](#).

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