PEOPLE FOR
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Michael Proffitt
Chief Editor, Oxford English Dictionary

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Dear Mr Proffitt:

Hello from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). We're writing on behalf of chickens, those who care about them, and anyone who appreciates accuracy in language, to ask you to please update your entry for the informal adjective "Chicken," currently defined as "A faint-hearted person; a coward." Not only is this definition deeply unfair to chickens, but it also perpetuates a stereotype that couldn't be further from the truth.

Chickens are curious - and often, remarkably brave. Mother hens will put themselves in harm's way to protect their young, using their wings to shield them from predators, while roosters are gallant guardians who defend their flock if threatened. Like all animals, chickens are individuals, and each possesses a unique personality. Some are outgoing, others shy, and many are understandably wary of humans. But being cautious in the face of danger is hardly cowardice – it's common sense.

Words matter. They shape how we perceive others, and in turn, how we treat them. Portraying chickens as cowardly reinforces the notion that these sensitive, intelligent animals are somehow inferior and undeserving of respect. This, in part, leads us to exploit hens for their eggs, burdening their bodies to the point of agony before we slaughter them. It sees us cram birds into sheds, denying them space to stretch a wing or see sunlight, before we slit their throats and devour their flesh. It causes us to abuse and kill over one billion feeling chickens each year in the UK alone.

Humans possess power and privilege over chickens, yet we use it to torment and kill them, largely out of sight. We look away from their suffering while piling their body parts onto our plates. And then we have the audacity to call *them* cowards.

We urge the OED to remove this derogatory definition of "chicken" and help put an end to a stereotype that does these remarkable birds such a disservice.

I appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

Elisa Allen
PETA UK Vice President of Programmes

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