

SALES OF RSPCA CHICKEN UP £55 MILLION IN A YEAR

By Emma Foster, Community Newswire

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Shoppers are ditching standard chicken for higher welfare meat, with sales of the RSPCA's Freedom Food chicken up £55 million in the past year, figures out today show.

The research, carried out by Kantar Worldpanel for RSPCA Freedom Food, revealed a rise in consumer spending on Freedom Food-labelled chicken, from £16.4 million to £71.6 million, since March last year. This compares to a drop of more than £26 million for standard chicken.

The RSPCA said the research was proof that animal welfare was still on the shopping list of even the most budget-conscious consumers.

The growth in the amount of Freedom Food chicken sold in supermarkets has also overtaken standard, increasing by more than 15 million kg - from 5.6 to 20.7 million kg - compared to a decrease of 11 million kg for standard chicken, according to the research.

The news comes more than two years after chicken welfare hit the headlines with high profile campaigns by TV chefs Jamie Oliver and Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall.

Leigh Grant, Freedom Food's chief executive, said: "We expected to see an increase in sales of Freedom Food chicken after Jamie and Hugh highlighted the benefits of buying higher welfare back in 2008 - but these latest results far exceed anything we could have predicted.

"They are absolute proof that chicken welfare is of paramount importance to more people than ever before. And the fact shoppers have stood firm by animal welfare through some of the most difficult economic times, only reinforces that it is an issue that is here to stay."

These findings are based on Kantar Worldpanel data for the 52 weeks to March 21 on fresh chicken meat sales (whole birds and portions) sold in major UK supermarkets.

Freedom Food-labelled products come from farms that are assessed to strict RSPCA welfare standards that go beyond the industry standards and legislation in many key welfare areas.

The RSPCA works to prevent cruelty to animals, investigates complaints of animal cruelty and re-homes and rehabilitates animals. For more information, visit www.rspca.org.uk.