

Proforma A (RSPCA) - 8539 responses received

Dear Committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my views on the use of battery cages in NSW.

Animal welfare is very important to me. All animals deserve to be treated with respect, especially those we use to produce our food and fibre.

It is therefore shocking to me that in 2019, we are still allowing hens to be confined to barren battery cages. In these cages, hens have the equivalent of an A4-size sheet of paper in floor space on which to live for the duration of their lives. Not only can they not perform normal behaviours like nesting, foraging, scratching, and dustbathing, they cannot even extend their wings.

This is cruel and the science proves it. Hens in battery cages suffer from:

- * extreme behavioural deprivation;
- * the highest rates of disuse osteoporosis (brittle bones);
- * the highest rates of bone fractures at depopulation; and
- * the highest rates of non-infectious diseases such as fatty liver disease.

All of these health and welfare problems are associated with the battery cage system itself. They cannot be addressed through good management.

The abundance of scientific literature on this topic has led the European Union Scientific Veterinary Commission, the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee of New Zealand, and the National Farm Animal Care Council of Canada to conclude that battery cages cannot meet the welfare needs of hens and must be phased out.

Battery cages have now been phased out of all 28 nations of the European Union, several US states including the largest egg-producing state of California, and are in the process of being phased out in New Zealand and Canada.

International food businesses including major Australian and international brands are also moving ahead. Arnott's, McDonalds, Hungry Jacks, Subway, Nando's, Oporto, Coles, Woolworths, Aldi, Harris Farm Markets, Ikea, Kellogg's, Compass Group, Mars, Nestle, PepsiCo and Unilever, have all committed to putting battery cage-free eggs on their shelves and in their products.

All of these developments show that it is entirely feasible to produce safe, affordable, nutritious eggs without the cruelty of battery cages. I want to see the NSW Government act on the scientific evidence and the community's expectations on animal welfare, and commence a phase out.

It is important to note that this issue is not just about animal welfare. It is also about trust in Australian agriculture and livestock production more broadly. Cruel and archaic systems like the battery cage taint the reputations of all Australian farmers and farming sectors, and have no place in the future of sustainable agriculture.

Thank you for considering my submission. I look forward to seeing decisive action from the NSW Government on this issue.

Kind regards,