

**Submission  
No 52**

**INQUIRY INTO USE OF BATTERY CAGES FOR HENS IN  
THE EGG PRODUCTION INDUSTRY**

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I would like to urge members of the committee to take any action they can to stop the unnecessary suffering of hens in battery cages. I am a former coal miner, avid egg meat and dairy consumer. However, I made a commitment to become vegan after studying business ethics at university. I do not judge others on the basis of what is right or wrong morally. I can only say that I opened my eyes to unnecessary suffering happening as a result of my consumer choices, something I could easily change and remain healthy.

This is why I am taking the time to write this submission, I believe the egg industry in general and in particular, battery cages are causing unnecessary suffering to our fellow animals. I have friends who saved some pet hens who are free to roam, socialise and generally satisfy their species unique needs in their backyard. I have no problem with this as all parties have a mutually beneficial deal and I don't understand why that can't be the paradigm, a fair deal for both parties, not exploitation due to one being weak and one being strong. I won't bore you with citing research on consciousness or the social needs of animals, including hens, as there is so much out there if you search for a small amount of time you will find enough peer-reviewed, scientific and philosophical journal articles to make you severely question how we treat other animals who are unlike us in some pretty superficial ways like how they (not if they) express emotion.

I'm not asking for Australia to go plant-based with me just yet, although I think we'd all benefit, I don't think it's unreasonable to ask for the cutting of low lying fruit such as battery cages. The suffering is very distressing to me and my friends but most of all, it's unnecessary. I think it's our obligation as the judge jury and executioner of millions of animals who have no choice in their own suffering, to at least explore that option.

The only reason I wasn't a vegan much earlier was because of ignorance. Just like democratic elections rely on a well-informed public to make correct voting decisions, the consumers need a well-informed public on how their food gets to their table. Transparent and unbiased reporting on conditions of animals is key and whistleblowers must be protected for revealing information in the public interest.

Lastly, I'd like to leave you good folks with a quote from Mahatma Gandhi that my parents always reminded me of:  
"the true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members".

These animals are members of our society, without us mass breeding them they wouldn't be here (not in these conditions or numbers anyway). Economically, perhaps they are our most productive members. They give their whole lives, their bodies and their children for us to take advantage of, even when we can survive just fine without them.

So in conclusion, even if we accept the mass breeding of hens to appease our palettes, at the very least can we please stop their unnecessary suffering. Give the chickens a fair go!

Thankyou for taking the time.

Kind Regards my fellow animals,  
James Kerr