

**Submission
No 125**

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

Organisation: Who Gives A Cluck Incorporated

Date Received: 27 June 2019

I am sure this committee will undertake an enormous amount of due diligence, to uncover and understand the plight of hens in the egg industry.

With over 27,000 hens culled every day in Australia to provide the 18 million eggs to our consumers, we need to consider the life of the hen as a sentient being. An egg laying hen, by the age of 18 months to 2 years of age, in the vast majority of free range and caged farms are culled and converted to compost. Battery hens are either culled or sold for a couple of dollars to dog food companies.

I have learnt so much over the last three years, while rescuing and rehoming nearly 2,000 hens from free range egg farms:

1) The farmers are good people who absolutely hate the part of their job when they need to cull their hens. It's a commercial decision when the hen doesn't lay an egg a day. They happily give us their older hens, to treat and rehome.

2) The farms I deal with are not large scale, would have between 200 and 600 hens at any one time. They are a family business and may employ one or two other people to help them, get their eggs prepared for markets and local businesses.

3) Every farmer I have dealt with has little to no education on economical ways to care for their hens, so organic free range hens do often suffer from worms, parasites, scaly leg mite, bumblefoot, respiratory diseases and more. They are all treatable, which is what we do when we rescue them, before adopting them to a forever family.

4) Battery cage farms will not give their older hens, they expect money, between \$2 to \$5 for each hen.

What I'd like to see considered by this committee, to improve the life of the hen:

1) Education then regulation for care of hens on egg farms, so farmers can economically look after them better and hens can enjoy a better life while living there. Policies such as; how often their nesting boxes and perches are to be cleaned (vinegar & hot water); use of diatomaceous earth (DE) for nesting boxes, perches, and hens to eliminate mites/lice; Inclusion of DE in feed to support elimination of worms & parasites; recognition of diseases and rescue charities who would take on sick hens; mandated rotation of free range area so hens have diversity of forage and not living their lives in one area that has not forage or grubs (their natural diet).

2) Regulation that all hens are to be rehomed, by local hen rescue charity, where a local charity can support this egg farm. This ensures no hen is culled and also hens are not given away or sold cheaply by the farm to unsavoury characters (to feed pet snakes and for dog baiting).

3) While this point is about the male chick, it is, very important to acknowledge and do something urgently about the way male chicks are culled. Chicken breeders for egg industry - enforce introduction of male chicken detecting technology on all breeders that sell to egg farms. In this way, we will have 12 million male chicks every year, in Australia, not minced up alive. (once NSW takes the lead, other states will surely follow).

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2016-07-20/male-chick-detecting-technology-could-be-used-by-2018/7644762>

4) Transition of all battery egg farms, to be closed down. We need to get in line with most of the rest of the world and see these battery farms for what they are, cruel and unnecessary. Do not leave it to businesses such as McDonalds and Hungry Jacks and local supermarkets who are setting a date to not buy battery caged eggs. This NSW government needs to lead by example, start the movement. If need be, give transitional training to battery caged farm owners on alternative produce that uses their large sheds, such as plant based food produce, flowers etc.

5) The allowance of hen per sqm classification as free range must be reviewed. While recently the new standard is maximum 10,000 hens per hectare, this standard is unacceptable. that is one square metre per hen. This is not free range. A hen needs to have enough room to move freely, dust bathe, peck at grass and grubs. NSW could stand out by creating its own allowance of 2,500 hens per hectare maximum. This is in line with many other countries and professional organisations recommendations.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-04-26/new-free-range-egg-laws-come-into-effect/9696146>

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to understanding the progress made by this committee and it's ultimate recommendations.

Regards

Julie O'Shea