

**Submission  
No 150**

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

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Currently in Australia, 11-12 million 'battery' hens are confined to small wire cages in which they are unable to perform most of their natural behaviours, confined row after row in large sheds with thousands, or even hundreds of thousands of other hens.

The space allocation for each bird is less than the size of a piece of A4 paper and cages are only 40 cm high. Small cages mean hens are unable to stretch out, flap their wings or exercise properly. These birds spend their time continually standing on sloping wire floors designed to facilitate egg collection; many experience chronic pain from the development of lesions and other foot problems.

Scientific studies indicate that battery hens suffer intensely while continually confined in cages. Restricted movement, constant exposure to a wire floor, and lack of perches lead to serious bone and muscle weakness.

Hens cannot express normal behaviours such as wing flapping, scratching, dust bathing, perching and foraging.

Caged hens cannot have a normal 'personal space' which means they cannot escape aggression from other hens.

Cages have no nesting area — nesting before and during egg laying is a priority for hens and this deficiency causes them to feel frustration.

The egg industry argues that the high laying rates in battery cages indicate healthy, productive hens. However, the overwhelming consensus among animal welfare experts is that the welfare of hens is severely compromised. A detailed European report makes a clear case against battery cages: <http://www.laywel.eu/>.