

**Submission  
No 195**

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

**Name:** Mr Robert O'Donnell

**Date Received:** 2 July 2019

---

As a regular meat eater, I often believe that some animal activists push their agendas too far. Humans have been farming and eating animals for thousands of years. Evolutionary theory and anthropology suggest that humans would not have developed large brains capable of advanced cognition without consuming animal protein.

However, whilst I consume animal products, I cannot support our modern mass agricultural practices. Not only have we enslaved billions of sentient animals (subjecting them to cruel lives, separating parents from offspring and making them endure terrifying deaths in the process), but we have modified them to the point that they need this system to even stay alive (modern meat chickens being the perfect example).

Out of all intensively-farmed animals, it is hard to imagine any suffering more than battery hens. Male chicks are ground up alive, or gassed - because their lives are considered to hold no value. Females are raised in an over-crowded, smelly, dirty environment, devoid of their parents, sunlight, grass or anything remotely natural. Once old enough, these poor creatures are shoved into crates, which they share with other birds, in a shed with thousands of other slaves. Hens are hierarchical and vocal - just imagine the psychological torment they must experience with just the constant noise, let alone not being able to walk, stretch or flap their wings. Chickens are also cannibalistic, merciless attacking others when they smell blood. In an environment where a dominant bird is jammed in next to a submissive one, and where tensions are on edge, severe injuries are common. Imagine not being able to escape from someone who continually attacks you.

These wretched beings endure this existence either until they give up and die, or are a couple of years old, when their egg production typically slows down. At this point, the overwhelming majority are killed. Despite Australian slaughtering methods being relatively humane, images of birds being hung upside on conveyer belts before their throats are sliced gives a partial insight into the terror they feel. Occasionally, something goes wrong in this process... and this even slower death is truly horrifying.

I have not been in a position to adopt any of the few ex-battery hens that find their way to adoption, but friends of mine have. The pictures of these animals relishing the simple joys of walking on grass, feeling the sun's rays on their feathers, and just having space to themselves is heartwarming. And despite the horror inflicted on them by humans (and the psychological damage they have surely experienced), they demonstrate that they are still capable of giving affection to their carers.

We cannot let the market forces of supply and demand continue to justify the existence of caged and intensively-farmed hens. Consumers as a whole will always purchase the cheapest option available, as has been demonstrated in a British study. We must find ways of improving the lot of hens, whilst keeping prices as low as possible.

It is 2019: humans should have evolved beyond ignorance of the suffering of others. As a society, we should abhor slavery and exploitation in all its guises.