

**Submission
No 222**

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

Name: Ms Robyn G. Henriksen

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Dear Members of the Select Committee:

I would like to make my views on the factory farming of egg-laying hens, perfectly clear to the N.S.W. government. It is a barbaric practice, causing totally unnecessary suffering to the extent that it is physical and mental torture, that has NO place in a civilised 21st century society.

It's bad enough that to maintain this industry, male chicks are killed - and they should NOT be killed in the cruel and often grotesque manner that they are (gassing or being cut and ground up alive - just imagine that for yourself!). But to confine hens that we are exploiting for their eggs into small cages where they can barely move, have to stand on wire with feet especially unsuited to that, and where they are often forced to share that tiny space with other hens with whom they don't get along (just like humans don't get along with some others), adds insult to injury.

Basic standards of animal welfare require that non-human animals are always able to behave in ways instinctual to their species. For hens, this means access to fresh air, water, food, sunshine, shelter when desired, dirt to scratch in, grass and insects to eat, nesting, and being able to flap their wings. Hens confined to battery cages, are denied everything but the absolute basics to keep them alive for a short while to produce eggs. They are denied, space, comfort, sunshine, fresh air, dirt, grass and insects. Instead, they are made to live in sheds that are either dark or have artificial light (often turned on to facilitate maximum egg production), and constantly breathe in the stench of the manure and dead bodies of thousands of other hens. Often, they are forced to share cages with hens who have perished. There are so many hens, that many suffer terrible ill health and are never treated - whether their legs, or a prolapse from too much forced egg production. Some fall down into manure pits below the cages where they starve and suffocate to death over long periods of time.

That anyone would even ever question that this type of egg production was cruel, is hard to fathom. I think rather, that everyone, once they are exposed to the truth of cage egg production, KNOWS how brutal it is on the hens, but just choose to deny that fact, from vested financial interests and/or an idiosyncratic lack of empathy for other beings who have JUST as much right as us, to fully live out the lives God gave them, naturally, and in comfort.

All you have to do, is consider how you would feel in the same sort of situation. It is NO less bad for them. We are all animals (none superior in value to any other, in fact, despite what some humans want to tell themselves), and a consciousness (spirit) can be born into any type of body and be limited by that. We are just LUCKY that this time around, we were born into human bodies. But the Christ said, "Do unto others as you'd have done unto you", and was ALL about compassion, just as the Buddha was. We are always meant to decrease suffering where possible.

Would you like to be confined in a metal cage with several others, some of whom you probably didn't get along with, barely able to turn around, and standing on wire that cut into your feet, whilst breathing in stench constantly, and with no exposure to fresh air or daylight or breezes from the time you were born until the day you were murdered - just so that a few people could maximise their profits and do better relative to others? No, we should be making a level playing field by requiring ALL egg production to be properly free range - with hens having safe, daylight access to the outdoors. Get an alpaca or two into a field and they will protect the flock and keep any foxes or feral cats or dogs at bay.

After all this suffering to benefit a greedy few, these poor animals are typically then gassed to death at only 18 months of age. By then, all their bodies are breaking down and they are regarded as 'spent' as maximum egg layers. Of course, this is because of the horrible conditions they are

forced to live in. You'd suffer negative health effects too! Why would you even want to go on living and suffering like that? Never getting to live your life normally, or experience even basic pleasures like breathing in fresh air and feeling the sun on your body? Of course producers try to keep the reality of what these caged hens (and their male chicks) go through, hidden from the public, as they know that all decent people would react against it if they knew the truth and their cruelty-based profits would be impacted.

Recently however, Animal Liberation N.S.W. got access to footage showing the hidden 'depopulation' of laying hens at 18 months of age, via gassing. For people with empathy, it is extremely distressing to view. But it is the reality of the last torture imposed upon these social, intelligent and sentient beings - to benefit the coffers of a few. Animal Liberation N.S.W. reported: "A death by gas is slow. Footage from inside the gas chamber shows hens frantically trying to escape, whilst shrieking for up to two minutes, eventually dying from cardiac failure. Due to the stress of producing eggs, the hens' bodies are so fragile and of poor quality, that they are either thrown away like trash or used in baby formula or stock". EVERYONE looking into the future of the caged egg industry NEEDS to see this footage, if they are to be properly informed, so here it is:

https://www.facebook.com/AnimalLiberationORG/videos/659837191145326/?link_id=3&can_id=3bbba99ab58343c2af489f629c069841&source=email-exposed-layer-hen-depopulation&email_referrer=email_566255&email_subject=exposed-layer-hen-depopulation

Also, you **MUST** watch the video at the bottom of this page labelled 'Penny's story'. It shows the reality of cage egg farming like you've probably never seen it before (going well beyond the images of a bald hen):

<https://www.thedodo.com/on-the-farm/sick-chicken-without-feathers-completely-transforms>

Really, watch it, and THEN make your decision on the future of cage eggs - because we can still have eggs and give hens a decent life too! It says a lot about the spiritual development of humans, whether we are okay with forcing this EXTREME cruelty upon hens or not. And remember, that if it were pet dogs or cats, it WOULD be deemed what it is, with severe penalties. There is a tidal movement now toward producing food in a more compassionate way. We should aspire to be leaders in this, not dragging our feet. We are better than that as a society, surely!

As Mohandas Gandhi also said, "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated" - in line with the stance of the Buddha and the Christ. I implore you, do the RIGHT thing - BAN caged eggs forever and have all egg farmers work by the same free range system.

Yours sincerely,

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