

**Submission  
No 242**

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

**Name:** Mr Charles Davis

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## NSW PARLIAMENT

### SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE USE OF BATTERY CAGES FOR HENS IN THE EGG PRODUCTION INDUSTRY

Thank you for the opportunity of providing a submission on the use of battery cages in NSW.

I am very interested in animal welfare, and I want to be guaranteed that farm animals are treated well. Hens are sentient creatures that enjoy outdoor activities; they like to forage and spread their wings. They are intelligent and gentle creatures that deserve better.

I have been following the horrific disclosures in the media about what happens in battery cage establishments. This is so bad that I do not eat eggs at all now – no matter where they come from.

I find it hard to believe that after all the adverse publicity and scientific reports about the shocking cruelty that battery cages inflict, that battery are still allowed to be used in the agriculture industry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Hens have the equivalent of an A4-size sheet of paper in floor space on which to live for the duration of their lives. Not only can they not perform normal behaviours like nesting, foraging, scratching, and dustbathing, they cannot even extend their wings.

#### **The Science**

Science has proved that hens in battery cages suffer extreme behavioural deprivation, the highest rates of disuse osteoporosis (brittle bones), the highest rates of bone fractures at depopulation and the highest rates of non-infectious diseases such as fatty liver disease. It doesn't matter what sort of manager you are, hens in battery cages suffer extreme cruelty and bad welfare. Good management will not make battery cages safe for hens. The problem is the cages themselves.

Scientific studies on battery cages has led the European Union Scientific Veterinary Commission, the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee of New Zealand, and the National Farm Animal Care Council of Canada to conclude that battery cages cannot meet the welfare needs of hens and must be phased out.

The article below is from the January 6, 2017 issue of The Age Digital Edition. Page

#### **Chickens a lot smarter than we give them credit for**

Chickens are just as intelligent as many of their feathered friends, demonstrate thinking skills on par with mammals and primates, and even exhibit Machiavellian tendencies, a US scientist has discovered.

A new study, published in the journal *Animal Cognition*, has reviewed previous research to find that, despite popular belief, chickens are intelligent and emotional animals with individual personalities.

“Chickens are behaviourally sophisticated, discriminating among individuals, exhibiting Machiavellian-like social interactions, and learning socially in complex ways that are similar to humans,” the report revealed. They were found to be masters of manipulation and counter-strategies, with males making false food calls to attract nearby females, and females eventually ignoring those who made false alerts too often.

Author Loro Marino, a senior scientist at The Someone Project, a venture focused on changing public perceptions of farm animals, said chickens exhibit logical reasoning that humans do not develop until the age of seven.

“Unlike many other birds, chickens are categorised as a commodity, devoid of authenticity as a real animal. But chickens have the capacity to reason and make logical inferences. They perceive time intervals and may be able to anticipate future events,” he said.

The farmyard bird was found to exhibit social awareness; capable of waiting for a better food reward, and recognising their status in the pecking order. They also have distinct personalities, with hens exhibiting different “maternal styles”, thought to influence the behaviour of their chicks, and have a complex system of communication, consisting of a range of visual displays and at least 24 vocalisations.

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## **Other countries**

Battery cages have now been phased out of all 28 nations of the European Union, several US states including the largest egg-producing state of California, and they are in the process of being phased out in New Zealand and Canada.

Consumers have been expressing their horror at battery cages for many years. That is why so many companies and countries around the world are banning the battery cage.

International food businesses including major Australian and international brands are also moving to ban products from battery cages. Arnott's, McDonalds, Hungry Jacks, Subway, Nando's, Oporto, Coles, Woolworths, Aldi, Harris Farm Markets, Ikea, Kellogg's, Compass Group, Mars, Nestle, PepsiCo and Unilever, have all committed to not put battery cage eggs on their shelves and in their products.

Hilton Hotels are now drafting a global policy to spare hens from battery cages

Just recently Best Western has pledged that not a single one of their 4000+ hotels or resorts will serve eggs laid by hens kept locked in cages.

These major developments show that it is possible to produce safe, affordable, nutritious eggs without the cruelty of battery cages.

This is more than a trend; it is a new way of life. Everyone around the world is banning battery cages except Australia.

I ask the NSW Government to act on the scientific evidence AND the community's expectations on animal welfare, and to commence a phase out of battery cages.

This issue is not just about animal welfare – it is also about trust and confidence in Australian agriculture and livestock production in an overall sense. Cruel and archaic systems like battery cages taint the reputations of all Australian farmers and farming sectors, and they have no place in the future of sustainable agriculture.

### **Egg industry and the formulation of industry standards**

Despite the overwhelming opposition to battery cages by the Australian consumers, illustrated by their buying of free-range eggs, I have also been appalled by the undue influence that the egg industry had in the preparation of the poultry standards in 2017-18. See link below. The voice of Australian consumers has been ignored by both successive governments and the industry in the quest for profits, to the detriment of hens.

### **No measures to assist businesses adversely affected by a phase out of cage eggs**

I do not believe egg producers should be compensated if battery cages are phased out. The worldwide trend towards the phasing out of battery cages has been taking place for a number of years already. The egg industry has had plenty of time to prepare for this; the taxpayer should not be expected to support an industry that has steadfastly ignored the trend to cage free and has actively opposed improvements in standards. See links below about the welfare standards and accusations of collusion below.

Examples of why the egg industry cannot be allowed to self-regulate and why it should remain out of the standard setting process.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-12-21/egg-farmers-accused-of-colluding-with-nsw-government/9229242>

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-01-08/concerns-poultry-welfare-standards-stage-managed-by-industry/9299256>

### **Examples of battery cages**

The images below were taken from Google. They show hens in battery cages. They live in a murky twilight for their entire, miserable lives. Many suffer from osteoporosis and fractured bones. Nearly all will have their skin rubbed raw and their feathers torn out, while their feet are crippled and cut on the wire cage flooring. This must stop.



Thank you for considering my submission. I trust the NSW government will join the 21<sup>st</sup> century and ban immediately and forever the barbaric battery cage.

Charles Davis

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