

Submission  
No 258

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

**Name:** Name suppressed

**Date Received:** 9 July 2019

---

Partially  
Confidential

## Inquiry into the use of battery cages for hens in the NSW egg production industry July 2019

As a trained poultry scientist, and having worked in the poultry industry for 5+ years, I offer personal and professional insight into the issue being discussed.

While the industry spouts the benefits of cage production for minimal reasons, the larger number of concerns are overlooked.

In my opinion, I would suggest a phase out over the next ten years. Many of the cage facilities are outdated and require massive investment to upgrade anyway. Rather than do this, it makes more sense to spend the money on improved facilities and space for the animals. There is no point in investing or supporting facilities that plan to continue utilising this option. It is a dead practice. The writing is on the wall however the government currently is supporting the industry for its own agenda.

Unfortunately, Australia is lagging behind in this arena. Our closest neighbours internationally have already debating and agreed to moves away from 'old fashioned' battery cages. We cannot expect to be seen as progressive in agriculture while still supporting and investing in an outdated practice.

Consumers have already driven this change, the market share for cage eggs is constantly decreasing and, as is widely known, supermarkets will be phasing out the sale of cage eggs by 2025.

I spent a year running a project as part of my Master's thesis at The University of Queensland. The project took 'spent' cage hens and put them in a free range environment. The condition of the hens on their arrival was poor. The average feather score was a 2/5 and the hens were anaemic and had parasites. The hens had long toe nails and terribly short beaks from being cut off for trimming expectations. They were also not fed in the lead up to their depopulation. I contact the AECL industry body to inform them of this producer and the deplorable conditions his animals were in.

Not surprisingly, my study showed that, on average, it took only two weeks of hens being in the new environment for their condition to improve, and their adaptation to develop. They were exhibiting behaviours they had never had the opportunity to when living in the cages. The hen's physical and behavioural changes were significant. For my conclusion, this went a long way to prove that the hens were kept in conditions that severely impacted on their desire to display natural behaviours and processes related to egg laying.

These hens are kept for at least 18 months, and can often be kept longer if a producer decides to push them through a moult for another laying stint. I have worked with broilers (chickens for meat production) who are kept for a maximum of 42 days. The suffering of the laying birds is considerably longer which is why this issue needs immediate consultation.

I anticipate producer noise and push back however the number of the small businesses are minimal and are looking at larger company take over anyway. The 'livelihood' of these producers should not be a reason to continue with this cruel way of keeping birds.

The use of battery cages to accommodate hens is undoubtedly associated with poor welfare outcomes.

Legislation should set the standard of hen welfare in NSW by banning the use of battery cages and then create and enforce appropriate minimum standards for the ongoing accommodation expectations in the egg production industry. It is important to provide consumers with complete confidence when they purchase eggs in NSW that they are not being deceived about the conditions of the hens.

Having worked with employees in the poultry industry, having better welfare for animals lead to improved workplace engagement. Having to work with sick/dying animals every day is terrible for the industry to retain staff which is a huge issue as it is already difficult to employ staff in this industry.

I am happy to provide more information and insight if it is required. I can be contacted on my mobile:

Thank you