

**Submission
No 363**

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

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I am deeply disturbed at the way hens are placed in battery cages and endure intense physical and emotional suffering in the egg production industry.

The industry is representative of poor animal welfare practices which are largely hidden from the consumer. The consumer is ill informed as to the conditions of hens in battery cages.

Many pictures of hens in cages are widely available but not the actual degree of suffering experienced by the hens from birth to death. Marketing has largely conditioned consumers to only think of hens happily laying eggs.

Chickens are social and complex creatures whose natural instinct is to scratch, peck in dirt, stretch their wings and enjoy the sunshine.

Battery cage conditions are the antithesis of what is a natural life for hens. In darkness, unable to move, feathers rubbed raw against cages, bare flesh pecked, breathing ammonia, suffering disease and maiming and emotional stress. Many, many hens don't even make it to slaughter as they die as a result of the conditions in which they are farmed.

Anecdotally I have heard that chickens are kept awake all night so when inspectors come they cannot tell which ones are dead or alive.

The fact that male chicks are macerated is not widely known.

The sheer size / volume of these battery hen industrialised farms means suffering chickens are not helped in any way and are a by-product – wastage. The automation of these farms also means that problems with the provision of food and water, illness etc is only discovered after the death of many chickens.

Consumers who abhor battery cage eggs and instead choose “ethical” eggs are unaware of the use of caged eggs in a plethora of other products, as this fact is not disclosed on labelling. If they knew they probably would make a more ethical choice.

Once battery cages are removed the next step is to follow up with the conditions in “free range” egg production to reduce the suffering in this industry also.

The entire battery cage industry is based on the deprivation of a natural life of chickens, and intense suffering – including during the transfer to transportation vehicles, the road trip itself to the slaughter house packed together in crates, experiencing heat, cold, no food or water, then followed by the hit and miss slaughter practices.

It is also concerning that members of the public are the ones who raise the alarm about cruelty that is inflicted upon hens and then it is the whistle blower that is targeted rather than the profiteer who is causing the animal suffering.

These chickens are at our mercy, they are sentient beings. The producers should have respect for the hens who bring them profit and for the rights of the people who eat the eggs

to be informed. No animal should be treated with such contempt. If it costs more for eggs to ensure the hens do not endure an entire life of suffering then so be it. Petrol prices go up, people still buy petrol so why not the same scenario for eggs?

In this day of internet and social media consumers should have access to the hen factories via CCTV, and have transparency and governance in the way the businesses are run. Otherwise these hens have no one protecting them from a life of suffering.

I would like to see that changed by CCTV camera's being accessible in all egg production facilities, transparency about the practices, governance, details of the average life of the hens, how they are slaughtered etc. No cover ups.

Be brave and have courage to do what you know is right.

Australians will continue to eat eggs, but I am sure most Australians, if they knew the facts would not be comfortable with the suffering endured by hens to provide eggs in our diet.

Thank you for the enquiry and the opportunity to express my thoughts.