

**Submission
No 372**

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

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I am writing to express my will on action to ban the use of battery hens in New South Wales (and Australia wide too).

There are many reasons not to have hens kept in battery cages. Some of these are as follows:

In Australia, there are at least 9 million hens housed in battery cages. This figure represents over 66% of all the layer hens in the country.

[1] [14] [17]

Hens in commercial systems will live for around 72 weeks until they are considered 'spent'. Then they are sent off to be roughly handled, have their bones broken and eventually inhumanely killed. [1] [17]

Hens have over 20 different calls, including two distinct alarm calls to warn their flock about approaching predators.

Aerial (flying) predators such as hawks and eagles will cause hens to give a different alarm call than ground predators, and the birds react differently to each call. When hens hear an aerial alarm call they run for cover, crouch down and look upwards; when they hear a ground alarm call they actively look around them for signs of danger. Hens also use calls to communicate with each other about food. Studies on hens have indicated that they can interpret the meaning of individual calls and can use calls to show their intention when communicating with each other. [1]

Hens have a complex nervous system that includes a prodigious memory and the ability to make complex decisions. Researchers who have studied the behaviour of hens are clear that battery cages can in no way meet the demands of such remarkable animals. [1]

They are known as 'battery' cages because of the way they are stacked above one another. How cruel is that?

A single shed can contain up to 100,000 hens. This means they never see sunlight.

Hens in battery cages spend their entire lives in a metal cage, and typically share their space with three to seven other hens. [1] [14]

You think you've got it bad on the morning commute?

Each hen is only allowed the space of less than an A4 sheet of paper. Can you please look at a sheet of A4 paper and read that sentence again?

[1] [13] [14]

The floor space per hen is 550cm². [1] [13]

Restrictions on bird movement in battery cages means hens suffer greatly both mentally and physically. Individual care of the hens is impossible.

Hens also have no escape from aggression, feather pecking and cannibalism. Allowing battery cages to continue means you support that suffering.

Would you swap places with them? [1] [13] [14]

What the science tells us is that layer hens deserve much better than to be forced to endure their lifetime in a barren battery cage. [1] [14]

This is ALL standard practice and RSPCA approved!

On average hens produce approximately 300 eggs each year. [1]

This is a deliberate genetic modification, that has been bred into the hens over the years.

In nature they produce approximately 12 per year (one per month). This overproduction is unnatural and strains the hens bodies to breaking point. [2][3]

This is a main reason egg-laying hens are so commonly afflicted with debilitating osteoporosis, as the near constant production of an unnatural quantity of eggs depletes their bodies of massive amounts of calcium. [2]

The male chicks are considered an unwanted by-product of egg production and are killed and disposed of shortly after birth. [1] [17]

They are typically ground up alive within the first 48 hours in a machine called a macerator. [4] [5] [14]

Overproduction of eggs is responsible for numerous disorders in hens, including often fatal diseases of the reproductive tract; osteoporosis and accompanying bone fractures; and, in some cases, total skeletal paralysis, sometimes referred to as "caged layer fatigue." Osteoporosis and bone fragility from unnatural lay rates are also greatly exacerbated by lack of exercise: more than 95% of egg laying hens spend their entire lives confined in battery cages so small they cannot even spread their wings. [2]

Reproductive disorders in egg laying hens include tumours of the oviduct; peritonitis; egg binding (large eggs getting stuck and being slow and painful to pass); and uterine prolapse, a condition in which the lower portion of the oviduct fails to retract back into the body after oviposition, or the depositing of an egg. Like egg binding, prolapse is commonly a result of small birds being genetically manipulated to lay an unnaturally high rate of unnaturally large eggs. [2]

Egg yolk peritonitis, a common disorder and frequent cause of death in egg laying hens. Egg yolk peritonitis results from egg yolks diverting into the abdominal cavity of hens, or from rupture or lodging of thin-shelled or otherwise malformed eggs in the oviduct. (Thin-shelled eggs are common in layer hens because the birds do not have sufficient calcium stores to produce such a high rate of shells). When eggs break or yolks accumulate inside of hens, this leads to a build-up of rotting egg material in the oviduct and abdomen, which causes painful swelling and frequently fatal bacterial infection. [2]

The beak is essential for activities such as preening, nesting, and defence. Being extensively innervated and connected to the autonomic nervous system, the tip of the beak is very sensitive, and has neural receptors for touch, taste, and temperature. [6] [17]

The egg industry has determined that these natural behaviours and habits interfere with profit, and therefore should be taken away from the hen, by slicing off up to 2/3 of their beaks with a hot blade. [7] [14] [17]

As stated above, this can only be described as cruel and painful for the hen.

While a chicken's natural lifespan is usually 5-8 years, it can last up to 30 years. However, most hens used for commercial egg production live for 1-2 years before they are killed, and broiler chickens, raised for meat, are slaughtered at just 6-7 weeks of age. [3] [17]

In her exhaustive work on the development of the chicken brain, Lesley Rogers, professor of neuroscience and animal behaviour at University of New England in Australia, concludes: "With increased knowledge of the behaviour and cognitive abilities of the chicken has come the realization that the chicken is not an inferior species to be treated merely as a food source." [3]

There are also health concerns with respect to salmonella outbreaks.

Here is a list of public outbreaks of salmonella, the health affects people suffer, how it can be spread nationwide and how it can lead to the destruction of HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF CHICKENS.

Five people ranging in age from their 20s to their 80s contracted salmonella enteritidis linked to eggs produced by Victoria's Bridgewater Poultry.

Symptoms include fever, headache, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting. They usually start from six to 72 hours after consuming the contaminated food and can last up to a week. [8]

At least 184 NSW residents have become unwell following an outbreak of Salmonella Enteritidis since first reported in May 2018 [9]

The majority of human cases reside in NSW, but cases have also been detected in Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania and South Australia. [10]

Authorities could order the destruction of hundreds of thousands chickens at a Victorian poultry farm, after the detection of a rare strain of salmonella at the property sparked a massive supermarket egg recall. [11]

There is also concern surrounding avian flu. [18]

This isn't limited to New South Wales, or Australia, it is happening all around the world. [12] [18]

New South Wales should be a leader in this area, not a laggard.

The Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania are in front of NSW, as is Switzerland (since 1991), the UK, the European Union, New Zealand, Brazil and some states in the USA (California, Michigan and Ohio). [14] [16] [22]

New South Wales is allowing the egg industry's zeitgeist to continue. Consumer attitudes have changed, and we should change with those times.

Over the last decade, Australian consumers have increasingly embraced the global ethical food movement. A 2014 Voiceless national survey of 1,041 adult Australians found 61% of respondents have bought 'free range' or 'humanely' derived animal products on animal welfare grounds.

A 2011 study, found 80% of individuals supported a battery cage ban. [14]

There is a growing call to ban battery hens.

Animal Health Australia says it got more than 100,000 submissions, some calling for a ban.

Animal welfare groups such as the RSPCA and Animals Australia want cages phased out and ultimately banned. They say battery cages are cruel and severely restrict movement, leading to bone and muscle weakness, and distress.

The RSPCA said its consumer research showed a significant trend against cages; in 2015 about 70 per cent of Australians thought cages cruel, rising to 84 per cent in a new survey, by McCrindle Research based upon a sample size of 1,000 people. [15] [16]

The future of the egg industry is predicted to be bleak, they MUST change in order to survive.

"Unless the egg industry and governments act now to commit to a phase-out of battery cages, it appears there's only one way for the egg industry to go, and that's down," said RSPCA chief executive Heather Neil. [16]

There are multiple issues surrounding the egg industry, from the labelling of the eggs, the life of a hen, the moral obligation of the consumer, misleading and deceptive industry standards. The issues are the same, in the USA as they are in Australia. [19]

The sooner the battery cages are banned, and the transparency is on display, the sooner the community can have confidence in the product they are buying.

There are plenty of operators that are doing the wrong thing, and not being held accountable for it.

Even convicted egg producer Shawn Stone has admitted that the abuse he carries out on his hens "was common in the industry". Despite the Magistrate, Ian Cheetham, describing Stone's offending as "objectively serious", resulting in the deaths of more than 4000 birds. [20]

You can see the atrocious conditions of the egg farm, which wasn't even a battery hen farm. It was meant to be a "better farm" than a battery hen farm. [21]

Not only are the health of the hens poor, but they are an unhealthy cholesterol laden product, that is a leading cause of stroke, heart disease, cancer and diabetes.

This has tax implications for the government and the taxpayer in the health care system.

People that consume the most eggs increase their risk of cardiovascular disease by 19%, if they already have diabetes, that increases to a whopping 83%! [23]

If they don't have diabetes they increase their risk of getting it to 68%!

People that consume 7 (or more) eggs per week had an almost 25% higher risk of death than those that ate the least amount of eggs.

Women that eat the most eggs have an increased risk of gestational diabetes, up to 165% in one study! [24]

Multivariate conditional logistic regression modelling indicates that consumption of eggs is associated with increased risk for colon cancer. [25]

Research suggests that even moderate egg consumption can triple the risk of developing bladder cancer. [26]

Eating eggs is linked to prostate cancer.

Consuming just 2.5 eggs per week, men increase their risk for a lethal form of prostate cancer by 81 percent, compared with men who consumed less than half an egg per week. [27]

The western include far more protein than necessary in their diets, adding a highly concentrated source of protein such as egg whites, can increase their risk for kidney disease and kidney stones. [28]

In the USA, eggs aren't allowed to be called healthy. [29] [30]

Chickens were only ever domesticated for one reason: to exploit them. All chickens used for meat and eggs are the result of centuries of violent domination and decades of invasive genetic manipulation that dooms even those lucky enough to be rescued to a lifetime of unnatural frailty and disease. This means that all eggs, even those from rescued hens, are the product of injustice. Since humans have no biological need to consume eggs, we can withdraw our support from this exploitative industry.

It is up to you, our law makers, to act, to take a moral stance against the cruelty of the battery hen industry.

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