

**Submission
No 385**

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

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I am sure everyone else is telling you everything about how hens should not be kept in those atrocious conditions. You should all know that by now, no need to repeat it. Instead I want to introduce you to some of my friends; ex-battery hens that were released at the “end” of their useful life by a chicken farmer. Certainly not the end of their “real” life as they would go on to live peaceful and happy lives for many more years.

Attached are some photos, first you can meet Mildred and Maud, you can see how they arrived from the battery farm, very dishevelled and in poor condition. When they arrived, they would not leave their enclosure, we had to carry them out and put them on the ground. They just stood there, no idea what to do. They looked up and saw the sky for the first time and seriously, they almost fell over looking up! Never seen anything like it before! And grass and trees too. Within a week they had discovered how to dig and scratch in the dirt and had their first dust bath ever. Their instinct kicked in, they still knew deep down how to be a chicken and only freedom from the battery cage allowed them to become who they really were. Over the months they grew their feathers back and put on some weight. The red came back to the comb and wattles. They explored the garden, found tasty things to eat and were able to fully stretch their wings for the first time...

We obtained two more rescues and after a few weeks they had all settled in as best mates. The new friends were Elizabeth and Mary. (We had a queens name theme going on – I’m sure they had their own names for each other as they made best friends with one of the other chickens and would hang out with each other a lot.) Chickens can recognise each other and form friendships – when they are living in normal conditions. They are smart; they knocked on the window when we had breakfast, trying to scam a treat. They’d try and come inside when it was raining; they’d sit on the windowsills watching what was going on inside and if you went out, they’d follow you around. Trying to plant a tree wasn’t easy – they thought great, you’re digging worms for me and they would jump in the hole to help dig!

So over time they all recovered and hung out in our backyard. With a healthy diet, plenty of space to roam they lived out their lives as happy as you would imagine. Later some died of cancer – a common thing with intensive breeding and the original poor living conditions. Mildred live for another 7 years, she just recently died aged 8, pretty old for a hen of her type. Much better life than the 1.5 years they normally live.

So having read a small part of their story, you can see they all have feelings, smarts, personality and even attitude! They simply do not need to be kept in such conditions. You wouldn’t do it to your dog. So ban the battery cages for good.