

**Submission  
No 409**

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

**Organisation:** Animal Liberation S.A.

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**Animal Liberation Inc.**

**Postal Address**  
PO. Box 327,  
Mitcham Shopping Centre,  
MITCHAM, 5062.

**SELECT COMMITTEE,**

12.7.2019.

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.**

Parliament House,  
  
CANBERRA 2600.

**A Submission to change the existing standards for Poultry and to ban the use of Battery cages for hens in egg production**

The majority of the public want change and are disgusted by the present cage systems. Proof of this is the rise in Free Range egg sales and the overall increase in people adopting the Vegan way of life. Australia has disgracefully fallen behind other developed country's hen welfare. This is the first time the Poultry Code has been revised in 15 years. A written commitment from the Federal Government to review the practise of battery cages was scheduled for 2010 but there was no further communication.

Because of this 11 million hens sit in these cages at this moment because they were cheaper for consumers in the past and more profit for the egg producer. This is definitely a money issue and not a welfare issue.

Poultry welfare principles from The World Organisation for Animal Health (Australia accepted these regulations) require that 'Animals be comfortable and able to express their innate behaviour'. The definition of innate is 'existing naturally in anything inherent, born in an animal, natural, inbred, native'. How can the Agriculture Department justify a cage system?

We know Switzerland has been cage free since 1992 and U.K., Europe, Canada, New Zealand and parts of USA have been cage free since 2012. Our IGA supermarkets sell only free rang eggs and many big restaurant chains have or are making the change.

*Respect and equal consideration for all animals*

We know that with the small space required, a cage is more profitable i.e. the size of an A4 piece of paper is allocated to each bird. Every moment of her life is spent in that tiny cage, never to feel the sun, to forage, to dust bath, to scratch and cluck, to feel grass and earth under her feet. Hens are sentient beings who have complex, natural behavioural needs and drives. We know they act methodically, they do make decisions and they have a memory so they certainly have a capacity to think. She is a victim of a shocking production system.

We cannot imagine the misery she experiences. She maybe living on sloping wire or floor, she cannot flap her wings, she is debeaked and sometimes painfully debeaked a 2<sup>nd</sup> time. She develops osteoporosis from high egg production, and this causes a high amount of fractured leg/wings. From egg laying she has prolapses, tumors and liver complaints. Her claws get growths on them. Every minute of her life she is cramped and with fractures going unnoticed, she may be in agony. Her mates sometimes are dying under her feet until they are removed. Some photos taken by activists show a wide variety of these cage systems from modern to appalling out-dated sheds. How much suffering goes undetected?

## LIGHTING

With lighting the maximum is 4 hours darkness to 20 hours light to encourage more egg laying. This can give the hen painful prolapses. This time frame doesn't correspond to the European directive and Welfare Guidelines. They advocate 6 hours straight or 2 periods of 4 hours in 24 hours. How does the Australian Egg Industry justify their shorter time-frame and practices being so inhumane.

## DEBEAKING

Norway has banned beak trimming, dubbing, castration since 1974. They say it is unnatural to change the animal in this way and by doing so you cut off their emotions. Destroying the beak she was born with is unethical. Because of industry driven overcrowding, debeaking has become a cruel solution with cage frustration and hens become fearful, aggressive and will peck each other. 2<sup>nd</sup> debeaking is extremely painful for the hens.

## THE ENRICHED CAGE.

The enriched cage is not the answer. The hen is still in a cage. Despite the small amount of extra room for each hen, they are confined in space and height. The small laying box supplied can be monopolized by the more aggressive hen and

the roosts supplied get greasy and take up space. Debeaking will continue and osteoporosis will still occur. The litter area is too meagre and is scratched out of the cage. The hen will never see daylight only electric lighting until she is dragged out of the cage with more leg fractures to slaughter. There is insufficient room for her to engage in natural movements. They are already banning the enriched cages overseas so it would be a very backward step for Australia to approve them.

Norway took 5 years to phase out the cage system. We could do the same by subsidizing egg farmers to act quicker.

We plead with you all to **end the battery cage system** and do not allow enriched cages to stay. **ALL cages** must be banned. Please don't make a ridiculous time for phase out. If Norway can do it in 5 years so can Australia. Yuval Noah Harari said in his novel Sapiens, '**Modern industrial agriculture may well be the greatest crime in history**'.

**We wait for good news for the 11 million hens in cages.**

Yours truly,

The Team,

**Animal Liberation S.A.**