

Submission
No 410

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

Organisation: Animal Justice Party Southern Highlands Regional Group

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THE PHASING OUT OF THE BATTERY CAGED EGG SYSTEM IN NSW

The Animal Justice Party Southern Highlands Regional Group does not want any animal to be exploited by the human species and the phasing out of the cruel battery caged egg system in NSW is urgent and needs the political will to do so.

LIFE AS A CAGED CHICKEN

Battery egg production is a sad indictment on human's treatment of animals. Bred in huge production facilities, the male baby caged chickens are of no use and are disposed of cruelly by either by grinding them up alive or by throwing them into garbage bags and gassing them as if they are rubbish. Female chicks are grown in extremely cramped and dark conditions and fed a processed diet.

Once they reach laying age, they are put into cages less than half the size of an A4 sheet of paper. The wire floor in these cages are slopes down on an angle. This prevents the hens from sitting properly and their feet often become deformed as a result. With these conditions they cannot exercise properly, and their bones become brittle and can easily break.

They also have the tips of their beaks cut or burned off to try and prevent them doing any damage to other birds caged right beside them. In fact, some of these toxic, windowless warehouses can contain as many as 100,000 caged chickens, never seeing sunlight and fed a diet of corn and chemicals.

Today's chickens have been bred to produce many more eggs than their original wild species did. For example the early chicken would lay between twelve to fourteen eggs a year to now when the modern day chicken has been bred to lay up to three hundred eggs a year causing all sorts of health issues for today's chickens from brittle bones (lack of calcium) and bowel prolapses from over producing eggs to name a few.

This is abhorrent and if we were to treat humans or domestic pets the same way there would be an uproar. It is important to realise that hens have personalities and are individuals just like humans. The cognitive ability of hens is that of a small child.

Chickens life expectancy can be 12 years however the egg industry slaughters the hens usually from one and a half years. Their poor bodies are spent due to the constant egg production and awful conditions they are forced to live in. Their egg production starts to drop off, so the industry wastes them.

LIFE AS A RESCUE BATTERY HEN

If these chickens are lucky enough to escape the slaughter process and be rescued then they require a lot of vet treatment to get them back to good health, they often have diseases, broken bones, respiratory issues and suffer from cancer and bowel prolapses. They are often almost bald and need to wear jackets or have heat lamps until they grow back their feathers.

They have great personalities still they eventually learn to dust bathe and are characters that can become as much of a part of the family as the dog or cat. They are curious, they communicate with one another in up to 24 different calls, they run to you when you call them, they love green vegetables and devour them with vigor.

FREE RANGE CHICKENS

To some extent the free-range method of farming still exploits the chicken, but if properly managed it could represent a vast improvement. Unfortunately, some large-scale egg farmers have exploited

lax definitions of free-range chicken and have been able to use this label. Even when they only allow their confined chicken out occasionally to a concreted area.

There is no national standard, so consumers have no real idea of the conditions the hens are being kept under. If they are allowed outside will they have protection from predators such as hawks and foxes. At a stocking density of 10,000 hens per hectare that would leave the hen with just a metre square. Animal advocacy groups recommend 1500 birds per hectare. – Source Animals Australia.

CONCLUSION

Factory farming distresses people because of the treatment of the animals, they are kept in unnatural conditions in terms of space, possible behavior and interactions with other animals. Keeping animals in these circumstances is not only cruel to the animals but diminishes the humanity of those involved from production to consumption. In addition, the use of chemicals and hormones to maximize yields, reduce health problems in the animals and speed production may also be harmful to human consumers.

It is imperative that this industry doesn't continue in its present form. Urgent action is required and laws need to be put in place as quickly as possible to allow these chickens some freedom and a chance at life not circumscribed by greed and cruelty.

Thank you for your consideration.