

**Submission
No 437**

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

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It's time to be responsible, act responsibly and take responsibility as legislators for the voiceless in the egg laying industry in NSW.

For too long, laying hens have suffered at the hands of humans in the name of "animal agriculture" and "profit", it's time the excuses used to treat hens poorly are removed permanently via legislation.

The community expects animals to be represented & protected by legislators - that means YOU!

Animal Health:

Hens require the ability to nest and when in a wire cage, they are unable to lay eggs in a discrete, private or enclosed nesting space. Hens housed in battery cages have been found to display agitated pacing and escape behaviours which can last for up to four hours prior to laying their eggs as they are stressed and unable to lay their eggs in a safe location - as instinct dictates.

Ian Duncan, Emeritus Chair in Animal Welfare at the University of Guelph, states that the most significant source of battery hen frustration is "undoubtedly the lack of nesting opportunity."

Battery hens also experience chronic pain from the development of lesions and foot problems, as a result of standing on sloping wire floors that are designed to facilitate egg collection. Extreme inactivity also results in hens developing disease osteoporosis, leading to chronic pain from bone fractures.

Debeaking the hens occurs due to the suppression of many of their natural instincts and social interactions, such as choosing a suitable nesting place to lay their eggs. Hens raised in battery cages can become frustrated, fearful and aggressive. This may trigger behaviours such as hen pecking, bullying and cannibalism.

Evidence suggests that battery hens have insufficient room to maintain a normal 'personal space' and to escape from bullying by companions. Physiological stress levels are also higher in birds subject to spatial restriction.

Instead of providing sufficient room to move, the industry attempts to prevent this behaviour by routinely conducting beak-trimming or 'debeaking' on chicks. This most commonly involves the amputation or searing off of a portion of the upper and lower beak using an electrically heated blade. Re-trimming may also be carried out if a hen's beak grows back.

This is performed without anaesthetic, causing intense pain to the baby birds. It is NOT NATURAL and is **EXTREMELY CRUEL**.

In addition to all the issues listed above, there's the obscene number of male birds that are murdered by this industry every year. Animal welfare groups estimate 12 million a year (just THINK about that for a moment. 12 MILLION animals brought into the world by humans and then immediately - each and EVERY YEAR!!!!), however, no-one is reporting the actual figures – who is monitoring this process? Why is there no compulsory reporting of these numbers? The inhumane method of killing the male birds via gassing or live maceration is very clearly OUTSIDE of community expectation and needs to cease immediately. It's also incredibly IRRESPONSIBLE to bring an animal to life on a 50/50 chance that it is of benefit to the industry. There needs to be reform in this process as well.

A small sample of the evidence of the detrimental effect of battery cages to laying hens:

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/world-s-poultry-science-journal/article/welfare-of-layer-hens-in-cage-and-cagefree-housing-systems/35FB8DB602AF9AE7C44C00FA3A20D67B>

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/proceedings-of-the-british-society-of-animal-production-1972/article/effect-of-group-size-spatial-allowance-and-perch-presence-on-nest-soiling-and-nest-use-in-caged-hens/025D9F78C2B814C2D012FB13AEBC4C31>

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/animal/article/motivation-to-dustbathe-of-laying-hens-housed-in-cages-and-in-aviaries/8B5994AC52D75CB3C4131867D5B74506>

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/world-s-poultry-science-journal/article/welfare-of-laying-hens-in-cages-and-alternative-systems-environmental-physical-and-behavioural-aspects/792BDD808D2D4007A55985BC2AB59D79>

<https://www.rspca.org.au/media-centre/news/2017/independent-science-again-confirms-battery-cages-are-bad-birds>

The RSPCA in all states have a multitude of evidence on how battery cages are cruel & do not meet the needs of the birds for proper welfare - I only hope that they too are making a submission to this committee.

Human Health:

Eggs are a chicken's menstrual cycle and eating that is NOT in the interest of human or chicken health. This means that hens are suffering in these tiny cages for no benefit other than to line the pockets of those in the industry and make humans sick with high cholesterol, breast cancer and heart disease.

Some excellent evidence here: <https://www.plantbasednews.org/lifestyle/the-good-the-bad-and-the-eggly-smashing-the-myth-that-eggs-are-a-health-food> and here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RtGf2FuzKo4> (this is the best video you will watch today – get ready for being entertained *and* educated 😊).

There are many scientific studies on how eggs are bad for human health. Of note, is the following study that works incredibly hard to gloss over the ill effects of eggs and make a consistent point about how eggs *could* be made healthy after we process them to remove the cholesterol and add other nutrients...only then would they be healthy.....:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4303863/>

Illegal activities by the industry:

As evidenced by the frequent Lakesland Battery Hen Farm investigations which resulted in Mr Shaun Stone being convicted of animal cruelty and banned from owning animals for 5 years, hens routinely had food and water withheld - illegally - to force them to molt faster and return to laying eggs sooner. The proprietor's actions led to a total of 5000 birds being killed as a result of his greed....

I note it is very difficult to locate the statistics on how many farmers in the egg industry have been investigated and/or charged for animal cruelty offenses. Is this because the industry hides its crimes?

I implore you to review data on investigations by the RSPCA and other animal welfare groups to find the real statistics on this industry. I believe they are hiding the crimes, and the only reason the Lakesland event was in the news or even reported publicly is due to animal activists who attempted to save the animals where charged and the media covered that event. There was next no coverage

of the charging & subsequent conviction of the farmer who killed those 5000 helpless animals who depended solely on Mr Stone for their welfare, food & water.

I believe this inability to find statistical data on the indiscretions is proof that industry cannot self-regulate, 'nor can it be trusted to do the right thing. While ever animals are kept in dark windows less sheds, this kind of cruelty will continue to occur. The only way to protect these vulnerable creatures is a complete ban on battery farms with a transition away from egg production completely.

Further evidence of an industry that can't be trusted is the failure of the Standards writing group to bring out the Draft Standards within a reasonable time frame (12 months late) – allowing more hens to suffer in this cruel system AND the Draft Standards ignore all scientific evidence of how bad caged farming practices are.

Community Expectation & other jurisdictions:

The ACT has already prohibited the use of battery cages and Tasmania and Western Australia are phasing the practice out. The European Union legislated a phase out of battery cages beginning in 2003 ending in a complete ban in 2012. New Zealand is phasing them out and it's time for NSW to follow suit.

This move would bring the industry in line with the community expectation of animals being treated with respect and cared for by those who make a living out of them.

Battery cages are cruel and unnecessary. I implore you to do the right thing by the VOICELESS and legislate OUT battery cages for layer hens immediately. Australia is falling behind the developed world by failing to end their use, this is your chance to make a change.

Australian consumers have displayed their rejection of animal cruelty – just look at how the country reacted to the discovery of the cruelty of the Live Export trade, as well as the Live Baiting scandal. If more were to witness or were aware of the atrocities committed by this industry, this decision would not be one that a committee would be making, it would be *demand*ed by the public. I am one who does know and who is demanding an end to this disgraceful farming practice.

Now you know just how bad eggs are for humans and the farmed hens (due to the way they are farmed), I trust that you will do the right thing for the millions of tiny defenceless, voiceless egg laying birds that need YOU to protect them, as it's clear that the industry doesn't care about them.

Kind regards

Paula Gilbard

Information found on many Australian & international web sites