

Submission  
No 446

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

**Name:** Name suppressed

**Date Received:** 25 July 2019

---

Partially  
Confidential

Our industry has been one of intense scrutiny from the public for all of our farming life. In 2001, under the new model code of practice our old cages were not going to comply to the new standard so that by 2008 if we were to continue farming hens for egg production we had to invest in the new better welfare outcome cages.

This investment had a total cost of \$5 million dollars and is only 9 years old. This type of investment is not too dissimilar to a house loan and our repayment schedule on the current trajectory will take 30 years to repay.

Any departure away from the current laws of cage production could have massive financial impacts on our family's business, and there seems to be no capacity within government to assist with structural adjustment to underpin any such move.

The Australian egg industry has about 10 million birds in these modern cages production systems about 50% of total eggs produced, and almost all of the new investment since that time has been in non cage systems. A trend which seems to be continuing and on current projections without regulatory or legislative intervention would have cages fall to about 25% of total production by about 2030.

Cage Eggs sell at a price point of half the retail price of Free Range and are amongst the most affordable source of protein available to lower socioeconomic families. As a responsible society we should not take that option away.

At the present time the egg market has a shortage of cage eggs and an unusual observation is that without increasing the cage production capacity, the consumption of cage eggs has continue to increase.

In our cage system we have not had to use any antibiotics for over 30 years and this is one of many ways of assessing the wellbeing of the hen, the same cannot be said of most non cage systems. Other problems that regularly occur in non cage systems that we don't experience in birds kept on wire include but are not limited to;

- \*Smothering or pile ups
- \*internal and external parasites
- \*Spotty liver disease
- \*Cannibalism
- \*Broodiness
- \*Fowl Cholera
- \*Enteritidis
- \*Wild animal predation
- \*Floor Eggs

These challenges can and are being managed by industry, but by taking birds off wire and putting them on the floor we have reintroduced the oral faecal cycle all over again.

Workers in non cage systems are subjected to much more dust, having to cope with the trauma of picking up smothered birds and floor eggs, and also much higher levels of ammonia, particularly in the colder months.

In concluding, the egg industry is poorly understood by community generally, and the term Battery conjures up incorrect images of cage production systems. Our family has always welcomed people to come and see how a system operates, subject to adhere to strict biosecurity protocols.