

Enriched Cages and Embodied Prisons
A Report on the EU Directive Banning Battery Cages for Egg Laying Hens
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"A rose by any other name would smell as sweet" is a commonly quoted piece of dialogue from Act II, Scene II, of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* in which Juliet says that names do not matter; what matters is what things are in reality¹.



Figure 1 Joy, a rescued enriched battery cage hen

¹ **Juliet:** 'Tis but thy name that is my enemy;
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.
What's Montague? it is nor hand, nor foot,
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part
Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!
What's in a name? that which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet;
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,

Battery cages were supposedly banned in the European Union in January 2012². Yet, the EU Directive merely banned *barren* battery cages, and replaced them with *enriched* or *furnished* battery cages. If one believes, as I do, that the lives of hens matter, then the effects of this welfare measure on their quality of life, individually and collectively, should be carefully evaluated. After all, there are six and a half billion egg laying hens in the world today, the vast majority of them still living in battery cages. Market trends predict that the demand for eggs will rise as the population continues to grow. Over half of this demand is currently met by only five countries (China, the United States, India, Japan and Mexico)³ that confine almost all the hens they exploit in caged systems. In the United States alone 95% of laying hens are confined in barren battery cages. If the lives of hens in Europe are significantly better since the ban on barren cages, and if their suffering has been ameliorated by the introduction of new enriched battery cages, then the implications for hens worldwide should be considered by looking, like Juliet, beyond the labels of confinement at the reality of the subjective experience of the hens who are forced to meet our demand for their eggs.

Following extensive scrutiny of the situation for egg laying hens in Europe, I argue that, like Juliet's rose, a cage by any other name is still a cage. Exploitation, regardless of the language with which it is represented, is still exploitation. Furthermore, the evidence shows that the reality for each individual hen is that she lives in an extant, embodied prison, regardless of which cage she lives in, or whether or not she is caged, by virtue of being bred to produce eggs for human consumption.



Figure 2 Joy following her rescue

² In 1999, the European Union Council Directive 1999/74/EC (COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 1999/74/EC of 19 July 1999 laying down minimum standards for the protection of laying hens. Official Journal of the European Communities. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:1999:203:0053:0057:EN:PDF> accessed 14 April 2013)

³ Conway A, (2012) China remains world's top egg producer in 2012 (http://www.wattagnet.com/China_remains_world%E2%80%99s_top_egg_producer_in_2012.html) Accessed 16 April 2013

History of Battery Cages

The word 'battery' has several meanings. In the context of the egg production industry, it refers to a system of confinement of thousands or hundreds of thousands of individual hens in vast, windowless warehouses containing several thousand identical cages arranged in batteries of rows and tiers.

Battery cages originated in the 1930's in the USA⁴. They came into use as agriculture intensified and it became difficult to control the increasing number of non-human animals being used for food.

Battery cages were originally designed to house a single bird to facilitate recording of egg production, particularly highlighting poor layers so that they could be killed. It was also hoped that they would reduce the risk to humans of eating eggs contaminated with excrement. Their use became prolific throughout the following decades as the population grew and the demand for eggs increased.

Battery cages are wire constructions of approximately 40cm height, each housing between four and eight hens, thus allowing 350cm² and 550cm² space per hen. The wire floors slope at approximately 14 degrees so that the hens' eggs roll onto a conveyor belt. They are fully automated so that the hens have little contact with humans. Excrement from the higher cages drops onto the hens in the lower cages. The air is ammonia ridden and contains high levels of debris from skin and feathers; human workers are unable to enter these facilities without the protection of masks. No such protection is afforded the hens confined inside permanently; as a result they suffer from burns, eye and respiratory conditions. The warehouses are artificially lit for approximately 17 hours per day to maximise egg production, which is associated with daylight.

In order to reduce the frustrated behaviour that results from close confinement, hens are debeaked soon after hatching. Hens in cages peck at each other but is this an example of interpersonal aggression, as suggested by the industry that oppresses them or is it the behavioural result of the affective experience of severe frustration? A study of the ethology of chickens explains this phenomenon in a more ecologically valid manner than that currently used by studies conducted on behalf of the industry. Experimental evidence suggests that the deprivation in cages of the earthy material necessary for dustbathing causes such an insult to chicken's natural behavioural repertoire that they suffer "an abnormal development of the perceptual mechanism responsible for the detection of dust for dustbathing" and come to perceive feathers as earth⁵, leading to abnormal and stereotypical pecking⁶. Therefore, one reason hens will peck at one another in cages is that they are trying to dustbathe, and they will be driven to pull at cage-mates' feathers not out of aggression but because they are trying to pull in "earth"⁷

Vestergaard's research also suggest that feather pecking in caged hens is a fear response⁸. Confined hens also pick and peck at one another because they are trying to obtain protein and other nutrients that they instinctively sense the need for but which is not meeting their individual needs in their food intake that is controlled and oppressed by the industry⁹.

Chickens have evolved as foragers who use their beaks to find food and explore their environments. In fact, as the torture that is experimental evidence demonstrates, they continue to peck even in the absence of the

⁴ Arndt, Milton (1931). *Battery Brooding* (2nd ed.). Orange Judd Publishing. pp. 308–312.

⁵ Davis, K (2009) *Prisoned Chicken, Poisoned Eggs: An Inside Look at the Modern Poultry Industry*, Lantern Books: New York.

⁶ Vestergaard, Klaus S.; Skadhauge, E.; Lawson, L. G. (1997) [The Stress of Not Being Able to Perform Dustbathing in Laying Hens](#). *Physiology & Behavior* vol. 62 issue 2 August, 1997. p. 413-419

⁷ Karen Davis, United Poultry Concerns, personal communication.

⁸ Johnsen, Pernille F.; Vestergaard, Klaus S.; Nørgaard-Nielsen, Gert, (1998). [Influence of early rearing conditions on the development of feather pecking and cannibalism in domestic fowl](#). *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* vol. 60 issue 1 October, 1998. p. 25-41

⁹ Karen Davis, United Poultry Concerns, Personal Communication, 9th May 2013.

need to do so in order to obtain food¹⁰. In their wild state chickens spend about half their time foraging and feeding, and make an estimated 14,000-15,000 pecks at food items and other objects in the course of a day¹¹.

Debeaking is a process that amputates the tip of the upper beak. This process is conducted without anaesthesia or pain relief. It is known to cause severe acute pain as well as chronic pain^{12, 13}. A hen's beak is to her what our hands and fingers are to us humans. Her beak has comparable dexterity and exquisite sensitivity that enables her to eat, drink, peck, forage, and groom; amputation of this essential part of her body greatly compromises her ability to live life to her full potential. It is a process that is as unnecessary as it is a cruel violation as liberated hens do not engage in feather pecking, and feather pecking is a symptom of our oppression of them for their bodies and their eggs, rather than a symptom of interpersonal aggression as is continually and unfairly reported by the industry that is the aetiological root of the phenomenon. In fact, certain kinds of beak-related wounds in debeaked caged hens are considered specific to the effects of debeaking.

When chickens can't pick off a piece of debris, a mite or something tiny off a chicken they are grooming, say on or around the face of another chicken, because they can't get hold of it with their blunted beak, they will peck at the target incessantly trying to get hold of it. It isn't aggression. It's a frustrated effort to get hold of a tiny object that a bird with an intact beak could easily pick off. Plus they have to do something to pass the time¹⁴.

It is worth noting that this, and other violations, are not confined to caged hens; they are reality for the majority of hens regardless of whether they go on to cages, free range warehouses where their outdoor access is still limited, organic farms or even private back yards. At Eden Farmed Animal Sanctuary many of the hens, regardless of their origins, have severely mutilated beaks; some of their beaks have been cut so high that their mouths never fully close.

¹⁰ A Tribute to Eldon Wesley Kienholz (1928-1993) <http://www.upc-online.org/pp/summer2013/23.1PoultryPress.pdf> (Accessed 10th May, 2013)

¹¹ Bell, D and Weaver WD J reds. (2002) Commercial Chicken Meat and Egg Production, 5th Ed Norwell, Mass: Kluwer Academic Publications in Davis, K (2009) Prisoned Chicken, Poisoned Eggs: An Inside Look at the Modern Poultry Industry, Lantern Books: New York, p.62..

¹² Duncan, Ian et al. (1989) "Behavioral consequences of partial beak amputation (Beak Trimming) in poultry." *British Poultry Science*, 30: 479-488.

¹³ Davis GS, Anderson KE, Jones DR (2004) The Effects of Different Beak Trimming Techniques on Plasma Corticosterone and Performance Criteria in Single Comb White Leghorn Chickens, *Poultry Science* 83: 1624-1628

¹⁴ Karen Davis, United Poultry Concerns, personal communication, 9th May 2013.

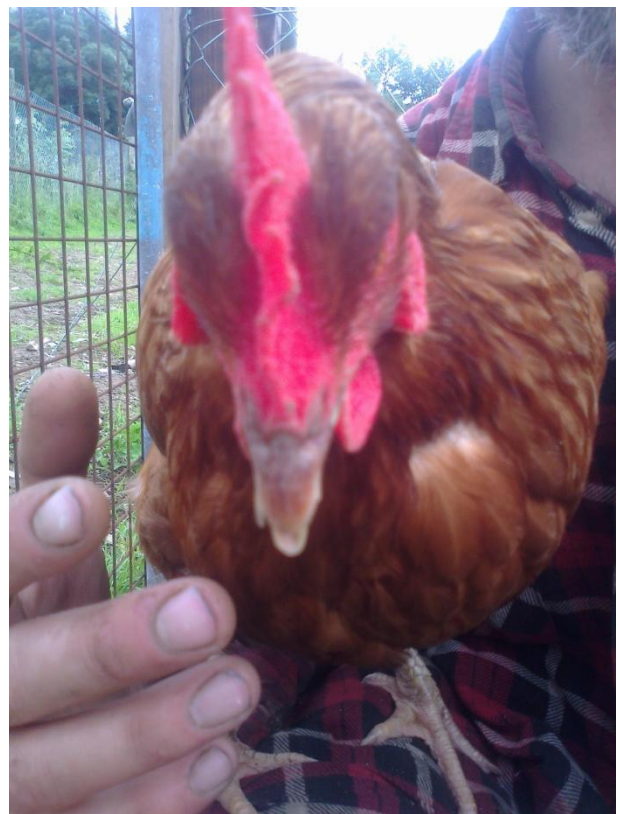
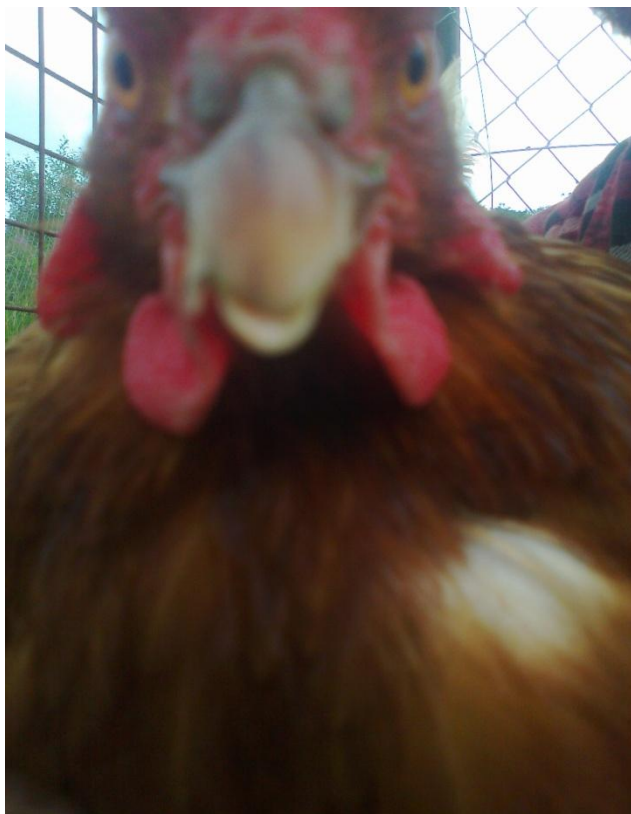


Figure 3 Mutilated beak of rescued free range hens at Eden

The word 'battery' has another meaning: to beat or assault. Examination of the assault on the minds and bodies of the individual hens imprisoned in this system deems the word 'battery' an appropriate description of the suffering and exploitation that the egg production industry inflicts on billions of hens each year. Perhaps the most significant and constant suffering that every individual confined hen sustains is the inability to engage in the behaviours that are governed by her natural, species specific instinctual desires, which artificial breeding has not eliminated. Some have termed these desires 'ancestral memories'¹⁵¹⁶; they include the desire to nest and hatch young and to dust bathe.

Barren cages offer no comfort to their prisoners. It is on grounds of barrenness that they have been banned.

Ban on Barren Battery Cages

One of the ways in which the wellbeing of hens is measured is to examine their behaviour, and particularly to compare their current behaviour to the behaviour that they would naturally engage in if given the chance to do so.

Behavioural studies demonstrate the following estimates of the space required for movement and engagement in natural behaviours:

¹⁵ Stamp Dawkins, M. (1993) *Through Our Eyes Only - the Search for Animal Consciousness*. WH Freeman Spektrum, p153.

¹⁶ Davis, Karen (2009) *The Social Lives of Chickens*, http://www.upc-online.org/thinking/social_life_of_chickens.html (accessed 18 April 2013)

Behaviour	Space Required
Turning	540 to 1006 cm ² ,
Wing Stretching	653 to 1118 cm ²
Wing Flapping	860 to 1980 cm ²
Feather Ruffling	676 to 1604 cm ²
Preening	814 to 1270 cm ²
Ground Scratching	540 to 1005 cm ²

Table 1: Space Needs of Laying Hens¹⁷



Figure 4 Bernie (RIP) rescued from a barren, battery cage

¹⁷ Stamp Dawkins, M. and Hardie, S., (1988). Space needs of laying hens. *British Poultry Science*, 30: 413-416. doi:10.1080/00071668908417163

Most of these conservative estimates exceed the space allocated to hens in battery cages. Spatial restrictions are a cause of severe psychological distress for hens and they also contribute to physical injuries. It is physical injuries that the industry is most concerned with as they cause economic loss¹⁸. In 1996 the report of the European Commission's Scientific Veterinary Committee (SVC) declared that

“It is clear that because of its small size and its barrenness, the battery cage as used at present has inherent severe disadvantages for the welfare of hens”.

On foot of this report the European Union Council Directive laying down minimum standards for the protection of laying hens banned battery cages effective from 1st January 2012¹⁹.

Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union states that

“The Union and the Member States shall, since animals are sentient beings, pay full regard to the welfare requirements of animals”.

Those same ‘welfare’ requirements are laid down in the EU Council Directive 98/58/EC on the Protection of Farm Animals²⁰. Adopted from the British Farm Animal Welfare Council they are known as the Five Freedoms:

- 1. Freedom from Hunger and Thirst** - by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.
- 2. Freedom from Discomfort** - by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
- 3. Freedom from Pain, Injury or Disease** - by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
- 4. Freedom to Express Normal Behaviour** - by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.
- 5. Freedom from Fear and Distress** - by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.

These are the minimum standards against which the new system of housing egg laying hens in Europe must be measured. However, by any stretch of the imagination the European Legislation falls very far short of meeting these basic needs in egg laying hens.

Enriched Cages

European battery cages have not been replaced with conditions that meet even the basic welfare guidelines above; they have merely been replaced with similar battery cages. These cages are referred to as ‘enriched’ but the degree to which they enrich the lives of the hens imprisoned in them is highly debatable. A more accurate term is ‘furnished cage’ or ‘furnished battery cage’ indicating mandatory perches, nesting areas, scratch pad, and substrate or litter on the floor area.

Like Juliet's rose, the reality of Enriched or Furnished battery cages is the antithesis of benign confinement suggested in the name. These cages are not furnished penthouses in which hens luxuriate as they lay eggs for fourteen months prior to going to the slaughterhouse. An enriched cage is a wire structure, similar to a

¹⁸ Nicol, C.J. and Dawkins, M., (1989). No room for manoeuvre. *New Scientist*, 16 September 1989

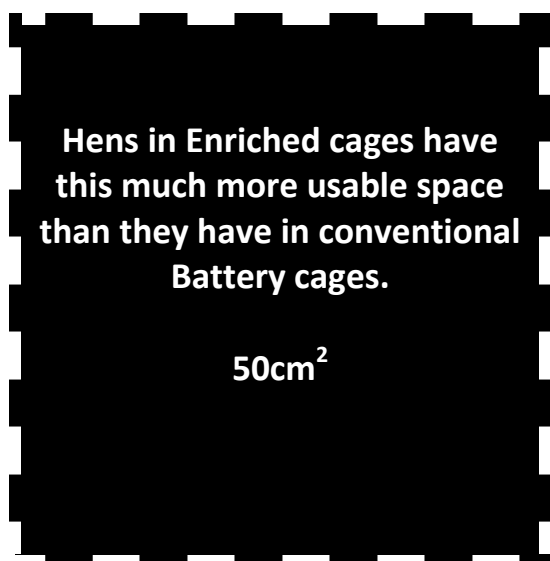
¹⁹ Council Directive 1999/74/EC of 19 July 1999 laying down minimum standards for the protection of laying hens. Official Journal of the European Communities.

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:1999:203:0053:0057:EN:PDF> (Accessed 12 April 2013)

²⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/farm/index_en.htm

barren battery cage, with a sloping wire mesh floor at an angle of 12 degrees. They are 45 cm in height, still too small to allow hens to stand and stretch upright. They can contain as many as 80 birds per cage who then compete for the ‘furnishings’ as well as the limited space.

Media reports have consistently, and erroneously, described enriched cages as affording individual hens 750cm² of space. Once the furnishings have been accounted for, enriched battery cages give a mere 600cm² per hen²¹. This is only 50cm² larger than barren battery cages. The following is a visual representation of the reality of extra space afforded individual hens in this new system of confinement that constitutes the erroneously described ‘ban on battery cages’ and that some have hailed as a major success for farmed animals.



Enriched or furnished battery cages have similar disadvantages to those outlined above with respect to barren battery cages. There are some additional costs to hens that outweigh the supposed advantages of their furnishings. Although the cages contain a nesting area, this is shared between large numbers of hens. Of all the cruelties that confining hens to cages inflicts, the one that consistently emerges as causing the most significant distress is lack of privacy and easy access to a nest, preferably a nest that she has built herself. Egg laying is a complex behaviour and if a hen is bullied or interrupted during this period she may delay laying (Cooper and Appleby, 2003)²². Furthermore, loss of cognisance of individuality is a feature of enriched cages as no single type of nestbox can cater for the requirements of all hens, who have individual preferences for nests and nesting behaviour (Petherick et al, 1993)²³.

The benefits of the furnishings are also debatable. The substrate or litter on the floors of cages merely approximates the dust required for dust bathing, even if the hens had enough room to engage in this activity. At Eden I have rescued hens from enriched cages. The claw shortening device known as a scratch pad did not prevent the development of severely overgrown nails in the hens that I rescued.

²¹ Article 6 of the Directive states that enriched cages have “at least 750 cm² of cage area per hen, 600 cm² of which shall be usable”. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:1999:203:0053:0057:EN:PDF> (Accessed 17 April 2013).

²² Cooper, J. J., and M. C. Appleby. 2003. The value of environmental resources to domestic hens: A comparison of the work rate for food and for nests as a function of time. *Anim. Welf.*12:39–52.

²³ Petherick, JC, Seawright, E and Waddington D. (1993) Influence of quantity of utter on nest box selection and nesting behaviour of domestic hens. *British Poultry Science*. Vol 34, Issue 5, pages 857-872



Figure 5 Enriched cage facility (where Joy was incarcerated)

My experience at Eden Farmed Animal Sanctuary, where the residents include hens rescued from a wide variety of situations including battery and enriched cages, is that there is little difference in the effects of cage type on the hens collectively or individually. Most of them arrive at Eden in a highly traumatised state, with few feathers, overgrown nails, untreated illnesses and broken bones. If anything, I have noted more depressed affect in hens coming from battery cages, and more frustration and agitation in hens coming from enriched cages.

Researching the literature on the potential benefits or disadvantages to hens of the new cages is a difficult task. Many cages are still new; in time they are likely to appear as filthy and decrepit as conventional battery cages. However, although the 'ban' is very recent, it was introduced over a twelve year period and some individual member states banned barren battery cages prior to the EU directive. Therefore, some literature is available on the effects of the new system on the hens living in them. Unfortunately, much of the scientific literature yields results in terms of egg quality and weight of hens at slaughter, more pertinent to the economic value to producers rather than the wellbeing of the living, sentient hens themselves (e.g. Wall and Tauson, 2007)²⁴.

From a welfare perspective, some, such as Peter Singer, regard the introduction of enriched battery cages as a major advance for non-human animals, and something to be 'celebrated' as a 'step towards becoming a more civilized and humane society and one that shows its concern for all beings capable of suffering'²⁵. However, most, including the most conservative of welfare organisations such as Compassion in World

²⁴Wall, H and Tauson, R (2007) Perch Arrangements in Small-Group furnished cages for Laying Hens, *J. Appl. Poult. Res.* **Fall 2007** vol. 16 no. 3 **322-330**

²⁵ Francione, Gary Replacing One Cage with Another, http://www.abolitionistapproach.com/replacing-one-cage-with-another/#.UW_6XklOPIU (Accessed 18 April, 2013)

Farming²⁶ oppose the new cage system on the grounds of the suffering it perpetrate on hens. The RSPC²⁷ and HSUS^{28 29} initially opposed the new cage system but unfortunately HSUS³⁰ changed its stance. Compassion in World Farming, HSUS and the RSPCA are among the organisations that promote the false view that the consumption of eggs can be ethical in certain circumstances. It cannot. Ever.

It is important to remember that because an enriched cage is still a cage, it carries many of the same disadvantages to hens as battery cages, including restriction of movement, forced imprisonment, overcrowding and invasion of natural boundaries, and osteoporosis due to locomotion restriction. There are some additional difficulties in larger enriched cages due to the number of hens competing for the meagre furnishings (some enriched cages contain as many as eighty hens). The furnishings may go some way towards enabling hens to approximate natural behaviour such as perching, but they fall a long way short of fulfilling the needs of hens for liberty and embeddedness in their natural environment.



Figure 6 Mary (RIP) rescued from a barren battery cage

Hens in cages suffer the same consequences of being bred to lay eggs as uncaged hens. Many die prior to deliberate slaughter. Hens in cages develop a condition termed cage layer fatigue caused by the devastating effects on their bodies of laying eggs on an almost daily basis, which is the equivalent of a human female menstrual cycle and childbirth on a daily basis. Hens who suffer and die in cages do so without veterinary

²⁶Lybery, P (2002) Laid Bare: The Case Against Enriched Cages in Europe, A Report for Compassion in World Farming Trust.

²⁷ RSPCA The Case Against Cages: Evidence in favour of Alternative Systems for Laying Hens <http://www.rspca.org.uk/ImageLocator/LocateAsset?asset=document&assetId=1232712906556&mode=prd> (Accessed 15 April 2013).

²⁸ The Humane Society of the United States Report: Welfare Issues with Furnished Cages for Egg-Laying Hens. http://www.humanesociety.org/assets/pdfs/farm/welfare_issues_furnished_cages.pdf (Accessed 14 April 2013)

²⁹ An HSUS Report: A Comparison of the Welfare of Hens in Battery Cages and Alternative Systems Sara Shields, Ph.D.,* and Ian J.H. Duncan, Ph.D. <http://www.humanesociety.org/assets/pdfs/farm/hsus-a-comparison-of-the-welfare-of-hens-in-battery-cages-and-alternative-systems.pdf> (Accessed 17 April 2013).

³⁰ http://www.upc-online.org/pp/spring2012/agreement_raises_flags.html (Accessed 15 May 2013)

care or pain relief. Their dead bodies often lie undiscovered beside their living cage mates for significant amounts of time, particularly if they die at the back of cages or in cages that are outside human eye level. Employing adequate staff to care for sick hens would render the egg production industry economically unfeasible. Dying hens, many of whom have cancer or infection, are transported to the slaughterhouse in barbaric conditions; there their bodies are transformed from sentient beings into processed food such as soup, pies, meat pastes and companion animal food.

Eighteen months prior to the introduction of enriched cages VIVA released footage of the horrendous conditions that pass for 'enriched' living^{31 32}. Individual members of the public have access to information such as these undercover investigations which show the reality of exploitation inherent in all forms of egg production. Yet, their reluctance to allow this information into their consciousness in any caring, meaningful manner, leaves them slaves to the persuasive advertising power of the egg industry that sells the myth of the humane egg.

The reality for hens in enriched cages is that they will never feel the grass beneath their feet or taste its sweet freshness. Despite the extra head room they still cannot stretch to their full height, nor can they fully open or flap their wings, stretch, scratch, forage, adequately dust bathe, build a nest, engage in normal nesting behaviour, or hatch their young. A caged hen will never see daylight prior to the day of her slaughter. She will never feel the warm rays of the sun on her body, or the inclination to lie with her wings outstretched sun bathing in the warmth of a Summer day. Her natural inclination to walk, run and fly is continually thwarted. Her boundaries are continually violated by her cage mates. Hens do not need bigger, more enriched cages. They need freedom from our oppression of them. This is not freedom. This is a travesty of the word freedom and it is a tragedy for any hen.

Case Study: Joy

I first met Joy on 25th July 2012 on the day I rescued her from an enriched cage.

Joy was brought to me carried upside down by her legs, along with four or five other hens in each human hand and roughly thrown into boxes. Subsequent x-rays revealed that some of them had broken wings, legs, toes and hips; one had bone cancer. The pain of being carried by their broken bones must have been intolerable. Yet none of them made a sound. When they were placed into the boxes they were visibly weak and unable to steady themselves.

I witnessed them in cages laying eggs as they awaited their deaths, and I saw their eggs, their property, carried away on a conveyor belt, extracting the life from them. Some were already dead in their cages, their miserable lives mercifully over.

Joy and her friends were extremely stressed on their journey home. Upon arrival at Eden we could see that many of them were seriously ill. A large number of them had extremely inflamed and swollen bodies, obviously stressed to the limit by the human demand for eggs. One hen was barely able to walk, her legs unable to keep her body upright because they were forced so wide apart from the swelling in her abdomen; when she attempted to waddle, penguin like, to eat or drink, her body dragged on the ground. Some had prolapsed from the effort of laying eggs. Some died of egg peritonitis.

³¹Justin Kerswell, Battery Hens Still Face Hell as Enriched Cages Phased In, *The Ecologist*, 8 September 2011. http://www.theecologist.org/blogs_and_comments/commentators/other_comments/1046687/battery_egg_hens_still_face_hell_as_enriched_cages_phased_in.html (Accessed 18 April 2013)

³²VIVA investigation of Enriched Cages at Nobel Foods, July 2010. <http://www.viva.org.uk/campaigns/chickens/enriched-cages.html> (Accessed 18 April 2013)



Figure 4 Joy immediately after rescue and six months post-rescue

Joy, like the others, was exceptionally light, with a mere covering of skin and feathers over her sharply protruding keel or breast bone. She had ammonia scalds on her skin.

Yet, beneath her skeletal, delicate frame lay a proud spirit of immense strength, resilience, and courage. Her inner self had retained something precious and magnificent that not even the cruellest human exploitation could squash. Joy's demeanour during her first days at Eden speaks not of someone accepting of charity, but of someone reclaiming what is hers by right.

As I watched her first glimpse of daylight, her first feel of grass beneath her feet, her first experience of the freedom to open her wings, walk, run, and fly, her first dust-bath and the first time she experienced the warmth of the sun's rays on her outstretched wings, I knew in my heart that she was in a world that belonged to her just as much as it belongs to you or I; a world that had been robbed from her and that many of her rescued comrades were now too ill to enjoy.

Joy has been fortunate. Almost a year post-rescue she is still alive and well. Several of her comrades are dead.

Joy, along with other rescued residents at Eden, will feature in the National Museum of Animals in Society portrait exhibition entitled "Uncooped: Deconstructing the Domesticated Chicken in May 2013."

Embodied Prisons

Is there less suffering in free range, barn, organic or back yard egg production facilities?

Whenever I am asked this question the first fact I remind people of is the death, by gassing or grinding alive, of day old male chicks who are redundant to egg producers. In addition, regardless of whether their destination is a caged or uncaged facility, most hens originate in hatcheries where they are deprived of the mother-child bond.

In terms of the wellbeing of hens in uncaged facilities, it is unfortunate, to say the least, that welfare organisations stop short at caged confinement in their advocacy for hen wellbeing. The fact that they fail to publicise the exploitation of hens in apparently benign situations such as free range, organic and in the increasingly popular back yard scenarios, is a gross disservice to the sentient beings who are exploited in these contexts. Worse still, the fact that they add their seal of approval to the eggs laid in these contexts, thereby sanctioning exploitation and slaughter, has a devastating effect on the movement that struggles for other animals' rights.

My experience at Eden is that all egg laying hens suffer by virtue of being bred to live embodied in a distorted version of their natural selves. The compromises to their natural health that all hens face when they are genetically bred to lay eggs imprisons them in bodies that are prone to severe suffering. This suffering is shared equally regardless of the systems in which they are confined.

For example, although the bone strength of hens whose movement is restricted in cages is very poor predisposing them to osteoporotic fractures, their non-caged counterparts share their predisposition for osteoporosis, which is attributable to their genetic selection to lay eggs in large, unnatural quantities³³ (Wilkins et al, 2004³⁴). The process of producing eggs requires large amounts of calcium to form egg shells; any shortfall in diet is leached from the hens' bones. A high proportion of hens sustain keel bone, toe, leg and wing fractures but the prevalence of fractures has been found to be higher in non-cage systems due to the risk of collision with perches, nest boxes and other structures. In fact, the risk of fractures in non-cage systems is as high as 60%³⁵.

³³ C. C. Whitehead and R. H. Fleming (2000) Osteoporosis in Cage Layers, *Poultry Science* 79:1033–1041

³⁴ R. H. Fleming, Whitehead, D. Alvey, N. G. Gregory & L. J. Wilkins (1994) Bone structure and breaking strength in laying hens housed in different husbandry systems, *British Poultry Science*, Volume 35, Issue 5.

³⁵ Blokhuis HJ et al, (2007) The LayWel Project: welfare implications of changes in production systems for laying hens. *World's Poultry Science Journal*, Vol. 63, March 2007. <http://www.laywel.eu/>



Figure 7 Frieda (RIP) (left) (note the open mouthed breathing indicative of severe pain and stress)

The suffering endured by hens in all egg production facilities as their fractures attempt to heal without support or pain relief must be immense. A useful exercise in empathising with hens exploited for their eggs is to imagine trying to nurse your broken wing as your cage mates or free range companions jostle against you. Imagine trying to walk on a broken leg or toe, on a wire floor, or across the floor of a free range barn, to get to food and water.

I witnessed Frieda's rescue: she was carried from the egg production facility upside down, by her legs, as were all her comrades. X-ray subsequently confirmed fractures in some of their toes, legs and pelvic areas. Frieda's x-ray (illustrated) demonstrates that the bone in her left leg has literally snapped; there is evidence of severe osteoporosis, and of old, untreated fractures that she sustained in the cage, and there is evidence of profuse pelvic bone cancer.

The pain of being carried by a fractured foot, leg or hip must be horrendous. The rates of fractures in hens at the time of slaughter is high; it is worth remembering that the process of slaughter that is the destiny of all egg laying hens also involves shackling of potentially broken bones and hanging upside down.

Their suffering does not cease after rescue. They are embodied in a physiology that will always compromise their health and wellbeing, until the day they die. We have inflicted this embodiment on them so that we can take their eggs for our food. The only possible solution is to stop breeding them, and all other sentient beings, for our use.



Figure 8 Frieda's X-Ray depicts fractured left leg, previous fractures sustained and untreated while caged, and profuse bone cancer

Other causes of illness and injury that affect all hens, including caged hens include, frustration-induced and misdirected pecking which can be fatal if the hen on the receiving end has suffered a prolapse. Cloacal or oviduct prolapse is common in hens who are genetically selected to lay 300 eggs per year. Similar to a female human who suffers prolapse, prolapse in hens involves protrusion of internal intestinal and reproductive organs through the vent, causing pain, infection, haemorrhage, and death.

Egg laying hens also suffer viral and bacterial infection such as respiratory infection, egg peritonitis, liver and heart disease, parasitic disease such as coccidiosis and red mite infestation, and cancer, particularly reproductive cancers. Virtually all causes of suffering and mortality in egg laying hens are attributable to their being bred to lay eggs.



Figure 9 Leonie, a rescued free range hen and the cancerous tumor that killed her

All egg laying hens who survive eighteen months of exploitation by the egg industry end their days in a slaughterhouse; they share this destiny regardless of whether they lived in cages, in free range barns, or on organic farms. Those who live in backyard situations are slaughtered by a variety of methods including breaking their necks.



Figure 10 The slaughterhouse truck that waited for Joy and her companions

Analysis of scientific reports on the welfare of hens in non-caged systems such as barn or free range and organic reveal that there are inherent disadvantages in these systems too. In fact, several studies indicate that rates of mortality are higher in non-cage systems of confinement, while other studies find few overall differences with welfare risks to all hens who are exploited for their eggs regardless of the facilities in which they are confined.³⁶ Of course, mortality rates to the egg production industry are meaningful only in terms of economic loss. Comparison of injury, suffering and mortality in a variety of systems of oppression is of little use to those who are oppressed and whose most pressing need is for us to stop exploiting them. However, in order to fairly examine the effects on hens of the introduction of enriched battery cages to replace barren battery cages and comparatively analyse different systems of oppression used by the egg industry, let us bear with the issue a little longer.

Several studies demonstrate that on farm mortality rates are higher for hens in non-cage systems as a result of parasitic disease, infection and misplaced pecking at feathers. This higher rate of mortality makes sense when one considers that hens in non-cage systems are still confined to an unnaturally small area in comparison to the range they would choose if liberated. Many of these studies refer to cannibalism as a cause of mortality. To do so is highly inaccurate and a gross misrepresentation of hens and is not found in feral, wild or liberated hens. As referred to elsewhere, feather pecking is a misdirected³⁷ and stereotypical behavioural response to our insult to the natural development of these innately inquisitive, intelligent foragers that deprives them of their natural habitat in which to range over large tracts of land, explore and dust bathe. Hens are naturally highly energetic beings, who spend their day engrossed in meaningful activity interspersed with rest periods, preferably under the rays of the warm sun, with their wings outstretched, in addition to episodes of social interaction, personal grooming, dust bathing and stretching. In the extreme confinement imposed by the egg industry, stereotypical and fruitless pecking can usefully be viewed as a self-soothing mechanism, and a way to calm what must be enormous frustration at the suppression of their natural energy and zest for life. Try to imagine, if you can, what it must be like to be at the mercy of the constant hormonal and physiological activity that is necessary for the constant production and development of eggs, long before they are ever laid, as well as the toil and stress of laying them on a daily basis³⁸. Try to imagine, if you can, what life must be like with nothing to do, all day, every day, in the unnatural, barren, restricted environment of most hens, even those termed as 'free range'. When humans are deprived of the opportunity to engage in instinctual and intelligent activity and opportunity for normal social interaction, thwarted from everything their very essence propels them towards, say in conditions of severe social deprivation or torture, they too engage in misplaced, stereotypical behaviour. If hens were truly 'cannibalistic', as the industry that exploits them suggests, why, when they are deprived of food for days and weeks at a time during the process of forced moulting, do they not peck each other to death?³⁹.

A full understanding of the exploitation of hens for their eggs can only fully be appreciated when we realise that our greatest violation occurs when we breed them for our use in the first place. Examination of liberated hens affords us an appreciation of their lives when they are free of our oppression.

A pertinent behaviour through which we gain much ethological knowledge about this species is egg laying in a liberated, natural environment. At Eden I have often observed males assisting hens in finding and making a nest. Hens like to use their beaks to pick up pieces of material, such as straw, which they drop on their backs and then shake off to form a nest. It takes quite a while to lay an egg, often as much an hour. In their

³⁶ Welfare Risk Assessment in Different Hen Housing Systems (2006) LayWel.

http://www.laywel.eu/web/xmlappservlet1e7e.html?action=ProcessSelection&REDIRECT_TEMPLATE=ShowPage&SAVE_PARAMETER_SAV_SOURCE_DATABASE_NAME=/flexyz/projects/wur/fox_cm_laywel.nsf&SAVE_PARAMETER_SAV_DESIGN_CHOICE=interzorg/default&SAVE_PARAMETER_SAV_TEMPLATE_NAME=frontpage&SAVE_PARAMETER_SAV_SOURCE_DOCUMENT_NAME=welfare_riskasses&SAVE_PARAMETER_SAV_NO_CACHE=TRUE%0A%09 (Accessed 18 April 2012)

³⁷ Glatz, PC (ed) (2005) Beak Trimming. Nottingham, UK: Nottingham University Press, in Davis, K (2009) *Prisoned Chicken, Poisoned Eggs: An Inside Look at the Modern Poultry Industry*, Lantern Books: New York.

³⁸ Karen Davis, United Poultry Concerns, Personal Communication, 9th May, 2013.

³⁹ Karen Davis, United Poultry Concerns, Personal Communication, 9th May, 2013.

natural state hens do not lay 300 eggs a year. Egg laying in such vast quantities is a result of artificial selection and manipulation by us of their reproductive systems. Without our interference, they lay a small clutch of eggs over a period of a week or so for the purposes of hatching their young. They choose their nesting site with great care for the need to camouflage and protect their eggs. Once the clutch is laid, hens sit on them for twenty one days, turning the eggs several times a day to carefully control the temperature and humidity of the developing embryo. Hens communicate vocally with their young while they are still in the shell and the chicks chirp back. Once they have hatched they remain under her wing for two days, surviving on the remaining ingested egg yolk, while their feathers dry. Thereafter, their bond continues to grow for at least twelve weeks as she cares for them and teaches them the skills they need to live their lives.

In their natural state, unhindered by human oppression, they do not simply survive. They can thrive and have a lifespan of thirty years.⁴⁰ By comparison, caged hens are killed at 18 months, and it is difficult for rescued hens, even from back yard or organic situations, to survive beyond four or five years of age.

We hold their lives in our hands. We cannot grant justice while we attempt to care for those we have oppressed; to even attempt this is to deny them their liberty.



Figure 11 Hope, rescued from a barren battery cage January 2012

⁴⁰ Mitchell, P.C., 1911. Proceedings of the Zoology Society of London 1911: 425. Longevity Records: Life Spans of Mammals, Birds, Amphibians, Reptiles, and Fish Gall\us gallus (Red junglefowl) <http://www.demogr.mpg.de/cgi-bin/longevityrecords/reference.plx?data=1976> (Accessed 17 April 2013)

Oppression of the wild

It is only through observation of the undomesticated Gallus Gallus or Red Jungle Fowl of South East Asia that we can gain an understanding of their sentience and the true complexity of their cognitive, emotional and social lives. Remarkably, even domesticated chickens and battery hens, when liberated, demonstrate that they have not lost the essence of their ancestry; the vast array of their behaviours post-rescue gives us a glimpse into the lived experience of their complex lives.

If you enter a meat or egg industry warehouse or hatchery with thousands of chicken or hens all you will hear is an overwhelming cacophony or wail of despair and frustration. In contrast, in a natural environment, you can hear their individual voices and a varied and rich repertoire of sounds of different frequency, length, and pitch, as they go about the business of life. These include the cockerel's loud and resonating crow, the rapid repeated clucking of excitement at a new found delight as he calls the females to a piece of food, or a good nesting spot, the gurgling, chuckling, guttural sounds of pleasure issued by the males while dust bathing, the chant-like, high pitched soliloquy of a hen as she wanders off to explore on her own, the repeated low chirping that indicates fear or pain, the wail of outrage that indicates their displeasure, and the coos and whines as they settle on their perches at bedtime.

Chickens have at least 25-30 discrete vocalisations that scientists have thus far recorded. For example, they have a distinct call to alert others in their group to the presence of an aerial predator, and another for terrestrial predators. They flee from what they perceive to be dangerous, and run towards what they perceive to be pleasurable, indicating that they do not simply live in the present, by instinct; they remember the past, anticipate the future, and they can perceive the difference between what feels good and what feels bad.



Figure 6 Joy & her friends, six months after rescue

The dynamics of their socio-emotional relationships tell us much about what we have in common with them. When I bring food items to the sanctuary the males make rapid clucking noises very similar to those made by a mother hen that appear to inform the others in the group about the presence of food. Interestingly, the

males take the food items in their mouth and place them on the ground in front of the females, clucking to attract her attention. He nods his head towards the food item, and may pick it up and drop it several times until he catches her attention. He waits while the female consumes the food, rather than ingesting it himself. This altruistic act may be because of the male protective role of the females; it may signal that the female who produces eggs has greater nutritional needs than the male that he somehow recognises; or it may be a relational transaction which is repaid to the male at some time in the future by allowing him to mate with and potentially procreate with the female. Any or all of these reasons indicate capacity for individual recognition of fellow chickens and anticipation of future reward or pain.

It was assumed that this kind of behaviour was merely instinctual and not like the behaviour of humans and other primates, which is presumed to be conscious and pre-meditated. However, in the early 2000's the Avian Brain Nomenclature forum⁴¹ was established in recognition of the need for a new terminology to describe the new understanding of the avian brain. It recognised that although the avian brain differs structurally from the mammalian and primate brain, it functions in a very similar manner; like ours most of it is devoted to highly complex cognitive functioning.



Figure 12 Victor with rescued caged hens ranging at Eden

Observation of free chickens shows the very large area through which they roam as they scratch, forage and explore throughout the day. At Eden Farm Animal Sanctuary my experience is that their preference is to range over an area of 1.5 to 2 acres. Their daily activities involve constant movement including running and flying. They fly low short distances, and particularly like to fly onto a perching area, similar to the branches

⁴¹ A Reiner, DJ Perkel, L Bruce, AB Butler, A Csillag, W Kuenzel, L Medina, G Paxinos, T Shimizu, GF Striedter, M Wild, GF Ball, S Durand, O Güntürkün, DW Lee, CV Mello, A Powers, SA White, G Hough, L Kubikova, TV Smulders, K Wada, J Dugas-Ford, S Husband, K Yamamoto, J Yu, C Siang, ED Jarvis (2004) [Revised Nomenclature for Avian Telencephalon and Some Related Brainstem Nuclei](#). *Journal of Comparative Neurology* **473:377–414 (2004)**.

of trees that their ancestors fly up to at night. It appears that their feet have evolved to curl around the branches of trees at night as they sleep. In my experience, when I lift a hen and place my hand under her claws she curls them around my fingers, gripping them, and this appears to give her a feeling of security.

Chickens also like to dust bathe which is the human equivalent of personal hygiene. The purpose of dust bathing is to 'wash' their plumage and skin with dust, thus removing dead cells, excess lipids, eliminate parasites and act as a parasite deterrent. The act of dust bathing requires finding an appropriate piece of land with adequate dry, loose dust. Some scratching and pecking behaviour using claws and beaks helps loosen the debris and form dust. The chicken then crouches low on the ground forming a hollow, and moves his or her body in circular motions, sometimes rolling sideways, and vigorously flapping his or her wings to ensure that the whole body is covered in dust. Dust bathing requires significant amounts of energy and time, and appears to be a very enjoyable activity for chickens. After dust bathing they stand up and shake their feathers free of excess dust. The hens at Eden have favourite dust bathing spots that they remember and return to week after week throughout the Spring and Summer, and that they return to year after year.

When hens are exploited for their eggs, the essence of their being is oppressed. Even in the most benign environments, such as sanctuaries, they will forever suffer the effects of our interference. The further we remove them from their natural status the greater we exploit them.

After the Ban: Hens' Rights?

The EU did not ban cages; it merely replaced one cage with another cage. Six months after the Directive 47 million of the 330 million hens in Europe were still in battery cages because some countries continued to flout animal welfare rules. Approximately half of Europe's hens, 155 million, remain confined in cages.

It is interesting to note the effect that the welfare measure banning battery cages has had on the consumption of eggs. The ban on battery cages within the EU did not legislate for a ban on the import or consumption of eggs from conventional battery cages in other countries. Battery eggs are still consumed in the EU in unshelled form and in imported processed foods.

Typical of welfare measures, more eggs are being consumed in Ireland since the ban. Research presented at An Bord Bia's sixth biennial Poultry and Egg Conference in November 2012 showed that egg sales increased by seven per cent to €87 million in 2012.⁴² Research carried out by Kantar Worldpanel for An Bord Bia shows that 358 million eggs were purchased in Ireland in the year to July 2012. 54% of consumers were buying eggs on a weekly basis, representing an 11% increase on the previous year. Some of this growth in the consumption of eggs is stated as being attributable to the purchase of larger value packs of eggs that are produced by caged hens, and to the perception of eggs as a 'nutritious, versatile and convenient food'⁴³, an image that is portrayed by nutritionists, the egg industry and the media alike⁴⁴. No doubt the conscience of the public has been assuaged by the notion that the hens who lay the value pack eggs are living in enriched, furnished luxury.

As the human population continues to grow, consumption of eggs is predicted to rise. The Animal Rights Movement, and the egg production industry, both know that the lives of egg laying hens lie in our hands. It is our values and behaviour that determine if and how they live. This has been a difficult evaluation to write: as an animal rights activist I tend to devote my efforts to working for the abolition of our use of other animals, for their rights to freedom from our oppression of them. I tend to avoid expending my efforts on

⁴² <http://www.thepoultrysite.com/poultrynews/27297/egg-sales-increase-despite-trading-difficulties> Accessed 15 April, 2013.

⁴³ Teresa Brophy, Ireland Market Manager at Bord Bia at An Bord Bia's sixth biennial Poultry and Egg Conference. <http://eggs.ie/2012/10/world-egg-day-friday-12th-october-2012/> accessed 12.04.2012

⁴⁴ <http://eggs.ie/2012/10/world-egg-day-friday-12th-october-2012/> Accessed 15 April 2013

what others have termed 'the messy business of regulating atrocities'⁴⁵. I believe that welfare measures pertain more to salving human conscience, allowing us to consume the products of other animals without guilt, than to conveying anything of meaningful significance to improving their lives. I believe that farm animal welfare measures run the risk of oppression of the rights of other animals as they perpetuate the notion that it is acceptable for us to exploit them, and for them to be our property, as long as we regulate our exploitation, and make the conditions of our use a little more tolerable for them.

The reality is that the welfare movement works with the animal agricultural industry, sanctioning labels that attract humans to continue exploiting other animals by consuming them and their products. Eggs carry labels supposedly indicative of higher welfare in the hens who laid them although the conditions in which they laid them fly in the face of even the most basic welfare regulations. The evidence of these atrocities is in the public domain but is apparently powerless in the face of the sway of advertising by the egg production and other animal agricultural industries and in the face of public apathy.

When organisations that claim to work on behalf of other animals simultaneously give their seal of approval to the products of exploitation of those animals, the battle for justice for those who are enslaved is on a dangerous, slippery slope. For example, the RSPCA disproves of battery and enriched cages, but gives its seal of approval to eggs originating in other systems of slavery such as free range and organic. The RSPCA monitors and approves a group called Freedom Foods⁴⁶. I recall buying Freedom Food products and I recall the feeling of assurance that I was shopping ethically because the label on the body part inferred that the non-human animal was somehow free and happy before he was killed for my food. Freedom Foods profits from the confinement and slaughter of millions of non-human animals including egg laying hens. The RSPCA endorsed Freedom Food label was accredited to Noble Food's Happy Egg Company which featured in VIVA's undercover investigation detailing horrific conditions for the very unhappy hens who are exploited by the free range system of egg production⁴⁷.

The life of every individual hen is determined by the relationship between the human values and attitudes that dictate consumption patterns and the economics of food production. Undercover investigation and reporting by animal rights activists brought the attention of the public to the suffering of hens in battery cages, ultimately leading to the ban. Why stop at caged hens? Why not abolish the exploitation of other animals who suffer for something that is unnecessary for humans? The level of public awareness of veganism as the solution to the suffering and exploitation of using non-human animals for food production is very shallow, and obviously camouflaged by the power of persuasive marketing dressed up as welfare as evidenced in the following data. In 1994 and again in 2004 a UK supermarket chain⁴⁸ surveyed consumers about concerns regarding the food industry. The results indicated that among the 30,000 members surveyed the welfare of caged hens emerged as their top concern. Did the supermarket respond by publicising the conditions in which egg laying hens live? Did it report the scientific data on the physical and psychological suffering of hens who are artificially selected to lay eggs in unnatural quantities, at great expense to their health and in violation of their right to bodily integrity? Did it publicise the damaging effects of eating eggs on human health and suggest plant-based alternatives? Did the supermarket make the public aware of the environmental destruction inherent in animal agriculture? No. In response the supermarket redesigned the packaging of eggs from non-caged hens to appear more attractive, and marked eggs from caged hens more clearly. Within a six month period the purchase of free range eggs increased by one third to 58%, and the following year it had increased to 61%. No doubt this was profitable for the

⁴⁵ Yates, Roger (2012) The Messy Business of Regulating Atrocities <http://human-nonhuman.blogspot.ie/2012> (Accessed 18 April 2013)

⁴⁶ <http://www.rspca.org.uk/servlet/Satellite?pagename=RSPCA/RSPCARedirect&pg=ConsumerFAQ&articleId=1127722666731&topic=null&subtopic=null&previousPage=null>

⁴⁷ <http://www.viva.org.uk/campaigns/chickens/happy-eggs.htm>

⁴⁸ RSPCA Report The Case Against cages: Evidence in Favour of Alternative Systems for Laying Hens <http://www.rspca.org.uk/ImageLocator/LocateAsset?asset=document&assetId=1232712906556&mode=prd> (Accessed 15 April 2013)

supermarket. This is clear evidence that welfare measures work alongside advertising and profit-making on animal foods.

In 2005 the first survey of attitudes towards the welfare of farmed animals was carried out in 25 member states of EU⁴⁹; the welfare of laying hens was again seen as the priority issue and consumers were prepared to pay more for food labelled as originating from higher welfare production systems. In 2007 RSPCA produced a report on consumer attitudes towards animal welfare⁵⁰. Interestingly, the report, which is produced by those who profit from using other animals as food (Freedom Foods) does not suggest that that the problem that consumers claim is their top priority is caused by our use of other animals for food. Rather they use human ignorance and reluctance to face the facts of their exploitation of non-human animals to drive the demand for food that can legally be labelled in such a way as to attract more customers. I quote from the report:

This new research also reveals that consumers know very little about the supply chain, and in particular they are deliberately ignorant of anything that happens between slaughter and consumption.

The only area that consumers do know – and want to know about – is the rearing and living stage prior to slaughter. **By feeling that animals have been treated well at this stage, it helps to alleviate the guilt that consumers feel about consumption. This, in turn, drives the demand for higher welfare foods:**

“Higher welfare is about making sure that they can run around, and have a nice life before we eat them!”⁵¹

The following statement is contained in one of the LayWel reports on egg laying hens as it attempts to evaluate the regulation of the atrocity of the treatment of hens following the EU Directive:

Where to draw the line

As with human welfare, this tends to be more of a cultural and political issue than a scientific one. The value judgements may be informed by science, but the dividing line between acceptable and unacceptable housing conditions will inevitably be different between different (groups of) people. As opinions of society change so too will the placement of the line.

On the basis of their sentience, other animals deserve equal moral consideration. The difference is that in the case of humans, we do not draw the line at welfare; we draw it at human rights. When the value judgements and opinions of society change from non-human animal welfare to non-human animal rights, so too will the placement of their line.

Wasted Resources, Wasted Lives: The cost of the ban

UK producers have invested £400 million in complying with the new regulations on the welfare of egg laying hens in “enriched” cages⁵². An aid package of €16 million under the Rural Development Programme was made available to assist Irish producers with the costs of transferring to enriched cages⁵³.

⁴⁹ Special EUROBAROMETER 229 “Attitudes of consumers towards the welfare of farmed animals” http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/euro_barometer25_en.pdf

⁵⁰ Consumer Attitudes to Animal Welfare A Report for Freedom Food by IGD March 2007

⁵¹ European Commission Special Eurobarometer 'Attitudes of consumers towards the welfare of farmed animals' 2005. IGD Consumer Unit. Executive Summary, Page 2. (Accessed 17 April 2013). Consumer Attitudes to Animal Welfare, March 2007 A Report by RSPCA Monitored Freedom Food and IGD, <http://www.rspca.org.uk/servlet/Satellite?blobcol=urlblob&blobheader=application%2Fpdf&blobkey=id&blobtable=RSPCABlob&blobwhere=1172248207766&ssbinary=true&Content-Type=application/pdf> (Accessed 14 April 2013)

These vast sums of money that have been spent in securing so little for egg laying hens do not include the financial and other resources that welfarists have invested in decades of campaigning on the single issue of battery reared hens, only to have battery cages replaced by cages that offer little or nothing of meaningful significance to the hens confined in them. Furthermore, the extent of the damage that the introduction of enriched cages has inflicted on the mindset of the public, assuaging as it did what was the pinnacle of public distress and consciousness of the exploitation of non-human animals for food, is probably unknown as yet. It is very likely that billions of hens are destined to be bred into lives of miserable slavery for a long time to come before their plight reaches the consciousness of the majority, on foot of this welfare measure.

Writing this article has confirmed for me that our efforts on behalf of other animals, including egg laying hens, are ineffective unless our priority is their rights: their right to life, their right not to suffer unnecessarily, their right not to be our property, and their right not to be exploited.

There are no humane eggs.

As far as I can see, being vegan is the closest we can get to solving the problem of our intolerable use of other animals and the consequences of that use for them.

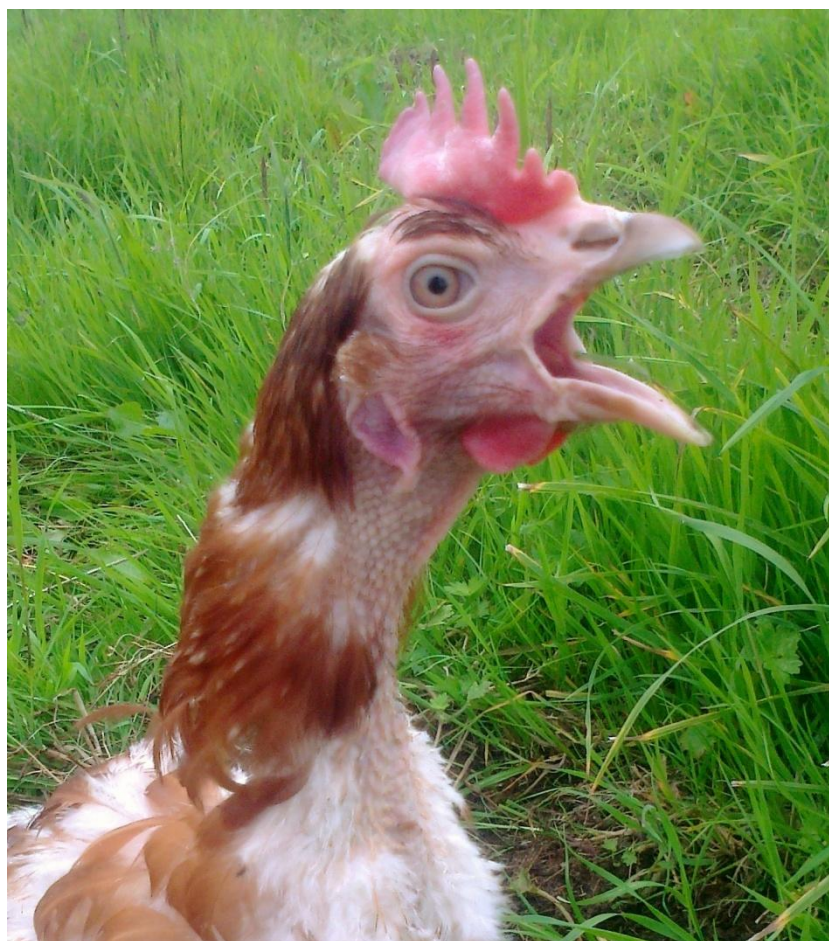


Figure 13 Joy

⁵² <http://www.scotsman.com/business/food-drink-and-agriculture/european-lethargy-blamed-for-failure-to-act-over-illegal-eggs-1-2025597> (Accessed 16 April 2013)

⁵³ <http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/press/ministersspeeches/speechesbyministercoveney/2012/18january2012ifaagm/> (Accessed 16 April 2013)