



BAN BATTERY CAGES

THE GREENS' PLAN TO BAN BATTERY CAGES AND INTRODUCE A TRUE FREE-RANGE EGG STANDARD IN VICTORIA

More and more Australians are turning away from eggs that are sourced from farms that employ cruel practices or cause egg laying hens to suffer by confining them for their entire lives in battery cages. The Greens have a plan to end battery cages and introduce a true free range standard in Victoria.

THE CRUELTY OF BATTERY CAGES

It is estimated that up to 12 million 'battery' hens are confined in small cages in the Australian egg-producing industry. Egg-laying hens can spend their entire lives in these small 'battery' cages, usually with other hens in the same cage, in huge warehouses containing tens of thousands of birds. Research has shown that battery hens suffer intensely and continuously for the entire time that they are confined in cages.

Battery cages deprive hens of the space they need to carry out normal behaviours such as flap their wings, fully stretch, safely access a perch, dust-bathe or forage. It is a cruel existence – all so that eggs can be mass produced.

The 'Farmed Bird Welfare Science Review' commissioned by the Victorian government confirms that hens suffer in battery cages and benefit from free-range systems. The RSPCA's 2016 report, *'The Welfare of Layer Hens in Cage and Cage-free Housing Systems'*, found the same.

Battery cages for egg laying hens are outlawed in the EU, the UK, several states of the USA and in the ACT. Canada and New Zealand are also phasing them out. Egg producers in NZ will only be able to keep hens in larger colony cages, barns or free range environments by 2022 and new battery hen cages have been banned.

Major retailers are moving to phase out eggs from battery-caged hens in Australia, but progress is slow. Legislation is needed to put an end to battery cages in Victoria.

The Greens will introduce legislation to

- **ban battery cages in Victoria;**
- **ban routine cruel practices such as de-beaking and forced moulting of hens; and**
- **implement a genuine free-range standard.**

WE NEED A TRUE FREE RANGE STANDARD

Most people understand 'free-range' to mean that egg-laying hens can move around outside and engage in natural behaviours. However, the egg industry uses 'stocking density' to compare free-range farms and the ability of birds to move around outside is largely ignored.

In 2017, the federal government announced the *Free Range Egg Labelling Information Standard* that allows a maximum density of 10,000 hens per hectare, leaving



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just a square metre for each hen. The Victorian government agreed with this decision. This is completely out of sync with consumers' expectations of what free-range means.

Whilst stocking densities vary, the CSIRO, ACCC and consumer group Choice recommend that up to 1,500 hens per hectare is a good standard for true cruelty-free egg production.

In May, 2017, the Greens moved a motion in the federal parliament calling on the Australian Government to review the *Free Range Egg Labelling Information Standard* to accurately reflect a genuine free-range stocking density and to ensure that consumers have truth in labelling. The Liberal, National and Labor parties voted against it.

References:

'Farmed Bird Welfare Science Review' School of Veterinary Science, University of Bristol, Langford House, BS40 5DU, UK, 2017

'The Welfare of Layer Hens in Cage and Cage-free Housing Systems', RSPCA, 2016.