

# Eggs

## *Cruelty and health issues*

Chickens are excluded from the Animal Welfare Act and the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act . Egg-laying eggs are killed when their egg production wanes.

Egg factory farms typically consist of a series of warehouse-like sheds, some the length of football fields, that can house 200,000 or more birds in each windowless building. Inside, hens are crammed into thousands of barren wire cages, battery cages, stacked several tiers high and extending in rows down the length of the building. Multiple birds are crammed into each cage, allowing each hen about 67 square inches of space, less area than a sheet of paper. (HSUS)

Today's hens are bred to lay almost twice the number of eggs per year than hens did in 1940. Because egg-laying depletes calcium levels, these overworked birds are highly susceptible to osteoporosis, 89 percent of them have the disease, making them vulnerable to broken bones and weak joints. (HSUS)

Battery cages are designed with a sloping wire floor so the eggs will roll down and onto a tray for easy collection. Lacking perches, birds are forced to stand on the harsh wire floor, which often leads to severe foot and leg problems. (HSUS)

Many countries, including Germany, Sweden and Switzerland, are getting rid of battery cages, and by 2012, conventional battery cages will be phased out in the entire European Union.

Ninety-eight percent of layer hens are raised in tiny, crowded cages.

14-inch square wire cages (the size of a newspaper folded in half) with 5-6 hens crammed together inside.

Laying hens do not have enough space to even spread their wings. Their wings atrophy from disuse.

After months of confinement, necks will be covered with blisters, wings bare, combs bloody, and feet torn.

Poultry Tribune: "We have discovered chickens literally grown fast to the cage. The flesh of the toes grew completely around the wire".

The cage floor slopes toward the food and water troughs, so that weaker hens are often crushed to the bottom.

Approximately 20 percent of the hens raised under these conditions die of stress or disease.

The overcrowding leads to fighting between birds and self-mutilation due to stress.

To reduce fighting injuries, the tips of the birds' beaks are sliced off using hot blades, and without anesthesia. Some of the birds cannot eat after debeaking

and starve.

The hot blade used in debeaking cuts through the complex horn, bone, and sensitive tissue causing severe pain. The beak of a chicken has an extensive nerve supply. The procedure, which requires cutting through tender tissue similar to the flesh under human fingernails, is so painful that many chicks die of shock. Some die of starvation, when eating becomes too painful.

Cages stacked one on top of another in long rows, forcing the chickens in lower rows to live in the excrement of those above them.

The excessive manure causes ammonia burn to the chicken's eyes and sometimes leads to blindness.

Manure fumes and rotting carcasses force poultry workers to wear gas masks.

Only female chickens can produce eggs, so about 280 million male chicks per year are disposed of by being shoved into plastic bags and left to suffocate or ground up alive.

The male chicks cannot be used as broilers or fryers because they have not been bred to produce a lot of muscle.

Free-range: No government laws or standards regulate the use of terms like "free-range" and "free-roaming" on egg cartons, so some "free-range" eggs may actually be produced by hens who spend their lives in small, conventional battery cages. Often, "free-range" hens are uncaged but confined indoors in crowded sheds similar to "broiler" houses.

Forced-molting: Starving the hens for up to 18 days, keeping them in the dark, and denying them water in order to shock their bodies into another egg-laying cycle. The birds may lose more than 25% of their body weight and it is common for 5% to 10% to die. (J Appl Poultry Res, 1992)

Because they have been manipulated to lay such large eggs, their uteruses sometimes prolapsed (become expelled along with the egg) (Poultry Digest, Sep 90). The hen cannot escape her severe pain except by dying.

Eggs are the number one cause of salmonella poisoning in the country.

Serving up just one egg for breakfast each morning can raise your cholesterol level by as much as 10 points! The human body makes all the cholesterol it needs, and when extra cholesterol is eaten, only 100 mg per day can be eliminated-the rest begins clogging arteries.

Healthy and humane alternatives to eggs: Ener-G Egg Replacer powdered egg substitute, Fantastic Foods Tofu Scrambler, and Veganaise or Nayonnaise eggless mayonnaise.