



Smt. Jayanthi Natarajan  
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Dear Smt. Jayanthi Natarajan

I am writing on behalf of the Asia for Animals 2011 organising committee members, representing international organisations with extensive knowledge of animal welfare issues. We express our deep concern with regards the farming of 140-200 million egg laying hens in conventional cages in India.

The Constitution of India provides that: "It shall be the fundamental duty of every citizen of India to protect and improve the Natural Environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife, and to have compassion for all living creatures" Article 51-A(g). We applaud India for considering the respect for animals in the constitution of its country, and respectfully invite your country to join the global movement to address the well-being of egg-laying hens.

Science has proven that hens are sentient animals with the ability to feel pain and to suffer.

Hens in conventional caged production typically have less floor space than an A4 sheet of paper. The cage prevents hens from carrying out important natural behaviours.

Scientific research has shown that it is very important for a hen to have a quiet, safe place to lay her egg. There is no such place in a barren wire cage. Hens need to walk, stretch their wings, dust-bathe and perch. This is not possible in a cage.

In natural conditions hens peck and scratch looking for food and exploring their environment. There is no opportunity to do this in a barren wire cage. They can become frustrated and peck their cage-mates. To try and prevent this, new-born chicks have part of their beaks removed, without any anaesthetic or pain relief.

Wire flooring can also result in the birds' claws becoming overgrown and in foot injuries.

Meaningful exercise is impossible and cages are associated with reduced bone strength due to lack of exercise. Hens can become paralysed and die from 'cage layer osteoporosis'. They can suffer broken bones when pulled from their cages to be taken to slaughter.

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) experts say: "Housing systems for hens differ in the possibilities for hens to show species specific behaviours such as foraging, dust-bathing, perching

and building or selecting a suitable nest. If hens cannot perform such high priority behaviours, this may result in significant frustration, or deprivation or injury, which is detrimental to their welfare” (EFSA, 2005).

The EFSA report shows that the inability to behave naturally and the high levels of osteoporosis pose a particularly severe threat to the welfare of battery hens. The LayWel report, prepared for the European Commission, concludes that “the welfare of laying hens is severely compromised in conventional cages” and such cages do not have the potential to provide satisfactory welfare.

Enriched or modified cages are similar to conventional battery cages with slightly more space and height. They contain features intended to enable hens to perform some important natural behaviours. Although the provision of a nesting area for the hen to lay her eggs is a real improvement on the barren battery cage, the other features are insufficient to insure the welfare of egg laying hens. The cages are still crowded and severely restrict the hens’ movement and natural behaviour. They are not acceptable on the basis of overall physical and behavioural well-being of the animals.

Non-cage systems have a better potential to meet hens welfare needs. The best systems have small flock sizes and daytime outdoor access with shelter from the elements and from predators. This allows the hen to carry out important natural behaviours.

The barren or ‘conventional’ cage has been banned across all 27 EU member states (effective from 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2012). The US state of California has banned the use of ‘conventional’ cages from 2015. In July, The Humane Society of the United States and the United Egg Producers announced an unprecedented agreement to work together toward the enactment of comprehensive new federal legislation that would ban barren battery cages across the U.S.

On behalf of our members globally, we urge you join this important global movement toward the improved care and respect of egg laying hens. Please ban the use of laying hen cages in India and help farmers to improve the welfare of egg laying hens across the country.

We also respectfully call on the Government to implement labelling of eggs by method of production – caged, barn, free-range and organic (or equivalent terms). Such labelling allows consumers to make an informed choice and support improvements in animal welfare.

Sent on behalf of the following organisations:

- Animal Guardians
- Animal People
- Animals Asia Foundation
- ACRES (Animal Concerns Research & Education Society)
- Compassion in World Farming
- Humane Society International
- International Animal Rescue
- International Fund for Animal Welfare
- Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (UK)
- SPCA Hong Kong
- World Society for the Protection of Animals

**Please respond to N.G.Jayasimha, 3-7-278/B Kakaguda, Tirumalagiri P.O, Secunderabad – 500015  
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**Copied to:**

Maj. Gen. (Retd), Dr. R.M. Kharb AVSM, Chairman, Animal Welfare Board of India  
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Dr. Anjani Kumar, Director Animal Welfare, Government of India [anjani.moef@yahoo.com](mailto:anjani.moef@yahoo.com)

### **References**

EFSA (2005) Opinion of the Scientific Panel on Animal Health and Welfare (AHAW) on a request from the Commission related to the welfare aspects of various systems of keeping laying hens. [www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/197.htm](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/197.htm))

LayWel (2006). Advantages and disadvantages of different housing systems for the welfare of laying hens. [www.laywel.eu/web/pdf/deliverable%2071%20welfare%20assessment.pdf](http://www.laywel.eu/web/pdf/deliverable%2071%20welfare%20assessment.pdf)

### **Further information**

Information on hen welfare and better systems is freely available at:

[www.ciwf.org.uk/resources/publications/poultry\\_laying\\_hens/default.aspx](http://www.ciwf.org.uk/resources/publications/poultry_laying_hens/default.aspx)

