

ENGLISH TEXTS

Short Written Texts (Blogs)

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Colony Cage Con

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Having campaigned for the abolition of cruel battery hen cages for nearly 30 years you would think I would be pleased about the Government's decision to phase out battery hen cages. Well I am not, because it's all spin, a lie, a con job, and you – someone who cares about the welfare of animals, is the one being conned.

Despite their promises the Government has no intention to get rid of battery cages but they know you don't like these cruel cages and want them banned. The fact is that instead of banning battery cages the Government is simply changing one cruel cage for another. The new cages are larger (but house more birds) and contain some token 'enrichments.' These new cages may appear better but the hens still have not enough space and still can't express their normal behavior. These cages will become mandatory for cage egg producers by 2022.

By moving away from current cages the Government hopes that you will believe that hens will have a better life. So, in cahoots with the egg industry they have devised a plan to fool you. First, they do not refer to these cages as cages. Instead they call them colony systems, or furnished colony systems. Then they pretend that the hens' lives will be vastly improved in these cages. They even claim that the animals can express their normal behavior as required by our animal welfare legislation. It is a cruel deception as no hen can ever express her normal behavior in a space barely larger than an A4 sheet of paper. Eggs from hens confined to these cages are sold as 'Colony Laid' or Colony Eggs' in the supermarkets, deliberately leaving consumers in the dark that these are in fact cage-produced eggs.

I feel angry for every single hen who will be made to suffer in a colony battery cage. I understand that many people find it difficult to relate to the suffering of three million battery hens. The number is just too large to get your head around, and a sense of helplessness results. If this applies to you, then please do me a favour – think about one hen only. Imagine one hen confined in a crowded wire cage; sore feet from standing on a wire floor; feathers missing due to being pecked by her cage mates and rubbing against the sides of the cage. She

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE?



Still a cruel cage.



will have brittle bones from calcium loss, will be unable to flap her wings, let alone walk around or do anything nature intended for her. Join me in my anger just for her, and then put that anger into action.

The New Zealand egg industry is set to spend over 150 million on installing colony cages, yet these cages are not wanted by the New Zealand public. A large number of political parties, including Labour and all animal welfare groups in New Zealand have condemned colony cages. Internationally there is also strong opposition to colony cages. They are illegal in Switzerland; Austria has banned all colony cages by 2020; Belgium by 2024. Supermarkets in Germany and the Netherlands refuse to sell colony cage produced eggs.

In New Zealand we must stop colony cages before they become entrenched. There is a real chance that a future New Zealand Government will ban colony cages, but SAFE believes it is time for our current Government to put a stop to any new layer hen cages being introduced and legislate for alternative, cage-free, high welfare systems. SAFE will make this issue one of its top priorities and we will be calling on you to help our new campaign to free all New Zealand's battery hens. Watch this space!

Hans Kriek, Executive Director