

## Details of the Animal Welfare Agreement between The Humane Society of the United States and The United Egg Producers



Currently, at least 92 percent of egg-laying hens in the United States are confined in barren battery cages so small the animals can't even spread their wings. Of these birds, about 210 million are provided 67 square inches of space and 50 million are provided with even less space than that meager amount (typically 48 square inches). In addition to being extremely restrictive, these cages are also barren, meaning they don't provide hens with tools necessary to engage in important natural behaviors, like laying their eggs in nests, perching or scratching—behaviors that are necessary for hens to have adequate welfare.

In recent years, HSUS has campaigned against these extreme confinement systems, because they so severely compromise the welfare of the hens. We've pushed for new state laws to give the birds more space, and helped food retailers start using cage-free eggs (e.g. Burger King, Wendy's, Kraft and dozens of others). Along the way, we've typically sparred with the United Egg Producers, the trade association for the nation's large egg producers.

In July 2011, The HSUS and The UEP reached an historic agreement whereby both organizations will support—and work together toward enactment of—federal legislation to afford certain protections to all U.S. egg laying hens. If passed, the federal legislation would:

- Eliminate new construction of barren battery cages, and replace the existing cages, through a phase-in, with new “enriched colony cage” housing systems that provide each hen nearly double the amount of space they're currently allotted. (And unlike battery cages, these are generally 12-foot-long, four-foot-wide enclosures.)
- Require that these new cages provide environmental enrichments that will allow hens to engage in important natural behaviors, such as perches, nesting boxes, and scratching areas.
- Mandate labeling on all egg cartons to inform consumers of the method used to produce the eggs, such as “eggs from caged hens,” “eggs from cage-free hens” or “eggs from free-range hens.”
- Prohibit forced molting through starvation, which involves withholding all food from birds for up to two weeks in order to manipulate the laying cycle.
- Mandate euthanasia standards for spent hens.
- Prohibit excessive ammonia levels in henhouses.
- Prohibit the sale of eggs and egg products nationwide that don't meet these requirements.



**Barren Battery Cage (The Current Standard)**



**Enriched Colony Cage (The Proposed New Standard)**

While The HSUS will continue advocating that consumers and corporations switch to cage-free eggs, and the new labeling system will give consumers the information they need to reach for a higher animal welfare standard, we're also heralding this as historic and significant progress in America's evolution toward better animal treatment. This law, if enacted, would represent the first time that any species of animal is provided with federal protection from abuse while on factory farms, the first federal farm animal protection law in more than 30 years, and the first time that chickens used in food production are provided any federal protections at all. It would create a critical labeling system to help inform consumers and—most critically—improve the lives of the hundreds of millions of animals used in egg production each year.