

SPCA Auckland Education Teacher Curriculum Guide



Looking at Labels – ‘The Torture of Hens’ Level 4 ‘Transactional Writing’ English Year 7 & 8

‘Write instructions, explanations, and factual accounts, and express personal viewpoints, in a range of authentic contexts, sequencing ideas logically and making language choices appropriate to the audience’.

Looking at Labels – ‘The Torture of Hens’ Worksheet
Year 7 & 8

In this activity, the different systems of commercial egg production will be compared.

1. Bring empty egg cartons from home and sort them into 3 groups; ideally, a carton from each egg produce variety - battery, barn, and free-range.
2. Read the text for each kind of carton.
Copy the text.
3. Note if there are any pictures on the cartons.
Copy them. If there are pictures, comment on the design and the impression each gives.
4. The 3 types of egg production in NZ are:



Battery - Each hen is caged and the floor space for each hen is the size of an A4 piece of paper

Barn - The hens are kept in a large building. There are perches at different heights and nest boxes. The birds cannot go outside.


Free-range - Live the same way as barn eggs but they have access to outdoor.

5. Check some eggs from each situation - Are they different to look at? Crack an egg from each situation. Are they different inside? Write out your findings for each egg.



6. Read the article provided, and then write your own reasoned account comparing the 3 different systems. Make sure you include the advantages and disadvantages of each system.

Finally, give your own opinion as to which system you prefer.



Talking for the Animals
By Bob Kerridge
Animal Hell
NZ Woman's Weekly
Publication Date:
27 September 2004



If I was asked to identify what animal suffers the greatest atrocities in this country I would have to say “it is the humble hen”.

There are over three million laying hens in New Zealand of which 92% live a life of sheer hell. These poor creatures who live their full miserable lives in a space, no larger than a phone book, for as long as they are capable of laying eggs.

Beaks have been trimmed to prevent self mutilation or harm neighbouring birds, they cannot stretch their wings, scratch, nest or bathe themselves in dust, they cannot enjoy the natural elements of sunshine or indeed every day freedom of movement.

A memory that haunts me is when I freed a battery hen from its cage of hell – it emerged into the sunlight in its new found feeling of warmth but yet, when it tried to walk, its wasted legs which had never been exercised collapsed. As it lay bewildered and helpless on the ground, its black eyes as wide as saucers, I knew I was watching an animal deprived of everything life should have given it. No creature on earth deserves that.

Even although battery hens produce more than 90% of New Zealand's eggs (and we each eat an average of 216 eggs annually) public opinion overwhelmingly opposes the battery cages that cage them. In a referendum organised by the SPCA a few years ago over 368,000 signatures were gathered from caring New Zealanders opposed to the cruel practise. More recently over 120,000 postcards pleaded to have this method of egg production phased put, and in a Colmar Brunton research poll an amazing 79% of New Zealanders stated they would be happy to pay higher prices for their eggs if it would stop the battery cages.

One would have thought that on moral grounds alone, let alone the huge public opinion which we expect our politicians to respect, we would have followed the lead of Europe and commenced a process of saving these miserable hens by phasing out the battery cage system. But no!

In a recently leaked document it has been suggested that any government decision to ban the practise is to be delayed for a further five years while 'more information is gathered'! That translates to another 2,000 days of misery for almost three million lives.

Isn't that a shame when at the centre of it all are literally millions of animals lives at stake, lives that at our hands will be tortured, and continue to be tortured, for as long as we allow it. Perhaps the sheer force of three million hens and an equal number of people could rise up to stop it.

(Bob is Chief Executive of SPCA Auckland)