

FARM ANIMAL WELFARE IN CANADA - ISSUE # 1: OCT 2012

Welcome to the first issue of *Farm Animal Welfare in Canada*. In this quarterly newsletter, you will hear what some of Canada's leading voices for animal welfare reform are doing - jointly and individually - to improve the standards of care for Canada's 700 million farm animals, the vast majority of whom are raised on factory farms. By working together, we share resources, expand our efforts and have greater impact than working alone.

JOINT INITIATIVES AND PERSPECTIVES: OPPOSITION TO CAGES AND CRATES

Cage-Free, not Furnished Cages

Although battery cagesⁱ are currently being phased out of the EU and some US states (California, Michigan and Ohio), **more than 95% of egg laying hens in Canada are still housed in these small, barren cages**. As a result of increasing opposition to battery cages, some Canadian egg producers and food retailers are switching to cage-free eggs - eggs laid by hens housed in free-run barns and/or on free-range pasture. However, many producers are in the process of assessing alternative furnishedⁱⁱ cages for future flocks.



Above: battery cages

While furnished cages - also called colony, modified or enriched cages - provide a higher level of welfare than conventional battery cage housing systems, decades of scientific research shows that **well-managed cage-free systems offer a substantially higher level of welfare than any current existing cage confinement system**. CCFA, VHS and WSPA urge all egg producers to invest in cage-free systems in order to significantly improve the welfare of their flocks and to ensure the Canadian egg industry and food retailers continue to meet globally recognized laying hen welfare standards in the future.

Adopt Crate-Free in Code of Practice for Pigs

Numerous recent corporate announcements, both in the United States and within Canada, have clearly demonstrated that major retailers and their consumers no longer accept gestation stallsⁱⁱⁱ as a suitable method of housing sows, and that producers should make every effort to develop plans to transition to group housing systems as soon as is feasible.



Above: gestation stalls

The current review of the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Pigs is an excellent opportunity for the Canadian pork industry to adopt strong, mandatory animal welfare requirements. Doing so will allow the industry to move into the future with a highly relevant Code of Practice that reflects current global industry trends as well as Canadian consumer demands.

CCFA, Humane Society International/Canada, VHS and WSPA submitted a joint letter to the National Farm Animal Care Council to strongly encourage all members of the Pig Code Development Committee to **support a complete phase out of the use of gestation stalls in favour of group housing for pregnant sows**, and for a timeline for doing so to be enshrined in the new code. **We are calling for a transition to group housing systems by 2017 to be a requirement in the code.**

ⁱ Battery cage barns in Canada hold hundreds of thousands of hens in cages, 5-7 birds per cage, tiered two to eight cages high. Each hen has approx. 450cm² - less space than a sheet of paper - in which to live her life. There is no access to the outdoors. Cages inhibit almost all natural behaviours including perching, dust bathing, wing flapping and nesting. Foot and leg injuries from the wire flooring are common.

ⁱⁱ Furnished cages are larger cages, allowing up to 600cm² of useable floor space per hen if European standards are followed, and may also include a perch and nesting area. Like conventional cages, they do not allow access to the outdoors and still inhibit some natural behaviours.

INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVES AND PERSPECTIVES

Canadian Coalition for Farm Animals (CCFA) www.humanefood.ca

Since its founding in 2002, CCFA has been actively campaigning to ban sow stalls and battery cages in Canada. This fall, CCFA and Canadians for Ethical Treatment of Food Animals (CETFA) are taking the campaign to ban sow stalls national, airing a TV ad on *CBC Newsworld*. The ad encourages viewers to take action by sending e-messages to the pork industry, to CEOs of Canada's largest grocers, and to agricultural ministers. Visit www.helpthepigs.ca.

CCFA is encouraged by the progress some food retailers in North America are making toward ending battery cages for hens and sow stalls for pigs, much as a result of HSUS initiatives. Progress continues to build in Canada, with preliminary commitments for farmed animals from Loblaw, Canada's largest grocer. Loblaw has committed to sourcing all its *President's Choice* brand eggs from cage-free producers, and to work with the National Farm Animal Care Council, the industry agency developing codes of practice for farmed animals in Canada.

Vancouver Humane Society (VHS) www.vancouverhumanesociety.bc.ca

Since VHS launched Chicken OUT! in 2002, we have helped many consumers, universities and businesses to adopt cage-free egg purchasing policies in order to phase out the battery cage confinement of Canada's egg-laying hens. By the end of 2012, 17% of BC's egg production will come from cage-free farms (up from just 2% in 2002). In other provinces, less than 5% of egg production is cage-free; alas, more work is needed to encourage national retailers to adopt more humane, cage-free policies. Visit www.chickenout.ca for more information.

This past spring, VHS initiated an online petition asking major retailer Tim Hortons to stop buying eggs from caged hens and pork from crated sows. We collected and presented 50,000 signatures to Tim Hortons at their AGM. Tim Hortons announced it will aim to source 10 per cent of its egg supply from enriched cage housing by the end of 2013 and work with its food supply chain to set timelines for crate-free pork. VHS encourages Tim Hortons and other retailers to make more progressive commitments to cage-free eggs. As well, VHS has been working with a major Canadian grocery chain to launch in-store shelf labelling for eggs in 2013. The egg labels will reference free-run, free-range and organic eggs, but also 'eggs from caged hens' – a first in North America. The color-coded shelf markers will also describe the housing and behavioral considerations for each of these categories.

World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) www.wspa.ca

The World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) is encouraging consumers, food service companies and policy makers to make more humane and sustainable choices. Since 2010, WSPA has convinced universities and colleges to switch to cage-free eggs in their dining facilities. Half a million more eggs annually now come from hens that can move freely, spread their wings and lay their eggs in a nest. Find out more and take the cage-free pledge at www.choosecagefree.ca.

This past spring, WSPA released a new report 'What's On Your Plate? The Hidden Costs of Industrial Animal Agriculture'. The expert report is the first comprehensive examination of the negative impacts industrial animal agriculture has on public health, the environment, animal welfare and Canada's rural communities and its policy recommendations point the way to a more humane and sustainable food system. The report received 120 pieces of media coverage. More than 50 MPs and Senators have been briefed on the report but copies were sent to all Canadian politicians in Ottawa and the provinces as well as to NGOs interested in the environment, animal welfare and food policy. Read the report at www.wspa.ca/food.

Contacts:

Stephanie Brown, CCFA
Leanne McConnachie, VHS
Melissa Matlow, WSPA

(416) 920-4984
(604) 266-9744 x23
(416) 369-0044 x108

info@humanefood.ca
leanne@vancouverhumanesociety.bc.ca
matlow@wspa.ca

ⁱⁱⁱA sow stall, or gestation crate, is a 2 metres (6.6 ft) x 60 centimetres (2.0 ft) metal enclosure used to confine a female pig (sow) during pregnancy, and for most of her adult life. The stalls are so small the sow cannot turn around. Instead, her movement is limited to one step forward or one step back. She must eat, sleep, urinate and defecate in this tiny space.