

# **Animal Welfare (Layer Hens) Code of Welfare Amendment Notice 2007**

*An amendment to the code of welfare issued under the  
Animal Welfare Act 1999*

Code of Welfare Amendment No. 1

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National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee  
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## **Preface**

The Animal Welfare (Layer Hens) Code of Welfare 2005 came into force on 1 January 2005. The code applies to all persons responsible for the welfare of layer hens kept for the purpose of producing eggs for sale.

The purpose of this minor amendment is to clarify the definition of “cages” in the code. I issue this minor amendment, which does not materially affect the purpose of the code, on the recommendation of the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee.

The Animal Welfare (Layer Hens) Code of Welfare Amendment Notice 2007 is issued by me, by a notice published in the *Gazette* on 6 September 2007, under section 76 of the Animal Welfare Act 1999. This Amendment Notice comes into force on 7 September 2007.

This Amendment Notice is deemed to be a regulation for the purposes of the Regulations (Disallowance) Act 1989 and is subject to the scrutiny of Parliament’s Regulations Review Committee.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jim Anderton', written in a cursive style.

Hon Jim Anderton  
Minister of Agriculture

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# Notice

## 1 Title

This notice is the Animal Welfare (Layer Hens) Code of Welfare Amendment Notice 2007.

## 2 Commencement

This notice comes into force on 7 September 2007

## 3 Animal Welfare (Layer Hens) Code of Welfare 2005 amended

This notice amends the Animal Welfare (Layer Hens) Code of Welfare 2005.

## 4 New sections substituted

Sections 1.9 and the Introduction to section 3.3.3 are revoked and the following section and Introduction substituted respectively:

### “1.9 Glossary

<b>Advisory livestock personnel</b>	Experienced or trained personnel e.g. commercial companies, layer hen advisors, technical advisors, hatchery managers. Also independent avian specialists and advisory personnel from hatcheries and poultry livestock breeding companies.
<b>Alternative systems</b>	Production systems which are not cage systems (as defined below). They may include free-range, aviary or barn systems.
<b>Aviary</b>	A building housing layer hens without cages, similar to a barn but providing two or more floor levels giving free access for all birds to all floors.
<b>Barn</b>	A building housing layer hens without cages, on a single level, and without access to an outdoor area.
<b>Beak trimming/tipping</b>	The removal of the upper and lower tips of the beak (see Appendix II).
<b>Birds</b>	Chicks, chickens, pullets or layer hens.

<b>Brooding</b>	The management of chickens from day-old to four weeks of age.
<b>Caking</b>	Undesirable compaction of the surface of litter.
<b>Cage</b>	An enclosure usually constructed of metal and usually containing 2-9 birds. These cages do not include a perch, a nest box, or a dust bathing area. Also commonly known as a “battery” cage.
<b>Cage system</b>	A system where layer hens are housed in cages (as defined above).
<b>Chicken</b>	Layer breed of chicken from day-old to eight weeks of age.
<b>Chicks</b>	Newly hatched layer chickens.
<b>Controlled environment</b>	An enclosed insulated building containing pullets or layer hens which provides total control of lighting, ventilation and temperature under automated control with feed, water and egg collection automated and usually computer monitored.
<b>Day-old chicks</b>	Chicks up to 72 hours of age (surviving on their internal yolk sack).
<b>Egg baffle</b>	A metallic strip attached to the back of the feed trough in a laying cage, designed to stop the caged bird pecking and breaking any eggs resting on the egg belt.
<b>Electrified egg saver wire</b>	An electrified wire situated under the feed trough to prevent birds from pecking eggs.
<b>Embryonated egg</b>	A fertilised egg which contains a developing pre-hatched chick.
<b>End of lay</b>	When laying is terminated either naturally or as a management practice. It may be followed by moulting and a further laying period.
<b>Enriched-cage</b>	An enclosure that typically provides more space for birds than a cage, and usually includes a perch, a nest box, and a dust bathing area.

<b>Euthanasia</b>	Humane killing.
<b>Free-range</b>	A system providing birds with access to an extensive outdoor area and which typically includes housing (either fixed or moveable) similar to a barn, aviary, or perchery without cages.
<b>Growing</b>	Management of the chickens from day-old to point of lay (approximately 18 weeks of age).
<b>Hatcher</b>	A controlled environment cabinet in which eggs are allowed to hatch.
<b>Hatchery</b>	A facility in which controlled environment cabinets are housed.
<b>Induced (or forced) moulting</b>	The deliberate practice of inducing birds to cease egg production simultaneously, lose and replace feathers and restore bone integrity. It usually involves restriction of nutrients and reduced day-length.
<b>Instantaneous fragmentation</b>	Mechanical method of humane destruction of eggs/day-old chicks (also known as maceration).
<b>Layer hen (hens)</b>	A sexually mature egg-producing bird from 18 weeks to end of lay.
<b>Lux</b>	An international measure of light intensity (not to be confused with watts).
<b>Moulting</b>	A natural shedding of the feathers of layer hens between laying cycles.
<b>Perch</b>	An elevated structure allowing birds to roost off the ground.
<b>Perchery</b>	A barn or aviary containing perches.
<b>Placement</b>	Placing of day-old chicks in the rearing facilities or pullets in the laying facility.
<b>Point of lay</b>	The commencement of laying by a sexually mature hen.
<b>Predator</b>	An animal that preys on another.

<b>Pullet</b>	Young hen from eight weeks of age to point of lay.
<b>Range</b>	An outdoor area, usually grass, used by birds in free-range systems.
<b>Spent hen</b>	An end of lay hen destined for slaughter.
<b>Vermin</b>	Animals of a noxious or objectionable kind, including wild birds, rodents and mustelids (weasels, stoats and ferrets)."

### “3.3.3 Cages

#### *Introduction*

Cages are the most common egg production system in use today, and currently their use accounts for the production of approximately 92% of the eggs consumed in New Zealand.

Cage systems have the advantage of protecting bird health and welfare, through the separation of the animal from its faeces, and through precise environmental control. In terms of problems such as feather pecking and cannibalism, the small group size found in a cage allows management interventions to be targeted, and reduces the total number of birds directly affected by such events.

The major disadvantage of cages is that they prevent the birds from displaying many of their normal behaviours such as they are not able to fly, run, or walk continuously. Cages also provide a barren environment where birds are denied the ability to forage or dust bathe and nest. Birds may have weaker bones due to lack of exercise.

In contrast to cages, enriched-cages are showing increased potential for allowing birds to display more of their normal behaviours.

Alternative systems generally provide more enriched environments and an ability to display normal behaviours; nevertheless there are potential welfare issues such as feather pecking, cannibalism, greater incidence of disease, and higher mortalities.

All production systems are subject to continual review and development. Future research may therefore lead to major changes in the way layer hens are managed. It is recognised that international research and development, and commercial trials, are currently being conducted with cages containing perches, nest boxes, litter, and abrasive strips, and that these cage features may offer potential for the New Zealand layer industry. NAWAC therefore wishes to see further research

comparing cage and alternative systems, including enriched-cages. NAWAC will not make any final decision on whether cages should continue, be modified or be phased out, until 2009, when it will review that scientific research (both national and international).

This code sets minimum standards that allow for the continued use of cages. Based on current knowledge, NAWAC would ideally like cages to be eventually phased out but is unable to recommend replacement of cages with alternative systems including enriched-cages, until such time as it can be shown that, in comparison to cage systems and in the context of supplying New Zealand's ongoing egg consumption needs, they would consistently provide better welfare outcomes for birds and be economically viable.

NAWAC notes that any decision to provide greater minimum space and/or behavioural enrichment, or to phase out cages altogether, will be left to such time as this code is reviewed in 2009. NAWAC will, at that time, consider: current New Zealand and international research on alternative systems including enriched-cages; good practice in relation to the management of layer hens; available technology; public submissions; international practices and trends; and the feasibility, practicality and economic effects of any change."

**5 Note to Minimum Standard No. 7 substituted**

The Note to Minimum Standard No. 7 is revoked and the following Note substituted:

*"Note:*

*Section 73(3) of the Act provides that NAWAC may, in exceptional circumstances, recommend minimum standards that do not fully meet the obligations to ensure that the physical, health and behavioural needs of the animal are met. In making this recommendation NAWAC must have regard to, among other things, the feasibility and practicality of effecting a transition from current practices and any adverse effects that may result from such a transition, and the economic effects of any transition from current practices to new practices.*

*NAWAC considers that cages that provide a minimum floor space of less than 550 sq cm per bird do not fully comply with section 10 of the Act. Minimum standard 7(d) allows for a transition period for the phasing out of cages that provide less than 550 sq cm."*