

## Battery Cages (Adapted from [FactoryFarming.com](http://FactoryFarming.com))\*

There are approximately 300 million egg laying hens in the U.S. confined in battery cages — small wire cages stacked in tiers and lined up in rows inside huge warehouses. In accordance with the USDA's recommendation to give each hen four inches of 'feeder space,' hens are commonly packed four to a cage measuring just 16 inches wide. In this tiny space, the birds cannot stretch their wings or legs, and they cannot fulfill normal behavioral patterns or social needs. Constantly rubbing against the wire cages, they suffer from severe feather loss, and their bodies are covered with bruises and abrasions.



In order to reduce injuries resulting from excessive pecking —an aberrant behavior that occurs when the confined hens are bored and frustrated — practically all laying hens have part of their beaks cut off. Debeaking is a painful procedure that involves cutting through bone, cartilage, and soft tissue. Laying more than 250 eggs per year each, laying hens' bodies are severely taxed. They suffer from "fatty liver syndrome" when their liver cells, which work overtime to produce the fat and protein for egg yolks, accumulate extra fat. They also suffer from what the industry calls 'cage layer fatigue,' and many become 'egg bound' and die when their bodies are too weak to pass another egg.

Osteoporosis is another common ailment afflicting egg laying hens, whose bodies lose more calcium to form egg shells than they can assimilate from their diets. One industry journal, *Feedstuffs*, explains, "...the laying hen at peak eggshell cannot absorb enough calcium from her diet..." while another (*Lancaster Farming*) states, "... a hen will use a quantity of calcium for yearly egg production that is greater than her entire skeleton by 30-fold or more." Inadequate calcium contributes to broken bones, paralysis, and death.

After one year in egg production, the birds are classified as 'spent hens' and are sent off to slaughter. Their brittle, calcium-depleted bones often shatter during handling or at the slaughterhouse. They usually end up in soups, pot pies, or similar low-grade chicken meat

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