

MEDIA RELEASE

25 June 2012

PROTEST CHALLENGES CAGE EGG INDUSTRY

Access to the largest battery cage facility in New Zealand has been blocked today by animal welfare activists protesting against cages for layer hens.

Early this morning tripod structures with climbers sitting on top were set up at the entrance to the Mainland Poultry complex in Waikouaiti and activists from the group Open Rescue expect to remain in place until they are forced down.

"The action is being carried out to highlight the continued cruelty of cages," says SAFE Campaign director Eliot Pryor, "and especially to stop the introduction of the proposed colony battery cage system. Both SAFE and Open Rescue want to see all cages banned for egg-laying hens. The so-called enriched colony cages are not an acceptable alternative to the existing system as the welfare benefits are so minimal."

"Mainland Poultry has refused the media access to these new colony battery cages and it is easy to see why," says Mr Pryor. "They do not want the public to see the abhorrent conditions the animals are forced to live in. They do not want to explain to consumers why hens are crammed inside cages so cramped they have barely any room to move."

Secretly filmed images of the colony battery cages in the Mainland facility, showing a dark future for New Zealand's three million battery hens, were revealed by activists on national television earlier this year. The Minister for Primary Industries, David Carter, is considering approving the introduction of colony battery cages as part of the new welfare code for layer hens.

Colony battery cages do not provide the hens with the opportunity to display their normal behaviour as required by the Animal Welfare Act. Both New Zealand and international animal welfare agencies have condemned them, declaring the cages "fail to properly meet the hens' physical or behavioural needs".

"The law does not meet the welfare needs of these animals and as the law fails the hens, and producers resist moving to better welfare systems, you will find more reaction from consumers," says Mr Pryor. "All retailers need to be looking again at their supply chain and asking themselves what their customers would find acceptable."

Eighty per cent of Kiwis are opposed to battery cages, and SAFE encourages the public not to be fooled into believing that the new colony battery cages are acceptable. Consumers can contact the Minister directly to demand a ban on all cages at nocages.org.nz.



Level 1, 145 Armagh Street
PO Box 13 366, Armagh
Christchurch, New Zealand 8141
Tel/fax: 03 379 9711
Email: safe@safe.org.nz

Level 1, 63 Great North Road
PO Box 5750, Wellesley St
Auckland, New Zealand 1141
Tel: 09 361 5646
Fax: 09 361 5644
Email: auckland@safe.org.nz