

## Contact Us

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In this issue read about:

- ⇒ **Egg Producers' AGM**
- ⇒ **Code for poultry welfare**

The NSW Government has not released its legislation on cage standards yet despite calls from NSW Farmers Association to give producers some certainty and time to plan. The Association has asked for a phase in grace period before the new standards are enforced to cover birds in the production cycle and pullet rearing.

As you know all state and national requests to governments for compensation or a buy out scheme failed because either government wouldn't fund it or wouldn't loan funds to industry to cover an internal industry buy out.

The Association does not know what the cage standards will be, but expects it to be similar to the intent of either the Victorian or QLD regulations summarised below. The new Victoria legislation which differs from the other states has made it difficult to predict whether the NSW Government will continue with its commitment to implement the standards or vary them slightly.

Below is a comparison of requirements for layer cages between national codes, international laws and selected Australian State laws.

#### **Australian Model Code of Practice for the welfare of poultry, May 2002**

##### **Conventional cages:**

- 450 cm<sup>2</sup> per bird stocking density for 20 years from date of cage manufacture if:
  - the cages were purchased or leased before 1/1/01 and
  - installed within 6 months of enactment of legislation and
  - adopt all 95 code standards
- 550 cm<sup>2</sup> per bird stocking density from 1/1/01 if:
  - the cages were purchased or leased after 1/1/101 or
  - installed after 30/6/01 or
  - installed over 6 months after enactment of legislation and
  - adopt all 95 code standards

(95 code standards are:

- cage protected from excreta from above
  - all birds visible for inspection
  - toe support
  - 10 cm per bird feeder space
  - 10 cm per bird drinker space
- cage height of at least 40 cm high over 65% of the cage area and not less than 35 cm at any point
- full door height and min 50cm door width or full door width)

In August 2000, all states agreed to put the code into their legislation so that the standards would become compulsory from 1/1/08.

#### **QLD Regulations, enacted 18/10/02**

##### **Conventional cages:**

- 450 cm<sup>2</sup> per bird stocking density for 20 years from date of cage manufacture if:
  - the cages were purchased or leased before 1/1/01 and

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- installed before 1/1/03 (which is within 6 months of enactment of QLD legislation as per the code) and
  - adopt all 95 code standards
- 550 cm<sup>2</sup> per bird stocking density from 1/1/08 if:
  - the cages were purchased or leased before 1/1/01 and
    - installed after 1/1/03 and
    - adopt all 95 code standards
  - OR
  - the cages were purchased or leased after 1/1/01 and
  - adopts all 95 code standards

- **Conclusion – QLD regulations have followed the Code**

**Victoria Regulations, enacted 1/1/07**

**Conventional cages:**

- 450 cm<sup>2</sup> per bird stocking density until 1/1/15 if :
  - cage protected from excreta from above
    - all birds visible for inspection
    - toe support
    - height higher than standing chook
    - full door height and min 50cm door width or full door width

- 550 cm<sup>2</sup> stocking density from 1/1/08 if:
  - cage installed after 1/1/07

- **Conclusion – Vic regulations do not give cages a maximum 20 year life from date of manufacture yet they allow slope back cages and allow less than 10 cm feeder and drinker space per bird which enables more cages to be run at 450 cm<sup>2</sup> per bird. They allow any cages purchased between 2001 and the legislation being enacted to compete with older cages on stocking density.**

**European Union Council Directive 1999/74/EC; of 19/7/99**

**Conventional cages:**

- 550 cm<sup>2</sup> per bird stocking density in only existing and in production conventional cages from 1/1/03 until 1/1/12 if:
  - 10 cm feeder space
  - an appropriate drinking system
- cage height of at least 40 cm high over 65% of the cage area and not less than 35 cm at any point
  - toe support
  - claw shortening devices
  - all cages registered with the government

(conventional cages banned after 1/1/12)

- **Conclusion – conventional cages will be banned in Europe whereas Australia has not banned them. Until they are banned they run at a lower stocking density than Australian cages which comply with the construction specifications of the Model Code and are within their 20 commercial life. The EU conventional cages also have to have claw shortening devices**

**Enriched cages**

- 750 cm<sup>2</sup> per bird stocking density from 1/1/02 if:
  - a nest
  - litter area
  - 15 cm per bird perch space
  - 12 cm feeder space
  - an appropriate drinking system
  - claw shortening devices

- 90 cm aisle space between cage banks
- 35 cm space between the bottom cage and the house floor
- all cages registered with the government
- **Conclusion – Australia does not require enriched cages**

### European countries which go beyond the EU directive

#### **Denmark**

Conventional cages

- 600 cm<sup>2</sup> (light and medium birds) / 900 cm<sup>2</sup> (heavy birds) until 1/1/12 with feeder space of 12 cm (light birds), 15 cm (medium birds) and 18 cm (heavy birds)

Enriched cages

- 750 cm<sup>2</sup> (light and medium birds) / 900 cm<sup>2</sup> heavy birds with feeder space as for conventional cages

#### **Sweden**

Enriched cages only at 750 cm<sup>2</sup>

#### **Switzerland**

Enriched cages only at 750 cm<sup>2</sup>

#### **Germany**

Enriched cages only then all cages banned by 2012

#### **Netherlands**

Enriched cages only then all cages banned by 2012

#### **Austria**

Enriched cages only then all cages banned by 2012 in some Austrian states

- **Conclusion – some countries have already banned conventional cages and will ban all cages by 2012**

### Summary of Egg Producers AGM

Nine producers attended the Egg Producers AGM on 16 July 2007 at Novotel, Sydney Olympic Park. James Kellaway, MD AECL and Jock Laurie, President NSW Farmers Association and Shaughn Morgan, CEO NSW Farmers Association also attended the meeting.

#### Chairman's Report

The NSW Farmers Association has been disappointed by the NSW Government for failing to deliver certainty to the NSW egg industry this past 12 months in the form of welfare regulations on cages which follow the Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of poultry which is now 6 years old.

The Association has written to Minister Macdonald and Minister McGauran requesting that efforts increase to release the draft regulations for scrutiny so that producers have a clear signal that change is to come. With this producers will have planning time to review business options and have time to manage their pullet placements.

The Association believes that new regulations are needed for the following reasons:

- industry credibility in delivering ongoing improvements to bird welfare must be maintained in the face of animal rights groups and RSPCA Australia to increasing efforts to ban caged production
- industry cannot backtrack from its agreed position of 2000 to change cage specifications and stocking density since no new scientific evidence has been produced against those changes
- each state enact the 2000 agreement in a similar way to avoid unfair cost of production advantages now or in the future (ACT, TAS and QLD had consistent legislation at the beginning of 2007 and Victoria has followed with a variation this year)

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Since the NSW Government has stalled the release of regulations the Association has requested that a phase in period be written into them to allow existing birds to live out their productive life.

The committee has been faced with the complication from the Victorian regulations which do not comply 100% with the wording of the Model Code of Practice for the welfare of poultry. They give more Victorian producers a stocking density of 450 cm squared (because the feeder space is not prescriptive) and have allowed cages with height issues, run different to that of the Code. The committee could be asked for its opinion of the suitability of the Victorian regulations for NSW.

Geoff Runge has predicted that Victorian production capacity will drop by 12% (350,000 cages) under their regulations but will be countered by expansion giving a net production increase of 22% on current capacity. NSW production will drop by 30% if it did not vary from the Code with expansion bringing that deficit back to 8%. If NSW adopts Victorian regulations overall capacity will increase by 8%. It is clear that Victorian regulations will contribute to an oversupply in the egg industry with resultant price reduction.

The arguments against lobbying for Victorian regulations are:

- they invite more criticism from animal rights and welfare groups
- they increase the supply of eggs
- they traded off a 20 year commercial life, for 7 years at 450 cm squared

The argument for lobbying for Victorian regulations is that 800,000 cages will remain in production for the medium term.

The Association has not formalised a position specifically on the Victorian regulations, however the Association believes that NSW must seek the most competitive overall trading position whilst complying with the agreement industry made in 2000.

James Kellaway addressed the meeting covering AECL's strategies on food safety, animal welfare, supply and demand, retailing and marketing and the R&D levy.

### Business arising

The meeting noted:

- that when the industry is profitable there is unity amongst producers
- requests for information from the Ministers office may indicate the regulations are imminent
- industry is using the AECL forecasts to manage its oversupply
- industry praises AECL for the data collection and accessibility of market forecasts
- industry praises AECL for consulting with its producer board directors
- industry praises the efforts of James Kellaway, MD AECL
- Egg Corp Assured is now linked to the Model Code of Practice for the hen welfare
- a 20 year cage life was very important for the industry, however ACT and Victoria have given this away (ACT with nil and Victoria with 15 years). This economic life in effect prevents an attack on the cage production system as a concept

### Egg Producers Election Results

Brett Langfield, Chair (C Holland/F Pace)

Joe Vella (C Holland/F Pace)

Bede Burke (C Holland/F Pace)

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Franko Pirovic (C Holland/F Pace)  
Glen Moncrieff (C Holland/F Pace)  
Paul Pace (C Holland/F Pace)  
Chris Holland (F Pace/D Williamson)

## **Motion**

**It was resolved that NSW Farmers Association lobby the NSW Government to deliver the regulations for layer cages within POCTA immediately. Carried**

## **Motion**

**It was resolved that the motions M2 and M3 from the 2006 AGM be brought across to the 2007 AGM because they could not be actioned without the release of the draft regulations. Carried**

**(M2 “That Egg Producers scrutinise the draft regulations when available with a means to phase out non compliant production to 2008 in an orderly way”**

**M3 “Egg Producers hold regional meetings in combination with committee meetings to encourage information exchange to growers on the Food Act and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act”)**

## **Lobbying by NSW Farmers Association**

At the request of the Egg Producers AGM the NSW Farmers Association released a press release and wrote to Minister Macdonald, NSW Minister for Primary Industries.

The points made were as follows:

- The NSW Farmers’ Association (the ‘Association’) urges the NSW Government to immediately release the draft regulations for hen welfare within the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act.
- At the Association’s Egg Producers Annual General Meeting on Monday 16 July 2007, producers representing 4.5 million hens (an estimated 90% of the production capacity of NSW) were unanimous in their calls for the draft regulations to be released.
- Producers need to secure their current and future investment in production systems compliant with the Model Code of Practice for Animal Welfare – poultry.
- The industry’s credibility is potentially threatened in the absence of regulations, given its agreement to legislate welfare standards in August 2000 and more recently, in relation to the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy.
- Regulations will provide the cage industry with some protection against animal welfare groups who continue to criticise cage production systems.
- Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania, ACT and Western Australia have all delivered regulations, in recognition that egg marketing crosses State boundaries. A failure to have regulations in NSW will compromise progress in NSW and limit productivity and the marketability of NSW eggs.

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