

Fact Sheet

Tabled comparison of different production systems

	Caged Housing	Barn Laid	Free Range
Hen Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easier to identify individual birds. • Easier to treat illness or injury. • Hens separate from faeces, and therefore have lower incidence of illness associated with faecal contamination. • Reduced opportunity for pecking and cannibalism. • Birds completely insulated from climatic extremes/predation. • Decreased competition for food and water. Shy feeders, weak or less aggressive birds are less likely to miss out. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to identify individual birds. • Difficult to treat illness or injury to individuals. • Easy to treat illness or injury by flock. • Hens not separated from faeces, higher incidence of illness associated with faecal contamination (Barnett, 1998). • Increased opportunity for pecking and cannibalism. • Environment partially controlled. • Lower body weight (Barnett, 1998). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to identify individual birds. • Difficult to treat disease or injury in individuals or flock. • Hens not separated from faeces, higher incidence of illness associated with faecal contamination (Dingle, 1998). Hens and eggs also exposed to faeces from other animals eg foxes etc. • Risk of attack from cats, dogs, foxes, rats and wild birds. • Increased opportunity for pecking and cannibalism. • Environment not controlled.
Death Rate <small>(Industry estimate)</small>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average 5 – 10% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average 10 – 25% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average 25 – 30%
Hen Movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large scale locomotion eliminated – Nil death due to suffocation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large scale locomotion not restricted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large scale locomotion not restricted.
Food Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eggs have little or no contact with faeces. • Low bacterial risk from egg shell. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eggs have contact with faeces in nest. • Medium bacterial risk from egg shell. • Eggs may be laid in litter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eggs have contact with faeces in nest. • High bacterial risk from egg shell.

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Medicine Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals and/or flocks can be treated with medicine when illness occurs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only flocks can be treated with medicine when illness occurs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to treat individuals or flocks when illness occurs.
Egg Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hens have little contact with eggs. • Few eggs cracked. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hens have contact with eggs. • Hens claw, crack and may eat eggs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hens have contact with eggs. • Hens claw, crack and may eat eggs.
Environmental Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little impact from shed on environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little impact from shed on environment. • Some dust pollution from litter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High impact from hens outdoors, hens remove all grass cover from ground. • Nitrate leaching from hen faeces on ground, possible water pollution. • Little impact from shed • Some dust pollution from litter.
Worker Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low levels of ammonia and dust. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High levels of ammonia and dust • May cause respiratory problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High levels of ammonia and dust. • May cause respiratory problems.

Barnett, J., Important role for barn hen production, Milne's Poultry Digest, December 1998

Dingle, J., Free range eggs provide new opportunities, Milne's Poultry Digest, December 1998