



Senator the Hon. Joe Ludwig

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Senator for Queensland

REF: MNMC2011-10163

The Hon. John Murphy MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Murphy

Thank you for your letter of 26 August 2011, about the petition requesting that the confining of hens in cages for egg production is phased out, submitted for the consideration of the Standing Committee on Petitions.

Each state and territory government is responsible for its animal production and welfare legislation. The Australian Government has no legislative responsibility for this issue but has played a leadership role by engaging the states and territories to develop model codes of practice for the welfare of animals. These model code for poultry aims to ensure that laying hens are treated humanely and responsibly, regardless of the production system used. The codes are reviewed from time to time to keep them up to date with technological and scientific developments.

Copies of the model codes can be purchased from CSIRO Publishing, freecall 1300 788 000, or downloaded for free from the CSIRO Publishing website at <http://www.publish.csiro.au/nid/22/sid/11.htm>.

The codes are being progressively replaced by a new series of nationally agreed standards and guidelines, which will be legislated by the states and territories. All states and territories are now working to implement the first of these, the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines—Land Transport of Livestock. The government ensures the inclusion of farming industries and animal welfare organisations, including the RSPCA, in these processes.

I note the petitioners' observation that other countries have banned the use of battery cage production systems. I understand that some European countries have banned the use of battery cages, but still permit the use of furnished cages. Sweden has banned cage production systems; however, imports of cage eggs now account for around 60 per cent of Sweden's total egg consumption.

Thank you for bringing this petition to the government's attention. I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

Joe Ludwig

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Senator for Queensland

9 October 2011