

Understanding New Zealand Barn Egg Farming

General Information Sheet

Introduction

A barn egg is laid by a hen in an indoor barn environment that does not contain cages and does not provide access to the outdoors. Barn hens are housed indoors at all times but move freely within the barn area, with equipment that is designed to allow birds to express natural behaviours such as perching, scratching and nesting.

Barn egg farming is one of three production systems recognised in New Zealand alongside colony (enriched) cage farming and free-range farming. The barn system differs from free-range in that hens do not have access to an outdoor range; it differs from colony in that hens are not housed in cages.

All barn egg farms must comply with Animal Welfare (Layer Hens) Code of Welfare 2018, which is administered by MPI in New Zealand, and was developed by the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC).

The Animal Welfare (Layer Hens) Code of Welfare 2018 ("the Code") is available in full on the Ministry of Primary Industry's website: www.mpi.govt.nz.

What is "barn" egg farming in New Zealand?

Hens living in a barn environment must:

- Be housed indoors in a barn environment without cages and without access to an outdoor range
- Have access to perching, nesting and scratching areas
- Have access to food and water each day
- Have eight hours of darkness every 24-hours
- Be housed in compliance with the Animal Welfare (Layer Hens) Code of Welfare 2018.

On the following page there is further information about each of these requirements.

Indoor barn environment without cages

Barn hens live in a barn environment that provides shelter and protection from heat, cold, pests and predators, but does not provide access to an outdoor range. Barn housing and equipment is designed to allow birds to express natural behaviours such as perching, scratching and nesting. Hens move freely within the barn at all times. There must not be more than 9 hens per square meter in the barn environment.

Access to perching, nesting and scratching areas

A barn farm's environment must value the health and welfare of layer hens, with good management of environmental factors so that hens do not have to compete for their food, water or perches. The barn must provide nesting areas, roosting perches and areas for scratching.

Access to food and water each day

All layer hens in New Zealand must have adequate access to food and water each day, to maintain good health.

Eight hours of darkness every 24-hours

It is important that all hens are provided with an 8-hour period of darkness every 24-hours to help them to rest and sleep properly.

Compliance with the Animal Welfare (Layer Hens) Code of Welfare 2018

The Code of Welfare is devised by the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC) - a panel of leading, independent New Zealand-based experts in animal welfare. There are a significant number of detailed requirements that must be met for a barn egg farm to comply with the Animal Welfare (Layer Hens) Code of Welfare 2018. Some of the most important factors include the needs explained, above.

Some other important needs that are outlined in the code include: good pest control to keep any unwanted pests away from hens, providing housing and equipment that is designed to allow birds to express natural behaviours, providing adequate ventilation in barns and protection from injury and disease, use of medication only in accordance with registration conditions and under veterinary supervision, and, importantly, every farm must have a health and welfare plan that includes daily checks of the hens, removal of any hens that have passed away, and the humane treatment of sick hens.

A copy of the full Animal Welfare (Layer Hens) Code of Welfare 2018 is available at: www.mpi.co.nz.