

UNDERSTANDING NEW ZEALAND BARN EGG FARMING

GENERAL INFORMATION SHEET

Introduction

Hens producing barn-laid eggs are housed in a barn environment which provides shelter and shade from heat or cold, as well as pests and predators. Barn housing and equipment is designed to allow birds to express natural behaviours such as perching, scratching and nesting.

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, must:

- ✓ Have the ability to roam inside the barn environment
- ✓ Have access to food and water each day
- ✓ Have access to perching, nesting and scratching areas
- ✓ 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.

Ability to roam inside a barn environment

A hen living in a barn environment is free to roam within a barn area. Barn-laid eggs are often marketed as “cage-free”. Barn housing and equipment is designed to allow birds to express natural behaviours such as perching, scratching and nesting.

The key difference between a barn-laid egg and a free-range-laid egg, is that a hen in a barn environment does not have access to the outdoors.

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.

Access to perching, nesting and scratching areas

A barn 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. It must provide nesting areas, food, water, roosting and litter as well as shelter and shade from heat or cold, pests and predators. There must not be more than 7 hens per square meter in a barn environment.

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 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 in the barn environment, 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.