



THE SHIELD

NEWSLETTER

of

THE R.S.P.C.A. (A.C.T.) Inc.

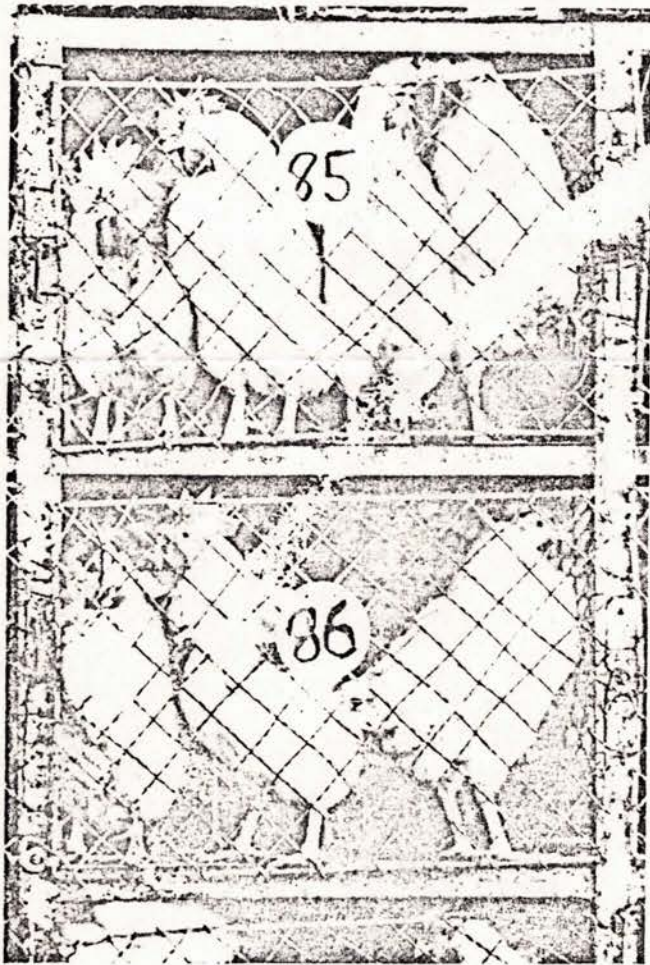
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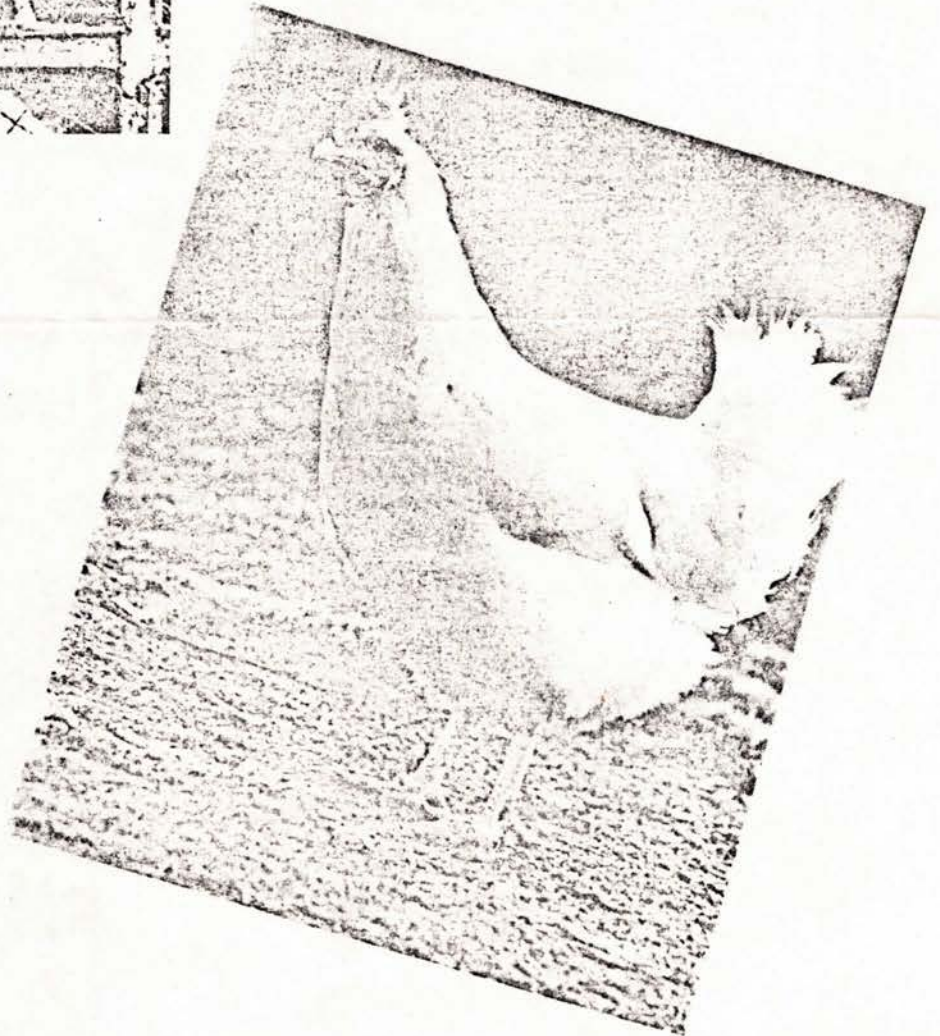
THE

BATTERY HEN



'I THINK THAT THE BATTERY
HEN IS THE MOST MISERABLE
CREATURE IN THE FEATHERED
WORLD TODAY ...'

A FREE RANGE HEN



The quote on page 1 of this newsletter came from Lord Houghton of Sowerby, speaking in the House of Lords, (2nd February, 1981)

" At the Annual General Meeting of R.S.P.C.A. (AUST.) held in March, the following policy was adopted by all members, [including the A.C.T.]

"The Society is opposed to the battery cage method of egg production as it is now practised.

The Society advocates the use of open range, deep litter or aviary-type systems of egg production as they enable the birds to lay in nests, stretch, flap their wings, to socialise, and to behave in a far more natural way.

The Society urges the industry to de-intensify from battery cages to the aviary-type system as it provides for the proper welfare of the birds whilst catering for the determination to maintain a disease free, cost efficient method of producing eggs.

The Society advocates that poultry management procedures such as beak-trimming and toe-trimming should only be conducted by approved, competent and registered personnel in accordance with the Poultry Code of Practice." ,,

Opposition to the cage system for laying hens is growing rapidly overseas and in Australia.

The results of a National Opinion Poll carried out in 1983 in Great Britain by N.O.P. Market Research Ltd., at the request of the General Election Co-ordinating Committee on Animal Protection (G.E.C.C.A.P.), shows overwhelming public opposition to factory farming.

The survey was based on a quota sample of 2,135 respondents in 107 constituencies across Great Britain. N.O.P. was careful to sample a good environmental mix to be representative of the whole country in terms of voting - urban, rural, age, sex, etc.

88% of the people questioned favoured the reform of factory farming conditions, with 48% strongly in favour of reform.

90% said that the law should be changed to give factory farm animals sufficient freedom of movement to turn round, stretch their limbs and groom themselves. This would mean banning sow stalls and tie stalls as well as veal crates.

82% said that if battery cages continue to be used, the law should be changed to ensure that the battery hens can always stretch their wings. (see footnote)

80% of Swiss voters opted for laws that will see the end of battery cages by 1991.

Public interest in the welfare of farm animals will continue to rise as people learn more about intensive systems and about the existence of alternatives.

Richard Adams, author of 'Watership Down' and past President of the British R.S.P.C.A. when interviewed by the 'Australian' in July 1980 said "It is a new evil this large scale commercial exploitation of animals, hundreds of thousands of calves which never see the sunshine, chickens have their beaks cut off and are kept in tiny cages - we care as much as if we were harvesting oranges".

But what is the battery cage method of production and why is the Society opposed to it?

The term battery means the clustering together of items, and in this case metal cages.

The battery consists of rows of wire cages, often with several vertical or tiered levels, within a shed. Feeding, watering and sometimes egg collection are automated. Common cage sizes are 305 x 440 mm (12" x 18") designed for 2 to 3 birds, and 305 x 540 mm (12" x 21") designed for 3 to 4 birds. The first dimension is across the front where the food is, the second dimension is depth. The floor slopes so the eggs will roll out of the cage to be collected. Layers stay in the same cage until culled. Artificial lighting is generally used to control and extend the length of the day. Ventilators are used to provide fresh air. In some places, the temperature is controlled.

The hens are unable to stretch their wings, to sleep properly, or to scratch in the dirt. A cage for four hens is no bigger than a single page of a daily newspaper.

Battery hens suffer from fear, stress, diseases and injuries which are all caused by the cage system.

Debeaking (or more accurately trimming) is common practice for intensively housed poultry. This is a very painful operation carried out with a cauterising knife on the young chick, causing death to some. Although most backyard hens are sociable, unaggressive creatures, cannibalism, feather pecking and vent picking are common problems in cages. Beak trimming is designed to hinder these stressed birds from taking their frustrations out on each other. Caged hens also suffer blistering from wire rubbing and such conditions as caged layer fatigue (withdrawal of vital minerals from the bones causing fractures).

WHAT IS THE SOCIETY DOING TO HELP THE BATTERY HEN?

The Society is researching the egg quota system in the A.C.T.

To date the findings are most disturbing. We intend to follow this through and will keep members informed in following newsletters

WHAT PEOPLE SAY

'Many people have written to me on the subject of hens in battery cages and veal calves in crates. Of course these systems of extreme confinement are to be abhorred ... History has repeatedly shown that when man exploits his fellow creatures for immediate gain it rebounds on him eventually and leads to spiritual poverty. In the end, lack of regard for the life and well-being of an animal must bring with it a lowering of man's own self-respect.

Dr. Robert Runcie, Archbishop of Canterbury. (Feb '81)

Footnote: Published by the British farm animal welfare reform magazine 'AG' No.71, May-June 1983.



Refuge Development

The Society is moving quickly towards the finalization of plans for the re-development of the existing Refuge sight.

In this, we are receiving excellent assistance from the Department of Territories and Local Government and the National Capital Development Commission.

We expect to reach agreement on the new lease for a further twenty years and to have a final re-development plan completed during July.

Mr. Paul Yonge has kindly offered his services on the technical aspects of the re-development and for this the Society thanks him.

Don McFeat
President

With the Compliments of

UNITED FARMERS & STOCKOWNERS OF S.A. INC.

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