For more information on what you can do to help egg industry hens and their chicks, please visit farmsanctuary.org.

Farm Sanctuary is the nation’s leading farm animal protection organization. Since incorporating in 1986, Farm Sanctuary has worked to expose and stop cruel practices of the “food animal” industry through research and investigations, legal and institutional reforms, public awareness projects, youth education, and direct rescue and refuge efforts. Farm Sanctuary shelters in Watkins Glen, N.Y., and Orland, Calif., provide lifelong care for hundreds of rescued animals, who have become ambassadors for farm animals everywhere by educating visitors about the realities of factory farming.

P.O. Box 150
Watkins Glen, NY 14891
607-583-2225
info@farmsanctuary.org
www.farmsanctuary.org

This is the truth behind eggs.

For every suffering laying hen, there is also a male chick who was killed immediately after hatching. Because layers have been bred exclusively for egg production, they do not grow fast or large enough to be raised profitably for meat. Hatcheries have no use for male chicks, and like garbage, they are usually disposed of as inexpensively as possible.

- Male offspring of layer hens are often thrown into trashcans, where they suffocate or are crushed under the weight of other birds.
- Other chicks are thrown into macerators — essentially high-powered meat grinders — while they are still alive. If the equipment is overloaded or not used properly, this method can horribly maim chicks and leave them to die slowly.

- By the time hens are “spent,” their bones are so brittle and calcium-depleted that they frequently shatter upon handling.
- The bodies of most spent hens are used for low-grade meat products, such as potpies and soups, where their bruised flesh will not be noticed. Some slaughterhouses no longer accept spent hens, and the birds are instead processed into feed for farm animals — including other layer hens.
- These hens, like all birds, are excluded from the federal Humane Slaughter Act, and they have their necks cut while conscious and are then dropped into scalding water — many of them while still conscious.
To meet consumer demand for eggs, every year approximately 325 million laying hens are raised in the U.S. inside battery cages — small wire enclosures stacked in tiers and lined up in rows within massive warehouses. Each warehouse typically holds anywhere from 80,000 to 100,000 birds. The United Egg Producers — a group representing more than 80 percent of U.S. egg producers — recommends a 67- to 87-square-inch living space per hen, an area smaller than an 8 ½-by-11-inch sheet of paper, but this is merely a voluntary guideline, and there are no federal laws pertaining to how chickens are raised. Abrasions and severe feather loss.

• Confined hens spend their lives standing on grated flooring, never touching the ground, so their toenails often grow to encircle the cage wires, making it difficult for them to even stand. Sometimes the wire actually grows into the flesh of the birds’ feet, which can cause limbs to become infected, deformed and swelled to several times their normal size.

• Even so-called “cage free” and “free range” hens often have very little space, and experience some of the problems associated with caging because there are no limits on flock density.

DIRT AND DISEASE

Inside massive, filthy, poorly-ventilated warehouses, where rows of cages are stacked tier upon tier and the manure of thousands of birds is collected in pits beneath the enclosures, the air is polluted with dust and ammonia, and disease runs rampant. Many of the health problems associated with these pollutants are widespread and remain untreated as individualized veterinary care is virtually unheard of on factory farms.

• Dust particles carrying airborne microorganisms — including bacteria, viruses, fungi, and molds — contribute significantly to respiratory disease.

• Ammonia from manure can cause sinus infections and impair the birds’ respiratory filtration systems, which would otherwise protect them from the viruses and bacteria that spread easily in crowded, filthy conditions.

CAGED FOR LIFE

Crammed into battery cages, hens cannot even stretch their wings or legs. Within these restrictive confines, the hens’ ability to engage in natural behaviors, like nesting, dustbathing and roosting, is almost completely thwarted. From birth to death, the birds spend their entire lives being continually battered by a cruel system.

• Soon after chicks hatch, farmers sever substantial portions of the hens’ beaks to prevent them from excessively pecking one another inside the unnatural confinements of battery cages, where severe overcrowding, boredom and frustration makes the hens uncharacteristically aggressive and territorial.

• This painful procedure, known as debeaking, is typically performed with hot blades or lasers that cut through bone, cartilage, nerves, and soft tissue — destroying many chickens’ sensory receptors. It can also cause chronic pain that persists for months.

• Birds in battery cages constantly rub their bodies against the wire walls, causing bruises, the heavy toll of high production

Selectively bred by the industry to lay more than 260 eggs per year, modern hens are relentlessly overtaxed during their time in production.

• Many birds suffer from fatty liver syndrome, a condition in which the liver accumulates extra fat and becomes prone to hemorrhaging.

• Other hens develop what the industry calls “cage layer fatigue.” These hens often die after becoming “egg bound” — a condition that occurs when their bodies grow too weak to pass eggs.

• Roughly three million hens die every year as a result of prolapsed uteruses, a condition that arises when an egg sticks to the lining of a hen’s uterus and pulls the uterus out along with it as it passes. An untreated hen may languish for days before succumbing to blood loss or infection as other hens step on and peck at her exposed organ.

• Many hens also suffer from osteoporosis because forming eggshells requires more calcium than they could ever assimilate from their diets. Low calcium levels in hens can lead to broken bones, paralysis and death.

RETIEMENT = SLAUGHTER

Approximately 16 million hens die inside their cages every year, and their bodies are often left to decompose alongside the living. After about one year in production, survivors are often classified as “spent” and sent to slaughter.