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Food & Drug Administration
Dockets Management Branch (HFA-305)
5630 Fishers Lane, #1061
Rockville, MD 20852

Docket No. 97N-0074

The FDA must stop the practice of forced molting in egg production. It could diminish foodborne illness in the nation's food supply.

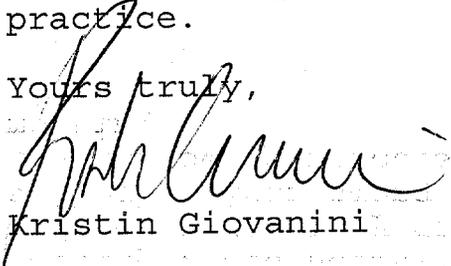
Molting is part of a hen's natural cycle. After about one year, the hen will lose her old feathers and begin to grow new ones. A natural molt will normally take place over the course of two or three months. During this time the hen, will lay very few eggs. The hen's reproductive system is given a rest while energy is used to grow new feathers. Molting would normally occur at a slightly different time and for a slightly different length of time for each bird in a flock. Even among laboratory-engineered hybrids each hen has her own particular rhythm and cycle. Not so with forced molting.

When statistics indicate that egg production levels are about to decline, the egg factories inflict a forced molt upon the entire flock. As a result, all the birds lose their feathers and temporarily stop laying eggs at the same time. During this process, up to 25 percent of the hens die. In an industry where millions of hens are involved, the death toll is alarming.

Egg Industry Magazine stated in an article dated June 1999, "Reduced feed and water intake is the most detrimental and universal aspect of disease."

It is imperative that the FDA prohibits this cruel practice.

Yours truly,


Kristin Giovanini

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