

Richard Laybourn
10200 Berkshire Road
Bloomington, MN 55437

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

Docket No. 97N-0074

Forced molting -- the deliberate starvation -- of hens used for egg production must be stopped. It is one way to decrease foodborne illness in America's food supply.

Egg laying hens are subjected to a barrage of injustices under intense confinement. Forced molting is just one. The following is a report from someone who visited a commercial egg factory for the first time:

"Upon entering the building my eyes panned slowly down long rows of cages -- full of birds. I could not see where the rows ended. They appeared to join somewhere far off in the distance -- as if I were looking down the center of railroad tracks.

"This building, one of several like it on the property, contained 275,000 hens.. Each small cage held between five and seven birds. The hens looked as if they had spent the last month in an automatic clothes dryer. Most had skin which had been rubbed raw. Many were bleeding.

"Barely able to move, the hens were literally crawling on each other. All were incessantly striking out in frustration, pecking at the only thing available -- each other."

Illness is a concern in egg-laying facilities, but it has been proven that hens undergoing forced molting have a higher incidence of salmonella poisoning.

I would like to see the egg industry eliminate the practice of forced molting.

Respectfully,


Richard Laybourn

97N-0074

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FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION
5630 FISHERS LANE, ROOM 1061
ROCKVILLE, MD 20852***