

# Caged at what cost?

## Country:

- England

## Key stage:

- Key stage 3

## Subject/Area of learning:

- Design and Technology
- PSHE

## Focus:

- Farming

This lesson examines the role of consumers in farm animal welfare and demonstrates how what we buy can make a difference to farmed animals. It uses egg-laying hens to illustrate different farming methods and standards of animal welfare. The ideas introduced in this lesson are extended in [Food for thought](#).

## Curriculum objectives

### Students should learn:

- to form opinions and debate those opinions
- to consider the ethical and moral issues that intensive farming can raise.

## Animal welfare objectives

### Students should learn:

- about the different methods of egg production and how these affect the welfare of egg-laying hens
- to understand that consumers have the power to improve the lives of farmed animals.

## Learning outcomes

### At the end of this lesson:

- most students will: have a basic understanding of the three main methods of egg production used in the UK. They will have formed opinions and will understand that we can all make a difference to the conditions in which animals are kept on farms
- some students will not have made so much progress and will: know that some methods of farming are kinder than others

- some students will have progressed further and will: have a good understanding of the three main methods of egg production used in the UK. They will not only have formed opinions but will also have debated them. They will also be able to provide examples of a number of ways in which they as an individual can try to improve the lives of farm animals.

## Starter activity

### What's your view?

The following activity will help students to decide what they think about farm animals and how they should be treated.

- Explain that their opinions will be looked at again towards the end of the session.
- Ask the students to complete the cut and stick activity *What's your view?*. There are no right or wrong answers. Ask the students to compare their answers with a partner and explain their decisions.

**Learning styles:** visual, auditory.

## Main activity

### Laying hens - what do you know?

- Explain to the students that some laying hens are kept in cages known as 'battery cages' while they produce eggs. Have they heard of any other systems?
- In pairs, students should talk about what they think battery cages are like. Think about:
  1. Size
  2. Location (indoors or outdoors)
  3. Dark/light
  4. What are the cages made from?
  5. How many hens?
- Students should make brief notes and be ready to share ideas. Each pair should share one idea and these should be listed on the board.

### The facts

- Circle the ideas on the board that you think are quite close to the reality of what battery cages are like.
- Using the section on the RSPCA website about [egg production systems](#), reveal information about battery cages one at a time.
- Ask students how they think the cage will affect the behaviour and health of the animal?
- Revisit the list made by the students for the previous activity and identify which facts were correct.
- List any points they have missed.
- Show images of laying hens in battery cages.
- Introduce the idea of the five freedoms as aspirations that all people who have a responsibility for caring for animals should work towards (see factsheet *The five freedoms*) and ask students if they agree with this idea.

### Development

- Split the class into two groups: A and B. All students are going to imagine that they are farmers. Group A want to be able to continue using battery cages, group B want them banned and for farmers to use the barn or free-range systems.

- Each group will have five minutes to prepare their argument. They need to think about the positives and negatives of each system. The group looking at barn and free-range alternatives needs to have a copy of the factsheet *Barn and free-range systems*.
- After preparation is complete, the opposing sides need to sit in separate halves of the classroom. Only one person may speak at any one time and the teacher, or a selected student, can be the chairperson.
- There is a strict time limit so participants must think carefully about which points they want to put across.
- At the end of the debate, vote to see who wants to keep or ban battery cages.

**Learning styles:** visual, auditory, kinaesthetic.

## Plenary activity

### What can you do?

- Ask the students to review their answers on the worksheet *What's your view?*.
- Have they changed their mind about where they put their statements? Ask students to write on each statement where they would put them now.
- How do we know how the hens that have produced our eggs have been looked after?
- Show examples of egg boxes or use the factsheets *Egg labelling* and *Looking at labels - answers*.
- What other things can students do to try to improve the conditions in which farm animals are kept? For example:
  1. Write to supermarkets to ask them to improve labelling
  2. Write to the government
  3. Support the work of the RSPCA.

**Learning styles:** visual, auditory.

## Differentiation

- Instead of cut and stick for **What's your view?** starter activity you could complete this activity as a class with a show of hands. If you want a record on paper, you could read the statements one at a time and students could simply write under each statement whether they agree, disagree or are unsure.
- Classroom debate could be completed in pairs instead of a class to help less confident students.
- More able students could complete extension activities if appropriate.

## Assessment

A basic assessment could involve students explaining the difference between the three systems and explaining the positives and negatives of each system. This would hopefully demonstrate an understanding of how the way in which animals are looked after could affect their health and behaviour.

## Extension activities

- Using the RSPCA report [The case against cages](#), complete research into what is already being done by retailers to try to improve the welfare of laying hens.
- Prepare a presentation for the rest of your group to highlight this information.
- Students could survey their supermarket or bring in egg boxes to see if the labelling is clear.

## Display

- Students can make their own illustrations of what they think the three systems for keeping laying hens look like.
- Or they can design posters:
  1. To highlight the health and welfare problems associated with battery cages
  2. To explain what things to look out for on egg boxes and eggs so that people know where their eggs are coming from
  3. To illustrate what other things people can do to help improve the lives of farm animals.

## What you need

### Equipment

- Scissors and glue

### Worksheets (see *Downloads* tab)

- *What's your view?*

### Factsheets (see *Downloads* tab)

- *Barn and free-range systems*
- *The five freedoms*
- *Looking at labels - answers*
- *Egg labelling*
- *Freedom Food logo*

### Images (see *Image collection - Farming*)

- Images of the different methods of farming laying hens: battery, barn and free-range

## Did you know?

- Advantages of well-managed alternative systems include:
  1. Freedom of movement
  2. Space and material to dustbathe whenever required
  3. Adequate nesting area and space to carry out pre-laying behaviours
  4. Space to carry out other natural behaviour such as stretching, wing flapping, foraging and perching.
- As of 1 January 2012 conventional “barren” battery cages are banned throughout Europe. However, it is still permitted to keep hens in so-called 'enriched' cages. These are still battery cages. They provide just 50cm<sup>2</sup> of extra usable space per bird compared to old conventional cages, with limited provisions for a scratching area, nesting area and perches. These facilities still fail to cater properly for the hens' behavioural needs and impose severe restrictions on

movement.

- What the RSPCA wants:
  1. All cage systems for laying hens to be banned.
  2. All hens to be kept in well-managed alternative production systems namely, barn and free-range.
  3. All eggs and egg products - produced within and outside the EU - to be clearly labelled according to the method of production and country of origin.
  4. Retailers to sell only eggs and products containing eggs that are from hens kept in barn and free-range systems, with imported eggs attaining the minimum production standards equivalent to those in the UK.

For tips and advice on writing to politicians, you can order the leaflet Make every word count from the [Publications](#) section of the RSPCA website.

## Vocabulary

alternatives

barn

battery

cages healthy

consumers

dustbathe

freedom

free-range

opinion

production

retailers

standards

welfare

## Downloads

- Barn and free-range systems
- Egg labelling
- Freedom Food logo
- Looking at labels - answers
- The five freedoms
- What's your view?

## Useful websites

- [RSPCA - All about animals - Farm animals](#)
- [RSPCA - Publications](#)
- [RSPCA - Farming - egg production systems](#)
- [RSPCA - Freedom Food](#)
- [RSPCA report: 'The case against cages'](#)
- [Compassion in World Farming - Education](#)
- [FACE - Farming and Countryside Education](#)