



EGG PRODUCERS FEDERATION
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29 February, 2008

Dear Peter,

I write in response to an article published on the 15th of February entitled *Hen Heaven's Here*, which quotes Green MP Sue Kedgley. While we appreciate spirited debate on the issue, we would like to clarify some factual errors by Mrs. Kedgley. Please note that our organisation represents all commercial egg producers in New Zealand - cage, barn and free-range.

Ms. Kedgley states that hens have their beaks "cut off". However, this statement is ridiculous, as a bird with its beak cut off could not eat. Such a process simply does not occur. In reality, the process of beak tipping is carried out using an infra-red beam, which is passed over the very tip of the beak where there is no nervous tissue. The part of the beak exposed to the beam is gradually worn down over the next 1-4 weeks.

This practice is used by both of New Zealand's commercial layer hen hatcheries, at the request of customers, and has been heralded by the British Free Range Egg Association as one of the major layer hen welfare advancements of the last 10 years.

It is also important to note that, while Ms. Kedgley infers this practice is unique to cage production systems, on a percentage basis, the practice is more prevalent in barn and free range systems. It is undertaken as a welfare measure (to reduce feather pecking and potential cannibalism between birds) and is approved by the SPCA free-range and barn accreditation system for that very reason.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Brooks
Executive Director