

COMMON QUESTIONS IN THE POULTRY INDUSTRY: A MEDIA RESOURCE

THE EGG SIDE OF THINGS

Are hormones used in egg production?

No hormones are used at all in the poultry industry, in meat or eggs. This is a common misconception about the poultry industry, but it is simply not true.

Are antibiotics fed to layer hens?

Antibiotics play an important role in ensuring good animal health and welfare. More than 40 years ago, government regulatory authorities first approved the use of antibiotics in animals. Since then, antibiotics have been used safely for livestock and egg production, when required for the animal's health. If antibiotics are required during the laying period for the control or treatment of disease, then any withholding periods associated with the use of that antibiotic are strictly adhered to, to ensure that there is no residue in the egg.

Do hens have their beaks trimmed?

Beak treatment is a practice used in all production systems—free range, barn and cage—in the interests of animal welfare, to prevent instances of feather pecking. Modern beak tipping is done with an infra-red beam and removes just the very tip of the beak. An infra-red beam is passed over the tip of the beak, where there is no nervous tissue, and the part exposed to the beam is gradually worn down over the next 1-4 weeks.

How is layer hen welfare governed in New Zealand?

The welfare of all laying hens – cage, barn and free-range – is strictly governed by the Animal Welfare (Layer Hen) Code of Welfare 2005. This comprehensive guide to hen welfare was created by the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC), a ministerial advisory committee composed of animal welfare experts and advisors. The EPF does not support farmers who do not comply with the Code.

What is the legal definition of a free-range production system in New Zealand?

The legal definition of 'free-range' is set out in the Animal Welfare (Layer Hen) Code of Welfare 2005. It is defined as "a system providing birds with access to an extensive outdoor area and which typically includes housing (either fixed or moveable) similar to a barn, aviary or perchery without cages."

What is the Avian Influenza situation in New Zealand?

Biosecurity New Zealand has recently completed a comprehensive surveillance program of the commercial meat and egg poultry flocks in New Zealand. This survey found that there was no Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza present in New Zealand. Further active and passive surveillance methods in the future will ensure

that any possible threats to the health of the New Zealand poultry flock (or its people) will be detected and contained quickly.

Is Salmonella present in New Zealand eggs?

Although this is occasionally rumored, due to Salmonella being an issue in eggs for many overseas countries, this is not true of New Zealand. A recent independent study by ESR has found that there is no *Salmonella* in New Zealand eggs.

THE MEAT SIDE OF THINGS

Are hormones used in meat production?

No hormones are used at all in either the meat or the egg industry. In fact, chicken is the only meat in New Zealand that is regularly and independently tested for the presence of hormones, and found free of them. Those chicken products that claim 'no added hormones' are simply stating an industry policy, not differentiating their product.

The use of hormones is a common accusation leveled at the industry, due to the fast growth of meat chickens. However, that fast growth rate is due to major advances in genetics and breeding, as well as New Zealand's unique freedom from the three major poultry diseases (Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, Infectious Bursal Disease and Newcastle's Disease). It is also due to New Zealand's superior farming, nutrition and welfare conditions.

Are antibiotics used in poultry meat production?

Antibiotics play an important role in ensuring good animal health and welfare. More than 40 years ago, government regulatory authorities first approved the use of antibiotics in animals. Since then, antibiotics have been used safely for livestock production. Where antibiotics are necessary for the control or treatment of disease in broilers, the appropriate withholding periods are strictly adhered to, to ensure there is no residue left in the meat. The use of antibiotics is strictly controlled and regulated by the New Zealand Food Safety Authority (NZFSA), and independent audits and testing are constantly undertaken for usage and residue levels.

Should I be concerned about antibiotic resistance?

There are some concerns about the use of antibiotics in livestock leading to the development of resistant bacteria that can cause disease in humans. However, studies have demonstrated that this risk is minimal. Correct selection and prudent use of appropriate antibiotics are important in minimizing those risks. Most of the antibiotics chosen for use in broilers are in classes of antibiotics not used in human medicine, or have extremely limited use in human medicine.

Is all chicken meat in New Zealand produced here?

All poultry meat consumed in New Zealand is raised domestically. New Zealand's poultry flock is unique, in that it is free from the three major worldwide poultry diseases – Infectious Bursal Disease, Newcastle's Disease and Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza. As imported raw poultry could carry these diseases, it is not currently imported into New Zealand, to protect our unique disease-free status. Raw imported poultry meat could also carry diseases which may pose a risk to native birds, so it is important to minimize this risk to help protect our native avian fauna.

Is it true that chicken meat comes from egg laying chickens that have passed their productive peak?

Chickens used for meat production and those used for egg production are very separate breeds. However, some meat from egg-laying chickens is used in a variety of processed products. Meat from egg-laying chickens constitutes only about 0.75% of the total market in New Zealand, so 99.25% of the time, you will be eating chicken meat from a chicken specifically bred for it.

Are New Zealand chickens genetically modified?

Genetic engineering involves making artificial changes to the genetic make-up of an organism in order to optimise a trait. New Zealand chickens are not genetically engineered or modified. They are selectively bred for positive traits, much in the way that many animals have been for thousands of years. This is a natural method of optimising a breed's traits.

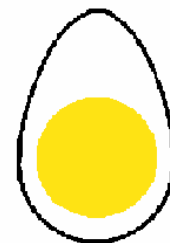
Is it true that meat chickens are kept in cages?

No. 99.5% of meat chickens are raised in large barns, where they have access to feed and water, and are protected from the elements and predators. A small percentage of meat chickens (0.5%) are produced in a free-range setting, which means they have access to an area outside.



**Poultry Industry Association of
New Zealand (PIANZ)**

**Egg Producer's Federation of
New Zealand (EPF)**



This resource has been produced conjointly by the Egg Producers Federation of New Zealand (EPFNZ) and the Poultry Industry Association of New Zealand (PIANZ). Please address any queries in writing to the Executive Director of both these organisations, Michael Brooks, at michael@pianz.org.nz. He may also be contacted by phone on (09) 520-4300, or on his mobile on 027 221 8228.