



EGG PRODUCERS FEDERATION
of New Zealand (Inc)

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Adelia Hallett, Editor
Organic New Zealand
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29 February, 2008

Dear Adelia,

I write in response to an article written by Michael Morris in your February issue entitled *The Problem With Battery Farms*. Please note that our organisation represents all commercial egg producers in New Zealand - cage, barn and free-range.

Firstly, layer hens are housed in conditions set out in the Animal Welfare (Layer Hen) Code of Welfare 2005, which was the recommendation of the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee. The Committee is a group of independent animal welfare experts, animal ethicists, veterinarians and lay people, who advise the Minister of Agriculture. It followed an extensive 3 year consultation process, which included the opportunity for public comment

If any members of the public believe that there any breaches of the Animal Welfare Act, the EPF supports regulatory authorities taking the appropriate action. Any farmer found to be in breach will not be supported by the EPF.

On the issue of beak tipping, it is important to note that this procedure is recognised as an important welfare measure to reduce feather pecking and possibly cannibalism. A substantial majority of caged layers do not have their beaks tipped. We are advised by commercial hatchery operators that, on a percentage basis, the

practice is more prevalent in barn and free range systems. It is undertaken as a welfare measure and is approved by the SPCA free range and barn accreditation system for that very reason.

The article suggests that beak tipping can be painful for hens, referencing a study performed in 1997. However, Mr. Morris may not be aware that in the last ten years, there has been a major change in the way beak tipping is carried out. The new methodology uses an infrared beam, which is passed over the very 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. This system has been heralded by the British Free Range Egg Association as one of the major layer hen welfare advancements in the last 10 years. This new practice is used by both of New Zealand's commercial layer hen hatcheries, at the request of customers. The hatcheries supply chicks to commercial free range, barn and cage layer hen farmers

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Brooks', written in a cursive style.

Michael Brooks

Executive Director