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# EUROPEAN ANIMAL WELFARE NEWS



March 2008

## Commission reaffirms cruel battery cages to be banned

A report by the European Commission on the use of battery cages for laying hens has confirmed that the practice will be outlawed in 2012 as already agreed by EU countries. The report was initiated due to pressure from the industry to postpone the ban. Council Directive 99/74/EC, which was adopted in 1999, lays down minimum standards for the welfare of laying hens. The Directive came into effect in all Member States on 1 January 2002. The directive gave Member States until 2012 to ban battery cages and replace them with "enriched cages" that must include increased space allowances, claw shortening devices, perches, nest boxes and litter for scratching and pecking. The farming industry, supported by the major farming nations of France, Spain and Poland, having deliberately done nothing to prepare over the last nine years, are now hoping to postpone the ban, but the Commission report has ended any hopes they had and the ban will go ahead as planned in 2012.

## Eurogroup for Animals welcomes Lisbon Treaty

The cross-party European Animal Welfare (of which the RSPCA in the UK affiliate) has welcomed the signing of the new Lisbon Treaty as being beneficial for animal welfare. According to the Eurogroup, the Lisbon Treaty gives a better recognition of the place of animal welfare in the EU policies. It makes the lobbying of the EU institutions and Member States more necessary than ever and also offers increased possibilities for EU-wide citizen action. To read more on the Eurogroup for Animals analysis of how the Lisbon Treaty benefits animal welfare, please click here.

<http://www.eurogroupforanimals.org/news/pdf/briefingLisbonTreatyNovember%202007.pdf>

## Cloning under fire in Europe

A number of European institutions have recently issued statements regarding the worrying implications of animal cloning for food, while MEPs have called for such activities to be banned.

In January, the European Group on Ethics (EGE) found animal cloning for food supply to be unethical, concluding that it "does not see convincing arguments to justify the production of food from clones and their offspring". The European Commission has also asked the EFSA (European Food Safety Authority) for advice on cloning in food production, with the EFSA having completed the public consultation period on its draft opinion on February 25<sup>th</sup>.

Members of the European Parliamentary Intergroup on Animal Welfare initiated measures in February to urge the European Commission to prohibit cloning of animals for food and any products from cloned animals and their offspring.

Cloned animals have been found to suffer more defects and earlier death than non-cloned animals, while the practice itself is highly inefficient, needing the deaths of many animals to create one viable clone. This is an important issue, and one that needs urgent, cohesive action on a Europe-wide level.

<http://www.eurogroupanimalwelfare.org/news/pdf/prcloning21feb08.pdf>

### **Calls for a European Convention on Animal Welfare**

Fellow socialist MEP Alain Hutchinson has proposed a new European Convention on Animal Welfare. He is particularly concerned with legislating against cruelty to stray animals, but is also committed to a wider framework with points including:

- Severely punishing those who publicly abandon an animal;
- Identifying animals upon purchase by their owner with an electronic chip;
- Punishing all mistreatment of animals in accordance with a future law to be applied throughout the European Union;
- Establishing a policy of birth control, i.e. drawing up a budget with the aim of:
  - Organizing and funding a Europe-wide trap, neuter, release and vaccination program for millions of stray animals in Europe;
  - Constructing shelters that conform to the norms in place within the EU;
  - Subsidizing these shelters to ensure that the animals are comfortably housed, fed and treated in time;
  - Financing the post of a shelter director for each shelter and ensure that his role is carried out to a minimum Europe wide standard.

Mr. Hutchinson has my full support in this matter. You can sign a petition backing his proposal by clicking here.

<http://www.oipa.org/public/europeanconvention/petition.php>

<http://www.oipa.org/abandonment/europeanconvention.html>

### **Malta Spring Bird Hunting Update**

I mentioned in the December newsletter my parliamentary question relating to Malta's disregard of EU law since its accession to the EU in 2004 in allowing spring bird hunting. At that time Malta was on its last warning, and in January the European Commission initiated measures to take the country to the European Court of Justice over the issue. The Maltese government have responded that they will fully comply with the verdict of the Court, and hopefully this year will see an end to a practice that has had an extremely damaging effect on a number of bird species.