



A crack down on poultry farming causing a scramble for eggs

The beginning of 2023 brought with it an egg shortage that many have been vocal about.

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The Animal Welfare Act (the Act) came into force in 1999. Under section 75 of this Act, the Minister must recommend new codes if it is necessary to change the best practice and care of animals under the Act. In 2012, the Minister issued the Animal Welfare (Layer Hens) Code of Welfare (the Code), with a 10 year period to phase out the production of caged eggs. In December 2022, that 10 year period came to an end.

It has been seen throughout the media that people are far from happy about this shortage. Comments such as "farmers have had 10 years to prepare for this" have flooded the news and many fingers have been pointed at farmers for not wanting to change.

Reports from the Ohoka Farmers Market state that their eggs have been sold within the first 20 minutes, with eager customers lining up an hour ahead of opening time. However, there are many factors that have led to this shortage and many that are out of farmer's control.



Change: If you are a regular egg consumer, be kind to your supplier as farmers adjust to their new way of business.

This shift in poultry farming is not as straight forward as it appears. With minimum standards of food, water, shelter and shade imposed on farmers, changing the systems of their business can be an expensive exercise.

Furthermore, reports of issues obtaining resource consents from Environment Canterbury have come to light as this change does not always align with the Resource Management Act.

Those farmers who were struggling in

business already simply did not have the extra money to transition their farm to meet the new standards being imposed.

All of this pressure has led to many leaving the industry. The Egg Producers Federation have reported that hen numbers have now dropped by 400,000. With hens only laying one egg a day and a chick not laying eggs until around five months old, New Zealand could be experiencing this shortage for many months to come.

If you are a poultry farmer, it is worth evaluating your packaging during this time of reform. Under the Fair Trading Act it is an offence to mislead customers. It is important to ensure that your packaging reflects the correct description of your produce and that you are familiar with the Code to ensure that you are meeting the new minimum standards.

If your difficulties with this transition arise from resource consent issues, speak with your local lawyer to see if they can assist. If you are a regular egg consumer, be kind to your supplier as farmers adjust to their new way of business.