



Three in four consumers wrongly believe cage chickens are a thing of the past

## Description

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Chickens in an 'enriched' colony cage

Vegan campaign group Viva! says its latest survey reveals a major transparency problem within the [UK egg industry](#) as the government mulls over a potential cage ban.

Underpinning this statement is an eye-opening statistic. Almost three-quarters (74%) of UK shoppers are unaware that 'enriched' colony cages are used in the UK.

Katie Robinson, campaigns manager at [Viva!](#) explains:

We asked 2,000 members of the public a simple question. And in doing so we've highlighted a deeply worrying disconnect between what consumers believe to be true and the realities of animal farming.

Brits consume 14.5bn eggs a year, yet most have no idea how they are produced. That's no accident. The egg industry shouts about supposedly idyllic free range farms and completely omits the hens trapped in cages.

A general lack of transparency across the whole supply chain is bolstered by concerted efforts by the egg industry to obscure the facts. Consumers are denied the information they need to make informed decisions. That must change.

## Cages weren't banned in 2012

Many consumers think all cages were banned in 2012. In reality, barren 'battery' cages were replaced by larger, 'enriched' colony cages, capable of holding 40-80 birds each. Under current guidelines, each hen is given slightly less usable space than an A4 piece of paper.

They spend their entire lives under artificial lights, in rows of cages within vast, industrial sheds, deprived of the ability to display natural behaviours.

Currently, around 7.3 million egg-laying hens are trapped inside these cages, with approximately 17% of the UK's egg supply stemming from caged birds.

While the public's understanding of UK cage use is low, [previous data from Bryant Research](#) shows that nearly all those (94%) who are aware of 'enriched' colony cages are strongly against them.

Viva! is therefore deeply concerned that consumers are unwittingly buying eggs produced in a manner they find cruel and would avoid if they knew the truth.

The [animal advocacy](#) organisation is one of many calling for much clearer food labelling requirements so shoppers can see [how an animal lived](#) before they were slaughtered and packaged for a supermarket shelf.

Even farmers are admitting that the industry needs to be more transparent. In a recent article in the *Western Morning News*, [Paul Kelly of Kelly Turkey Breeders said](#)

We have to accept that things can be ugly on a turkey farm. Feather pecking to killing and plucking – we have to do a better job of educating consumers about the realities of farming.

## Cracking the cage secret

The poll was conducted as part of [Viva!'s 2026 Cracked campaign](#). The campaign's primary aims are to raise awareness of the plight of caged hens and maintain pressure on the government to follow through on its commitment to phase out 'enriched' colony cages, a pledge outlined in the [government's Animal Welfare Strategy for England](#)

Despite huge public backing for a ban, the National Farmers' Union and British Egg Industry Council have both pushed back hard on proposals. And the much-anticipated outcome of a major public consultation has already suffered delays. Defra says it will deliver its verdict in 'the summer'.

Viva! activists have been tirelessly campaigning for a ban on 'enriched' colony cages, organising dozens of public outreach events across the UK, protesting in Parliament Square, securing [prominent media coverage](#) of Viva! Campaigns' caged hen facility investigation and even canvassing [celebrities and influencers](#) for support.

Thousands of letters calling for a ban have also been sent by constituents to their MPs, making it clear that this is a welfare issue the animal-loving British public cares deeply about.

Robinson adds:

There's still time for people to support our Cracked campaign while we await a response to the government consultation. These beautiful, sensitive birds will never know freedom. They can't stretch, dustbathe, enjoy the sun on their backs or the dirt beneath their claws.

Caged egg systems take everything from them; all these hens have is people who care enough to fight for them.

I'd urge everyone shocked by what they've read here to take 30 seconds out of their day to write to their MP and demand change. Without you, millions more hens could face a lifetime of misery in cages.

Viva! has created a letter template supporters can use to contact their MP quickly and easily. Visit [viva.org.uk/mp-ban-cages](http://viva.org.uk/mp-ban-cages) to write to yours now, before it's too late.

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