



Federal Bill Introduced to Improve Housing for Egg-Laying Hens and Provide Stable Future for Egg Farmers

Egg Industry and Animal Welfare Groups Enthusiastically Support Legislation

WASHINGTON (Jan. 23, 2012) -- The Humane Society of the United States and the United Egg Producers announced that they will make passage of H.R. 3798, the Egg Products Inspection Act Amendments of 2012, introduced today by Reps. Kurt Schrader, D-Ore., Jeff Denham, R-Calif., Elton Gallegly, R-Calif., and Sam Farr, D-Calif., a top legislative priority in Congress this year. All of these lawmakers are deeply committed to agriculture, and their federal legislation will lead to improvements in housing for 280 million hens involved in U.S. egg production, while providing a stable future for egg farmers.

The bill will require egg producers to essentially double the space allotted per hen and make other important animal welfare improvements during a tiered phase-in period that allows farmers time to make the investments in better housing, with the assurance that all will face the same requirements by the end of the phase-in period. The legislation is strongly supported by UEP, HSUS, American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) and other animal welfare groups, National Consumers League, the overwhelming majority of egg farmers, and state agricultural and egg producer groups, including the Association of California Egg Farmers, Colorado Egg Producers Association, Florida Poultry Association, Michigan Agri-Business Association, Michigan Allied Poultry Industries, North Carolina Egg Association and Ohio Egg Processors Association.

In recent years, a growing number of states approved often-conflicting standards for egg production, frequently applying those standards to all eggs sold in the state—including those produced out-of-state. As a result, egg farmers have said they foresee an unworkable patchwork of conflicting state laws that will make interstate commerce in eggs difficult, if not impossible. Egg farmers see a federal standard as the only solution that both enhances hen welfare and ensures a sustainable future for America's family-owned egg farms, according to the United Egg Producers, which represents egg farmers who produce 88 percent of the nation's eggs.

"Eggs are a national commodity, and egg producers should have a level playing field—not have different, costly rules in all 50 states," said Gene Gregory, president and CEO of United Egg Producers. "That's where we are heading if we don't pass this federal legislation. We need this legislation for our customers and consumers and the survival of egg farmers."

“The HSUS and UEP have been long-time adversaries, but have come together and identified a solution that balances animal welfare and the economic realities of the industry,” said Wayne Pacelle, president and CEO of The Humane Society of the United States. “The nation needs this kind of problem solving, and the Congress should enthusiastically embrace an agreement between all of the key stakeholders.”

“This agreement between the United Egg Producers and the Humane Society of the United States represents an important and necessary step in addressing the patchwork of state laws facing the industry and providing stability for farmers moving forward,” said Rep. Schrader. “I take my hat off to both organizations for putting aside their historical differences and working together to reach a deal that provides certainty for our farmers while providing improved conditions for the hens.”

“As an advocate for agriculture and animal welfare, I am pleased to join my colleagues in co-sponsoring this common-sense legislation that will help farmers, consumers and animals,” said Rep. Farr, ranking member of the agriculture appropriations subcommittee. “Having consistent rules and a national standard will help egg producers meet the consumer demand for safe, wholesome food and will send a message that doing what’s good for animal welfare and what’s good for industry economics are not mutually exclusive.”

H.R. 3798, the **Egg Products Inspection Act Amendments of 2012**, would:

- require conventional cages to be replaced during an ample phase-in period with new, enriched colony housing systems that provide all egg-laying hens nearly double the amount of current space;
- require that, after a phase-in period, all egg-laying hens be provided with environmental enrichments, such as perches, nesting boxes, and scratching areas, that will allow hens to express natural behaviors;
- require labeling on all egg cartons nationwide to inform consumers of the method used to produce the eggs—“eggs from caged hens,” “eggs from hens in enriched cages,” “eggs from cage-free hens,” and “eggs from free-range hens”;
- prohibit feed- or water-withdrawal molting to extend the laying cycle, a practice already prohibited by the United Egg Producers Certified program;
- require standards approved by the American Veterinary Medical Association for euthanasia of egg-laying hens;
- prohibit excessive ammonia levels in henhouses; and
- prohibit the transport and sale of eggs and egg products nationwide that don’t meet these requirements.

If enacted, the proposal would require egg producers to increase space per hen in a tiered phase-in, with the amount of space hens are given increasing, in intervals, over the next 15 to 18 years. (Phase-in schedules are more rapid in California, consistent with a ballot initiative approved earlier by that state’s voters.) Currently, the majority of hens are each provided 67 square inches of space, with up to 50 million receiving just 48 square inches.

The proposed phase-in would culminate with a minimum of 124 square inches of space for white hens and 144 for brown hens nationwide.

Farmers have begun to invest in enrichable cage housing systems in hopes that this legislation will pass and provide clarity for what is acceptable hen housing in all states in the future.

-30-

Media Contacts:

HSUS: Anna West, [757-575-0079](tel:757-575-0079), awest@humanesociety.org

UEP: Jewanna Porter, [404-367-2761](tel:404-367-2761), jporter@golinharris.com

The Humane Society of the United States is the nation's largest animal protection organization—backed by 12 million Americans, or one of every 28. For more than a half-century, The HSUS has been fighting for the protection of all animals through advocacy, education, and hands-on programs. Celebrating animals and confronting cruelty—on the web at humanesociety.org.

United Egg Producers (UEP) is a Capper-Volstead cooperative for U.S. egg farmers, representing the ownership of approximately 88 percent of the nation's egg-laying hens. UEP members produce eggs using various systems including modern cage production, enriched cages, cage-free, free range, organic and other specialty eggs. For more information about UEP, please go to unitedegg.org.

The Humane Society of the United States

2100 L Street, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20037

humanesociety.org

Celebrating Animals, Confronting Cruelty