Animal Ethics & the Evolution of Standards for Laying Hens in the United States

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U.S. Farm Animal Welfare Regulatory Environment

• Animal Welfare Act (revised 1986)
  – Excludes farm animals

• Non-governmental Standards
  – Retailers
  – Animal Protection NGOs
  – Animal Commodity Organizations
    • United Egg Producers
U.E.P
United Egg Producers
- trade organization
  -- member services
    -- lobbying

The Egg Board
- QuANGO supervising USDA check-off funds
  -- advertising
    -- research
  -- liaison with USDA
Current Scientific Advisory Committee Members:

- Dr. Patricia Y. Hester, PhD (Chairwoman) - Purdue University
- Bill Chase, DVM - Kestrel: Inc. - Private Veterinarian
- Gail Golab, DVM - American Veterinary Medical Association
- Joy Mench, PhD - University of California Davis
- Ruth Newberry, PhD - Washington State University
- Janice Swanson, PhD - Michigan State University
- Paul Thompson, PhD - Michigan State University
- Dr. Jeffrey D. Armstrong, PhD (Consultant) - California Polytechnic State University
UEP Standards

McDonald’s announces standards for suppliers

Circa 1999

UEP convenes panel of experts on animal welfare
McDonald’s announces standards for suppliers

Circa 1999

UEP convenes panel of experts on animal welfare

2002

Expert recommendation on space needs accepted by UEP

2001

50% Compliance with UEP Approved Standard

Circa 1999

UEP Standards

Produced in Compliance with United Egg Producers’ Animal Husbandry Guidelines

www.uepcertified.com
-- 68 -72 sq. in. per hen in caged layer systems

-- average industry space allotment before
UEP Standard: 48 sq. in.

-- new standard reflects point at which
improved welfare is unambiguous

-- must be met by all facilities at a given location

-- certified by USDA and by contracted 3rd party firms
   (accredited by USDA)
McDonald’s announces standards for suppliers

Circa 1999

UEP convenes panel of experts on animal welfare

2001

Expert recommendation on space needs accepted by UEP

2003

Ethicist appointed to the (now permanent) Scientific Advisory Panel

2005

80% Compliance with UEP Approved Standard
How the Process Works

UEP Producer Committee

Scientific Advisory Committee
How the Process Works

-- SAC does not offer spontaneous advise or recommendations
-- Thus far, all recommendations have been adopted by the producer committee without modifications
-- Committee makes few public statements. When it does so, it takes the form of a letter from the Committee, and requires full agreement of all members.
How the Process Works

The process and the UEP Certified label have been widely criticized by those who feel that current practice is unacceptable.

REASONS TO SUPPORT THE PROCESS

1. Rapid improvement for large numbers of animals
2. Important to work with producer groups
3. Cost considerations are legitimate
UEP Standards

- Circa 1999: UEP convenes panel of experts on animal welfare
- 2001: Expert recommendation on space needs accepted by UEP
- 2003: UEP Standard updated to include ban on feed restricted molting
- 2005: McDonald’s announces standards for suppliers
- 2008: Prop 2 passes in California (with 10 year phase in)
California
Proposition 2

-- animals must be housed with sufficient space to turn around and fully extend their limbs without touching another individual

-- will not come into force for 10 years

-- final interpretation will be both debated and very likely litigated

-- similar pieces of legislation have been enacted in Michigan, Florida and Ohio, proposed in Oregon
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UEP convenes panel of experts on animal welfare

2001

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2003

Scientific Advisory Committee develops standards for non-cage systems

2005

Prop 2 passes in California (with 10 year phase in)

2008

July: UEP signs agreement with Humane Society of the United States

2011

McDonald’s announces standards for suppliers
UEP/HSUS Agreement

• Industry will transition to “colony” housing within 13 years
  – N.B. this is the enriched cage, but the agreement does not mention the word “cage”
UEP/HSUS Agreement

• Industry will transition to “colony” housing within 13 years

• UEP and HSUS will jointly seek Federal legislation to mandate this transition
  – Federal legislation will override state regulations such as Prop. 2
UEP/HSUS Agreement

• Industry will transition to “colony” housing within 13 years
• UEP and HSUS will jointly seek Federal legislation to mandate this transition
• HSUS will not challenge UEP or members through ballot initiatives or litigation
  – Time limited: legislation must pass soon
UEP/HSUS Agreement

- Industry will transition to “colony” housing within 13 years
- UEP and HSUS will jointly seek Federal legislation to mandate this transition
- HSUS will not challenge UEP or members through ballot initiatives or litigation
- Current Status: Legislation has been introduced, is being strongly opposed by other food animal producers
McDonald’s announces standards for suppliers

UEP convenes panel of experts on animal welfare

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August 2011: Iowa producer, party to lawsuit and non-UEP member is targeted by video.

Approximate date of lawsuits against UEP alleging that UEP approved standard is restraint of trade.

Period of “expose” films and photographs taken at facilities owned by UEP members
Expert Animal Ethics

Cognitive Measures: Pain, Suffering, Experiential Frustration or Satisfaction

Species Typical Behaviors: Nesting, Wing Flapping, Dust Bathing, Perching

Standard Veterinary Health Measures: Mortality, Morbidity, Growth and Development
Expert Animal Ethics Gets Wicked

Cognitive Measures: Pain, Suffering, Experiential Frustration or Satisfaction

Option 1: Species typical behaviors are important to the extent that they effect cognitive or veterinary well-being

Species Typical Behaviors: Nesting, Wing Flapping, Dust Bathing, Perching

The Philosophical Problem: How to understand animal natures?

Option 2: Species typical behaviors are constitutive of well-being.

Standard Veterinary Health Measures: Mortality, Morbidity, Growth and Development
Expert Animal Ethics Gets Wicked in the Real World

Cognitive Measures: Pain, Suffering, Experiential Frustration or Satisfaction

Option 1: Species typical behaviors are important to the extent that they effect cognitive or veterinary well-being

Species Typical Behaviors: Nesting, Wing Flapping, Dust Bathing, Perching

The Practical Problem: The philosophical problem makes a difference to how you approach industry standards

Option 2: Species typical behaviors are constitutive of well-being.
Wicked Animal Ethics

1. Mind
2. Nature
3.  

Diagram showing the relationship between mind, nature, and possibly another element.
Animal Ethics: The Public Mind

Price Seekers:
Only minimal levels of physical well-being matter.

Basic Welfarists:
Experience of pain, satisfaction, frustration & contentment.

Naturalists:
The kind of life that animals would lead in nature is the moral norm.

Mortality from predators or diseases, discomforts and risks that animals might experience in nature “don’t count”

Research by Pritchard, Norwood and Lusk, Oklahoma State U.
What Does an Ethicist Do in a Scientific Committee?

Keeps the conversation going within the committee.
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