



Benefits for California Families

Confining chickens in cages so small they can barely move threatens human health. Decades of research shows higher rates of deadly food-borne pathogens, such as *Salmonella*, among caged hen operations versus their cage-free counterparts. The egg industry itself acknowledges these problems, with its own trade publication conceding that “*Salmonella* thrives in cage housing.”

By ensuring better welfare standards for farm animals, Prop 12 would result in safer food for California families.

Health threat

Numerous factors likely contribute to the higher rates of *Salmonella* in operations that confine hens in cages. When hens are crammed so tightly together, pathogens can quickly spread. Additionally, the constant stress and inability to exercise weakens their immune systems. *Salmonella* kills more Americans and sends more people to the hospital than any other foodborne pathogen. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) estimates that 79,000 illnesses each year are caused by consuming eggs contaminated with *Salmonella*. The agency states “Egg-associated illness caused by *Salmonella* is a serious public health problem.”

More than a dozen scientific studies have found that cage operations are significantly more likely to harbor *Salmonella* than cage-free facilities. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)—using the best available data comparing *Salmonella* infection risk between different hen housing systems—found higher *Salmonella* rates among caged hens.

In addition, confined farm animals are often fed a steady stream of antibiotics to prevent them from dying prematurely in these wretched conditions. The use of antibiotics in caged animals can increase the prevalence of antibiotic-resistant bacteria in the food supply and among farm workers.

Cooking is no guarantee

Because *Salmonella* can infect the ovaries of hens, eggs from infected birds can be laid with the bacteria essentially prepackaged inside. *Salmonella* can survive various cooking methods, including sunny-side-up, over-easy, and scrambled, according to research funded by the American Egg Board.

Reforms needed

Prominent consumer advocacy organizations including the Consumer Federation of America and the Center for Science in the Public Interest have called on the egg industry to switch to cage-free production.

The Center for Food Safety (CFS), which has endorsed Prop 12, is clear on the issue when it writes that “caged hens have consistently presented a higher risk of *Salmonella* than cage-free hens, indicating a strong connection between cages and pathogen contamination.” The non-profit food safety agency concluded “...the fact remains that in terms of potential *Salmonella* contamination, eggs from caged hens are simply more dangerous than their cage-free counterparts.”