

AECL response to the Sun Herald, 7th June 2009



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A good laugh, but here are the facts

As I read Simon Webster's article last Sunday (The Sun Herald, June 7, 2009) I couldn't help but laugh at his witty observations linking an Animal Liberation advertisement on chickens to Sydney's poor rail service. But for all its amusement, the article also included a number of incorrect, albeit common, misconceptions about Australia's modern day hen egg industry.

The fact is perceptions that animal welfare is overlooked by egg farmers harks back to a bygone era when man first landed on the moon and hippies hung out at Woodstock.

Egg production has come a long way since the 1960s. The modern day Australian egg farmer places the welfare (health and safety) of their flock above all else. It is in their interests to do so - a healthy hen means healthy egg production.

While all production systems, including barn laid and free range, play a valuable role in Australia's egg industry, cage production systems offer greater safety to hens from disease, parasites, cannibalism and predator attack. Furthermore tighter biosecurity controls, made possible in a cage egg system, help to prevent diseases such as bird flu and Newcastle Disease outbreaks from occurring. Given the views expressed in Mr Webster's article, I am left wondering if he has even visited a commercial egg farm in Australia.

Approximately 80 per cent of egg-loving Australians choose to buy cage produced eggs as they seek out nutritious yet affordable meals for their families.

The simple fact is cage production systems offer a safe and welfare-friendly environment for hens and a nutritious and affordable product for Australian consumers. Perceptions that suggest otherwise are hanging on to a time that has long since passed.