

AOL Hits "Delete" on Battery Cages

With more than 20 million Americans using an AOL account - and with the popularity of AOL's web properties (AOL Instant Messenger, Moviefone, Mapquest, or Netscape), chances are that you or someone you know uses AOL. Those users may be surprised to hear how AOL and The HSUS (**Humane**¹ Society of the United States) are working together to put their daily computing - e-mails, searches, and blogging—to work helping animals.

AOL is now providing more than just online services to millions of Americans - it's providing improved conditions for thousands of American **egg-laying hens**².

Working with its food service vendor, Sodexo USA, AOL has **discontinued**³ the use of eggs from birds confined in battery cages in all of its corporate dining facilities servicing the company's 5,000 employees in Northern Virginia. Over the coming months, AOL will make the transition to cage-free eggs in its other facilities around the country as well. The HSUS **praises**⁴ AOL's policy as an important success in the growing **trend**⁵ to end one of the most abusive, yet customary, **factory farming**⁶ practices.

AOL currently uses nearly a half-million eggs per year. As a result of the company's decision, nearly 2,000 laying hens will no longer be confined in restrictive **battery cages**⁷.

« AOL's concern for social responsibility, including animal **welfare**⁸, led us to distance ourselves from battery cage eggs and switch to exclusively cage-free eggs in our dining facilities, » said Alan Nielsen, AOL's Vice President of Corporate Services. « By making a simple **purchasing**⁹ switch, AOL is helping improve the lives of millions of egg-laying birds. »(...)

A behind-the-scenes hero in this story is Lori Prantil, Manager of Food Services for AOL. An animal advocate, Lori volunteers with United Animal Nations' Emergency Animal Rescue Service (EARS), which provides emergency **sheltering**¹⁰ and relief to animal victims of disasters. Lori has used her personal vacation time to care for animals at EARS shelters after Hurricane Charley in Florida (2004) and Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana (2005).

After reading about UAN's rescue of nearly 400 « spent » hens from a California battery egg farm in August 2005, Lori realized she had an opportunity **to alleviate**¹¹ animal suffering - without even leaving her desk at AOL's headquarters in Dulles. She contacted The HSUS to find out more about **enacting**¹² a cage-free egg policy.

« At AOL we have been working toward more **sustainable**¹³ food purchasing for some time, and transitioning to cage-free eggs was an obvious step to take, » said Lori. « It is really rewarding to realize how those of us who care about animals can help when we bring our compassion to work with us. »

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Source : The Humane Society of the United States website (<http://www.hsus.org/>), Factory Farming Campaign.

Link : <http://www.hsus.org/farm/news/ournews/aol.html>



VOCABULARY

1. **to be humane** : to act in a kind, sympathetic way towards other people and animals, and try to do them as little harm as possible.
2. **a hen** : a female chicken. But the female of any bird can be referred to as a hen. An egg-laying hen is a hen raised for its eggs not for its meat.
3. **to discontinue** : to stop doing something.
4. **to praise** : to express approval.
5. **a trend** : change or development towards something new or different.
6. **factory farming** : system of farming which involves keeping animals indoors, often with very little space, and giving them special foods so that they grow more quickly or produce more eggs or milk.
7. **a battery cage** : term used for the hen housing system where egg-laying hens are in all-wire cages with 3 or 4 others. Each hen has less living space than a A4 sheet of paper.
8. **welfare** : health, comfort, and happiness of a person or animal.
9. **to purchase** : to buy.
10. **a shelter** : place provided to stay or live, especially when you need protection from bad weather or danger.
11. **to alleviate** : to make pain, suffering, or an unpleasant condition less intense or severe.
12. **to enact** : when a government or authority enacts a proposal, they make it into a law.
13. **sustainable** : use of natural resources when this use is kept at a steady level that is not likely to damage the environment.

QUOTATIONS FOR FURTHER DEBATE

« **Think occasionally of the suffering of which you spare yourself the sight.** »

Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965), German theologian, musician, philosopher, and physician. He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1953.

« **A hen is only an egg's way of making another egg.** »

Samuel Butler (1835-1902) was a British writer best known for his satire *Erewhon*.

« **We live in a world which is full of misery and ignorance, and the plain duty of each and all of us is to try to make the little corner he can influence somewhat less miserable and somewhat less ignorant than it was before he entered it.** »

Thomas Huxley (1825-1895), was a British biologist, known as « Darwin's Bulldog » for his defence of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution.