

the growing CAGE-FREE EGG trend at hospitals



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Safe and sustainable food is important for hospitals, including when it comes to the procurement of eggs. Prevailing science on public health favors cage-free housing of farm animals. Accordingly, **dozens of hospitals** across the country have switched to cage-free eggs – a change that **Healthcare Without Harm** and **The Center for Food Safety** advocate for. As well, some states have passed laws to outlaw the cage confinement of hens, and California banned the *sale* of whole eggs from caged hens (as of 2015). Dozens of major food companies—including nearly 20 top restaurant chains—also use cage-free eggs.

HOSPITAL & CORPORATE POLICIES:

- Dozens of hospitals across the country including **Swedish Covenant, Thomas Jefferson Hospital, Multicare Health Systems, Fairview Hospital, Mission Hospital, Norwalk Hospital, Valley Hospital, Good Shepherd Hospital** switched to cage-free eggs.
- Top restaurant chains (e.g. **Burger King, Cracker Barrel, Subway, Wendy's, Denny's, IHOP, Golden Corral, Sonic, Arby's, Starbucks, Red Robin, Whataburger, Carl's Jr., Wolfgang Puck, Hardee's, PF Chang's, Au Bon Pain, Bruegger's Bagels & Quiznos**) use cage-free eggs.
- **Sara Lee, Pepperidge Farm, Otis Spunkmeyer** and other food manufacturers are phasing cage-free eggs into their products, and **Hellmann's** mayonnaise recently [announced](#) that it will switch all 350 million eggs it uses each year to cage-free.
- The Sustainable Endowments Institute reported that **64% of universities** use cage-free eggs, as do top culinary schools including **Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts, New England Culinary Institute, The International Culinary Schools at the Art Institutes** and **Natural Gourmet Cookery School**. And major corporate and government cafeterias (e.g. **U.S. House of Representatives and Senate, NASA, the National Institutes of Health, Google, Yahoo!, Coca-Cola, Gap, IBM and Microsoft**) also use cage-free eggs.

“Switching to cage free eggs will help us to help meet our goal of supporting more humane agriculture systems, which is one of the initiatives in the Healthy Food in Health Care pledge.”

—[The Valley Hospital](#)



“St. Vincent Hospital takes our responsibility of being a good steward seriously, which is why we switched to cage-free eggs. Transitioning to cage-free eggs demonstrates our commitment to safer food and more humane treatment of animals.”

—St. Vincent Hospital (Wisconsin)

INDICATORS OF PUBLIC SENTIMENT:

- A 2010 survey by **Context Marketing** found that [69% of consumers](#) will pay more for “ethically produced” foods and [91%](#) include animal welfare in their criteria for whether something is ethically produced.
- A study by the food industry consulting firm **Technomic** found that animal welfare is the [third most-important social issue](#) to restaurant patrons, outranking the environment and other issues.
- **California** and **Michigan** have passed laws to outlaw cages for egg-laying hens, and similar legislation is pending in numerous other states. California also passed a law to ban the *sale* of whole eggs from caged hens statewide (regardless of where they are produced) by 2015.
- As Cardinal, **Pope Benedict XVI** called the extreme confinement of hens in battery cages a [contradiction of Biblical principles](#).
- An **American Farm Bureau** poll found that 95% of Americans believe farm animals should be well-cared for and 89% believe food companies that require suppliers to treat animals well are “doing the right thing.”
- A recent study by **Label Networks** (a leading marketing firm) found that, of all non-profit organizations nationwide, Americans between the ages of 13 and 24 would be most likely to volunteer for an animal protection organization. Animal protection had as many votes as the number two and three spots combined (The American Red Cross and Habitat for Humanity).

The New York Times

“Industrial confinement is cruel and senseless and will turn out to be, we hope, a relatively short-lived anomaly in modern farming.”

— 2010 *NYT* editorial on laws banning the extreme confinement of farm animals

These findings make sense, considering what consumers are seeing and hearing with regard to farm animal welfare in the mainstream media (both conservative and liberal) and from trusted sources. For example:

- The **Oprah Winfrey** and **Ellen DeGeneres** shows have both dedicated episodes to the extreme confinement of farm animals.
- A 2010 **New York Times** editorial regarding egg production declared, “There is no justification, economic or otherwise, for the abusive practice of confining animals in spaces barely larger than the volume of their bodies. Animals with more space are healthier, and they are no less productive. Industrial confinement is cruel and senseless and will turn out to be, we hope, a relatively short-lived anomaly in modern farming.”
- **The American Conservative** ran a cover article titled “Torture on the Farm: Why Conservatives Should Care about Animal Cruelty” which focused on the extreme confinement of farm animals in cages.
- **TIME magazine** has repeatedly covered this issue, including in a 2010 article about extreme confinement which stated, “Factory hens are confined in what are known as battery cages, which leave them crowded and all but immobilized, reduced to little more than egg laying machines. Free-range and organic chickens have different degrees of freedom to move and are raised on varying levels of higher quality feed. There's no question what kind of life the birds prefer.”
- A **New York Times** article called cage-free eggs “the food industry’s latest have-to-have-it product.” *The NYT* also ran an editorial on Wolfgang Puck’s decision to switch to cage-free eggs titled “Mr. Puck’s Good Idea.”
- **The National Journal** recently ran a cover story about the extreme confinement of sows and other animals that started with: “Suppose you were a furry or feathery creature, confined to a cramped crate or a tiny cage, with your sole purpose in life to produce eggs for some human's plate — or to end up on that plate yourself. Don't you think your keepers should at least provide you with enough room to turn around freely, lie down, stand up, and stretch your limbs?”



ANIMAL WELFARE & FOOD SAFETY:

Cages restrict many natural behaviors that are critical to birds' welfare, including the ability to nest, perch and forage. In cages, hens aren't even able to fully extend their limbs.

The prestigious **Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production** [concluded](#) that cage confinement should be eliminated. The Commission was funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts and Johns Hopkins School of Public Health and included the former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture.

The [LayWel study](#) – which is the most extensive scientific study into laying hen welfare – concluded that battery cages are the only method of housing hens that, under no circumstances, can provide “satisfactory welfare” for animals. The LayWel study involved working groups in seven European countries, funding from the European Commission and data from 230 flocks of hens. The *Netherlands Journal of Agricultural Science* published a [study](#) that ranked 22 different methods of housing hens in terms of animal welfare on a zero-to-ten scale. **Battery cages ranked 0.0** (literally as low as possible). “Modified Battery Cages” ranked only slightly higher, at 2.3, whereas typical U.S. cage-free egg production systems ranked significantly higher, around 5.9.

A 2002 prospective case-control study published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* reported that people who recently ate eggs from caged hens had about 200% higher odds of being sickened by *Salmonella* compared to people who did not eat eggs from hens kept in cages. **The European Food Safety Authority** found that “Without exception...there was significantly higher risk of *Salmonella* infection in hens confined in cages.”

Consumer organizations such as **The Consumer Federation of America**, **Center for Food Safety** and **Center for Science in the Public Interest** have all supported a ban on battery cages and a move to cage-free egg production.

“Virtually all aspects of hen behavior are thwarted by battery cages. ...research has confirmed what common sense already knew — animals built to move must move.”

— Dr. Bernard Rollin, Department of Animal Science, Colorado State



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