



Get to know your Ontario egg farmers.

The Hayes Family



CARING FOR HENS IS AN EGG FARMERS' TOP PRIORITY



CONVENTIONAL, SMALLER GROUP HOUSING

Being phased out because of restrictions to hens' abilities to engage in natural behaviours.

Canadian egg farmers have taken a progressive step forward by committing to phase out the use of an older style of smaller group housing system which had been successful in reducing hen mortality, disease and antibiotic use while improving sustainability and affordability.

During their time, these systems were an innovation which dramatically improved laying hen welfare by moving birds up off the floor, away from their own manure, into elevated, hygienic housing in small social groups.

Despite these systems' effectiveness, the small group sizes of six to eight hens, space restrictions and restrictions in the hens' abilities to engage in the natural behaviours of perching, scratching and private nesting – when compared to the ongoing developments of other housing systems – led to a phasing-out of this housing type.

Visit www.getcracking.ca to learn more about Ontario's egg farm families.



Ontario egg farmers are committed to providing the best care for their hens with housing designed for hen health and welfare under strict Canadian standards.



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How Farmers Care For Their Hens

Ontario's egg farmers are highly committed to the care and well-being of their hens so they can provide fresh, high-quality eggs for Ontario consumers.

Laying hens are housed in a variety of ways in accordance with standards defined in the *2017 Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Pullets and Laying Hens*.

These housing system standards include new enriched colony housing, free run large group housing with access to an outdoor space (weather permitting in Ontario) plus the previous style of smaller group housing system which is being phased out of use in Canada.



ENRICHED COLONY HOUSING

Naturally-sized social groups with perches, scratch areas and private nest boxes benefit hen health and welfare.

Enriched colony housing, first developed in Europe, has evolved to maximize hen health and welfare by moving birds away from their own waste and its many pathogens, into elevated, hygienic housing with stable social groups of 30 to 60 hens.

This housing provides dramatic results in: low hen mortality; preventing deaths by predators and insect infestations; virtual elimination of disease and antibiotic use while improving food safety, environmental sustainability and consumer affordability.

Enriched colony housing gives hens more space than conventional, smaller group housing. Hens have room to move around and use the perches and scratch pads and lay eggs in nest boxes designed into this modern housing style. Many farmers and hen welfare experts believe this type of housing provides the best combination of benefits among all the housing system standards defined in the *2017 Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Pullets and Laying Hens*.

FREE RUN LARGE GROUP HOUSING

Hens can perch, scratch and use private nest boxes plus have access to entire barn area.

Free run group housing gives hens in one large group access to the entire floor area in their barn. Hens in this type of housing are also able to perch, scratch and lay their eggs in nest boxes. The large group setting presents egg farmers with some different issues to manage in their care for hens, including more social pressures for the hens, such as increased aggressive behaviours.

These challenges can be managed and mitigated, but higher costs of doing so means higher egg prices for consumers for eggs produced in free run barn housing since more feed, labour and veterinary care are required and higher mortality rates occur.

Some farmers prefer to use free run barn housing and some consumers make these eggs their choice when purchasing.



FREE RANGE LARGE GROUP HOUSING

Share the features of free run housing and also have access to an outdoor space.

Free range large group housing systems are essentially the same as free run housing with hens also having access to an outdoor space (weather permitting in Ontario). The amount of space per bird required in the Code is similar to that provided in free run and enriched colonies. Hens in free range housing are also able to perch, scratch, lay their eggs in nest boxes plus forage for food.

Like free run housing, this large group setting again presents egg farmers with different issues to manage in their care for hens, including more social pressures for the hens and other issues including needing more feed, labour and veterinary care and higher mortality rates.

These challenges can be managed and mitigated, but higher costs of doing so means higher egg prices for consumers for eggs produced in free range housing. During times of the year where the birds do not go outside, the conditions for free range are essentially the same as free run housing.

Some farmers prefer to use free range housing and some consumers make these eggs their choice when purchasing.