

results suggest majority of Canadians want 2010 to be happier for hens

New poll shows most want ban on battery cages

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VANCOUVER, Dec. 28 /CNW/ - The Vancouver Humane Society (VHS) wants to make 2010 a happier new year for hens and is urging everyone to add compassionate food choices to their New Year's resolutions list.

It looks like VHS and the hens may get their wish. Nearly three-quarters (72%) of Canadians say they are willing to pay more for humanely produced food, according to a Harris/Decima poll commissioned by VHS.

When it comes to egg-laying hens, almost two-thirds (63%) of Canadians indicated they would support a legislative ban on battery cages for their province. Battery cages are barren, wire cages that confine an average of five birds per cage, denying hens the ability to engage in any of their natural behaviours, such as nesting, wing-flapping, scratching in the earth, or dust bathing.

British Columbians were the most opposed to the use of battery cages, with 69% supporting a provincial ban, followed by Quebec (66%), Alberta (65%) and Ontario (61%). Results from a similar poll in 2007 suggest there has been an increase in public support for a ban over the past two years.

Countries such as Sweden, Switzerland, Germany and the Netherlands have all banned the use of battery cages, as will the entire European Union as of 2012, and the State of California in 2015.

"Canadians are becoming more compassionate as they learn more about how our food is actually produced," said Leanne McConnachie, Director of Farm Animal Programs for VHS. "If consumers want to make a difference now, the best option is to make compassionate choices in the grocery store. In Canada, Certified Organic standards guarantee that the eggs come from free-range and free-run hens."

The poll reported that 10% of Canadians and 21% of British Columbians already buy cage-free eggs. This surprised McConnachie, as it demonstrates that demand for cage-free eggs clearly exceeds what the egg marketing boards allow to be produced under the supply management system.

Respondents also indicated they would like to be more aware of what they're buying, with most Canadians (77%) supporting a requirement to label cartons as "eggs from caged hens" if the eggs come from hens that are raised in battery cages. Quebec showed the highest support with 84% of respondents wanting better labelling.

For more information, visit www.chickenout.ca.

ChickenOUT! is funded, in part, by the Vancouver Foundation and Canadians for the Ethical Treatment of Farm Animals (CETFA).

About the survey:

A total of 2,012 Canadians were surveyed from December 3rd through December 13th 2009 using teleVox, Harris/Decima's telephone omnibus. Results for the full sample are considered accurate +/- 2.2%, 19 times out of 20.