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Shocking welfare standards for animals used in hospital food

Animal welfare standard of hospital food is 'postcode lottery'



15.11.12

A survey published today by the RSPCA and the Campaign for Better Hospital Food reveals that most eggs, chicken and pork served in hospitals in England are produced from animals reared in only basic welfare conditions.

The RSPCA and the Campaign for Better Hospital Food are calling on the Westminster government to introduce mandatory minimum standards for hospital food in England, to ensure that all eggs are cage-free and all chicken and pork meets RSPCA welfare standards.

Find out more about our campaign calling for [better animal welfare standards for food served in hospitals](#).

Key national findings of the survey

- 71 per cent of eggs served by hospitals are laid by caged hens.
- 86 per cent of chicken and 80 per cent of pork served by hospitals is not from farms inspected to meet RSPCA welfare standards.
- 81 per cent of hospitals don't serve any chicken which meets RSPCA welfare standards, more than 75 per cent don't serve any pork which meets RSPCA welfare standards, and 56 per cent don't serve any cage-free eggs.

The survey results show that the animal welfare standard of hospital food is lower than the standards demanded by shoppers in British supermarkets.

With animal welfare becoming an increasingly important consideration for consumers, more than half of eggs produced in the UK are now cage-free, and Sainsbury's, Waitrose, M&S and the Co-operative have banned cage eggs altogether.

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Lifetime ban given for shocking

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Our press releases provide quick access to information on RSPCA campaigns and animal welfare issues.

Freedom Food certification ensures that food is produced from animals on farms which are inspected to meet strict RSPCA welfare standards, covering all aspects of their lives.

Despite pressure on hospital budgets, supermarket figures show that **Freedom Food labelled food does not always cost more**. For example, Freedom Food barn eggs from Sainsbury's cost the same as cage eggs from Tesco and ASDA and Sainsbury's Freedom Food chicken thighs and drumsticks are £1.22p per kilogram cheaper than Sainsbury's chicken and thighs which meet Farm Assured Standards.

When surveyed 7 out of 10 people agreed that the welfare of animals bred for meat, eggs and dairy should not be compromised in order to produce cheap hospital food.

David Bowles, Head of Public Affairs at the RSPCA, said:

It is strange that just when you are at your weakest, you are served food that may not be to your taste and can be from animals kept under intensive conditions. Even hospitals serving food made from free range eggs in their coffee shops and cafeterias are still delivering food made with cage eggs to patients. We support the idea of having standards for hospital food.

Alex Jackson, Co-ordinator of the Campaign for Better Hospital Food, said:

It's disgraceful for the taxpayer to pay for hospital food which causes misery to animals.

The government must introduce mandatory higher animal welfare standards for all hospital food in England to improve its quality and taste, and guarantee that it is produced from animals living happy lives.

James Varghese, Catering Manager at Royal Brompton Hospital in London, said:

The Royal Brompton uses approximately 75,000 free range eggs per year. The price is very competitive and well within our budget constraints. All our sausages and cooked ham joints are from farms in Essex which operate to very high standards of animal welfare.

Every NHS trust spends hard-earned taxpayers' money and we want to make sure we are giving patients, staff and relatives food that is both nutritious and which meets high standards of animal welfare.

Take action

Join the campaign calling for **better animal welfare standards for food served in hospitals**.

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