



Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on December 19, 2014

## Coming Egg Shortage Will Tax Family Budgets

If eggs are a staple in your family's diet and you'd like to keep it that way, now would be a good time to get a few laying hens. Next month, beginning January 1, 2015, the chicken-and-egg production in the United States is in for a big shock. That's when California's new regulations on egg-laying hens goes into effect. And the effects of those regs on eggs will be felt nationally, even globally. The incredible, edible, prolate spheroid-shaped poultry product, which has long been one of the most affordable sources of high-quality protein, is certain to become significantly more expensive.



In 2008, the Humane Society of the United States spent \$10 million on a statewide campaign in California to pass Proposition 2, which bans the sale of eggs from hens kept in restrictive "battery cages" that are lined row-on-row in major hatcheries. Battery cage systems, which are the standard in the industry, account for over 90 percent of the eggs produced in the country.

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The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and its allies convinced California voters to support Proposition 2 by claiming that battery cages: a) are cruel, not allowing chickens free, natural movement, and; b) increase incidence of salmonella in eggs. The cruelty charge is moral/aesthetic argument open to debate under those parameters. The salmonella charge, on the other hand, gives the appearance of being scientific and falling under the state's purview of health and safety protection. However, the science supporting the salmonella justification appears to be weak, and was likely tagged on to the initiative by HSUS to win consumer support for its larger "animal rights" agenda. Nevertheless, the Golden State's new standards require that the minimum size of each hen's cage increase from a floor of 67 square inches to 116 square inches, an increase of more than 73 percent. Rebuilding coops and cages is costly, especially on top of the increased costs of the severe drought that has afflicted California and much of the West.

In order to meet the new standards, chicken farmers will have to either build more cages, reduce the number of hens — or both. That translates into higher costs for each chicken and egg; which, in turn, translates into higher costs for consumers. How much higher is the big unknown, at this point. The price Californians pay for eggs may jump as much as 20 percent in three to six months, according to Dermot J. Hayes, an agribusiness professor at Iowa State University in Ames quoted by [Bloomberg.com](#) on December 13.

And, says Prof. Hayes, the rest of the country will probably follow suit. The Bloomberg story reported that wholesale egg prices "already average a record \$2.27 a dozen nationally, up 34 percent from a year earlier."

How do California's egg regs affect the price of eggs in Iowa or Alabama? California already imports 4 billion eggs a year from other states. The new mandates will almost certainly cause many California egg



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producers out of business and cause those that survive to increase their prices. This alone would cause a national supply-and-demand impact, as out-of-state producers rushed to fill the void in California. In order to protect California farmers from the cheaper out-of-state competition, the California legislature passed Assembly Bill 1437, which applies Prop 2's standards to out-of-state eggs sold in California. Farmers in Missouri, Oklahoma, Iowa, Nebraska, Alabama, and Kentucky filed suit in federal court, claiming that this is an illegal attempt by California to protect its industry and regulate out-of-state businesses in violation of the U.S. Constitution's interstate commerce clause. In October, U.S. District Court Judge Kimberly J. Mueller dismissed the six-state suit, but they are appealing the decision. As their suit winds its way through the appeals process, many egg producers outside of California are already restructuring their operations in order to comply with the new mandates. But they may find, after having made huge investments in new fowl-friendly cages, that the USHS has moved the goalposts. As, indeed, they already have.

### **Inhumane Society**

The Humane Society is not satisfied with the eggscruiciating havoc they've already caused. The new 116 square-inch/cage standard is not sufficient, says HSUS, which now says 216 square inches should be the minimum. HSUS is actually pushing for "cage free" standards, and beyond that to "free range" standards. And beyond that to a completely vegan society. "Cage free" chicken are kept in a barn, but not in cages. "Free range" chickens may have a barn to roost in and lay eggs, but can also have access to the outdoors.

"We have a very active cage-free campaign," HSUS Vice President Miyun Park has said (hear recording [here](#)). "Are we saying that cage-free eggs are the way to go?" she continued. "No, that's not what we're saying. But we're saying it's a step in the right direction."

And where is that direction is taking us? "We don't want any of these animals to be raised and killed," says Park, referring to all domestic livestock. But, she says, "unfortunately we don't have the luxury of waiting until we have the opportunity to get rid of the entire industry." When she says "the entire industry," she clearly means all farming that produces animals for human consumption. She goes on to say that "a number of organizations including the Humane Society of the United States ... work on promoting veganism."

Those familiar with the history of the HSUS are not surprised that it has upped the ante in the egg wars. ActivistFacts.com, a website that tracks the activities of organizations, activists, and tax-exempt foundations, has assembled a portfolio of very damning evidence against HSUS, which falsely portrays itself as an "animal welfare" organization.

HSUS regularly uses photos of abused dogs, cats, and other animals in heartrending television and print ad campaigns to raise millions of dollars, supposedly to care for these unfortunate victims of abuse. However, it seems the money goes instead to fund the HSUS radical "green" vegan/animal rights agenda ... and the salaries, perks, and pension plans of its execs.

"The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) is a radical animal rights group that inaccurately portrays itself as a mainstream animal care organization," [charges ActivistFacts](#). "The words 'humane society' may appear on its letterhead, but HSUS is not affiliated with your local animal shelter. Despite the omnipresent dogs and cats in its fundraising materials and television commercials, it's not an organization that runs spay/neuter programs or takes in stray, neglected, and abused pets. And quite unlike the common image of animal protection agencies as cash-strapped organizations dedicated to



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animal welfare, HSUS has become the wealthiest animal rights organization on earth.”

ActivistFacts and its parent organization, the Center for Organizational Research and Education (CORE), have launched a separate website on HSUS, [HumaneWatch.org](http://HumaneWatch.org), that features many statements from HSUS President Wayne Pacelle and other HSUS officials, such as Paul Shapiro, Josh Balk, and Miyun Park, showing that the ultimate objective of the Humane Society of the United States is to end all livestock farming. Driving up the cost of eggs and driving many egg producers into bankruptcy is but one of many campaigns HSUS underway to radically rearrange American society.

*Full disclosure: The author of this article has no financial ties to either the cage-free or conventional egg lobbies, even though all chickens, ducks, turkeys, goats, cats, dogs and other animals (domestic rabbits excepted) on the Jasper ranch are raised as cage free, free range, natural, and organic critters.*

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