



Categories of housing systems for laying hens

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Introduction

Council Directive 1999/74/EC laying down minimum standards for housing of laying hens, defines three major categories of housing system: alternative systems, unenriched cage systems and enriched cage systems. In time unenriched cages are due to be phased out, leaving only two categories of housing system. Both categories however comprise a wide variety of different models, making it hard to draw conclusions on bird welfare in these systems. A better indication of welfare in relation to housing system can be made by using sub-categories of housing system.

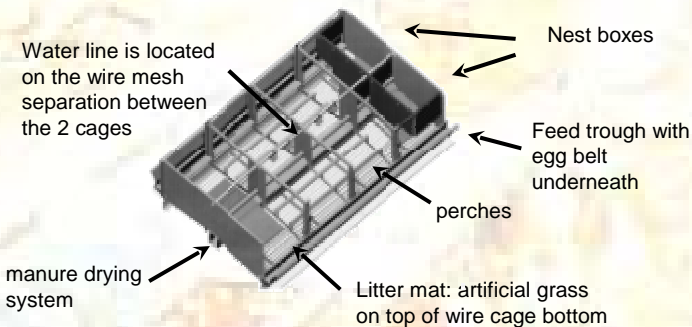
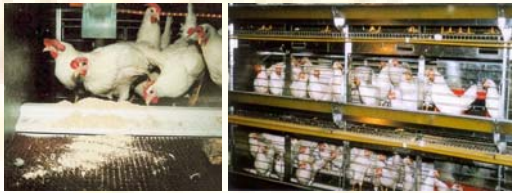
What is a cage?

Cage systems = operated from outside
Non-cage systems = operated from inside

Furnished cages (= enriched cages)

Large group cages → up to 60 or more hens
Medium group cages → 15 - 30 hens
Small group cages → up to 15 hens

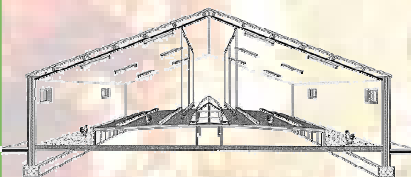
- nest boxes
- perches
- litter area



(Picture SLU)

Single tiered non-cage system (= alternative system)

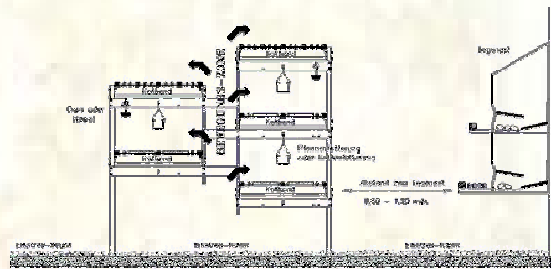
- 1 level on any vertical line



Multi tiered non-cage system (= alternative system)

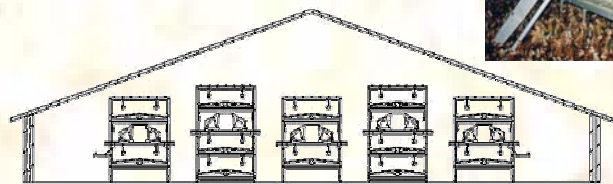
Aviaries with non-integrated nest boxes

- several levels of perforated floors with manure belts under them and separate (stacks of) nest boxes



Aviaries with integrated nest boxes

- nest boxes are integrated in the same tier as the perforated floors and feeders



Portal systems

- elevated perforated floors, the top tier of which is a single level; nest boxes are integrated in the system

