

NEWS RELEASE

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WINNIPEG.....Manitoba's 171 regulated egg and pullet farmers recognize the importance of providing the public with quality food along with the reassurance that our laying hens are well looked after. To demonstrate this commitment, *Manitoba Egg Farmers* launched a mandatory Quality Assurance Program which includes food safety and animal care standards. In addition, the MEF Board recently adopted a policy which further reflects progressive initiatives. The policy reads:

***Manitoba Egg Farmers is committed to the care and well-being of our laying hens. As a result of advancements in behavioural and welfare research, it is recognized and accepted that husbandry systems for hens should provide for the Five Freedoms. After 2018, all new housing facilities for laying hens in Manitoba will be required to meet this policy.***

This policy ensures egg farmers who build new facilities, or undertake a major retrofit after 2018 would be required to have either enriched cages<sup>1</sup> or, an alternative housing system that supports the Five Freedoms<sup>2</sup>. The Five Freedoms are the most respected welfare guidelines and are viewed as credible by poultry specialists and animal welfarists around the globe.

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<sup>1</sup>Enriched cages combine the food safety benefits of conventional cages along with the welfare benefits of open housing, by including furnishings such as perches, scratch pads and nesting boxes. These furnishings enable hens to express natural behaviours.

<sup>2</sup>The Five Freedoms were introduced in Europe in the mid sixties, and revised in 1993. The Five Freedoms now read:

1. **Freedom from thirst, hunger and malnutrition** – by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour
2. **Freedom from discomfort** – by providing a suitable environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area
3. **Freedom from pain, injury and disease** – by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment
4. **Freedom to express normal behaviour** – by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animals own kind
5. **Freedom from fear and distress** – by ensuring conditions that avoid mental suffering

