Iceland drops its cage-free commitment as Dame Joanna Lumley launches petition urging better treatment of hens

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May 6th 2025 - Iceland has stripped its cage-free commitment from its website, becoming the first UK supermarket to ditch its cage-free promise.

This unprecedented move has left Iceland as the only UK supermarket without a public commitment to be cage-free by the end of the year.

Iceland has drawn fire from Dame Joanna Lumley, who has fronted a new petition with animal charity The Humane League UK (THL UK) demanding Iceland keep their cage-free promise.

Iceland committed to source whole eggs exclusively from hens raised outside of cages by the end of 2025. However, 71% of their eggs came from caged hens in 2023-24, 6% more than the previous year, and the highest amount since Iceland began reporting in 2017-2018.

Dame Joanna Lumley said: *"I believe that the British public are committed to seeing farmed animals treated with kindness and decency. However, there is no better symbol of cruelty to farmed animals than a hen in a cage. Iceland said they would get their hens out of cages by the end of the year, but they are so far failing to do it. It pains me deeply to think of the thousands of hens suffering day in, day out because of this. It is Iceland's moral duty to help these animals. Hens can feel happiness and pain; if locking them in cages isn't animal cruelty, I don't know what is."*

Claire Williams, Campaigns Manager at THL UK, said: "*Iceland has axed their commitment to stop selling whole eggs from cruelly caged birds from their website. This is a phenomenally short-sighted move, and a deep betrayal of their customers and countless suffering animals. An overwhelming majority of the public thinks caging hens is wrong, but Iceland seemingly doesn't care. Shoppers who want to avoid caged cruelty should shop somewhere else."*

Additionally, Iceland has only committed to sourcing its whole eggs from cage-free hens, not ingredient eggs - which falls short of other supermarkets. Their lack of progress could impact hundreds of thousands of hens.

Iceland made the original promise in 2016, stating that "it is clear that our customers would prefer to buy eggs from non-caged hens".

As part of a report released earlier this month, THL UK also ranked Asda as a supermarket of concern due to gaps in its reporting on transitioning to cage-free systems. Lidl, Tesco, Morrisons, and Aldi are on track to meet their commitment, while still selling eggs from cages today. Sainsbury's, Waitrose, M&S and the Co-op are already cage-free.

While barren battery cages were outlawed in the UK in 2012, an estimated 8 million hens are still trapped in so-called 'enriched' cages, which still severely harm the wellbeing of hens.

In these cages, hens cannot properly perform key instinctual behaviours such as dust-bathing, perching, roosting, and wing-flapping. This creates intense stress for the birds, as well as leading to weaker bones.

Recent research shows that 94% of the UK public oppose the use of cages for laying hens.

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