

Compassion not burglary, says battery hen activist

New Zealand Open Rescue

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New Zealand Open Rescue activist Mark Eden is facing burglary charges relating to the November 2006 rescue of 20 battery hens from Turk's Poultry, an intensive egg farm in Foxton owned by Ron Turk.

Eden's jury trial, scheduled for late 2008, will be the first of its kind in New Zealand. Eden is challenging the property status of animals under the Animal Welfare Act 1999. He maintains that by removing battery hens from Turks farm, he was mitigating suffering, not stealing property.

Eden says "Jim Anderton's over-ruling of the Parliament's Regulations Review Committee's 2006 decision that battery cages are actually in breach of the Animal Welfare Act is outrageous considering that a 2002 Colmar Brunton survey showed 79 per cent of New Zealanders thought battery cages unacceptable, and wanted them banned".

"Since Jim Anderton so blatantly disregards breaches of legislation, why should members of Open Rescue abide by so-called animal welfare legislation that does nothing to protect animals but in fact protects the industries that abuse them? Animals are afforded no rights under the Act and are deemed as nothing more than property to be owned and exploited".

"Open Rescue activists rescued 15 battery hens in Auckland just before Christmas and more recently rescued 31 battery hens from appalling conditions in Christchurch. Its great to see caring people take direct and compassionate action for animals on factory farms. I fully support the actions of these people and know there will be many more rescues in 2008."

Mark Eden and Open Rescue supporters will be staging a protest today outside the Turks Poultry Slaughterhouse at 11am, urging consumers to boycott cruel caged eggs.

NOTES

(1) Turks Poultry Slaughterhouse, State Highway One, Foxton.

(2) Mr. Eden is pleading not guilty to the theft of the hens from the intensive egg farm. The 20 hens were rescued from horrendous conditions on Turk's farm in November 2006 and were placed into new homes for rehabilitation.

(3) New Zealand Open Rescue formed in 2006 after New Zealand activists became immensely frustrated with the Government's lack of real action for animals on factory farms.