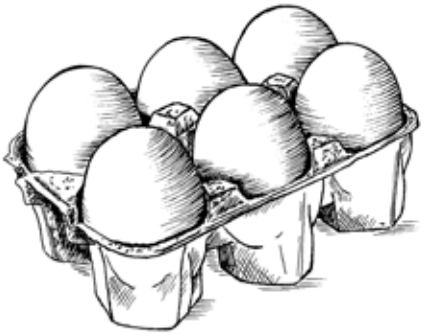
factsheet

Egg labelling (1)

The law states that:

- all eggs produced in the European Union (EU) must now be stamped with a code to show where they came from
- all packaging must also be labelled to show how the eggs were produced.



Beware – some boxes have ***labelling that can be misleading.***

The information about the conditions the hens were kept in might be in very small print on the back of the box.

What do the different labels mean?

Eggs from caged hens	Hens are kept in cages made of bare wire and stacked on top of each other. The cages contain perches and small areas for nesting and for scratching. Each cage houses around 80 hens.
Barn	Hens are housed in buildings with one or more levels. The hens have room to move around, litter for scratching and dustbathing, perches for roosting and nest boxes so they can lay their eggs.
Free-range	Most hens live in buildings similar to the barn system, so they have room to move around and behave naturally, e.g. flapping their wings. Also, there is an outside area for the hens if they choose.

ILLUSTRATION: ANN BIGGS/GCI

factsheet

Egg labelling (2)

How can I avoid buying eggs from caged hens?

Only buy eggs that are clearly labelled 'free-range' or 'barn'. If you can't find these words on the packaging, the eggs have probably been laid by hens kept in cages.

What does the lion stamp on eggs mean?

The '*Lion Quality Code*' was introduced by the British Egg Industry Council (BEIC) in 1993. It was supposed to show that the hens that produced the eggs were looked after well. However, you may find the lion stamp on eggs that have been produced by caged hens.

What does the Freedom Food logo on egg boxes mean?

The Freedom Food logo means that the eggs come from hens that have been reared on farms inspected to higher welfare standards developed and monitored by the RSPCA.

What does an organic label mean?

Organic eggs come from hens kept on farms certified by one of the organic bodies. These organisations set various standards that cover issues such as reducing or banning the use of pesticides, and looking after the environment on the farm, as well as standards relating to how to keep the hens.