

TO: World Organisation for Animal Health
The Director General, Dr. Monique Eloit
12, rue de Prony 75017 Paris, France

December 24th, 2020

CHAPTER 7.Z. ANIMAL WELFARE AND LAYING HEN PRODUCTION SYSTEMS

Request for Reconsideration in Order to Maintain Confidence in the Animal Welfare Code

Animal husbandry that has the foundation of high animal welfare has an impact on One Health, One Welfare, and ultimately on the sustainability of society. The animal welfare chapters of the OIE's *Terrestrial Code* make a considerable contribution to society at large, and in particular to the welfare of animals in countries like Japan, where the concept of animal welfare is still developing.

It is thus regrettable that the development of the proposed chapter on layer hen welfare may have been compromised by alleged bribery orchestrated by the Japanese poultry industry, which desired to maintain the status quo.

Earlier in December, it emerged that former Japanese Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Mr. Takamori Yoshikawa, is under investigation for accepting approximately €40,000 in bribes from Mr. Yoshiki Akita of Akita Foods Co. (Fukuyama, Hiroshima) during his time as the agriculture minister to influence the OIE's draft chapter on laying hen welfare. Akita Foods Co. is the second largest egg producer in Japan and heavily reliant on the battery cage system.

In response to the bribery, the Japanese government has stated that the comments submitted by Japan to OIE remain valid regardless of the process by which they were submitted. However, in fact, the comments sent by Japan overlook the voices of Japanese consumer groups and animal welfare experts on the OIE Liaison Committee, where Japan's comments are formulated, responding only to the strong demands of the egg industry that advocates for battery cages.

Mr. Shogo Akita, who attended as an extraordinary member on behalf of the Japan Poultry Association (JPA), and is the son of Mr. Yoshiki Akita (who is alleged to bribe the former Minister), the then-vice chairman of the JPA's Animal Welfare Measures Council, and then-vice president of the JPA, stated at the committee meeting that "chickens no longer rest on perches due to changes undergone in the breeding process" and that "wire mesh in cages has replaced the role of perches," indicating that understanding of animal welfare is not fostered among Japanese poultry farmers.

Key Events

September, 2018: OIE released the 2nd draft of the "Animal Welfare and Laying Hen Production Systems."

November, 2018 (according to local media reports): ¥2 million (€15,816) was given to then-Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Takamori Yoshikawa, asking him to lobby on behalf of the industry.

December, 2018: Japan convened a meeting of the OIE Liaison Committee, with three industry stakeholders joining as extraordinary members.

January, 2019 : [Japan submitted the comments to OIE](#)

2019: Mr. Yoshiki Akita, the representative alleged to have bribed the then-Minister, says "animal welfare is being negotiated directly with the Minister, so it's okay," and "I've already thanked the Minister, so it will not be a tough talk" (Jiji Press, December 6th, 2020).

March, 2019: Again, ¥2 million (€15,816) was given to the then-Minister Yoshikawa.

July, 2019: [Japan submitted the comments to OIE again](#). In December 2020, the administration stated the reason for re-submitting was that "we had not heard from the OIE".

August, 2019: Another ¥1 million (€7,908) was given to the then-Minister Yoshikawa. In addition, the illicit entertainment and bribery of another then-Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Kouya Nishikawa by Akita Foods Co. was also exposed.

The Japanese comments submitted to the OIE and its opinions expressed at the OIE General Session are suspected to have been distorted by this flagrant bribery. If the standards are adjusted based on these alleged Japanese comments and opinions, and if not adequately responded to, the legitimacy and validity of the OIE'S laying hen welfare standard will be undermined, and it will be difficult to gain trust from people around the world.

We hence request that the OIE reconsider the sections that may have been affected by Japan's comments and opinions, and revise the standards to ensure they are truly fair and capable of bringing about improvements in animal welfare worldwide.

Sincerely,

Open Wing Alliance
The Humane League Japan
Animal Rights Center Japan

**THE HUMANE
LEAGUE** 
JAPAN

 **OPEN WING
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ANIMAL RIGHTS CENTER

With support from Japanese organizations:

PEACE (Put an End to Animal Cruelty and Exploitation)
Foundation Animal environment & Welfare Association Eva
the ALIVE Foundation

HELP ANIMALS

Animal Welfare Promotion Network

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