

## Miraculous New Life for “Spent” Hens

By Laurelee Blanchard, Leilani Farm Sanctuary

Part of why I’ve chosen to devote a major part of my life energy to animal rescue stems from the special bonds I’ve experienced with animals who came from desperate situations. An example of this was “Limpy” and her three friends.

Some years ago, I learned that a large egg factory on Maui was having a sale on spent hens. Knowing that some people buy the birds to toss into pots of boiling water for soup, I decided to try to save a few from that horrible fate. Customers could buy hens in groups of four for a dollar a hen. So, upon arriving, I paid my four dollars and asked to see the area where the hens were kept. The lady who took my money denied my request to go inside, saying that the department of health prohibited it. I was given a receipt and instructed to drive to the last row of sheds in the back, park there, and wait.

I parked next to a huge warehouse and was greeted by an employee who disappeared for a minute and returned holding four chickens upside down, their legs bound together with twine. Nearby, on a concrete slab, I saw a large pile of hens with their legs tied together. Hens not purchased would be buried alive.

I placed my four chickens inside a box in my car and asked if I could take a look around. Surprisingly, he said "Just go on in," and pointed to the door of the warehouse. I entered and saw row upon row of thousands of debeaked hens crammed into tiny cages. The loud squawking of imprisoned birds was deafening. I almost vomited from the overpowering odor.



Commercial egg factory



**Hens in a battery cage**

Inside my car, the chickens were collapsed and lying motionless. They looked dead, but were severely traumatized from being tied up for an excessive length of time. The twine around their legs was tied so tightly that I had to use thin scissors to remove it.

Once home, I carefully placed the chickens into a pen filled with straw and observed that they had difficulty walking. One hen, whom I named Limpy, had permanent paralysis of her left leg and wing, likely due to lack of blood circulation and rough handling. The chickens were extremely hungry and thirsty, as egg factories typically discontinue food and water for spent hens.



**Limpy (left) and her three friends**

Four days later, the chickens were still fearfully huddling in the corner of their new enclosure. Their neck feathers were worn down to the skin, and they looked emaciated, a sharp contrast to a group of recovered battery hens I had rescued several months earlier, who blossomed under loving care to become full and fluffy. The rehabilitated hens had learned to strut happily around the yard, scratching and pecking, dust-bathing, and perching in trees.



**Hen rescued from egg factory**

Every day, for two years after the rescue, I would carry Limpy, the paralyzed hen, out to the grass so she could soak up the sun. Her legs were too weak for her to walk on her own. After so much abuse, she was amazingly sweet and trusting. Frequently, she limped over to where I was sitting on the grass and attempted to hop onto my lap. I helped her up and petted her like a cat. She was warm and soft and smelled good. Chickens, just like cats, love petting and affection.



**Limpy feels the grass beneath her feet**

This emphasized for me once again the humane impact of choosing a vegan diet, given the direct connection between the purchase of commercial eggs and the abuse of animals.



**Author Laurelee Blanchard with rescued hen named Limpy**

Afterword: The Maui Humane Society attempted to prosecute the egg factory for throwing spent hens into a pit and burying them alive, but unfortunately the case was dismissed because the employee at the egg factory had not had his Miranda Rights read to him.