

Judge upholds Calif. humane hen housing law

By Jacob Bunge, Wall Street Journal

A federal judge has dismissed a lawsuit challenging a California law that requires all eggs sold in the Golden State to come from hens housed in roomier cages.

The ruling deals a blow to a joint effort by a half-dozen farm states, including Missouri and Iowa, whose attorneys general have argued the law overstepped California's legal authority and violated principles of interstate commerce enshrined in the U.S. Constitution.

The law, which takes effect Jan. 1, requires all producers selling eggs in California to house egg-laying hens in enclosures spacious enough for birds to lie down, stand up and fully spread their wings. The rules stem from a voter-approved 2008 ballot initiative covering California farmers and a 2010 state law that extended the standards to all producers selling eggs in the state.

The attorneys general have argued California lawmakers were attempting to force expensive new rules on any U.S. farmer who might market eggs in the state. They said farmers would have to spend hundreds of millions of dollars overhauling farms to ensure they would have access to the California market, the most-populous U.S. state and the biggest for egg sales.

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