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Eggs-istential Questions: Why Supermarket Shelves Are Bare

Australia's ongoing egg shortage may not be a short-term blip, with new questions emerging about whether supplies – and prices – will ever fully return to what consumers once expected.

According to ANZ Executive Director of Agribusiness Insights, Michael Whitehead, , avian influenza, supply chain shifts, and supermarket policy uncertainty have all contributed to a situation that is reshaping expectations in the egg market.

“After the culling of over a million layer hens across New South Wales and Victoria due to avian influenza, the national egg industry is under pressure.”

“While Australia's egg producers have shown remarkable resilience – and egg production is forecast to increase in 2025 – that doesn't necessarily mean supply will return to previous levels, especially given rising costs and structural change across the sector,” Mr Whitehead said.

A further layer of uncertainty is emerging around the shift away from caged eggs, particularly in major supermarkets.

“Most major supermarket chains committed to phasing out caged eggs by 2025, but this deadline now appears to be softening or potentially shifting – which is leaving egg producers unsure of how and when to reinvest,” Mr Whitehead said.

The price of eggs has risen significantly in Australia, with a dozen free-range eggs typically retailing at around \$6 – or up to \$9 for premium extra-large eggs.

However, Mr Whitehead noted that eggs still represent one of the most cost-effective protein sources available.

“In relative terms, eggs remain excellent value. Even at \$6–9 per dozen, that's less than \$1 per serve for a high-quality, versatile protein – still significantly cheaper than most meat or seafood options,” he said.

“For comparison, US egg prices have also climbed – a dozen eggs now costs around US\$5, or roughly A\$8, which is well above the long-term average.”

Australia's per capita egg consumption has continued to rise, reaching 250–260 eggs per person per year – one of the highest globally.

However, supply chain pressures and consumer preference for free-range or organic options have added further pressure to pricing and availability.

“Given the investment required to rebuild and transition farms to meet new welfare standards, and the unpredictable nature of avian disease outbreaks, we may be looking at a new normal for the egg sector – one where price volatility and supply constraints are more common,” Mr Whitehead said.

“Shoppers may need to adjust their expectations and appreciate the real cost and complexity involved in keeping eggs on the shelf.”

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