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# Good lives

The people making the difference

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**Who** Linda Turvey

**What** Runs sanctuary for battery hens

**Where** East Sussex

When the hens arrive at Hen Heaven they're always completely featherless. In cages they're bored senseless, so as soon as one grows even the smallest inch of feather, another will pull it out. But as soon as you put them into a loosebox with a wire door, so that they can see out and where they have something to do, this behaviour stops and the feathers start to grow again.

They're so pathetic when they arrive; poor little scrawny, exhausted things. It's hard to believe they have managed to produce those big eggs. About 60 million laying birds are born in the UK every year, and all the male birds are killed straight away. The females start producing eggs at about 18 weeks and keep going for 50 weeks which is when they're killed.

Supermarkets won't take eggs from older chickens because they say there's more risk of breakage. In some battery farms, where they're kept under a blue light on an 18-hour cycle so that they can produce even more eggs, they won't even live till 50 weeks. We get them at the end-of-lay, although most farms prefer to kill them than let anyone see the state they're in.

The first thing I do here is give them sawdust so that they can dustbathe themselves: most of them won't ever have been able to do that even though it's what they do naturally. After a few days, we start letting them go outside. We fund the sanctuary with the eggs we sell but we're always short of money. Usually I get about two lots of home-reared chickens a year, but in the past two months alone we've had 15 enquiries. A new concern is bird flu, although my vet says there is nothing to worry about. We're netting the place in case but I won't shut the hens up until I absolutely have to.

Chickens are amazing. Any other rescued animal that's been ill-treated will usually have some sort of vice, but chickens really put that horrible life they used to lead behind them, and just get into living outside, happily scratching about like chickens should. I get a lot of pleasure from watching them.

- Details: [www.henheaven.org](http://www.henheaven.org) or phone 07754 550 193.
- Send your Good Lives nominations to [ethical.living@guardian.co.uk](mailto:ethical.living@guardian.co.uk)

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