



# Free Range Meat Chickens

SPCA Certified® Standards



# SPCA Certified Standards for Free Range Meat Chickens

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# SPCA Certified Standards for Free Range Meat Chickens

## Overview of SPCA Certified

SPCA Certified is a certification system designed to celebrate good farming and raise animal welfare above current legal requirements. Its overarching goal is to improve the lives of as many animals as possible, through a process of increasing uptake and continual improvement over time. As such, SPCA Certified standards for free range meat chickens allow participants to demonstrate that they apply a high level of animal welfare to their farming operations.

Certification is given to participants, which may include farmers, distributors, retailers and companies, through a legal contract, following a successful initial assessment and subsequent welfare audit of compliance with the SPCA Certified standards.

SPCA Certified standards for free range meat chickens apply to those production systems that give meat chickens continuous access to an outdoor range area, with shade and shelter, during daylight hours<sup>1</sup>.

In terms of the welfare outcomes they achieve, SPCA Certified standards are intended to go beyond the Animal Welfare Act 1999 and relevant Codes of Welfare. They are informed by animal behaviour and welfare science, consultation with stakeholders, and the values of SPCA. All farm staff, operators and owners should be aware of, and compliant with the standards, as well as the legal requirements relating to the animals in their care.

SPCA Certified standards are intended to be used alongside existing industry programmes and practices on farm, and should be read in association with the following documents:

- Animal Welfare Act 1999.
- Animal Welfare (Meat Chickens) Code of Welfare 2018.
- Animal Welfare (Painful Husbandry Procedures) Code of Welfare 2018.
- Animal Welfare (Transport within New Zealand) Code of Welfare 2018.
- Animal Welfare (Commercial Slaughter) Code of Welfare 2018.

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<sup>1</sup> See standards E39 to E42 for details.

## Framework of the SPCA Certified Standards

Previous iterations of SPCA Standards (Blue Tick) were based on the 'Five Freedoms' framework, which focuses on freedom from negative states, e.g. hunger, fear and injury, in order to achieve good welfare. However, with the recognition that animals can experience positive, as well as negative emotions and the acknowledgement of sentience<sup>2</sup> in the amended Animal Welfare Act 1999, the time has come for a new approach.

As a result, the framework for the SPCA Certified standards has been derived from the Five Domains model of animal welfare, developed by New Zealand Professor, David Mellor<sup>3</sup>. The Five Domains model is a holistic assessment of animal welfare, which addresses both minimising suffering and promoting positive emotional states.

### The Five Domains are:

- nutrition;
- physical environment;
- health;
- behavioural interactions; and
- mental state.

Each of the four physical domains contribute to the provision of opportunities for positive mental experiences, as evaluated in the fifth domain.



<sup>2</sup> Sentience is the ability to feel, perceive or experience things subjectively (i.e. from one's own perspective), rather than objectively (i.e. from an external perspective).

<sup>3</sup> Mellor, D. J., Beausoleil, N. J., Littlewood, K. E., McLean, A. N., McGreevy, P. D., Jones, B., & Wilkins, C. (2020). The 2020 five domains model: Including human–animal interactions in assessments of animal welfare. *Animals: an open access journal from MDPI* 10(10):1870

## Scope

SPCA Certified standards for free range meat chickens apply from the moment that the chicks are placed into the shed, until they are transported for slaughter or euthanased on the farm.

All transport, including transport to and from the farm, up until the point of slaughter, is covered by the Animal Welfare Act and relevant Codes of Welfare. It is the responsibility of the participant (farmer/licensee<sup>4</sup>) to ensure that the supplying hatchery, transport operators, contractors and slaughter facilities comply with the law and ideally follow all best practice recommendations.

## Traceability and Integrity

SPCA Certified endeavours to inspire best practice animal welfare within the meat chicken industry and to ensure transparency in animal welfare. To protect the integrity of SPCA Certified and the participating farmers, distributors, retailers and companies who use the brand, it is important that all SPCA Certified members clearly demonstrate product traceability throughout their supply chains.

SPCA Certified also uses independent audits, including unannounced audits, to maintain the integrity of the scheme and ensure that participants are meeting its standards. As a result, products carrying the SPCA Certified logo allow consumers to identify products that have come from meat chickens farmed to a higher standard of animal welfare than is currently required by law.

For more information about SPCA Certified, including types of membership, procedures and the third party auditing process, please refer to the SPCA Certified Farmed Animals Operations Manual.

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<sup>4</sup> See the SPCA Certified Farmed Animals Operation Manual for more information.

# SPCA Certified Standards for Free Range Meat Chickens

## Important notes:


- Section titles and their accompanying descriptions are taken from the Five Domains.
- Information presented in ***bold italic*** type is either a standard explanation, a recommendation, an area of concern, or an indication of where a standard is likely to be reviewed in the future.
- In order to avoid unnecessary duplication, existing information/records from other sources can be used to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of a standard. Electronic/controller records and logs are acceptable, as long as they can be accessed by SPCA Certified during assessments/audits.

## Positive Mental Experience



### Provide safe, congenial and species-appropriate opportunities to have pleasurable experiences

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The meat chicken icon  indicates those standards and recommendations that provide positive mental experiences for meat chickens.

## Good Nutrition



### Provide ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour

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## Feed

- N1 Meat chickens must have unrestricted access to a good quality diet. The only exception to this is when acting under veterinary advice or when withholding feed for no more than twelve hours prior to transport.



- N2 Feeders must be:
- Distributed evenly within each shed.
  - Located at an appropriate height, suitable to the birds' life stage, in order to ensure they can access the feed using a normal posture and without experiencing undue competition.
  - Maintained in a clean state, in order to avoid feed becoming stale or contaminated.
  - Monitored to ensure that feed is evenly distributed.
- N3 If standard manufactured feeder equipment is used, it must be installed according to the manufacturer's recommendations and be suitable for the birds in production.
- N4 Feed must be free from avian-derived proteins, sub-therapeutic antibiotics (including zinc bacitracin), growth promoters and hormones.
- A current feed declaration, or letter of guarantee, must be available for inspection.
- N5 The use of pharmaceutical products in the birds' feed is prohibited, unless acting under written veterinary guidance. A copy of the veterinary guidance received must be retained for inspection.
- For the avoidance of doubt, a 'pharmaceutical' is any compound that is produced for use as a medicine. It does not include minerals, vitamins or pre/probiotics.
- N6 Feed storage must be secure and feed must not be allowed to become contaminated by pests or the effects of adverse weather.
- N7 In case of any unexpected interruption to the feed supply, there must be sufficient feed stored on the farm to cater for all birds for at least 48 hours.
- N8 A minimum of 0.5 % of the flock must be weighed weekly, in order to ensure that the birds' body weights are in line with the appropriate New Zealand industry standard.
- Records of bodyweight and flock uniformity must be made available, alongside a comparison of the appropriate New Zealand industry standard.
- Any major deviations, i.e. a 15 % change from the standard body weight curve or any increase in flock unevenness, must be immediately investigated.
- To ensure accuracy, weighing scales must be calibrated for each new flock. In-house calibration is acceptable and records must be kept for inspection.
- N9 Feed levels must be monitored daily, in order to ensure equipment is in working order and to check that birds are consuming the correct amount of feed according to the appropriate New Zealand industry standard.
- If changes to the type, quantity or composition of the feed are made during the growing cycle, this must be done gradually.
- N10 Any physiological issues, e.g. loose, watery droppings, that are attributable to feed must be investigated and appropriate remedial action taken.

## Water

- N11 All birds must have unrestricted and continuous access to clean, potable water, including up until the time of catching for slaughter, except when acting under written veterinary advice.
- N12 Drinkers must be:
- Evenly distributed within the shed and as per manufacturer's recommendations.
  - Located at the correct height for birds, in order to allow easy access using a normal posture and without experiencing undue competition.
  - Maintained in a clean state, in order to avoid water becoming contaminated.
- N13 Breed recommendations should be followed regarding the minimum drinker space per bird.
- N14 The use of pharmaceutical products in the birds' water is prohibited, unless acting under written veterinary guidance. A copy of the veterinary guidance received must be retained for inspection.
- N15 Water consumption must be monitored daily, in order to ensure that equipment is in working order and that birds are consuming the correct amount of water as indicated by the appropriate New Zealand industry standard.
- N16 Where a chemical water treatment is used, weekly testing of the chemical at drinker level is required.
- N17 Water quality must be tested annually at both the source and the drinker line, in order to ensure that microbiological levels are acceptable and that the water is potable.
- If *E. coli* is detected, i.e. one or more bacteria per 100 mL of sample water, then immediate remedial action must be taken.
- Water quality reports must be available for inspection on request.
- N18 In the event of a new water source being used, the water supply must be tested before being made available to the birds.
- N19 In the event of a major incident in the surrounding area, e.g. earthquake or major flooding, the water supply must be tested at the source no later than two months after the event being resolved.
- N20 Provision must be made to ensure that there is an alternative emergency water supply, in case the normal water supply fails.

# Good Physical Environment



Provide shade/shelter, suitable housing, good air quality and comfortable resting areas

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## Chick placement

- E1 The shed and facilities must be suitably prepared prior to the arrival of chicks and must include:
- Cleaning and sanitising of all equipment and facilities.
  - Provision of sufficient, suitable and easily accessible feed and water.
  - Appropriate ventilation, lighting, relative humidity and temperature conditions.
  - Provision of good quality litter at an appropriate depth to meet the birds' needs.
  - Ensuring that all equipment is fully functional and able to meet the birds' needs.

- E2 Care must be taken to avoid the chicks becoming thermally stressed.

Sufficient time must be allowed to ensure that the necessary target brooding temperature, at bird level, is achieved, prior to chicks being placed.

Where signs of thermal stress are observed, immediate remedial action must be taken.

- E3 Ammonia levels must be maintained at or below 10 ppm at bird head height, while the chicks are being brooded.
- E4 Once the chicks have been placed, they must not be moved to another shed except in an emergency.
- E5 The use of continuous lighting at any time in the growing cycle is prohibited.
- E6 A lighting pattern of 23 hours of light and one continuous hour of darkness may be used for a maximum of four days after placement (day one being the day of placement). During this time, a minimum average light intensity of 30 lux must be maintained across the shed when the lights are on.

## Shed and housing standards

- E7 A site plan of the farm must be available to view and must include:
- the number of sheds;
  - the shed size (internal length and width in m<sup>2</sup>);
  - the maximum stocking density per shed and associated range area, expressed as birds/m<sup>2</sup> and kg/m<sup>2</sup>;
  - the size of the range in m<sup>2</sup>;
  - the number, size and location of pop holes, e.g. along one side or both sides of the shed;

- the shade and shelter areas on the range, including the type and amount in m<sup>2</sup>;
- any drainage areas (if applicable);
- the internal shed specifications, including the number of feeders and drinkers per bird; and
- the type of lighting and lighting programme in use, including total light hours given.

E8 The birds' physical environment must not cause, nor have the potential to cause, recurring injury, distress or disease to the animals.

E9 All internal surfaces must be made of materials that can be easily and readily cleaned, sanitised and replaced when required.

E10 Any equipment on which the birds rely, e.g. feeders, drinkers and ventilation systems, must be maintained so that it is in full working order. This includes ensuring that all electrical installations are well insulated, inaccessible to birds and safeguarded from rodents.

All electrical installations must be safety checked by a qualified person at least annually and the results recorded.

E11 Where birds are dependent on a power supply for feed, water or environmental controls, a fully functioning alarm system is required, to notify staff of any problems with the power supply.

Personnel must be available to respond to alarms at all times.

With the exception of self-checking/continually monitored systems that notify the owner when a problem occurs, alarms must be checked at least weekly, in order to ensure that they are in full working order.

Any problems found with an alarm system must be rectified as soon as possible and ideally within 24 hours.

E12 An auxiliary power supply must be available on each farm and be functional at all times. It must be capable of powering all critical equipment, including mechanical equipment, for at least 24 hours and must be tested under load at least every month.

Generators should:

- Be self-starting upon a power outage.
- Be started weekly, to ensure functionality. The time, date and result of the start-up should be recorded.
- Be load bank tested at least annually, by a suitably trained operator, in order to ensure that maximum load outputs are available. The test should also cover ancillary equipment to ensure this is working properly. If a load bank test is not available, a test run for a minimum of four hours under full load is an acceptable alternative.
- Be certified by a competent person to be of sufficient size to handle the maximum load that could be required on farm.
- Have scheduled service checks, as stipulated by the manufacturer.
- Have accurate and up to date testing records available for inspection on request.

E13 Alternative plans for providing feed and water, and for controlling the indoor environment, must be available in case of computer failure or mechanical breakdown.

## Flooring

E14 All floors must be easy to clean and sanitise.

E15 All floors must be even, smooth, solid and actively maintained, in order to ensure that no element has the potential to cause injury to the birds.

E16 Floors must not become wet, or be likely to become wet, from rising moisture.

E17 Fully slatted or fully wire/mesh shed floors are prohibited.

***It is recommended that shed floors are either made out of concrete or tar sealed, to allow for effective cleaning and sanitation between flocks.***

## Litter

E18 Birds must have continuous access to good quality litter that is of a suitable material and particle size. Litter must be dry, absorbent, friable and free from toxic contaminants. 🐔

E19 Litter must cover the entire useable indoor floor area. 🐔

E20 If litter becomes irreparably wet, fouled, crusted, capped or pugged, it must be removed promptly and replaced with dry, friable litter. 🐔

E21 At placement, litter depth must be a minimum of 5 cm across the entire shed and maintained at this depth until depopulation. 🐔

E22 From 14 days after placement, until final depopulation, litter condition must be assessed every day and the results recorded using the method below, unless a suitable alternative is agreed with SPCA Certified. The assessment must be done by a trained operator, at a minimum of ten random sites within each shed. If litter is found to be in poor condition, immediate remedial action, e.g. turning or replacement, is required.

For information, litter assessment should not be done under drinker lines or directly opposite pop holes in the shed.

Litter scoring method:

Litter description	Litter condition
Litter loosely packs together when compressed: springs back on release.	Acceptable
Litter packs together easily when compressed: feels wet.	Not acceptable
Litter will not pack together when compressed: very dusty.	Not acceptable



Left sample: too wet, not acceptable. Right sample: about right, acceptable.

*Photo credit: AAAP Welfare Committee Litter Subcommittee.*

- E23 Litter must be completely removed and replaced between flocks.
- E24 Any additional litter kept on site must be properly stored, so that it is not able to become contaminated.
- E25 From three weeks of age, each flock must be scored every week for feather cleanliness and the results recorded (see appendix 4 for details). 🐔

## Lighting

- E26 The lighting programme must be controlled through a timer and must spread light evenly throughout the shed.
- E27 The lighting programme, duration of the light period, approximate light levels and type of lighting used must be recorded for each flock.
- E28 Where artificial lighting is used, it must:
  - Be raised/lowered over a minimum of fifteen minutes at the start and end of each light/dark cycle, in order to allow the birds to prepare for the change.
  - Not be changed/altered abruptly.
  - Operate correctly, with any non-functional or flickering lights being replaced immediately.
- E29 Light meters must be readily available, in order to accurately assess light levels and light uniformity throughout the shed.
- E30 A minimum average light intensity of 20 lux, measured at bird height across the shed, must be provided from five days after placement. The only exceptions to this are during catching, when light levels may be reduced to reduce stress to the birds, and as a last resort, on written veterinary advice, to manage a chronic animal welfare issue.
- E31 Starting from the fifth day after placement, birds must be provided with a minimum of eight hours of continuous light and a minimum of six hours of darkness in each 24-hour

period. Four of the hours of darkness must be continuous and must occur during normal night time.

The only exceptions to this are during the three days before catching, when the minimum dark period may be reduced to four continuous hours and in systems that provide natural light where the natural dark period is less than six hours.

***An average light intensity of 50 lux across the shed is recommended for the entire production cycle.***

***Where possible, the provision of natural lighting inside the shed is recommended.*** 

***SPCA Certified's preference is for a combination of natural light and full spectrum artificial light, including UVA (360nm), to be provided for all meat chickens.***


## Temperature

- E32 Birds must be housed in a thermally comfortable environment at all times. If birds are observed panting (heat stress) or huddling together (cold stress), then immediate remedial action must be taken.
- E33 Provisions must be made to protect the birds from stress associated with extreme weather or other extreme environmental conditions.
- E34 Minimum and maximum temperatures inside sheds must be recorded daily.

## Ventilation and air quality

- E35 Natural or artificial ventilation, sufficient to avoid the build-up of condensation, heat, humidity, dust and noxious gases, without causing draughts, must be provided.
- E36 For buildings constructed after the release of this standard, shed orientation, spacing and ventilation systems must be designed to avoid contaminating one shed with the exhaust from another.
- E37 Ammonia must be assessed at bird head height and recorded daily. Calibrated meters or pull tubes are preferred, although ammonia test strips, e.g. Hydrion, may be used.  
  
With the exception of brooding (see standard E3) ammonia levels at bird head height must be maintained at or below 15 ppm. If the maximum ammonia level is exceeded, immediate remedial action must be taken and the outcome recorded.
- E38 Dust levels in sheds must be managed to avoid negative impacts on the birds. Visible haze inside the shed is an indicator that dust levels are unacceptable.

## Outdoor environment

- E39 Birds must have unrestricted access to an outdoor range area, adjacent to the shed, for at least eight hours every day during daylight hours. 

The minimum size of the range area must be at least 1.5 times the size of the total floor area of the shed that it is attached to.

- E40 Access to the range must be given as soon as possible, but no later than three weeks after placement, i.e. at a maximum of 21 days of age.
- E41 If chickens are to be slaughtered at, or prior to four weeks of age, they must be given access to the range for not less than one week before they are slaughtered. Such access must be during daylight hours and for a minimum of eight hours per day.
- E42 Access to the range must only be prevented in exceptional circumstances, such as during extreme weather conditions (including the issue of a relevant weather alert) or upon written veterinary advice.
- E43 A daily record must be kept, detailing the times that the birds had access to the range, or an explanation as to why they did not. 🐦

Ensuring that birds have access to the range as soon as possible after any exceptional circumstances have resolved, must be a priority.

- E44 Routine inspections by stock-keepers must include an assessment of the number of birds using the range. A simple scoring system, sufficient to identify trends in range use, is acceptable.
- E45 The range must be inspected daily to ensure that there are no factors present, which could cause distress, disease or injury to the birds.
- E46 The range area must be managed to encourage birds to use the outdoor area fully, i.e. to go outside and roam away from the building.
- E47 The ground area directly outside the pop holes must be made of a material that helps to avoid muddy conditions in wet weather. It must have an overhead covering to provide shelter and must be managed so as to avoid attracting rodents or wild birds.
- E48 Other areas on the range must not be allowed to remain in a muddy condition due to standing or stagnant water.
- E49 The range must have appropriate ground cover that is well maintained and well drained. 🐦

Natural ground cover must occupy no less than 70 % of the range, in order to ensure that the birds have sufficient area to forage, scratch and dustbathe.

If arable crops are planted, they must provide effective and appropriate shade, shelter and behavioural enrichment for the birds on the range.

- E50 Overhead shelter and shade, both natural and artificial, must: 🐦
- Cover at least 20 % of the outdoor range area or be provided at an area of at least 8 m<sup>2</sup> per 1,000 birds, whichever is greater.
  - Always be available when the birds have access to the range.
  - Be of sound construction, secure and not pose any welfare or health risks to the birds.
  - Be of sufficient height to ensure that all birds can adopt a normal standing position beneath it.



- Offer adequate protection from overhead/aerial predators.
- Be provided in the form of established natural plantings, plus artificial structures (if needed), with at least half of the total component being in the form of natural cover, e.g. trees and shrubs.
- In the case of facilities built after the release of this standard, written permission will be required from SPCA to allow artificial shelter to comprise more than 50 % of the total, until the natural vegetation has become established.
- Be distributed in a way that encourages full use of the range, with at least 50 % of the available shade and shelter being provided within 5 m of the pop holes.

E51 Where deciduous or immature trees are being used for shade and shelter purposes, other forms of overhead protection must also be provided, until those trees provide sufficient cover for the birds.

E52 The range must be suitably fenced to contain the flock and discourage the entry of predators, while the farm site itself must be kept secure, in order to deter access by unauthorised persons.

***Provision of behavioural enrichment on the range is recommended, as this encourages birds to utilise the outdoor space better.*** 🐔

***It is recommended that birds are given the opportunity to range as soon as possible prior to 21 days of age.*** 🐔

## Pop Holes

E53 Pop holes must:

- Allow easy, safe and comfortable access to and from the range.
- Allow birds to see part of the range and the shelter provisions from inside the shed, when the pop holes are open.
- Be designed to minimise the effects of adverse weather on both the birds and the litter quality.
- Be closed no earlier than the time that the artificial lights are being turned off inside the shed, or at natural dusk, unless they are kept open on a 24-hour basis, as may be the case for older birds.
- Be well fitting and secure when closed.

E54 Where there is a frame or lip at the base of a pop hole, which hinders the birds' ability to easily access the range or get back into the shed, ramps/slats must be provided.

Ramps/slats must run the length of the pop hole, with no gaps, and be maintained to ensure that no part is likely to cause injury to the birds.


Once the birds have access to the range, regular observations must take place in order to ensure the frame or ramps/slats do not impede their access to and from the shed.

E55 There must be at least 2 m of pop holes per 1,000 birds.

Pop holes must be at least 40 cm wide, 35 cm high and must be evenly spaced along the length of the shed.

- E56 For facilities already in existence at the time this standard is released, birds must not have to travel more than 16 m within the shed to reach a pop hole.

For facilities built after the release of this standard, birds must not have to travel more than 13 m within the shed to reach a pop hole.

***It is recommended that birds are able to access the range from both sides of the shed, as this encourages better use of the outdoor area.*** 

***It is recommended that birds should not have to travel more than 8 m within the shed to reach a pop hole.***

## Transport

- E57 Prior to catching for transport, the flock must be assessed by the person in charge, in order to ensure that birds are fit for the journey. The assessment must take into consideration the likely trip duration and weather conditions that will be experienced by the birds.

- E58 Animals deemed unfit for transport, include birds who are:

- Severely lame, deformed, unable to stand or evenly bear weight on both limbs, or walk.
- Unlikely to withstand the journey without suffering unnecessary pain or distress.
- Obviously injured or diseased.
- Severely undersized.

Animals deemed unfit for transport at any stage during the catching and loading process must not be transported and must be euthanased immediately.

- E59 Accurate transport records must be maintained and must include:

- the name and address of the place to which the birds were transported;
- the number of birds that were transported;
- a signed declaration of 'Fitness to Transport' for the birds;
- a record of any birds deemed unfit for transport and the reasons why;
- the time that the birds spent without water and feed;
- the departure date, the time birds were loaded and the time that the transport vehicle left the farm; and
- any occurrences of injury and mortality during loading.

- E60 The ambient temperature and humidity at loading must be recorded and the records made available upon request. A contingency plan must also be in place to manage bird welfare during transport under conditions of high temperature (+27°C) and humidity.

- E61 There must be adequate ventilation for all birds when in transport crates and on the vehicle.

- E62 With the exception of loading and unloading, the transport vehicle must not be kept stationary or parked for extended periods when animals are on board.

If, for any reason, it is unavoidable to keep birds on-board a stationary vehicle, the driver must take action to avoid the birds experiencing heat or cold stress.

Parking in direct sunlight must be avoided.

E63 Where levels of bird mortality or euthanasia during transport exceed 0.3 %, the situation must be investigated by the receiving slaughterhouse and a record of the incident made. Where causes of mortality or injury are identified, prompt action must be taken to prevent further deaths or injury and the matter reported to SPCA Certified.

E64 The time between loading of the last bird, to the time of arrival at the final destination, must be less than four hours. In addition, the maximum time from arrival to slaughter must not exceed six hours. If these times are exceeded for any reason, the matter must be documented and SPCA Certified informed immediately.

Where transport time is less than 1 hour, the maximum time from arrival to slaughter of 7 hours is permitted.

E65 Every effort must be made to ensure that journeys are completed without unnecessary delays. Drivers must be aware of any potential traffic problems in the area and plan their journey accordingly.

***Meat chickens are particularly vulnerable to conditions causing poor welfare during transport. It is therefore important that their physical, health and behavioural needs are met throughout the transport process. Consequently, careful planning is needed at every stage of transport.***

## Emergency preparedness

E66 A written emergency response and preparedness plan must be created. The plan must detail how the farm will safeguard and ensure the health and welfare of the birds in emergency situations or during severe events.

E67 Management practices that reduce the risk and severity of fires must be in place and where possible, fire detection and prevention measures, e.g. extinguishers, should be incorporated into each shed.

All fire prevention measures and fire detection/limitation devices must be maintained and tested regularly.

# Good Health




**Prevent or rapidly diagnose and treat disease and injury, and foster good muscle tone, posture and cardiorespiratory function**

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## Animal health plan

- H1 An animal health plan must be created and maintained. It must include:
- Procedures for the identification of weak, sick or injured birds, including procedures for euthanasia.
  - Biosecurity procedures (including quarantine).
  - Details of health issues that have affected previous flocks and any preventative actions that were undertaken, as well as details of health issues that could affect the current flock.
  - A record of all mortalities, including euthanasia, and the primary reason(s), where those are known. Culls and natural deaths should be recorded separately.
  - Procedures for managing disease outbreaks, lameness, foot pad dermatitis and hock burn.
- Documentation of any corrective actions taken must be kept for a minimum of three years and be available for inspection on request.
- H2 High numbers of sudden deaths, disease outbreaks, or other welfare issues must be investigated and reported to SPCA Certified. This also applies in any situation where the daily flock mortality exceeds 0.3 %.
- H3 The animal health plan must be updated annually, or after any major instance of disease, illness or other problematic outbreak, and after any significant change to the production system. This must be done in accordance with veterinary advice.

***When developing, implementing and reviewing the animal health plan, it is important to establish and maintain a good working relationship with a practicing veterinarian who specialises in poultry medicine.***

***SPCA Certified supports the use of meat chicken breeds that demonstrate improved welfare outcomes in comparison to conventional breeds. This includes the use of slower growing breeds. SPCA Certified strongly recommends that meat chicken producers switch to the use of slower growing breeds as soon as they are available in New Zealand.*** 

## Pharmaceutical use

- H4 Staff involved in the administration of any pharmaceutical must be trained and competent to do so. All equipment used must be calibrated and tested regularly.

H5 Antibiotics at therapeutic levels must only be used where they have been prescribed by a veterinarian for the treatment of a specific diagnosed condition, disease or injury. Prophylactic use of antibiotics is not permitted by SPCA Certified.

In the case of a notifiable disease being confirmed on farm, this must be reported to SPCA Certified as soon as possible.

H6 Pharmaceuticals must only be administered as per the manufacturer's guidelines on the label, be in-date and be licensed for use in New Zealand, unless otherwise authorised by a registered veterinarian.

Pharmaceuticals may only be used 'off-label' with prior veterinary approval. Such approval must follow the relevant Ministry for Primary Industries guidelines<sup>5</sup> and be accompanied by a signed and dated declaration from the veterinarian that 'off-label' use was justified.

Inclusion of animal live weight is required for ensuring accurate dosages.

All pharmaceutical treatments must be safely discarded after the expiration date.

H7 Up-to-date records must be kept of all treatments administered and must include:

- the pharmaceutical name, administration method (including by food or water) and dose rate;
- the reason for administration and the result of treatment; and
- the date(s) administered.

***The animal health plan (see start of this section) should include protocols addressing the use, storage and monitoring of antibiotic treatments and a strategy for the reduction of their use. Protocols should be in line with the recommendations of the New Zealand Veterinary Association (NZVA) policy on judicious use of antimicrobials.***

***Establishing an antimicrobial stewardship plan on farm is highly recommended.***

## Inspection and general health

H8 Birds, both indoors and outdoors, must be inspected at least three times each day, in order to ensure that they do not show signs of injury, disease, distress, abnormal behaviour, lameness or any other health or welfare concerns.

Any bird found to be injured, sick, lame, experiencing pain, or which is unable to access feed and water by itself, must be immediately treated or else euthanased.

H9 Shed inspections must be appropriately spaced throughout the day and records of the inspection made, i.e. date, initials and time of inspection.

Any concerns about the welfare of the birds, the facilities or the equipment, that are observed during inspection, must be recorded and appropriate action taken.

H10 Inspection rates must increase during periods of extreme weather and where there are welfare concerns. Increased inspection rates must continue until conditions have returned to normal.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/processing/agricultural-compounds-and-vet-medicines/acvm-guidance-for-veterinarians/#using-products-off-label>

H11 Inspections must be conducted in a calm and compassionate manner that minimises the chance of birds becoming distressed. 🐦

H12 An assessment of the flock's gait must be conducted in the final week before catching, in order to identify any issues related to lameness. During this assessment, the flock must be carefully encouraged to move, so they can be observed walking.

Any bird observed with severe lameness must be euthanased, in order to avoid further suffering. For the avoidance of doubt, severe lameness is defined as a bird that is either unable to walk or is reluctant to move and cannot walk ten steps before sitting down.

H13 Starting no later than 14 days of age, at least 25 birds per flock (from different parts of the shed) must be inspected each week for general foot pad health, e.g. Foot Pad Dermatitis and hock burn. The results of this assessment must be recorded (see appendices 2 and 3 for details) and is in addition to routine foot pad checking of culls and dead birds.

If more than 12 birds out of those assessed during formal scoring are observed with mild or severe foot pad lesions, the circumstances must be investigated and remedial action taken.

***Persons in charge of meat chickens should ensure regular, positive flock interactions occur, in order to build resilient flocks that are better able to cope with stressful events.*** 🐦

## Euthanasia

H14 Euthanasia must ensure a rapid death, without causing undue pain, fear or distress. It must be done as soon as possible after recognising untreatable pain, distress, injury or disease in the bird.

H15 The only method of euthanasia permitted for routine use on-farm is cervical dislocation.

Other methods that achieve an equivalent or improved welfare outcome, e.g. captive bolt guns, may be used only following SPCA Certified approval.

H16 If approved equipment is used for euthanasia, it must be well maintained, in order to operate efficiently.

H17 Equipment that crushes the bird's neck, including killing pliers, is prohibited.

H18 Methods of neck dislocation that require spinning or flicking the bird by the head are prohibited.

H19 All staff responsible for conducting euthanasia must be appropriately trained and competent for the role. All training must be documented and the techniques used, monitored.

H20 All euthanased birds must be inspected by the person undertaking the procedure, in order to confirm death. The following signs can be used to confirm death:

- A gap in the neck vertebrae, which can be felt with the finger, indicating complete severance between the brain and the spinal cord.
- A lack of rhythmic breathing.

- A lack of blink or nictating membrane (third eyelid) reflexes, when the eyeball is touched.
- Dilated pupils.

***Nothing within this section is intended to discourage the rapid diagnosis and appropriate treatment of any diseased, sick or injured bird.***

## Mortality

H21 Daily mortality rates must be recorded over the entire flock cycle. The information recorded each day must include:

- The number of birds found dead.
- The number of birds euthanased.
- The reason for euthanasia, e.g. lameness.

H22 Mortality rates must be maintained below 0.8 % during the first week of production and below 1 % for each subsequent week. If mortality rates exceed these levels, the causes must be investigated.

In addition, if flock mortality exceeds 0.3 % in any 24-hour period, SPCA Certified must be informed and an investigation carried out.

H23 Carcasses of all euthanased birds, and any birds found dead, must be disposed of immediately upon death/discovery. Disposal must be done:

- in accordance with local Council regulations;
- in a manner that does not put other animals at risk of disease; and
- in a manner that ensures carcasses are protected from pests or being disturbed by other animals.

A record/statement must be on hand, detailing how and where all dead birds are disposed of.

## Biosecurity

H24 A detailed biosecurity plan must be created. Staff must be familiar with and follow instructions to reduce the risk of introducing and/or spreading disease on the farm. As a minimum, the plan must document and implement the following:

- A visitor sign-in book.
- Personal protective equipment.
- Hand washing facilities.
- Hand sanitizer outside all sheds, which must not be allowed to become depleted.
- Procedures for entry to the farm and sheds.
- Pest control procedures and equipment location records.
- Cleaning, sanitation and waste/carcass removal procedures.

H25 Pest control programmes must be humanely managed. Preferable methods of pest control include physical exclusion and removal of elements that may encourage pests, rather than baiting, trapping or poisoning.

Sheds and the area around sheds must be maintained in a clean and tidy condition, in order to reduce the risk of rodent movement.

Where lethal control is used, the extent of the pest problem must be assessed at least annually, in order to determine if lethal control is still warranted and if so, that it meets the requirements of the relevant regulatory authority.

***Where possible, all sheds housing birds should have a period of at least seven days without birds between flocks, in order to allow equipment and facilities to be thoroughly cleaned, sanitised and dried.***

## Appropriate Behavioural Interactions



**Provide sufficient space, proper facilities, congenial company and appropriately varied conditions**

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### Care of chicks

- B1 All chicks must be unloaded and placed into sheds as soon as possible after arrival at the farm.
- B2 Where, for any reason, chicks cannot be unloaded immediately, a plan must be in place to ensure their welfare until unloading can commence.
- B3 Chicks must be handled with extreme care during unloading and placement. This includes careful tipping of trays close to the shed floor. 🐣
- B4 Chicks must be inspected at least three times a day, in order to ensure their appearance, health, behaviour and distribution in the shed is appropriate for their age and breed. Where an abnormality is identified, immediate remedial action must be taken.
- B5 A record of chick placement must be kept and must include:
  - the hatchery name and address;
  - the breed of bird;
  - the number of chicks placed;
  - the time and date of chick placement; and



- the mortality after placement in the shed.

***Compassionate, careful handling and inspection of chicks throughout the rearing period is recommended, as it will help build more resilient flocks.*** 🐔

## Platforms

- B6 All birds must have access to suitable platforms for perching from seven days after placement. Structures designed for laying hens are not suitable for meat chickens, due to the increased risk of leg and keel bone injury they present. 🐔
- B7 Platforms must be distributed evenly throughout the length of the shed. 🐔
- B8 A minimum of 3 linear metres of platform space must be provided for every 1000 birds.
- B9 Platforms must support the whole of the bird's foot, have a flat surface, with rounded edges and be positioned at a height which enables birds to easily get on and off. 🐔
- B10 Platforms must be placed far enough apart from each other, walls, drinker lines, etc., to allow birds to rest comfortably on them.
- B11 If platforms are removed for litter maintenance or thinning/depopulation, they must be replaced as soon as the activity has been completed.

***It is recommended that platforms are not more than 15 cm in height and that lower ones are also provided, in order to enable older birds to use them with ease.*** 🐔

***It is recommended that platforms are covered with a non-slip surface, especially if they are made from plastic or metal, in order to reduce the risk of birds slipping off them.*** 🐔

***Plastic transport crates, turned upside down and placed on the litter, can provide a cheap and easy platform for perching.***

***Ramps should be used for perches/platforms higher than 15 cm, in order to make it easier for birds to access them safely.*** 🐔

***Perching and roosting are fundamental needs of meat chickens. For this reason, the provision of platforms to enable this to occur is seen as a minimum requirement, rather than a form of behavioural enrichment.***

## Behavioural enrichment

- B12 Sufficient and suitable behavioural enrichment must be present from at least seven days of age. 🐔
- B13 Enrichment items must be spread evenly throughout the shed, so that they are easily accessible to all birds. 🐔

Where large enrichment items are used, e.g. cardboard boxes or straw/hay/wood shaving bales, there must be at least one enrichment item for every 1,000 birds.

Where small enrichment items are used, e.g. coloured plastic chains, egg boxes/trays or pecking blocks, there must be at least one enrichment item for every 500 birds.

- B14 Enrichment items must be cleaned and sanitised, or disposed of, between flocks, in order to prevent disease transmission. 🦋
- B15 A weekly record of bird interactions with the behavioural enrichment items must be kept (see appendix 5 for details and examples of enrichment items). 🦋

***The provision of behavioural enrichment has been shown to increase bird activity, promote leg strength and decrease the incidence of bird welfare issues. Combining a variety of both small and large enrichment items is recommended.*** 🦋

## Stocking densities

- B16 All meat chickens must be provided with enough space to move freely, turn around completely and perform natural behaviours, such as preening, wing flapping and full extension stretching, without coming into contact with other birds. 🦋
- B17 The maximum permitted stocking density inside the shed is 34 kg/m<sup>2</sup> and must be calculated based on the target live weight of the birds at slaughter.
- B18 A maximum of two cuts/thins per cycle (excluding depopulation) is allowed.
- B19 The maximum permitted stocking density on the range is 10 birds/m<sup>2</sup>.
- B20 If conditions that signify poor flock welfare are observed, e.g. severe Foot Pad Dermatitis or hock burn, the stocking density must be reviewed.

***SPCA Certified strongly recommends stocking meat chickens at a maximum of 30 kg/m<sup>2</sup>. Future versions of this standard will likely reduce the maximum permitted stocking density in order to achieve this.***

***SPCA Certified recommends that no flock thinning/cutting occurs, in order to minimise bird stress during growing.***

## Managers, stock-keepers and other personnel

- B21 Managers must ensure that all staff who are directly involved with the birds have access to, are familiar with, and adhere to the most up-to-date version of the SPCA Certified standards for free range meat chickens and the relevant Codes of Welfare.
- B22 The farm must have a written policy of the actions that will be taken if an employee is found to be negligent in their role and responsibilities in relation to maintaining the welfare of the birds.
- B23 The farm must have a written policy that encourages employees to report any concerns they have in regard to personnel actions or situations that negatively impact the birds' health and welfare. Where concerns are raised, an immediate investigation into the issue must be conducted.

- B24 Sufficient resources, including staff, must be provided, in order to ensure that the birds' needs are met in a compassionate manner. 🐦
- B25 All staff must undergo training to ensure that they can carry out their duties and responsibilities in a manner that promotes positive health and welfare for the birds in their care. Stock-keepers in particular, must have a good working knowledge of poultry health and husbandry that is specific to their area of work and responsibilities. For example: 🐦
- Identifying sick, diseased or injured birds, providing appropriate treatment, and knowing when to seek management and veterinary advice.
  - Conducting euthanasia.
  - Carrying out appropriate handling and depopulation procedures.
  - Understanding bird behaviour, including the care of day-old/newly placed chicks, and the ability to recognise deviations from normal flock activity.
  - Understanding and performing assessments of bird welfare, including lameness and foot health scoring.
  - Performing routine husbandry procedures in a manner that minimises fear and distress.
  - Operating, inspecting and maintaining equipment and alarms.
- B26 Up-to-date records must be kept detailing on-going training for staff.
- B27 All staff responsible for the chickens, including external personnel, must be fully aware of their personal roles and responsibilities with regard to animal welfare.
- B28 Staff who are still in training, must work in conjunction with a fully trained, competent and experienced stock-keeper(s), until they are fully trained themselves. No member of staff is to carry out any task that they have not been trained in or are not competent in performing.
- B29 All staff must know who to contact should they observe anything abnormal.
- Emergency contact details must be readily available.

***The initial and continuing training of all personnel involved with meat chicken husbandry is important in promoting a high standard of animal welfare. 🐦***

***Where possible, training from certified training providers is recommended.***


## Catching

- B30 Birds must always be approached, caught, handled and moved in a calm and careful manner that does not cause injury or undue fear and distress to them.
- B31 When handling individual birds, they must be caught and carried in an upright position, with the catcher's hands cradling the bird's chest and holding the wings against the body. The only exceptions to this are:
- when carrying very young chicks;
  - catching for slaughter;
  - catching for euthanasia, when individual birds may be picked up by the base of both


wings, with the chest supported; or

- during husbandry procedures, when individual birds may be caught by one leg then carried by both.

- B32 When catching for slaughter, no more than three birds may be carried in each hand. In addition, birds must not be caught or carried by their wings, tail, neck or head.
- B33 Birds must never be hit, thrown, swung, dropped, kicked or handled in any way that could cause them injury or distress.
- B34 Migration barriers must be used when needed, in order to prevent bird smothering and overcrowding. If crowding does occur, the birds must be spread out calmly and quietly.
- B35 Catching must take place under low light or blue light conditions, in order to minimise bird stress.
- B36 Catching teams must never put the speed of operation before bird welfare.
- B37 Any birds that are injured during catching must be promptly treated or else euthanased.

***Recommended best practice catching is that chickens should be carried around the body, upright and held around the wings and chest, so that they are not inverted.*** 

## Depopulation

- B38 A depopulation plan must be available on farm and must include:
- Clear guidelines on humane catching and handling procedures.
  - How to catch and move birds so that they do not crowd or smother.
  - Euthanasia procedures and the persons responsible during depopulation.
  - Transport arrangements.
  - How the needs of the birds will be met if there is an unexpected delay or an emergency.
  - The time and date when feed, water and behavioural enrichment will be withdrawn.
- B39 All staff involved in the depopulation process must be trained and competent in handling and moving birds, and be aware of the factors that may negatively impact upon the birds' welfare.
- All stages of the depopulation process must be conducted in a manner that does not cause the birds to experience undue fear or distress.
- B40 The birds must have access to the range until the day before catching and loading takes place. 
- B41 Environmental conditions within the shed must be controlled, in order to ensure that the birds are not negatively affected during catching and loading.
- B42 Feed must not be withdrawn for longer than twelve hours prior to catching.

- B43 If environmental enrichment is removed, it must be withdrawn at the same time as feed, in order to minimise the disturbance caused to the birds.
- B44 Water must be available to the birds until immediately prior to catching.
- B45 Noise produced by staff and equipment must be kept to a minimum at all times.
- B46 A nominated and stated member of the team must be responsible for supervising, monitoring and maintaining good animal welfare standards throughout the depopulation process.
- B47 If a worker is found to be in breach of SPCA Certified standards during depopulation, the supervisor must stop the worker, address the issue and take appropriate action. After the issue has been resolved, a record of the incident must be created and made available on request.
- B48 Any birds that are injured during depopulation must be promptly treated or else euthanased.
- B49 Where only a portion of the birds are being removed from a house, e.g. during a thin/cut:
- Catching procedures must be managed to minimise any detrimental impact on the welfare of those birds remaining in the house.
  - The birds remaining in the house must be provided with feed and water immediately after catching has finished.
  - Environmental enrichment and perching structures must be reintroduced to the shed as soon as practicable.
- B50 Auditable records of each depopulation must be created and be made available to view on request.

***Careful planning is required during the catching, loading and transportation period, in order to minimise the risk of injury and distress caused to the birds.***

## Loading and unloading

- B51 Only personnel who are trained and competent in the handling of birds are to be involved in the loading and unloading procedure.
- B52 Birds must be placed into transport containers inside the shed.
- B53 Transport vehicles must be parked as close as possible to the shed being depopulated, in order to reduce the distance that the loaded containers have to be moved.
- B54 Birds must be carried with care and placed into the transport containers in an upright position. Any birds found lying on their backs in the transport container must be placed into an upright position.

Birds must never be dropped or thrown into the transport containers.

- B55 The vehicle and all transport containers and associated equipment must be examined prior to the birds being loaded, in order to ensure that they are clean, secure, fit for purpose and that no element, e.g. sharp edges or protrusions, could cause injury or distress to the birds.
- B56 Transport containers used to move chickens must:
- Be at least 22 cm in height.
  - Be stocked no more than 57 kg/m<sup>2</sup>.
  - Provide enough space to ensure that the risk of thermal stress is minimised and that all birds are transported comfortably.
  - Not have wire or wire mesh floors.
  - Have openings large enough to allow the birds to easily be placed inside.
- B57 Birds must be loaded into transport containers carefully, in order to ensure that no part of their bodies become trapped. Particular care must be taken when stacking containers or when drawers are being opened and closed.
- B58 Transport crates/containers/modules containing birds must not be thrown or dropped and must be moved carefully during loading and unloading.
- B59 Once on the transport vehicle, transport containers must be safely secured, in order to ensure that they do not move during the journey.
- B60 All conveyances and containers must have sufficient ventilation, even when the vehicle is stationary, in order to prevent the birds from exposure to harmful conditions, e.g. concentrations of gases or water vapour, and to protect them from climatic conditions that may compromise their welfare.
- B61 Any birds that are injured during loading or unloading must be promptly treated or else euthanased.

**END OF STANDARDS**

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Records required

Records	Standard	Description
<b>Three times each day</b>		
Flock/shed inspections	<b>H8 &amp; H9</b>	Date and time of the inspection. Initials of the person doing the inspection. Record any signs of injury, distress, abnormal behaviour or other concerns identified and any actions taken.
<b>Daily</b>		
Access to range	<b>E43</b>	Record the time that pop holes were opened and closed. If not opened, give a detailed explanation as to why not.
Ammonia level	<b>E37</b>	Date, time and test result. Initials of person doing inspection. Record the outcome of any remedial action taken.
Euthanasia & mortality	<b>H19 &amp; H21</b>	Retain euthanasia training records for inspection. Record mortality rate and reasons for euthanasia and mortality (where known).
Litter quality (from day 14)	<b>E22</b>	Record the litter condition in at least 10 different areas in each shed.
Temperature	<b>E34</b>	Record the minimum and maximum temperature in each shed.
<b>Weekly</b>		
Body weight and calibration records	<b>N8</b>	Weigh 0.5 % of the flock. Calibrate scales between flocks and record result.
Enrichment interaction	<b>B15</b>	Whole flock general summary (see appendix 5).
Feather cleanliness	<b>E25</b>	Visual assessment of entire flock, every week from 3 weeks of age.



Foot health inspections (from day 14)	<b>H13</b>	Foot pad condition, including hock burn, from 25 birds assessed randomly in the shed (see appendices 2 and 3).
Generator start-up	<b>E12</b>	Record time, date and result of test.
Water chemical treatment	<b>N16</b>	Date of testing. Initials of person doing the test. Record the results of the test.
<b>Monthly</b>		
Generator testing	<b>E12</b>	Load testing results required.
<b>Annual</b>		
Animal health plan	<b>H1 &amp; H3</b>	Review and update annually or after a major disease outbreak. Record any corrective actions taken and retain documentation for at least three years.
Electrical safety check	<b>E10</b>	Retain annual test results for inspection.
Generator testing	<b>E12</b>	Load bank/full load test results. Assessment of load handling capability. Service/maintenance records.
Water quality	<b>N17</b>	Retain laboratory report for water quality (if not on town supply). Retain <i>E.coli</i> test results for drinker lines.
<b>Other</b>		
Biosecurity plan	<b>H24</b>	Must be available for inspection.
Chick placement contingency plan	<b>B2</b>	Retain for inspection.
Chick placement record (every flock)	<b>B5</b>	Record: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hatchery name and address.</li> <li>• Bird breed.</li> <li>• Number of chicks placed.</li> <li>• Time and date of placement.</li> <li>• Post-placement mortality.</li> </ul>
Dead bird disposal (every occurrence)	<b>H23</b>	Record details of how and where birds have been disposed of.

Depopulation plan (every depopulation)	<b>B38</b>	Review and update for each depopulation.
Depopulation record (every depopulation)	<b>B50</b>	Record of number of birds removed and any deviations from the depopulation plan.
Detailed site plan	<b>E7</b>	Must be available for inspection.
Emergency response and preparedness plan	<b>E66</b>	Must be available for inspection.
Feed declaration or letter of guarantee	<b>N4</b>	Retain for inspection.
Lighting plan (every flock)	<b>E27</b>	Record: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lighting programme in use.</li> <li>• Duration of light/dark period(s).</li> <li>• Light levels (in lux).</li> <li>• Type of lighting in use.</li> </ul>
Negligence policy	<b>B22</b>	Must be available for inspection.
Off label pharmaceutical use (every occurrence)	<b>H6</b>	Retain veterinary approval document for inspection.
Pharmaceutical records (every occurrence)	<b>H7</b>	Record: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The pharmaceutical name, administration method and dose rate.</li> <li>• The reason for administration and the result of treatment.</li> <li>• The date(s) administered.</li> </ul>
Staff training	<b>B26</b>	Record: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name of staff member.</li> <li>• Date and type of training.</li> <li>• Qualifications gained (if appropriate).</li> </ul>

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Transport records  
and temperature/  
humidity  
(every  
transportation)

**E59 & E60**

Record:

- The name and address of the destination.
- The number of birds transported.
- Birds unfit for transport and the reason why.
- The time without feed and water.
- The departure date, time the birds were loaded and time the transport vehicle left the farm.
- Any occurrence of injury and/or mortality during loading.
- Ambient temperature and humidity during loading.

Provide a signed 'Fitness for Transport' declaration.

Have a temperature contingency plan available for inspection.

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Whistleblowing  
policy

**B23**

Must be available for inspection.

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## Appendix 2: Photo guide to assessing Foot Pad Dermatitis (FPD) in meat chickens

### Method

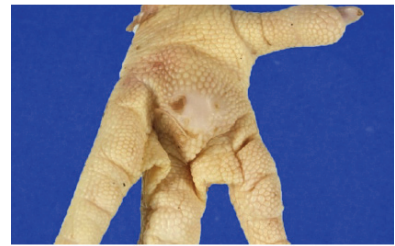
- Assess the feet of at least 25 birds in each flock.
- Select the birds from different parts of the shed and check for signs of Foot Pad Dermatitis, using the images below for reference.
- If more than 12 birds assessed have a score of 1 or 2, the cause must be investigated and remedial action taken.



Score 0: smooth, no lesion



Score 0: small discoloration



Score 0: (almost) healed lesion (scar)



Score 1: superficial lesion, discoloration



Score 1: dark papillae, no ulceration



Score 1: substantial discoloration



Score 2: dark papillae and ulcer



Score 2: ulcer covered by crust



Score 2: abscess, bumble foot, swollen

*Images: Swedish Scoring System (Version 1.3) by de Jong and Van Harn, 2014, Wageningen University & Research, Wageningen Livestock Research, Netherlands.*

## Appendix 3: Assessment of hock burn

### Method

- Assess the hocks of at least 25 birds in each flock.
- Select the birds from different parts of the shed and check for signs of hock burn, using the guide below for reference.
- If more than 12 birds assessed have a score of 1 or 2, the cause must be investigated and action taken.

Score	Description
0	None. Lesions are absent or else very small and superficial (<1mm). There is slight discolouration in a limited area, with mild thickening of the skin (hyperkeratosis).
1	Mild. The affected area does not extend over the entire hock. There is substantial discolouration, with dark papillae, superficial lesions, but no ulceration.
2	Severe. The affected area extends over the greater surface of the hock. There are deeper lesions with ulceration. Haemorrhage, scabs of significant size and a severely swollen area may also be present.

Adapted from AssureWel, Meat Chicken Assessment Protocol: <http://www.assurewel.org/broilers>



Meat chicken with mild hock burn

Image credit: Broiler Signals/Peter Hut. See <http://www.assurewel.org/broilers.html> for more information.

## Appendix 4: Feather cleanliness score

Healthy birds in normal circumstances keep themselves clean. When bird's feathers are found to be dirty, this may signal a litter quality issue.

### Method

- From three weeks of age, score the flock in each shed for feather cleanliness.
- Scan the entire flock on entry to the shed and record the score that applies to the majority of the flock, i.e. more than 50 % of the birds. NB. The score may be revised after walking the shed if necessary.

Score	Description
0	None/Mild. Flock plumage is not significantly dirty. The feathers on breast may be slightly stained or soiled. There is no clumping of feathers.
1	Moderate. Overall plumage is moderately dirty. The feathers on breast are stained or soiled and this may extend onto the wings. Some clumping of feathers is evident.
2	Severe. Flock plumage is very dirty. The feathers on the breast and wings are heavily stained or soiled and this may extend to the belly/vent area. There is considerable clumping of feathers.

*Adapted from AssureWel, Meat Chicken Assessment Protocol: <http://www.assurewel.org/broilers>*

## Appendix 5: Engagement with enrichment

A weekly record of bird interaction with the behavioural enrichment items provided must be kept. This will give an understanding of the level of engagement with the items, e.g. interaction or no/low interaction. Where possible, comment on any likely reasons for no/low engagement with the enrichment items provided, or where there is high interaction, record those enrichment items being used the most. This will help when planning future enrichment interventions.

### Method

- On entry to a shed, visually assess the whole flock for engagement with the enrichment items provided.

Score	Interaction	Description
0	No/Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No or limited interaction with the items.</li><li>• Likely reasons for no or low engagement with items.</li></ul>
1	Yes/High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Birds are observed interacting with the items.</li></ul>

Studies have shown that the following can be useful as forms of environmental enrichment:

### Large items

- Straw bales. Chopped straw (4-5 cm in length), pressed and presented in 20 kg bales.
- Bales of wood shavings (not sawdust).
- Heaped piles of wood shavings.
- Cardboard boxes.

### Small items

- Lengths of plastic chain hung in the shed\*
- Vegetables, e.g. cabbages, hung from string/rope in the shed
- Egg trays/boxes
- Pecking blocks
- Balls\*
- Plastic bottles (empty)\*
- Mirrored/shiny surfaces\*
- Strips of newspaper scattered on the floor.

\* These items have to be regularly changed/rotated in order to maintain their novelty. Compact Discs/DVD's are not recommended, because of the risk of them shattering when pecked.



## Contact

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