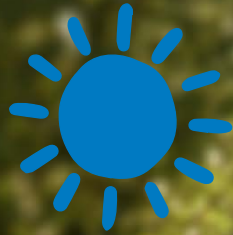
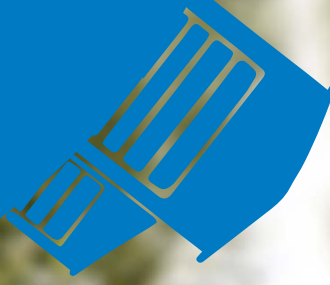
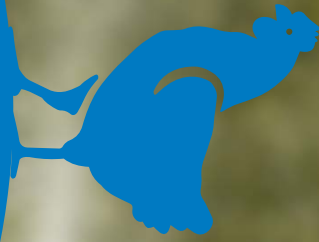




Free Range and Barn Layer Hens

Farm Audit Checklist



Farm Audit Checklist for Free Range and Barn Layer Hens

Version 1.1 – 2026



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Introduction

This document provides a summary of the relevant SPCA Certified standards for free range and barn layer hens and is intended to help members assess their farm and prepare for an audit.

It is not exhaustive and not intended as a replacement for the standards, which should be read and fully understood before this checklist is used.

In addition, while completing this checklist and addressing any problems that it raises will increase the likelihood of a successful audit, it is not a guarantee of success.

Please do not send this document to SPCA Certified. It is provided purely for your own reference.

Date of assessment:		Flock ages:	
Overall comments:			

Reference Standard	Summarised standard	Check (Y/N)	Comments
	Good Nutrition		
	Feed		
N1 – N5	Hens have unrestricted access to a good diet, which is provided in a suitable way and does not contain pharmaceuticals, antibiotics, hormones, growth promotors or avian derived proteins.		
N6	Hens have access to insoluble grit at least weekly.		
N7 & N8	Food is stored securely and enough is on hand to deal with emergencies.		
N9	Hens are regularly weighed, records kept and veterinary advice sought, if average flock weights drop by more than 5 %.		
N10 & N11	Feed levels are monitored daily and any resulting bird health or welfare concerns are investigated.		

	Water		
N12 – N14	Hens have unrestricted access to clean water, which is provided in a suitable way.		
N15 & N16	Water quality is tested at least annually (weekly if chemically treated) and the results recorded.		
N17	New water sources are tested before being given to the birds.		
N19	An emergency water supply is in place.		

Reference Standard	Summarised standard	Check (Y/N)	Comments
	Good Environment		
	Pullet placement		
E1	Sheds and facilities are suitably prepared for pullet arrival.		

	Shed and housing standards		
E2	A detailed site plan is available for viewing.		
E3 – E5	Hens (and people) can move freely through the shed without the risk of injury, distress or disease.		
E6 & E7	Equipment is maintained and regularly checked. Alarms are in place to warn staff of problems.		
E8	An auxiliary power supply is in place and is tested under load, at least monthly.		
	Flooring		
E9 – E10 & E12 – E13	Floors are even, smooth, solid and maintained to avoid injury. They are not fully slatted or meshed and rising moisture is prevented.		
E11	Provision is made to enable claw wear.		

	Litter		
E14, E16 – E18	Good quality litter, which covers the entire usable floor area, is available at all times and is managed to keep it dry, friable and of a suitable depth.		
E19	Litter condition is assessed weekly and poor litter conditions addressed.		
E20 & E21	Extra litter is uncontaminated and all litter is replaced between flocks.		
	Nest boxes		
E22 – E24	Hens have easy access to a sufficient number of nest boxes, with suitable and hygienic flooring/ nesting substrates.		
E26	Floor eggs are regularly collected and not allowed to go above a target of 2 %.		
	Lighting		
E27 – E29	Hens have a minimum of 12 hours continuous light and eight hours continuous dark each day. Light is spread evenly throughout the shed and is of 20 lux or greater at hen height.		

E30	Light is available to ensure all birds can be thoroughly inspected.		
	Temperature		
E31 & E32	Hens are kept in a comfortable environment and protected from extreme weather conditions.		
E33	Minimum and maximum temperatures are recorded daily.		
	Ventilation and air quality		
E34, E35 & E38	Condensation, heat, humidity, dust and noxious gases are not allowed to accumulate or contaminate other sheds.		
E37	Ammonia levels are measured every day and kept below 15 ppm.		
	Stocking densities		
E39	Hens can move freely and perform normal behaviours.		

E40	Flock sizes are no bigger than 5,000 birds.		
E41 & E42	The stocking density does not exceed 7 birds/m ² in barn sheds and 9 birds/m ² in free range sheds.		
E43	Free range stocking densities do not exceed 1,500 birds/ha without range rotation or spelling. 2,000 birds/ha with range rotation or spelling.		
	Multi-tier systems		
E44 & E45	Hens can move freely around all parts of the system and be easily inspected.		
E46 & E47	Ramps are safe and easy for hens to use and there is sufficient space between each tier and the one above or below it.		
E48	Manure belts are operated at least every week.		

	Outdoor environment		
E49	Hens can go outside for at least eight hours each day, starting no later than three weeks after completing nest box training.		
E50 & E51	Hens are regularly inspected on the range and records of range access kept.		
E52 – E56	The range is inspected every day and managed in a way that avoids mud and standing water accumulation, while encouraging hen movement.		
E57	Shade and shelter covers 20 % of the range. It is safe and suitable for hens to use and encourages full use of the range.		
E58	Deciduous and growing trees are supplemented with other forms of shade and shelter.		
E59	The range area is properly fenced.		

	Pop holes		
E60 & E61	Hens are easily able to access an appropriate number of pop holes for unrestricted access to the range.		
E62	One pop hole, measuring 1 m x 35 cm, is provided for every 600 hens.		
	Winter garden (or veranda)		
E63	Birds are given access to the winter garden no later than three weeks after placement.		
E64, E65 & E67	Winter gardens are at least 2 m wide, have suitable flooring and protect hens from adverse weather conditions.		
E66	Pop holes to/from the winter garden measure 40 cm wide by 35 cm high and are evenly placed along the shed.		
	Transport		
E68 & E69	Flocks are assessed before transport and any hens found to be unfit are euthanased.		

E70	Detailed transport records are kept.		
E71 & E72	Transport vehicles are ventilated and a contingency plan is in place for when the ambient temperature exceeds 25°C.		
E73	Transport vehicles are not left standing, except when loading and unloading.		
E74	Any bird mortality above 0.2 % is investigated.		
E75 & E76	Journey durations do not exceed eight hours and drivers are aware of possible delays along the route.		
	Emergency preparedness		
E77	An emergency response and preparedness plan is in place.		

Reference Standard	Summarised standard	Check (Y/N)	Comments
	Good Health		
	Animal health plan		
H1 – H3	A detailed animal health plan, which is regularly reviewed and which covers major health and welfare issues, is in place and records are kept for a minimum of three years.		
	Pullet health		
H4 & H5	Pullets are vaccinated against Marek's disease and placement records are kept.		
	Pharmaceutical use		
H6 – H8	Staff are properly trained and pharmaceuticals are only used when prescribed and then only <i>as per</i> manufacturers guidelines, unless otherwise authorised by a veterinarian.		
H9	Detailed records of pharmaceutical administration are kept.		

	Feather pecking and cannibalism		
H10	Beak trimming is done at the hatchery, on chicks no older than 24 hours, using infra-red treatment.		
H11 & H12	Any other beak trimming is only done as a last resort, following SPCA approval and only 25 % of the upper and lower beak is removed.		
H13	Monthly feather scoring is practiced and recorded after 30 weeks of age.		
	Inspection and general health		
H14 & H15	Flocks are inspected at least twice daily and records kept. Sick hens are separated from the main flock for treatment.		
H16	Nest boxes are inspected at least weekly.		
H17 & H18	Inspections are done calmly and increased when there are welfare concerns or during extreme weather.		

H19	Monthly foot health inspections are carried out.		
	Euthanasia		
H20 – H24	Euthanasia is performed by cervical dislocation, using properly maintained and appropriate equipment and methods (not killing pliers or spinning/flicking), as soon as untreatable pain/distress is detected.		
H25 & H26	Staff conducting euthanasia are properly trained and inspect all euthanased birds to confirm death.		
	Mortality		
H27 & H28	Daily mortality rates are recorded and investigated if they exceed 0.25 % in any one month.		
H29	Carcasses are disposed of safely and according to local regulations.		

	Egg production		
H30 & H31	Variations in egg production are investigated and performance records are available for each flock.		
H32 & H33	Eggs are not collected in a way that distresses/ harms the hens and forced moulting is not performed.		
H34	The farm operates under an official Risk Management Plan (RMP).		
	Biosecurity		
H35 & H36	A detailed biosecurity plan is in place and pest control programmes are reviewed annually.		

Reference Standard	Summarised standard	Check (Y/N)	Comments
	Appropriate Behaviour		
	Sourcing of pullets		
B1	Pullets are reared in an appropriate system to the one they will live in as adults.		
	Care of pullets		
B2, B4 & B5	Pullets are handled with care and inspected regularly after placement.		
B3	A plan is in place to ensure pullet welfare if they cannot be placed immediately upon arrival at the farm.		
	Behavioural enrichment		
B6 – B8	Enrichment, spread evenly through the shed, is available to all hens and cleaned or disposed of between flocks.		

B9	Hens use of the enrichment is recorded every week.		
	Perches and perching structures		
B10 – B12	All hens have access to suitable and comfortable perches/perching structures.		
B13	Electrified perching wires are properly fitted and turned off after nest box training.		
	Managers, stock-keepers and other personnel		
B14	All staff understand and comply with the latest version of the standards and relevant Codes of Welfare.		
B15 & B16	Policies covering staff negligence and whistle-blowing around hen welfare are in place and complaints are followed up.		
B17 & B18	All staff are appropriately trained in hen welfare and training records are kept.		

B19 – B21	Staff are aware of their animal welfare responsibilities, do not undertake unsupervised tasks until fully trained and know who to report problems/issues to.		
	Catching and handling at depopulation		
B22 – B24	No more than three hens are carried in each hand, after having been caught in an appropriate way, which does not cause undue fear and distress to them.		
B25	Birds are never caught or handled in a way that causes injury or pain.		
	End of lay depopulation		
B26 & B27	Staff are properly trained in hen depopulation and work according to a depopulation plan.		
B28 & B30	Hens have access to the range/winter garden until the day before depopulation and food is available until eight hours before depopulation.		
B29 & B31	The indoor environment is controlled and where enrichment is removed, it is done at the same time as feed withdrawal.		

B32	Hens have access to water until immediately before catching begins.		
B33 & B34	A nominated catching supervisor is in place and all noise is kept to a minimum.		
B35 & B36	Catching teams prioritise welfare over speed and work under low light conditions to minimise hen stress.		
B37 & B38	Anyone breaching the standards is removed from the catching team and any incidents or mortality during catching is investigated.		
	Loading and unloading		
B39	Only properly trained people load and unload hens.		
B40 & B41	Hens are moved via the shortest route, in an upright position and not dropped/thrown into transport containers.		
B42 & B43	All transport equipment is inspected before loading and is deemed appropriate for the task.		

B44 – B46	Hens are loaded into containers with care and containers are handled gently/secured safely.		
B47	Containers and vehicles have enough ventilation to avoid exposing hens to harm.		

END OF ASSESSMENT



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