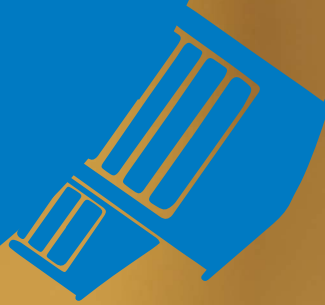




# Meat Chickens

Farm Audit Checklist



# Farm Audit Checklist for Meat Chickens

VERSION 1 – 2023



## Contact

Email: [certified@spca.nz](mailto:certified@spca.nz)

Web: [www.spcacertified.nz](http://www.spcacertified.nz)

©The SPCA (Royal New Zealand Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) 2026.  
Subject to [Terms and Conditions](#) of use.

# Introduction

This document provides a summary of the relevant SPCA Certified standards for meat chickens 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 it raises, it is not a guarantee of success.

<b>Date of assessment:</b>		<b>Flock ages:</b>	
<b>Overall comments:</b>			

<b>Reference Standard</b>	<b>Summarised standard</b>	<b>Check (Y/N)</b>	<b>Comments</b>
	<b>Good Nutrition</b>		
	<b>Feed</b>		
<b>N1 – N5</b>	Birds have unrestricted access to a good diet, which is provided in a suitable way and does not contain pharmaceuticals, antibiotics (including zinc bacitracin), hormones, growth promotors or avian derived proteins.		
<b>N6 &amp; N7</b>	Food is stored securely and enough is on hand to deal with emergencies.		
<b>N8</b>	Birds are weighed weekly, records kept and an investigation undertaken, if average flock weights deviate by more than 15 % from the standard growth curve.		
<b>N9 &amp; N10</b>	Feed levels are monitored daily and any resulting bird health or welfare concerns are investigated.		

	<b>Water</b>		
<b>N11 – N13 &amp; N15</b>	Birds have unrestricted access to clean water, which is provided in a suitable way and water consumption is monitored daily.		
<b>N14</b>	Pharmaceuticals are not used in the water supply without veterinary approval.		
<b>N16 &amp; N17</b>	Water quality is tested at least annually (weekly if chemically treated) and the results recorded.		
<b>N18</b>	New water sources are tested before being given to the birds.		
<b>N19</b>	No later than two months after a major incident in the surrounding area, water sources must be tested.		
<b>N20</b>	An emergency water supply is in place.		

<b>Reference Standard</b>	<b>Summarised standard</b>	<b>Check (Y/N)</b>	<b>Comments</b>
	<b>Good Environment</b>		
	<b>Chick placement</b>		
<b>E1</b>	Sheds and facilities are suitably prepared for chick arrival.		
<b>E2 &amp; E3</b>	Chicks are not thermally stressed and ammonia levels are kept below 10 ppm.		
<b>E4</b>	Chicks are not moved after placement.		

<b>E5 &amp; E6</b>	23-hour light periods (at 30 lux) are only used for a maximum of four days following placement. Continuous light is not used.		
	<b>Shed and housing standards</b>		
<b>E7</b>	A detailed site plan is available for viewing.		
<b>E8 &amp; E9</b>	The shed does not pose an injury risk to the animals and all internal surfaces can be easily cleaned, sanitised and replaced if needed.		
<b>E10 &amp; E11</b>	Equipment is maintained and regularly checked. Alarms are in place to warn staff of problems and are checked weekly.		
<b>E12</b>	An auxiliary power supply is in place and is tested under load, at least monthly.		
<b>E13</b>	A contingency plan is in place to manage feed, water and the internal environment, in the case of mechanical breakdown or computer failure.		
	<b>Flooring</b>		
<b>E14 – E17</b>	Floors are even, smooth, solid and maintained to avoid injury. They are also easy to clean. Fully slatted or meshed floors are not used and rising moisture is prevented.		

	<b>Litter</b>		
<b>E18 – E21</b>	Good quality litter, which covers the entire usable floor area, is available at all times and is managed to keep it dry and friable. Litter depth is not less than 5 cm.		
<b>E22</b>	Starting 14 days after placement, litter condition is assessed daily and action taken if quality is poor.		
<b>E23 &amp; E24</b>	Extra litter is uncontaminated and all litter is replaced between flocks.		
<b>E25</b>	Birds are scored weekly for feather cleanliness after the third week of life.		
	<b>Lighting</b>		
<b>E26 – E28</b>	The lighting programme is recorded, controlled by a timer and a dimmer is used to raise/lower light levels gradually.		
<b>E29</b>	Light meters are available to record light intensity.		
<b>E30 &amp; E31</b>	From five days after placement, light intensity at bird head height is not lower than 20 lux and birds have eight hours of continuous light and six hours of darkness in every 24 hour period		
<b>E32</b>	Where possible, from five days after placement, birds have access to either natural light or full spectrum artificial light (including UV to 360 nm) for the full duration of the light period.		

<b>E33</b>	Where natural light is used there is a plan to avoid smothering and openings correspond to at least 3 % of the total floor area, windows and fittings are evenly distributed along the shed and minimize draughts.		
	<b>Temperature</b>		
<b>E34 &amp; E35</b>	Birds are kept in a comfortable environment and protected from extreme weather conditions.		
<b>E36</b>	Minimum and maximum temperatures are recorded daily.		
	<b>Ventilation and air quality</b>		
<b>E37, E38 &amp; E40</b>	Condensation, heat, humidity, dust and noxious gases are not allowed to accumulate or contaminate other sheds.		
<b>E39</b>	Ammonia levels are measured every day and kept below 15 ppm.		
	<b>Outdoor environment (Free range)</b>		
<b>E41</b>	The minimum range size is 1.5 times the total floor area of the shed and birds have access to it for at least eight hours each day.		
<b>E42</b>	Birds have access to the range no later than three weeks after placement.		

<b>E43</b>	Birds slaughtered at or before four weeks of age have access to the range for at least one week before slaughter.		
<b>E44</b>	Access to the range is only prevented in exceptional circumstances.		
<b>E45 – E47</b>	Birds and the range are inspected daily and records of range access kept.		
<b>E48 – E51</b>	The range, especially around pop holes, is managed in a way that avoids mud and standing water accumulation, while encouraging chicken movement. Natural ground cover must occupy no less than 70% of the range.		
<b>E52</b>	Shade and shelter covers at least 20 % of the range, is safe and suitable for birds to use and encourages full use of the range. At least half of the shade and shelter is within 5 m of pop holes.		
<b>E53</b>	Deciduous and growing trees are supplemented with other forms of shade and shelter.		
<b>E54</b>	The range area and entire farm are properly fenced.		
	<b>Pop holes (Free range)</b>		
<b>E55 &amp; E56</b>	Pop holes make it easy for birds to see and access the range, and minimise negative impacts on the surrounding litter.		

<b>E57</b>	There are at least 2 m of pop holes, measuring at least 40 x 35 cm, for every 1,000 birds.		
<b>E58</b>	Birds do not have to travel more than 13 m to reach a pop hole in new sheds and 16 m in existing sheds.		
	<b>Transport</b>		
<b>E59 &amp; E60</b>	Flocks are assessed before transport and any birds found to be unfit are euthanased.		
<b>E61</b>	Detailed transport records are kept.		
<b>E62 &amp; E63</b>	Transport vehicles are ventilated and a contingency plan is in place for when conditions are hot and humid.		
<b>E64</b>	Transport vehicles are not left standing, except when loading and unloading.		
<b>E65</b>	Any bird mortality above 0.3 % during transport is investigated and reported to SPCA Certified.		
<b>E66 &amp; E67</b>	Journey durations do not exceed four hours and drivers are aware of possible delays along the route.		
	<b>Emergency preparedness</b>		
<b>E68</b>	An emergency response and preparedness plan is in place.		
<b>E69</b>	Management practices to reduce the risk of fire are in place and fire-fighting equipment is maintained and tested.		

Reference Standard	Summarised standard	Check (Y/N)	Comments
	<b>Good Health</b>		
	<b>Animal health plan</b>		
<b>H1 &amp; H3</b>	A detailed animal health plan, which is regularly reviewed and which covers major health, welfare and biosecurity issues, is in place and records are kept for a minimum of three years.		
<b>H2</b>	Where high numbers of sudden death, disease outbreaks, other welfare issues or where daily flock mortality exceeds 0.3 %, this must be reported to SPCA Certified.		
	<b>Pharmaceutical use</b>		
<b>H4 – H6</b>	Staff are properly trained and pharmaceuticals are only used when prescribed and then only following the manufacturers guidelines, unless otherwise authorised by a veterinarian.		
<b>H7</b>	Detailed records of pharmaceutical administration are kept.		
	<b>Inspection and general health</b>		
<b>H8 &amp; H9</b>	Flocks are inspected at least three times each day and records kept. Sick birds are separated from the main flock for treatment or else euthanased.		

<b>H10 &amp; H11</b>	Inspections are done calmly and increased when there are welfare concerns or during bad weather.		
<b>H12</b>	The flock is gait scored the week before catching and any birds with severe lameness are promptly euthanased.		
<b>H13</b>	Weekly foot pad checks are done on birds from fourteen days of age and action taken if foot pad health is poor.		
	<b>Euthanasia</b>		
<b>H14 – H18</b>	Euthanasia is performed by cervical neck dislocation or another SPCA approved method, using properly maintained and appropriate equipment and methods (not killing pliers or spinning/flicking), as soon as untreatable pain, distress, injury or disease is detected.		
<b>H19 &amp; H20</b>	Staff conducting euthanasia are properly trained and inspect all euthanased birds to confirm death.		
	<b>Mortality</b>		
<b>H21 &amp; H22</b>	Daily mortality rates are recorded and investigated if they exceed 0.8 % in week one and 1 % in any subsequent week. If flock mortality exceeds 0.3 % in any 24-hr period, SPCA Certified is informed.		

<b>H23</b>	Carcasses are disposed of safely and according to local regulations.		
	<b>Biosecurity</b>		
<b>H24 &amp; H25</b>	A detailed biosecurity plan is in place and pest control programmes are reviewed annually.		

<b>Reference Standard</b>	<b>Summarised standard</b>	<b>Check (Y/N)</b>	<b>Comments</b>
	<b>Appropriate Behaviour</b>		
	<b>Care of chicks</b>		
<b>B1</b>	Chicks are unloaded and placed into sheds as soon as possible on arrival at the farm.		
<b>B2</b>	A plan is in place to ensure chick welfare if they cannot be placed immediately upon arrival at the farm.		
<b>B3 – B5</b>	Chicks are handled with care and inspected three times each day. Any problems are immediately addressed and placement records are kept.		
	<b>Platforms</b>		
<b>B6 &amp; B7</b>	Birds have access to platforms for perching, distributed evenly along the shed, from seven days of age.		

<b>B8 – B10</b>	Three (3) m of platform space is provided for every 1,000 birds in a way that allows them to rest in comfort.		
<b>B11</b>	Platforms are returned to allow perching as soon as thinning or litter maintenance has been completed.		
	<b>Behavioural enrichment</b>		
<b>B12 &amp; B14</b>	Large or small enrichment items are available to all birds from seven days of age and items are cleaned or disposed of between flocks.		
<b>B13</b>	Where used, at least one large enrichment item is provided for every 1,000 birds and one small item for every 500 birds.		
<b>B15</b>	Use of the enrichment by birds is recorded every week.		
	<b>Stocking densities</b>		
<b>B16</b>	All birds have enough space to move freely, turn around and perform normal/ natural behaviours.		
<b>B17 &amp; B18</b>	Birds are not stocked at more than 34 kg/m <sup>2</sup> and a maximum of two thins per growing cycle (excluding depopulation) is used.		
<b>B19</b>	On the outdoor range birds are not stocked at more than 10 birds/m <sup>2</sup> (free range only).		

<b>B20</b>	If poor flock welfare is observed, stocking density must be reviewed.		
	<b>Managers, stock-keepers and other personnel</b>		
<b>B21</b>	All staff understand and comply with the latest version of the SPCA Certified standards, relevant Codes of Welfare and legal requirements.		
<b>B22 &amp; B23</b>	Policies covering staff negligence and whistleblowing around bird welfare are in place and complaints followed up.		
<b>B24 – B26</b>	There are enough appropriately trained staff to care for the birds, with training records kept on file.		
<b>B27 – B29</b>	Staff are aware of their animal welfare responsibilities, do not undertake unsupervised tasks until fully trained and know who to report problems/issues to.		
	<b>Catching</b>		
<b>B30 &amp; B31</b>	Birds are caught in a calm and careful manner, with individual birds being caught and carried upright.		
<b>B32</b>	No more than three birds are carried per hand during catching for slaughter and never by their wings, tails, necks or head.		
<b>B33</b>	Birds are never caught or handled in a way that causes injury or pain.		

<b>B34</b>	Migration barriers are used, when needed, to prevent smothering and over-crowding.		
<b>B35 &amp; B36</b>	Catching is done under low/blue light conditions and at a speed that does not compromise welfare.		
<b>B37</b>	Birds that are injured during catching are promptly treated or else euthanased to minimise suffering.		
	<b>Depopulation</b>		
<b>B38 &amp; B39</b>	Staff are properly trained in bird depopulation and work according to a depopulation plan.		
<b>B40</b>	Birds have access to the outdoor range until the day before depopulation (free range only).		
<b>B41 – B43</b>	The indoor environment is controlled and where enrichment is removed, it is done at the same time as feed withdrawal, which must not be longer than twelve hours prior to arrival at the slaughterhouse.		
<b>B44</b>	Birds have access to water until immediately before catching begins.		
<b>B45 &amp; B46</b>	A nominated catching supervisor is in place and all noise is kept to a minimum.		
<b>B47</b>	Anyone breaching the standards is stopped, appropriate action taken and the incident documented.		

<b>B48</b>	Birds that are injured during depopulation are promptly treated or else euthanased to minimise suffering.		
<b>B49</b>	Thinning/cuts are done in a way that maximises bird welfare, with food, water, enrichment and platforms being provided to the remaining birds as soon as the procedure is completed.		
<b>B50</b>	Auditable records are kept of each depopulation.		
	<b>Loading and unloading</b>		
<b>B51</b>	Only properly trained people load and unload birds.		
<b>B52 &amp; B53</b>	Birds are put in transport containers inside the shed and transport vehicles are parked as close to the shed as possible.		
<b>B54</b>	Birds are put into transport containers upright and are not dropped/thrown into them.		
<b>B55</b>	All transport equipment is inspected before loading and is deemed appropriate for the task.		
<b>B56</b>	Transport containers are at least 22 cm high, not stocked at more than 57 kg/m <sup>2</sup> and provide sufficient ventilation/space for the birds.		

<b>B57</b>	Birds are loaded into containers with care and containers are handled gently.		
<b>B58 &amp; B59</b>	Transport containers are safely secured on the vehicle and are not thrown or dropped during handling.		
<b>B60</b>	Containers and vehicles have enough ventilation to avoid exposing the birds to harm.		
<b>B61</b>	Birds injured during loading are treated or else euthanased to minimise suffering.		

**END OF DOCUMENT**



### **Contact**

Email: [certified@spca.nz](mailto:certified@spca.nz)

Web: [www.spcacertified.nz](http://www.spcacertified.nz)