



RSPCA welfare standards for

FARMED RAINBOW TROUT



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Introduction

The '*RSPCA welfare standards for farmed rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*)*' have been developed to provide the only RSPCA-approved scheme for the rearing, handling, transport and slaughter/killing of rainbow trout. The standards cover the two distinct phases of farming (freshwater and marine farming).

They take account of UK legislation, official codes of practice, scientific research, veterinary advice, recommendations of the Farm Animal Welfare Committee (FAWC) and the practical experience of the aquaculture industry. However, difficulties arise in specifying details in relation to several issues (for example, acceptable maximum stocking densities) due to the lack of scientific research examining fish welfare under different commercial systems. It is important to recognise therefore that the following requirements are made pending the relevant scientific research. To this end, the farmer is expected to maintain higher welfare standards at all times and demonstrate commitment to continual improvement as advances in knowledge and technology allow.

Scientific evidence from behavioural, physiological and anatomical studies shows that it is highly likely that fish feel pain. Fish also have a similar stress response system to mammals. It is essential that staff managing farmed fish are aware of the importance of welfare as an integral part of production.

A written Veterinary Health and Welfare Plan (VHWP) must be drawn up, which is regularly updated, in order to ensure higher standards of welfare. It is advisable for each farm to have a designated fish veterinary surgeon available to advise on fish health matters and able to attend at short notice in case of disease. An Environmental Impact Management Plan must also be drawn up to closely monitor and minimise any effects of the operation on the wider environment.

The standards are based upon the 'Five Freedoms' as defined by FAWC. Although these 'freedoms' define ideal states, they provide a comprehensive framework for the assessment of animal welfare on-farm, in transit and at the place of slaughter/killing, as well as representing an important element of farm assurance requirements. These 'Five Freedoms' are relevant to fish welfare and should be considered in relation to husbandry practice. These 'Freedoms' are shown in bold below, and the wording has been adapted with supporting text to reflect how they relate to fish welfare.

- **Freedom from hunger and thirst**
by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.
- **Freedom from discomfort**
by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
- **Freedom from pain, injury or disease**
by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
- **Freedom to express normal behaviour**
by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.
- **Freedom from fear and distress**
by ensuring conditions and care which avoid mental suffering.

These freedoms will be better provided for if those who have care of livestock practise/provide:

- **caring and responsible planning and management**
- **skilled, knowledgeable and conscientious stockmanship**
- **appropriate environmental design**
- **considerate handling and transport**
- **humane slaughter.**

The standards also take into account newer models of assessing the status of the welfare of the fish, by introducing some fish welfare outcome measures.

Guide to the use of the RSPCA welfare standards

- (i) The numbered requirements are the standards, all of which must be complied with.
- (ii) Boxed sections (indicated by ①) give additional information, including: providing the reasoning behind a standard, expanding on a standard, stating how a standard can/will be assessed and/or highlighting areas where the standards will be reviewed in the future.
- (iii) It is expected that all relevant UK legislation regarding farm animal husbandry and welfare on-farm, during transport, and at the abattoir/place of killing, will be fully implemented in addition to the RSPCA welfare standards.



RSPCA Farm Animals Department

The RSPCA's Farm Animals Department develops the RSPCA welfare standards for farm animals. These detailed documents are intended to represent 'best practice' in the care and welfare of farm animals.

The RSPCA works to continually develop and improve the welfare standards using a range of information, including the latest scientific research and practical farming experience. We regularly consult with other animal welfare and agricultural scientists, veterinary surgeons, and farming industry representatives. This helps to ensure that the RSPCA welfare standards continue to be at the forefront of farm animal care and welfare, and are also achievable on commercial farms.

The standards also take account of feedback from RSPCA Farm Livestock Officers, who carry out monitoring of the RSPCA Assured scheme, RSPCA Assured Assessors who audit scheme members, and the scheme members themselves.

We always value constructive feedback and ideas for improvement from those who are implementing the RSPCA welfare standards. Comments/feedback can be discussed with:

- a) RSPCA Farm Animals Department scientific staff, by contacting them via the below details:

Address: Farm Animals Department
RSPCA
Wilberforce Way
Southwater
Horsham
West Sussex
RH13 9RS

Telephone: 0300 123 0183

Email: farm-animals@rspca.org.uk

- b) RSPCA Farm Livestock Officers, who can discuss any issues during farm visits and offer advice, and can provide feedback to the RSPCA Farm Animals Department scientific staff.



RSPCA Assured

RSPCA Assured is the RSPCA's farm assurance and food labelling scheme. RSPCA Assured assesses and approves farms, hauliers and abattoirs that meet all of the applicable RSPCA welfare standards. (Please note that RSPCA Assured does not approve equipment).

Products from animals reared under the RSPCA Assured scheme can be labelled with the scheme's food label: 'RSPCA Assured'. Use of the RSPCA Assured name and mark are strictly subject to RSPCA Assured membership, traceability, licence fee and artwork approval. Membership is subject to an annual membership fee and successful assessment as well as risk based monitoring visits by Farm Livestock Officers employed by the RSPCA's Farm Animals Department.

RSPCA Assured is a charity in its own right and not for profit. Any surplus goes back into improving farm animal welfare.

Any queries relating to the operation of the RSPCA Assured scheme (e.g. administration, assessments etc.) should be directed to the RSPCA Assured office (0300 123 0014; info@rspcaassured.co.uk).

- * **(i) For the purposes of these standards the following definitions apply:**
- **Eyed eggs**
Eggs that have reached the stage of development where the eyes are clearly visible as black spots. This is approximately 140 to 150 degree days post fertilisation.
 - **Alevins**
Very young fry which have not fully absorbed their yolk sacs, and are not ready for first feeding.
 - **Fry**
Fish weighing up to 5g.
 - **Fingerlings**
5–49g.
 - **Ongrowers**
50g to harvest size.

General

(i) There are currently areas of ongoing research designed to enhance our knowledge of rainbow trout welfare at the juvenile stage of their lifecycle. If any new scientific information emanating from this research indicates ways of improving aspects of trout husbandry, the RSPCA will seek to incorporate this information into subsequent versions of the standards. Some of this research may challenge aspects of current established practice.

FW 1.1 Eggs and juvenile fish must be produced either in-house or obtained from another RSPCA Assured-approved supplier.

(i) Producers will be given two years from the date of joining the scheme to allow other hatcheries to comply with the RSPCA standards to allow easier sourcing from RSPCA Assured sources.

FW 1.2 * All eggs must be tested for specified pathogens as required under the relevant European and national legislation.

FW 1.2.1 * Imported eggs must come from sources in line with national legislative requirements.

FW 1.3 Eggs and juvenile fish supplied by third parties must be accompanied by full health documentation appropriate to the source.

FW 1.4 Supply water must:

- a) be of high quality (see FW 1.6)
- b) if necessary, be filtered, aerated, degassed, or treated with ultra violet radiation.

FW 1.5 The maximum stocking densities in FW 1.5.1 and FW 1.5.2 must not be exceeded.

FW 1.5.1 Conventional hatchery trays/baskets must stock eggs at a maximum of 3 layers deep.

- * **i** If you are an RSPCA Assured member and would like to use a recirculation system, then please contact RSPCA Assured to request a derogation for this purpose. If granted, rigorous record keeping will be required whilst the derogation is in place. The information collected will be reviewed to inform a decision regarding the future use of recirculation systems under the standards.

FW 1.5.2 For first feeding and on-growing tanks, raceways and ponds, the maximum stocking density must not exceed 60kg/m³.

FW 1.6 The following water quality parameters must be complied with when water quality is recycled:

Parameter	Ova	Alevins	Fry/Fingerlings	Ongrowers
Oxygen (O ₂) mg/l	7.0	7.0	7.0	7.0
Oxygen (O ₂) saturation % in exit water	>90.0	>90.0	>70.0	>70.0
Free ammonia (NH ₃) mg/l	N/A	<0.025	<0.025	<0.025
Carbon dioxide (CO ₂) mg/l	<10.0	<10.0	<10.0	<10.0
Max temp °C	10.0	10.0	12.0	16.0
Min temp °C	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
pH in inlet water	7.0 to 8.0	7.0 to 8.0	7.0 to 8.0	7.0 to 8.0
Non-spate suspended solids (turbidity) mg/l	<25.0	<25.0	<25.0	<25.0
Nitrite mg/l †	<0.2	<0.2	<0.2	<0.2
Nitrate mg/l	N/A	N/A	<50.0	<50.0

FW 1.6.1 For flow through systems, dissolved oxygen must be maintained at the levels shown in FW 1.6.

FW 1.6.2 In flow through systems the producer must be able to demonstrate how potentially harmful water constituents are monitored at levels to ensure that they are not harmful to the fish.

i Super-saturated water can compromise fish welfare. Levels of oxygen and other relevant constituents should be regularly monitored in order to avoid this. As knowledge of the water quality needs of the fish improves, it may be necessary to change and/or add to the constituents in FW 1.6. For example, the inclusion of parameters associated with the mineral content of the water may be appropriate as more information becomes available about their effect on the welfare of the fish.

In order to ensure due diligence with regard to the welfare of the fish, it is expected that all water quality parameters with the potential to affect welfare will be measured.

FW 1.7 Flow rates/velocities must be such that:

- fish can comfortably maintain their position in the water column and,
- waste is effectively removed.

FW 1.7.1 Water quality composition must be monitored at least daily.

FW 1.7.2 If water quality departs from the acceptable range, steps must be taken immediately to identify the source of the problems and rectify the situation as quickly as possible.

- FW 1.8** The Emergency Action Plan must contain provisions to account for potentially catastrophic events such as pollution incidents, leaf blockages, equipment failure or spates that may adversely affect water quality.
- FW 1.9** Records must be kept of equipment servicing in line with manufacturer's instructions.
- FW 1.10** The hatching environment must minimise movement of the eggs.
- FW 1.11** Flow and/oxygen alarms must be fitted to all water intakes to the farm/hatchery.
- FW 1.12** All alarms must be checked weekly and records kept of the checks.
- FW 1.13** There must be a screen to prevent the blocking of inlet valves.
- FW 1.13.1** Inlet valves must be regularly checked (at least daily) and recorded in the daily checklist.
- FW 1.14** All eggs must be disinfected prior to entry into the hatchery, and used egg boxes disposed of in a biosecure way.
- FW 1.15** Eggs must be water-hardened before being exposed to disinfectant or transportation.
- FW 1.16 *** Unfertilised eggs being transported must be carried in their own ovarian fluid or a suitable substitute saline solution.
- FW 1.17** Water flow and tank design must be such that 'dead spots' within the tank/tray do not occur, i.e. they must be sufficient to provide oxygen and remove waste products.
- FW 1.18** Eggs must be placed into the hatching environment in a way that ensures maximum survival rates and be accessible for picking where this procedure is undertaken.
- FW 1.19** Conditions in the hatching environment must be hygienic and free from any rough edges that could cause damage to the eggs.
- FW 1.20** Where multi-layer systems such as buckets are used, it must be demonstrated that water hygiene and the integrity of the eggs are maintained.
- FW 1.21** After placement, green eggs must remain undisturbed.
- FW 1.22** Regular inspections must be made to ensure the earliest detection of fungal infections and must be recorded in the daily checklist.
- FW 1.23 *** The egg shocking method used must not cause mortalities of viable (eyed) eggs.
- FW 1.24** Training records must be available which identify those who are competent to perform shocking.
- FW 1.25** Shocking onto a dry surface is prohibited.

Eyed eggs

- FW 2.1** The transportation of eyed eggs must be undertaken using purpose built boxes.
- FW 2.2** Eggs must not be transported at a depth greater than 4cm.
- FW 2.3 *** Ice must be used above the eggs to allow cooling water to drip through the eggs to maintain moisture levels.

- FW 2.4 *** In relation to FW 2.3, the bottom tray must be kept free of eggs to avoid the eggs sitting in melt water and asphyxiating.

Alevins

- FW 3.1** All alevins must be inspected daily, and any dead removed as necessary.
- FW 3.2 *** The siphoning of alevins is not permitted.
- FW 3.2.1 *** Alevins weighing under 0.5 grams must not be moved using nets.
- FW 3.3** Abrupt changes in light levels must be avoided.
- FW 3.4** Where water temperature manipulation is practised, fluctuation in temperature and temperature gradient must be kept to a minimum.
- FW 3.5** Feeding must start only when at least 90% of the alevins have lost their yolk sac.

Multi-level hatchery systems

i The stocking density calculation for multi-level systems is different from a traditional flowthrough or recirculation system in that, rather than calculating stocking density in square metres, it is calculated per tray. This is because each tray has the ability to maintain its own oxygen supply for the eggs.

The following standards need to be read in conjunction with the general hatchery standards.

- FW 4.1** Each tray must have its own water intake.
- FW 4.2** The flow in each tray must be:
- visible and/or measurable, and
 - monitored to ensure maximum survival of the eggs.
- FW 4.3** Trays must be easily accessible in order to perform tasks such as removing 'deads' without disturbing the other trays.
- FW 4.4** The maximum stocking density in each tray must not exceed 60,000 eggs per tray (tray size 55 x 53cm approx) with eggs no more than 3 deep.
- FW 4.5** Producers must be able to demonstrate that mortality over the ova-alevin period was below 5% for the previous year, if intending to stock to maximum permitted levels.

Fry/fingerlings

- FW 5.1** Fish must have access to sufficient food to maintain them in full health and vigour.
- FW 5.2** Feed must be:
- available to appetite
 - spread at regular intervals.

- FW 5.3** Light levels must be such that they allow all fish in the water column to see the feed during feeding.
- FW 5.4 *** Water flow rates must be such that:
- fish can hold and adjust their position in the water easily
 - the oxygen level can be maintained at the required level
 - wastes can be effectively removed.
- FW 5.5** All tanks must have individual nets/cleaning equipment.
- FW 5.6** There must not be any grading before at least 90% of fish weigh a minimum of 1.3 grams.
- FW 5.7 *** The load of suspended solids must allow visibility to the bottom of the tank.
- FW 5.7.1 *** Where water visibility is affected by the presence of peat, the producer must demonstrate that fish welfare is not being compromised.
- FW 5.8** The water depth must be appropriate to the tank being used in order to be able to maintain optimum water quality levels.
- FW 5.9** As the fish leave the bottom of the tank, the water depth must be adjusted to allow natural feeding behaviour.

* **Ongrowers – fish between 50 grams and harvest size**

- FW 6.1** The water temperature must not be manipulated above 16°C unless required by a veterinary surgeon.
- FW 6.2 *** Feed withdrawal, when required for any situation, must not exceed a maximum of 54 degree days.
- FW 6.2.1 *** With regards to FW 6.2, if the maximum feed withdrawal period permitted must be extended for any reason then this must:
- be signed off by a veterinary health professional
 - be recorded in the VHWP, including full details of why this was necessary
 - be subject to a welfare risk assessment.
- FW 6.3** Any section or group of fish must only be crowded for a maximum of 2 hours.
- FW 6.4** The grader must be appropriate for the size and type of fish to be graded.
- FW 6.5** All staff must be fully trained and competent to use the chosen grading system.
- FW 6.6** Fish must be able to hold and adjust their position in the water easily.
- FW 6.7** All fish that require culling must be dispatched humanely and records kept of the culls.
- FW 6.7.1** All culls must be disposed of in a biosecure way as documented in the VHWP.
- FW 6.8** Measures must be in place to prevent fish escaping.

* Lochs (fresh and seawater)

i In some adverse environmental conditions it may be necessary to temporarily withdraw feed to avoid compromising the welfare of the fish through the increased risk of de-oxygenated conditions arising, for example, during an algal bloom

- FW 7.1** If food is temporarily withdrawn for welfare reasons, it must be:
- kept to a minimum
 - recorded in the VHWP (see H 1.1).

- FW 7.2 *** Nets used in lochs must be managed hygienically.

- FW 7.3** Deterioration of water quality due to fouled nets or over feeding must be avoided.

- FW 7.4 *** The stocking density in enclosures:

- for fish up to 100g, must not exceed 10kg/m³
- for ongrowers weighing more than 100g, must not exceed 15kg/m³ over the site, and 17kg/m³ in any one enclosure.

Vaccination

- FW 8.1** The VHWP (see H 1.1) must incorporate a vaccination programme to protect fish from diseases for which a licensed effective vaccine is available and which may represent a risk to the fish.

i If effective oral vaccines are available these should be the preferred method of vaccination.

- FW 8.2** All vaccination procedures must be conducted with care and with the minimum possible distress caused to the fish.

- FW 8.3** Vaccines and anaesthetics must be used according to the manufacturer's data sheet, unless otherwise specified by a vet.

- FW 8.4** Vaccine use must be recorded in the VHWP.

- FW 8.5** All fish must be sedated before being injected, unless there are clear health and welfare reasons not to.

- FW 8.6** All fish must have been pre-graded before they are vaccinated.

- FW 8.7** An assessment of fish condition must be made before the grading process begins to ensure that they are robust enough to endure the grading procedure.

- FW 8.8** Vaccine operatives must be able to demonstrate that the machine is properly calibrated before the main vaccination process begins.

- FW 8.9** Any sample fish used must be humanely dispatched before any inspections to check for vaccination accuracy.

- FW 8.10** There must be back-up systems and contingency plans in place in order to deal with system malfunctions and breakdowns in order to safeguard the welfare of the fish.

- FW 8.11** Water temperature for vaccination must be according to manufacturer's data sheet, or recorded in the VHPW if temperature does not adhere to manufacturer's recommendations.
- FW 8.12** Care must be taken when returning fish to the recovery tank following vaccination in order to avoid injury to any fish.
- FW 8.13** Oxygen levels in the recovery tank must be:
- monitored regularly
 - maintained at a minimum of 7mg/litre.
- FW 8.14** Fish must be checked at regular intervals to ensure that vaccinations are being performed correctly and consistently.
- FW 8.15** Any injectable vaccination procedure must be subject to a third party audit.



The audit may be performed by the health manager or other competent person outside of the vaccination team.

- FW 8.16** All of those involved in vaccinating fish must be trained and competent to do so and records kept of any training undertaken.

Auto-vaccination

- FW 9.1** All fish must have been pre-graded before they are vaccinated.
- FW 9.2** An assessment of fish condition must be made before the grading process begins to ensure that they are robust enough to endure the grading procedure.
- FW 9.3** The machine must:
- be calibrated according to the size of the fish, taking into account the vaccination depth, position, angle and dosage of the vaccine
 - be checked for the correct calibration at least once per hour during the vaccination process.
- FW 9.4** A sample number of fish must be vaccinated to check the calibration before the main process is started.
- FW 9.5** The sample fish must be humanely dispatched before any inspections to check for vaccination accuracy.
- FW 9.6** All fish must be anaesthetised before being vaccinated.
- FW 9.7** There must be back-up systems and contingency plans in place in order to deal with system malfunctions and breakdowns in order to safeguard the welfare of the fish.
- FW 9.8** Needles must be inspected at least every two hours and replaced if necessary.
- FW 9.9** After transportation, the machine must be thoroughly checked to ensure that any working parts have not been damaged during the transportation process.

Management

- * The attitudes and competence of staff are a vital factor determining whether high standards of fish welfare can be achieved. It is the responsibility of management to ensure there is a welfare ethos among staff. It is essential that stock-keepers are suitably trained and experienced, and are able to recognise indicators of poor welfare at an early stage. They need to have a good working knowledge of the husbandry system used and the animals under their care. It is important to note that all of the sections of the welfare standards are applicable to all relevant aspects of the farming process.

M 1.1 All records and other documentation that the '*RSPCA welfare standards for farmed rainbow trout*' require the producer to keep and maintain, must be made available to the RSPCA Assured Assessor and RSPCA Farm Livestock Officer.

Managers and stock-keepers

M 2.1 Managers must ensure that all stock-keepers:

- a) have a copy of the current version of the '*RSPCA welfare standards for farmed rainbow trout*' at each site
- b) are familiar with its content
- c) understand and apply its content
- d) have a), b) and c) as part of their induction program.

M 2.2 Managers must:

- a) ensure that all staff working with stock are trained and competent in aspects of fish husbandry and welfare, relevant to their duties
- b) ensure that staff working with stock must have attended a recognised fish welfare course.

M 2.3 Written records of staff training must be maintained.

M 2.4 An adequate number of experienced staff must be available to deal sufficiently quickly with any problems that arise.

M 2.5 Managers must:

- a) develop and implement plans and precautions to cope with emergencies such as fire, leaks, problems with transportation, etc.
- b) provide an emergency action board, sited in a prominent position, which must include:
 - i. appropriate emergency contact numbers
 - ii. a map grid reference and postcode for the location of the unit.

M 2.6 Stock-keepers must be able to demonstrate their proficiency in procedures that have the potential to cause pain or distress including netting or other handling, crowding and euthanasia.

M 2.7 Stock-keepers must be able to recognise indicators of poor welfare in fish including abnormal behaviour, physical injury and symptoms of disease.

M 2.8 Managers must ensure that the site specific VHPW is drawn up (see H 1.1), implemented and regularly reviewed and updated at least annually.

Inspection and records

M 3.1 Any welfare problems seen during an inspection by the producer or stock-keeper must be dealt with appropriately and without delay.

i Welfare problems of sufficient severity that they should have been noticed on previous inspections and dealt with, shall be taken by the RSPCA Assured Assessor or RSPCA Farm Livestock Officer as evidence of negligence of duties by the stock-keeper.

M 3.2 Fish must be inspected at regular intervals, at least twice daily, weather permitting.

i It is the responsibility of the person caring for the fish to ensure that suitably regular and thorough inspections are being made.

M 3.3 * Full records must be maintained of farm inspections, including:

- the time and date of inspections
- the name(s) and signature(s) of the person(s) conducting the inspection for each group of animals
- details of any problems identified and any action taken
- numbers of sick/moribund fish.

M 3.4 If problems are identified during an inspection, the stock-keeper must act promptly to discover the cause and take remedial action, in consultation with a veterinary surgeon when necessary.

M 3.5 High standards of biosecurity must be maintained to avoid the spread of diseases between different populations of fish, as specified in a written policy, such as the Biosecurity Measures Plan as required by the Fish Health Inspectorate (FHI).

M 3.6 Removal of dead fish in:

- pen systems must occur frequently, and at least twice a week, except when adverse weather conditions mean this would involve danger to personnel, and
- land based systems must occur on a daily basis.

M 3.7 The cause of death of all fish must be classified using the categories developed in the VHWP (see H 1.1).

i Veterinary advice should be sought if the cause of death is not clear according to the criteria identified in the VHWP (see H 1.1).

M 3.8 Relevant staff must demonstrate competence in interpretation of all records.

M 3.9 Any equipment defects must be immediately rectified or, if this is not possible, alternative measures must be taken to safeguard fish welfare.

M 3.10 Alternative measures relating to M 3.9 must be written into the Emergency Action Plan section of the VHWP (see H 1.1) and all staff must be made aware of them.

M 3.11 Stock-keepers must be able to recognise:

- visual indicators of poor water quality
- fish behavioural indicators.

M 3.12 * The following accurate and up-to-date records must be maintained:

- a) details of origin of stock, allowing traceability
- b) age of fish
- c) wild animal control
- d) crowding, movement and grading records
- e) calibration records
- f) numbers and weights of fish in each tank/enclosure/raceway/pond
- g) estimated current stocking densities in each tank/enclosure
- h) where appropriate, target age and weight at which fish will be transferred to sea or killed (in order to predict final stocking densities)
- i) details of fish and equipment inspections
- j) daily and cumulative mortality (reasons stated)
- k) daily and cumulative culling (reasons stated)
- l) feed consumption or provision
- m) details of any health problems
- n) details of any medication/vaccinations given
- o) records of water quality tests as appropriate to the system
- p) records of net inspections and maintenance where appropriate
- q) training records
- r) full details of fish movements
- s) appropriate statutory authority correspondence.

Husbandry practices

High standards of husbandry need to be maintained at all times with the welfare of stock being considered as a priority. Animals should be handled in a considerate and skilled manner. Caring and responsible planning and management should be employed to safeguard welfare during essential procedures.

Handling

- HP 1.1** Removal from water and handling must only be carried out when absolutely necessary.
- HP 1.2** If fish must be handled adequate support must be given to the body.
- HP 1.2.1** Live fish must never be:
 - a) held by the tail only
 - b) thrown onto solid objects.
- HP 1.3** Time out of water must:
 - a) be kept to the minimum possible
 - b) never exceed 15 seconds for a live fish (unless anaesthetised).
- HP 1.4** Where pumps and pipes are used these must:
 - a) not unnecessarily stress fish
 - b) be free from sharp protrusions, kinks and bends that are likely to injure fish.
- HP 1.4.1** Wherever pipes are used there must be a humane method in place to ensure that all fish have been removed from the pipe at the end of the operation.
- HP 1.5** When hand nets are used they must be:
 - a) of a suitable size
 - b) designed to avoid the occurrence of physical damage
 - c) kept clean, disinfected and in good repair.
- HP 1.6** In order to reduce the risk of disease transmission when handling fish from different populations:
 - a) a different net must be used for each batch or,
 - b) nets must be thoroughly cleansed between tanks and a record kept of the procedure.
- HP 1.7** Fish must not be left to die in air.

Crowding and grading (general)

(i) Consideration should be given to stocking tanks and enclosures to final biomass from their initial stocking, so as to minimise the possibility of welfare compromises during the crowding and grading processes.

- HP 2.1** All grading systems must be fit for purpose and must be situated in such a way that fish can be observed at all times.
- HP 2.2** All personnel involved in the grading operation must:
- have access to a copy of the current version of the '*RSPCA welfare standards for farmed rainbow trout*'
 - be familiar with its content
 - understand and be able to apply its content.
- HP 2.3** All personnel working with, or handling the fish must be:
- trained and fully competent
 - aware of the needs of the fish
 - aware of any risks involved and the procedures to address those risks.
- HP 2.4** Grading must only be performed when absolutely necessary.
- HP 2.5** A written grading plan must be agreed between farm management and site staff and/or grading operator prior to operations commencing. This plan must become a part of the VHWP (see H 1.1).
- HP 2.6** The grading plan must include:
- the reason for the need to grade
 - a pre-grade risk assessment
 - the number of fish to be graded per day
 - the location of fish populations both pre- and post-grade
 - the pre-grade fasting period
 - the health status of the fish
 - the equipment to be used, including the type of grader
 - expected timetable for completion of the grade
 - the required number of staff and duties to be performed
 - the physical characteristics of the site such as water temperature, tides and weather conditions
 - the training records of the grading team
 - the requirement for a post grading health check
 - post grading mortality records
 - any relevant contingency plans
 - the approval and signatures of the site manager and the person in charge of the grading equipment.
- HP 2.7** All grading equipment must be designed and maintained in order to prevent damage or causing stress to the fish.
- HP 2.8** Sweep nets must be of knotless construction and of optimal design for the enclosure, and of an appropriate mesh size for the fish.

- HP 2.9** Only healthy fish must be subjected to the grading process.
- HP 2.10 *** Feed withdrawal, when required for any situation, must not exceed a maximum of 54 degree days.
- HP 2.10.1 *** With regards to HP 2.10, if the maximum feed withdrawal period permitted must be extended for any reason then this must:
- a) be signed off by a veterinary health professional
 - b) be recorded in the VHWP, including full details of why this was necessary
 - c) be subject to a welfare risk assessment.
- HP 2.11** If fish are being returned to their original enclosure, it must be large enough to ensure the welfare of both the original and returning populations.
- HP 2.12** The grade of the group/section of fish must be completed in one continuous operation.
- HP 2.13** Sweep nets/floatlines must be used to crowd a portion of the population rather than crowding the whole enclosure.
- HP 2.14** Any section/group of fish must not be crowded for more than 2 hours.
- HP 2.15** No population of fish must be crowded more than twice in any one week or three times in any month, unless this is required by the designated veterinary surgeon for fish welfare reasons.
- HP 2.16** Producers must:
- a) return any extraneous/non-target fish to the watercourse or humanely cull them as advised by the veterinary surgeon.
 - b) be aware of, and adhere to, any legislation relating to protected species.
- HP 2.17** Fish must be monitored throughout the operation by a designated person whose responsibility it is to recognise welfare issues and take appropriate action if necessary.
- HP 2.18** Enclosure nets must be kept clean in order to avoid water quality problems during crowding.
- HP 2.19** Oxygen levels must:
- a) be monitored throughout crowding
 - b) not fall below 7mg/l, with appropriate action taken should this occur.
- HP 2.20** Where water replenishment has been shut-off from the crowd:
- a) supplementary oxygen and/or aeration must be available for the duration of the crowding procedure
 - b) oxygen levels must be monitored
 - c) oxygen levels must not fall below 7mg/l, with appropriate action being taken should this occur.
- HP 2.21** Mortality checks must be recorded as soon as possible after grading.
- HP 2.22** All equipment must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before use and between sites.
- HP 2.23** Grading operations must not take place if adverse weather conditions are likely to compromise fish welfare.

Passive grading



Passive grading is recommended where possible and practical to do so.

- HP 3.1** Where passive grading is used, the size and design of the grading panel must be appropriate for the size of fish that are to be graded, and the enclosure they are contained within.
- HP 3.2** The grading panels must be pre-checked for signs of wear before grading commences.

Hand/manual grading

- HP 4.1** Pumps must be able to pump the required distance and head.
- HP 4.2** All pipes must be:
- a) smooth with swept bends
 - b) of a diameter which is appropriate for the size of the fish, including when they pass through the couplings.
- HP 4.3** Water must always flow through the pipework to minimise the incidence of scaling.
- HP 4.4** All grading equipment must be smooth, with no sharp edges.
- HP 4.5** Where counters are used, they must be in working order and be fit for purpose.
- HP 4.6** The sweep net/crowding device must:
- a) be of an appropriate size
 - b) have sufficient floatation
 - c) be constructed of knotless mesh.
- HP 4.7** No fish must be out of the water for more than 15 seconds.

Protection from other animals

- HP 5.1** Humane precautions must be taken to prevent wild animal infestations on the farm.
- HP 5.2** The producer must:
- a) use all reasonable non-lethal methods of control to protect fish from predation from wild animals
 - b) detail the methods specified in a) in the Environmental Action Plan
 - c) detail the methods specified in the Wild Animal Control Plan.
- HP 5.3** The primary means of protecting the fish must be through physical exclusion, by denying potential predators access to tanks and enclosures.
- HP 5.4** Enclosure nets must be adequately tensioned and weighted to prevent distortion, taking into account local conditions such as currents, tidal flows etc.
- HP 5.5** Enclosure nets must be regularly checked for holes and fouling and maintained accordingly and records must be kept of these checks.

- HP 5.6** Removal of dead fish must occur at least twice weekly, except when adverse weather conditions mean that this would mean danger to personnel.
- HP 5.7** Enclosures must be:
- protected using visible topnets
 - of a mesh size that does not ensnare birds.
- HP 5.8** Predator nets must be considered for deployment at high risk sites during high risk periods, and at other times as appropriate if there is a risk of an attack.
- HP 5.9** Where predator nets cannot be deployed for animal welfare reasons, the reason why must be documented and recorded.
- HP 5.10** Any site that is recognised as having a high risk of attack or has suffered an attack in the past must have a working Acoustic Deterrent Device (ADD) in place (see HP 5.11), where they are permitted to be used.
- HP 5.11** If an attack takes place on a site with no history of previous attacks, then an ADD must be deployed without delay, provided that the use of such devices is allowed by the statutory authorities.
- HP 5.12** All ADDs must be regularly serviced and maintained to ensure that they are in full working order. They must be checked daily (weather permitting) and records kept of their daily working status.

(i) ADDs should only be used whilst taking into consideration the potential effects they may have on other wildlife, in particular, cetaceans, which may have a migration route nearby.

The remote monitoring of ADDs is available. The RSPCA recommends that this is used to ensure that they are working properly.

- HP 5.13** If an attack has taken place, the fish must be checked for signs of any injury as a result of the attack.
- HP 5.14** Culling of non-protected wild animals to protect fish welfare, must only be undertaken as a last resort:
- when all available non-lethal methods have been employed and have proved unsuccessful and,
 - be undertaken using the most humane method possible.
- (i)** For the purposes of these standards, a last resort scenario is defined as:
- nets are adequately tensioned
 - top nets are secured to deny ingress into the enclosures
 - dead fish have been regularly removed
 - where they can be used, ADDs have been fully utilised and regularly serviced, and are monitored to ensure that they are working
 - predator nets/curtains/screens have been deployed.
- HP 5.15** The producer must be able to demonstrate to the RSPCA Assured Assessor or the RSPCA Farm Livestock Officer that all of the procedures leading up to the point of last resort have been mobilised.
- * **(i)** The shooting of animals without having deployed all of the measures leading to a last resort scenario, will result in the site being suspended from the scheme pending further investigation.

- HP 5.16** There must be positive identification that an animal is causing the problem of fish mortality, or is the cause of compromised fish welfare.
- HP 5.17** Where it becomes necessary to humanely dispatch a predator, the following records must be kept:
- names of all persons with valid firearms certificate who are deemed competent to perform the task
 - detail of any bullets used and returned, in the ammunition register
 - details of any animal that has been shot, including:
 - the species
 - the time and date of dispatch
 - the location
 - the reason for the shooting.
- HP 5.18** All attempts must be made to recover the body of the animal that has been shot and it must be recorded as to whether or not the body was recovered.
- HP 5.19** Any carcases must be disposed of in accordance with the law.
- HP 5.20** After every shooting incident, a review of all predator exclusion procedures must be undertaken and records kept of such reviews.

Genetic selection and modification

(i) The RSPCA is opposed to any breeding procedures that adversely affect welfare.

- HP 6.1** Genetic modification techniques as defined by European Directive 2001/18/EC are prohibited.
- HP 6.2** Fish must not have been produced by breeding techniques that result in health or welfare problems for any of the animals involved.

Equipment and environmental quality

The units in which fish are kept should be designed with full consideration of their welfare needs, and should protect them from physical or physiological discomfort, distress and injury, and allow them to perform natural behaviours. The stock-keeper is responsible for providing the life support system for farmed fish and should maintain the highest environmental quality at all times.

Tank, pond, raceway and net pen enclosure construction, situation and maintenance

- E 1.1 *** The siting of tanks, ponds, raceways and net pen enclosures must be carefully considered with regard to fish welfare.
- E 1.2** All facilities for housing fish must be designed with their welfare as a major consideration, with no sharp protrusions which may be injurious to the fish.
- E 1.3** Inlets and outlets must:
- be screened and designed to prevent fish escape, ingress of wild stock and other materials and,
 - be easily accessible for cleaning.
- E 1.4** If there is evidence of fish jumping out of their accommodation, then jump screens must be put in place.
- E 1.4.1** If nets are used, they must be a suitable size for the fish in the tank to prevent escapes and fish becoming entangled.
- E 1.5** Flow rate must be such that it:
- enables fish to be able to hold their position in the water column easily and,
 - ensures that it removes dead fish and metabolites but,
 - is not so great that it erodes the walls of the particular facility such as a pond.
- E 1.6** Intake water must contain the same level of oxygen as required in standard FW 1.6.
- E 1.7** Biosecurity measures which have been carried out between batches of fish must be documented in the VHWP.
- E 1.8** Enclosure nets must be regularly checked for holes and fouling and maintained accordingly.
- E 1.9** Net pen enclosures must be adequately tensioned and weighted to prevent distortion.

Lighting

- E 2.1** Lighting must be maintained at a level suitable for each stage of development (as detailed in the VHWP – see H 1.1).
- E 2.2** Fish must be protected from distress caused by high levels of UV light or sudden changes in lighting levels (see E 2.3 to E 2.4).
- E 2.3** Tank covers must be removed or lights provided at least 12 hours before transfer to sea in order to habituate fish to brighter light.
- E 2.4** Enclosures must be of adequate depth to prevent damage from ultraviolet radiation.

Climate change and animal welfare

- i** The issues relating to climate change have the potential to significantly affect the welfare of farm animals. The RSPCA believes that it is now appropriate to react to, think ahead, and consider what can reasonably be done to mitigate, any negative effects that adverse weather conditions may have/be having on the welfare of farm animals now, and in the future.

Feeding

Fish should have freedom from hunger and malnutrition by ready access to a high quality diet that is appropriate to their species, and allows full health to be maintained.

- F1.1** Feeding must be such that the quality, quantity and frequency are optimal for the fish's stage of development.

Food content

- F2.1** All feed must be manufactured from constituents that are free from active parasites and known fish pathogens and contamination.
- F2.2** All feeds used must be produced strictly to the standards laid down by all the relevant UK and EU legislation.
- F2.3** The use of veterinary medicinal products in food is prohibited except for essential therapeutic use (i.e. in a disease outbreak or where welfare will otherwise be compromised as advised by a veterinary surgeon).

Feeding methods

- F3.1** Food must be dispensed and distributed in such a way that fish can eat without undue competition.
- F3.2** Fish must be observed at least once a day during feeding.
- F3.3** The person feeding must check that fish on the periphery of the tank or enclosure receive adequate amounts of food.
- F3.4** Overfeeding must be avoided.

Fasting/food withdrawal

- F4.1 *** Feed withdrawal, when required for any situation, must not exceed a maximum of 54 degree days.
- F4.1.1 *** With regards to F4.1, if the maximum feed withdrawal period permitted must be extended for any reason then this must:
- be signed off by a veterinary health professional
 - be recorded in the VHPW, including full details of why this was necessary
 - be subject to a welfare risk assessment.
- F4.2** After any period of fasting, food must be reintroduced in a way that:
- encourages the fish to resume feeding
 - minimises waste
 - can be demonstrated not to compromise fish welfare.
- F4.3** Records must be kept of the period for which the fish were fasted and when feed was reintroduced.

Fish should be protected from pain, injury and disease, through good management and husbandry practice, and by rapid detection and treatment of disease. All producers should develop a health and welfare plan in consultation with a designated veterinary surgeon. Disease is a major cause of poor welfare and mortality in farmed fish. Further, wild fish may be susceptible to disease agents carried by farmed fish. Therefore it is essential to take all reasonable steps to minimise the likelihood of disease outbreaks in the farmed stock.

- H 1.1** A Veterinary Health and Welfare Plan (VHWP) must be drawn up and updated at least annually.
- H 1.2** The VHWP (see H 1.1) must include future husbandry plans, risk assessment, monitoring and control of fish health and diseases.
- H 1.3** All relevant legislation regarding notifiable diseases must be understood and adhered to.
- H 1.4** There must be no recurring physical damage occurring on fish attributable to features of their environment, husbandry procedures or unrecognised disease challenge.



Recurring physical damage is that seen on a number of fish, with sufficient similarity to suggest a common cause, for example poor tank or enclosure design, methods of handling or a husbandry procedure. Different types of physical damage may also suggest a common cause.

- H 1.5** Fish condition must be continuously monitored for signs of disease or problems with the environment or handling practices.
- H 1.6** If a problem is identified, the VHWP (see H 1.1) must be revised as soon as is practicably possible to include a programme of remedial action.
- H 1.7** Any fish suffering from overt physical damage, or disease symptoms, must be:
 - a) segregated
 - b) treated/humanely euthanased without delay.
- H 1.8** If the mortality level is above 0.5% a week (excluding pre-swim up fry):
 - a) the designated vet or trained and competent fish biologist/fish health manager must be notified and an investigation made as appropriate and,
 - b) records of the investigation must be kept and be available for inspection and,
 - c) appropriate action must be taken without delay.

Casualty killing

- H 2.1** Any seriously sick or injured fish, or fish found not to be recovering, must be humanely killed without delay.
- H 2.2** Fish must only be culled using the following methods:
- overdose of a suitable anaesthetic (as specified in the VHWP) using immersion in a solution of the agent, for fish under 5 grams and,
 - a non-recoverable percussive blow to the head which renders the fish immediately insensible, for fish over 5 grams.
- H 2.2.1** For fish during the seawater stage, a non-recoverable percussive blow to the head, using a priest or mechanical percussive device, of sufficient force to render the fish immediately insensible, can be used for emergency killing instead of anaesthetic overdose.
- H 2.3** Under no circumstances must seriously injured or sick fish be left to die in air.
- H 2.4** Culling of any fish must only be conducted by suitably trained and competent people.

Medicinal products

- H 3.1** High quality management and husbandry standards must be employed in order to minimise the need for therapeutants.
- H 3.2** Treatment must only be given when the welfare of the stock may otherwise be threatened (as advised by a veterinary surgeon).
- H 3.3** Prophylactic use of veterinary medicinal products, where no known disease problems exist, is prohibited (except in the case of vaccines as agreed with the veterinary surgeon).
- H 3.4** In cases where medication is required for welfare reasons, treatments must be used in accordance with current legislation and the designated veterinary surgeon's recommendations.

(i) It is recommended that producers obtain, read and where appropriate, apply the advice contained within the latest versions of the guidelines on '*Responsible use of antimicrobials in fish production*' and the '*Responsible use of vaccines and vaccination in fish*' issued by the Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture (RUMA) alliance (www.ruma.org.uk).

- H 3.5** Any veterinary medicines used must be licensed in the UK for use in rainbow trout. Alternative medicines can be used under the cascade system. Alternatively drugs must be used under a Special Importation Certificate (SIC) or Special Treatment Authorisation (STA).
- H 3.6** The medication must only be administered to fish:
- by suitably trained staff
 - strictly in accordance with the instructions prescribed by the veterinary surgeon and,
 - must be on site before the treatment commences.
- H 3.7** The potential for therapeutic agents to affect the environment, both locally and more widely, must be given full consideration, and all relevant legislation and Codes of Practice must be adhered to.
- H 3.8** Veterinary medicine withdrawal periods must be strictly adhered to.

- H 3.9** Veterinary products must be properly labelled and stored appropriately.
- H 3.9.1** Records must be kept of all treatments.
- H 3.10** All farms must have a written pharmaceutical waste policy.

Mutilations

- H 4.1** Mutilations involving the removal of sensitive tissue are prohibited.
- H 4.2** Marking methods that cause distress or injury to fish must not be used.

* Sea lice

- * **(i)** The problems involved with availability of effective and non-aversive treatments for sea lice infections are recognised. The welfare impact of treatments on the fish must be given full consideration. The RSPCA will monitor the situation, and review new technology and research as it develops.
- H 5.1 *** Non-medicinal sea lice removal technologies must be risk assessed against the impact they may have on the welfare of the fish, prior to each use of the technology.
- * **(i)** The Farmed Fish Welfare Risk Assessment template in Appendix 3 can be used to record the activity outlined in H 5.1
- H 5.2 *** Farms must take all reasonable steps to minimise the gravid lice population, as per the requirements of the relevant legislation.
- H 5.3 *** Lice levels must be below the thresholds laid out by the relevant statutory/regulatory body.
- H 5.4 *** Stock keepers must be able to recognise symptoms of lice infection.
- H 5.5 *** Separation of year classes and fallowing of sites must be practised to help control sea lice populations as detailed in the VHWP/Environmental Impact Plan.
- H 5.6 *** The producer must, through documented evidence, demonstrate that any co-operative management schemes between operations in the same loch/area aimed at reducing sea lice populations have been entered into.
- H 5.7 *** Sea lice prevention and treatment programmes must be:
 - a) drawn-up with the designated veterinary health professional
 - b) fully detailed in the VHWP.

H 5.8 * Sea lice damage to fish must be recorded during lice counts, and include:

- a) condition of the fish: good/thin
- b) site of lesions
- c) skin condition
- d) fish feeding behaviour.

H 5.9 * Any fish with severe physical damage caused by sea lice must be removed and dispatched humanely without delay.

Transport

Transport systems should be designed and operated to ensure that fish are not caused unnecessary distress or discomfort. The transport and handling of fish should be kept to an absolute minimum. Persons involved in transport should be thoroughly trained and competent to carry out the required tasks.

- T 1.1** Managers must ensure that all drivers/vehicle owners:
- a) have a copy of the current version of the '*RSPCA welfare standards for farmed rainbow trout*' at each site
 - b) are familiar with its content
 - c) understand and apply its content
 - d) have a), b) and c) as part of their induction program.
- T 1.2** All journeys must have an up to date transport plan, which covers important aspects of the journey, including journey times, water qualities, contingency plans and those responsible for fish welfare.
- T 1.3** Any handling of fish prior to transport must be:
- a) kept to a minimum
 - b) conducted in such a way as to prevent any unnecessary distress to the fish.
- T 1.4** All equipment that the fish rely on for life support must be constantly monitored throughout the journey.
- T 1.5** If any faults are found in the equipment (see T 1.4) then:
- a) fish in transit must be inspected
 - b) any problems must be corrected immediately.
- T 1.6** Delays in transport must be kept to the absolute minimum possible.
- T 1.7** Supplementary oxygen or aeration must be available during all transportation, which is sufficient to last at least 50% longer than the anticipated journey length.
- T 1.8** Oxygen levels must be maintained at a minimum of 7mg/litre.
- T 1.9** Excessive changes in water temperature and pH during transportation must be avoided.
- T 1.10** Care must be taken to ensure dead fish are not loaded for transport.
- T 1.11** Sick or seriously injured fish must:
- a) not be transported
 - b) be humanely destroyed.
- T 1.12** Any fish which die during transportation must be separated from live fish as soon as possible after arrival.
- T 1.13** Records must be kept of any deaths or injuries that occur during transportation.
- T 1.14** To prevent disease, transport containers must be cleaned and disinfected after each consignment of fish is transported.
- T 1.15** All persons involved in transportation of fish must be familiar with, and transport fish in accordance with, all relevant legislation.

Juvenile transport

These juvenile transport standards are to be considered in conjunction with, and as a supplement to, the general transport standards.

Juvenile fish transport – general

- JT 1.1** Only boats with the ability to run on closed valves are permitted.
- JT 1.2** There must be a named member of staff responsible for monitoring the welfare of the fish during loading and unloading.
- JT 1.3** Records of procedures relating to transporting vessels must:
 - a) be maintained
 - b) include details of any casualties or compromises to the welfare of the fish.
- JT 1.4** There must be a pre-transport plan in place that identifies all areas of risk associated with the journey.
- JT 1.5** Should a journey require the use of a roll-on-roll-off ferry, procedures must be in place to ensure the welfare of the fish during any stationary time.
- JT 1.6** The ferry must be pre-booked prior to sailing.
- JT 1.7** Drivers must be able to gain access below deck during the journey, to be able to check on the welfare of the fish.
- JT 1.8** Fish must be monitored throughout the journey.
- JT 1.9** The following records must be kept in relation to the transport process:
 - a) time since last handling
 - b) time since vaccination
 - c) time since last treatment (including anaesthetic)
 - d) feed withdrawal time
 - e) any clinical signs of disease
 - f) crowding records (how often/duration etc.)
 - g) oxygen levels during crowding
 - h) numbers of fish in each tank to be transported
 - i) stocking densities of tanks being used for transport
 - j) numbers of fish to be put in each receiving enclosure
 - k) numbers of fish in each tank and the stocking density of each tank.
- JT 1.10** Producers must be able to demonstrate that they have done everything possible to ensure maximum survival when fish are transferred to sea.
- JT 1.11** Only healthy, undamaged fish must be transported.
- JT 1.12 *** Feed withdrawal, when required for any situation, must not exceed a maximum of 54 degree days.

- JT 1.12.1 *** With regards to JT 1.12, if the maximum feed withdrawal period permitted must be extended for any reason then this must:
- be signed off by a veterinary health professional
 - be recorded in the VHWP, including full details of why this was necessary
 - be subject to a welfare risk assessment.
- JT 1.13** Any bath treatment must be recorded in the VHWP.
- JT 1.14** All staff working with, or handling the fish must be:
- trained and competent
 - aware of their duties
 - aware of any risks to welfare involved.
- JT 1.15** Records of training relating to JT 1.14 must be kept.
- JT 1.16** All equipment must be:
- cleansed and disinfected prior to use
 - fit and suitable for the purpose for which it was intended.
- JT 1.17** To minimise thermal shock and to avoid the inhibition of oxygen release into the water, the water temperature used for transportation must be as close as possible to that from which the fish came.
- (i)** As a guide, a difference of more than 3 or 4°C would not be expected. Where the difference is greater, transport water should be mixed with receiving water in order to acclimatise the fish.
- JT 1.18** Fish must not be transported at temperatures which may compromise their welfare.
- JT 1.19** No fish must be out of water for more than 15 seconds.
- JT 1.20** There must be at least 50% more oxygen available than is needed for the journey.
- JT 1.21** Water must be free from contaminants which may be detrimental to the welfare of the fish.
- JT 1.22** If fish pumps are to be used, they must be suitable for the size of fish being pumped.
- JT 1.23** To avoid physical injury to the fish, any bends or joins in the pipes must be kept to a minimum, or ideally avoided altogether.
- JT 1.24** There must be no joints, kinks or rough internal edges on, or in the pipes which may cause physical injury to the fish.
- JT 1.25** There must be a procedure in place to ensure that all fish are removed from any pipes or other equipment used at the end of loading and unloading.
- JT 1.26** The drop from the end of any pipe must be such that it:
- avoids injuring the fish
 - allows them to disperse without others landing on top of them.

- JT 1.27** Hand nets must:
- be of the correct size so that they can be easily lifted such that the fish at the bottom of the net are not injured
 - have a suitable mesh size for the size of the fish that does not allow the fish to escape
 - not be filled to a level which is likely to inflict physical damage to the fish.

JT 1.28 Fish must not be netted before they are ready to be received at the transport tanks/helicopter buckets.

JT 1.29 The netting of the last fish in any tank must be undertaken with a great deal of caution and care so as not to injure any fish.

Pushing/towing enclosures

JT 2.1 The speed of pushing/towing must be suitable for the size of the fish.

JT 2.2 Nets must be tensioned to avoid the problems associated with the nets bagging, which could compromise fish welfare.

JT 2.3 Nets must be clean before they are used for pushing/towing.

JT 2.4 There must be a person on the enclosure monitoring the behaviour of the fish to ensure their welfare.

JT 2.5 There must be a clear method of communication between the skipper and the person on the enclosure.

JT 2.6 The speed of the pushing/towing must not be faster than the speed of the swimming fish.

JT 2.7 Extreme care must be taken to avoiding pushing/towing the enclosure through a fluther of jellyfish or algal blooms.

Road transport – (relating to both internal and external journeys)

JT 3.1 The driver of the vehicle must:

- be fully aware of the transport regulations relating to fish
- understand the needs of the fish being transported
- drive in a manner which will not adversely compromise the welfare of the fish.

JT 3.2 Tank insulation must be such that it allows the water to remain at a constant temperature +/- 1.5°C from the start of the journey.

JT 3.3 Before leaving the site, the driver must:

- perform a visual check of the oxygen levels and rates of aeration into the tanks
- record the oxygen levels on the record sheet.

JT 3.4 All transport tanks and life support systems must:

- be designed and be fit for the purpose of transporting fish
- be without leaks, chips or cracks.

JT 3.5 Fish must be allowed to settle before departure.

JT 3.6 After the required density has been reached, all tanks must be filled to the top with good quality water from where the fish were loaded.

JT 3.7 * The following stocking densities must be adhered to during transport:

Size of fish (grams)	Max stocking density (kgs/cubic metre)
1 to 4	40
5 to 19	85
20 to 49	95
50 to 99	110
100 to 224	130
225 to 449	140
450 to 999	160
1000 +	150

JT 3.8 Oxygen levels must be:

- continuously monitored
- maintained at a minimum of 7mg/litre.

JT 3.9 Diffused oxygen must be spread around the water column by the use of an oil free compressor.

JT 3.10 There must be sufficient aeration to avoid deadspots.

JT 3.11 All lids, outlets and any other openings must be fully secured before departure.

JT 3.12 * During the journey, if oxygen levels fluctuate, the driver must:

- be able to visually check the fish for signs of stress
- be able to identify the reasons for the oxygen instability
- take appropriate action to ensure the welfare of the fish.

JT 3.13 All equipment that the fish rely on for life support during the journey must be monitored throughout the journey.

JT 3.14 If any faults are found in the equipment (see JT 3.13) then:

- fish in transit must be inspected
- any problems must be corrected immediately.

JT 3.15 When arriving at the discharge site, the driver must:

- ensure compliance with any biosecurity requirements
- have been aware of these before arrival on site.

JT 3.16 After arrival at the site, discharge must take place without undue delay.

JT 3.17 The lorry must be sited to ensure that all tanks can be fully emptied, taking into account any camber which may be in the ground.

- JT 3.18** Valves must be suitable for more than one fish to pass through at any one time.
- JT 3.19** All pipes must be securely attached to prevent fish from escaping during the unloading process.
- JT 3.20** All unloading must be through appropriate valves, rather than netting fish from the tanks.
- JT 3.21** Any pipes used for unloading must be able to be adjusted to account for any rise and fall in the tide.
- JT 3.22** Water must always be in the tanks during unloading in order to avoid the last fish from becoming dry.
- JT 3.23** There must be a system for flushing the tanks at the end of unloading to ensure that the last fish is removed.
- JT 3.24** Tank design must facilitate the discharge of the last fish by having sloping floors which guide the fish to the outlet.

Stunning beyond recovery/killing

Fish should be killed humanely without any unnecessary distress or discomfort. Pre-killing crowding and handling should be kept to an absolute minimum. Personnel involved in killing should be thoroughly trained and competent to carry out the required tasks.

- S 1.1** All fish must be humanely stunned/killed.
- S 1.2 *** Feed withdrawal, when required for any situation, must not exceed a maximum of 54 degree days.
- S 1.2.1 *** With regards to S 1.2, if the maximum feed withdrawal period permitted must be extended for any reason then this must:
- a) be signed off by a veterinary health professional
 - b) be recorded in the VHW, including full details of why this was necessary
 - c) be subject to a welfare risk assessment.
- S 1.3** Crowding and handling prior to stunning/killing must be kept to an absolute minimum.
- S 1.4** The method of stunning/killing used must rapidly, and without pain and distress, render the fish insensible, until death supervenes.
- S 1.4.1** Permitted stunning/killing methods for marine sourced trout are:
- a) an effectively applied percussive blow
 - b) electronarcosis followed by bleeding or,
 - c) electrocution.
- S 1.4.2** Humane mechanical devices must be used in preference to a manual percussive blow (except for emergency killing).
- S 1.4.3** When used, the use of mechanical devices must be monitored to ensure that they are working properly and that they are delivering the stun at the correct location.
- S 1.5** One blow must be delivered to the top of the head just behind the eyes, of sufficient force to cause immediate loss of consciousness that lasts until death.
- S 1.5.1** A 'priest' must be available throughout the killing process to allow a manual percussive blow to be administered in an emergency.
- S 1.6** Where fish have to be bled, bleeding must follow within 10 seconds after the animals have been stunned.
- S 1.7** All staff involved with the stunning/killing process must have received full training to ensure they have the knowledge and skill to perform their task humanely and efficiently.
- S 1.8** There must be a named person responsible for fish welfare throughout the killing process who has attended a recognised training course in humane killing of fish and who has the authority to stop the harvest if poor welfare for whatever reason is suspected.
- S 1.8.1** Records of any harvests which have had to be stopped must be made available to the RSPCA Assured Assessor or RSPCA Farm Livestock Officer (FLO).

- S 1.9** Killing efficiency must be continuously monitored to ensure that every fish is effectively stunned/killed and does not regain consciousness prior to death.
- S 1.10** A sample of fish must be examined during, and at the end of the process and checked to ensure that there are no signs of consciousness.
- S 1.11** The results of these checks must be recorded and be made available to the RSPCA Assured Assessor or RSPCA Farm Livestock Officer (FLO).
- S 1.12** All blood and mucus from killing operations must be contained and disposed of ashore.

(i) The RSPCA is examining all new developments associated with the killing of farmed fish. If any of these alternative methods are shown to maintain or enhance the welfare of the fish, then consideration will be given to incorporating them into the RSPCA welfare standards in the future.

Electronarcosis followed by bleeding/electrocution

(i) The system in use should pass enough current through the body of the fish for a sufficient duration, which either renders the fish insensible until it has been bled or death by anoxia supervenes.

- S 2.1** Whatever electrical process is used (batch, continuous flow etc):
a) insensibility of the fish must be immediate, with no pre-stun shocks
b) the system must ensure that the stun is maintained and is irrecoverable until the fish dies.
- S 2.2** Fish must be presented to the stunner in a way which prevents mis-stunning.
- S 2.3** Any fish which fall to the ground during the process must be humanely dispatched.
- S 2.4** Fish must be carefully observed throughout the process to ensure that none of them are showing any signs of recovery before any further handling of them.
- S 2.5** The following welfare outcomes relating to assessing the effectiveness of the stun must be carried out at the end of the process and recorded:
a) no eye movement
b) no rhythmic opercular movement
c) only mild short-term involuntary muscular twitches
d) fish turn over and remain upside down
e) no sign of fish attempting to swim.
- S 2.6** All personnel must be able to identify when fish have been properly stunned/are dead.
- S 2.7** All personnel must be competent and able to operate the electrical system safely.
- S 2.8** All equipment must be operated in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.
- S 2.9** All equipment must be fitted with visible means of checking that the correct level of current is being administered throughout the process as dictated by the manufacturer's recommendations.

- S 2.10** All equipment must be regularly cleaned and maintained so that it ensures that it is fit for purpose at all times.
- S 2.11** Contingency plans must be in place to ensure that fish welfare is not compromised should there be an interruption in the electricity supply, loss of water, breakdown of the water pump or any other equipment or material failure.
- S 2.12** A back-up manual percussion stunner must be available at all times to humanely dispatch fish which are showing signs of consciousness.
- S 2.13** Personnel must be competent at percussively stunning and manually bleeding fish.
- S 2.14** There must be a process in place which ensures that no fish are left in the system at the end of the procedure.
- S 2.15** Dry stunning methods using electricity are prohibited.

Environmental impact

The farm should be operated with respect for the natural environment and employees should recognise their duty to care for the wider environment. All reasonable steps should be taken to minimise the ecological impact of the farming system.

- EVI 1.1 An Environmental Impact Plan must be drawn up and fully implemented at all times.
- EVI 1.2 All relevant legislation, official guidelines and Codes of Practice must be understood and strictly adhered to.

i These standards are primarily focused on the welfare of farmed fish. However, the potential for aquaculture to have wider environmental effects also needs to be considered. In addition to fully complying with all relevant legislation and recommendations, the farmer should demonstrably and positively review environmental protection policies as developments in research and technology allow. It is the responsibility of the management to ensure that all employees recognise their duty to care for the natural environment and monitor possible impacts on it.

Escapees

- EVI 2.1 Every reasonable step must be taken to prevent the escape of farmed fish.
- EVI 2.2 Enclosures must be designed and sited in such a way that they are not likely to be damaged by adverse weather conditions.
- EVI 2.3 Fish farms must have a containment plan in place with the aim of preventing fish escaping.

i Farmed fish which escape may have an adverse ecological impact and are also likely to experience welfare problems. It is therefore essential that all possible reasonable measures are being taken to prevent farmed fish escaping.

- EVI 2.4 The contingency plan, as referred to in M 2.5, must contain a section on actions to be taken in the event of fish escaping.

Extraneous species

- EVI 3.1 Extraneous species must be returned to the wild, or humanely culled, as advised by the designated veterinary surgeon.

Fallowing

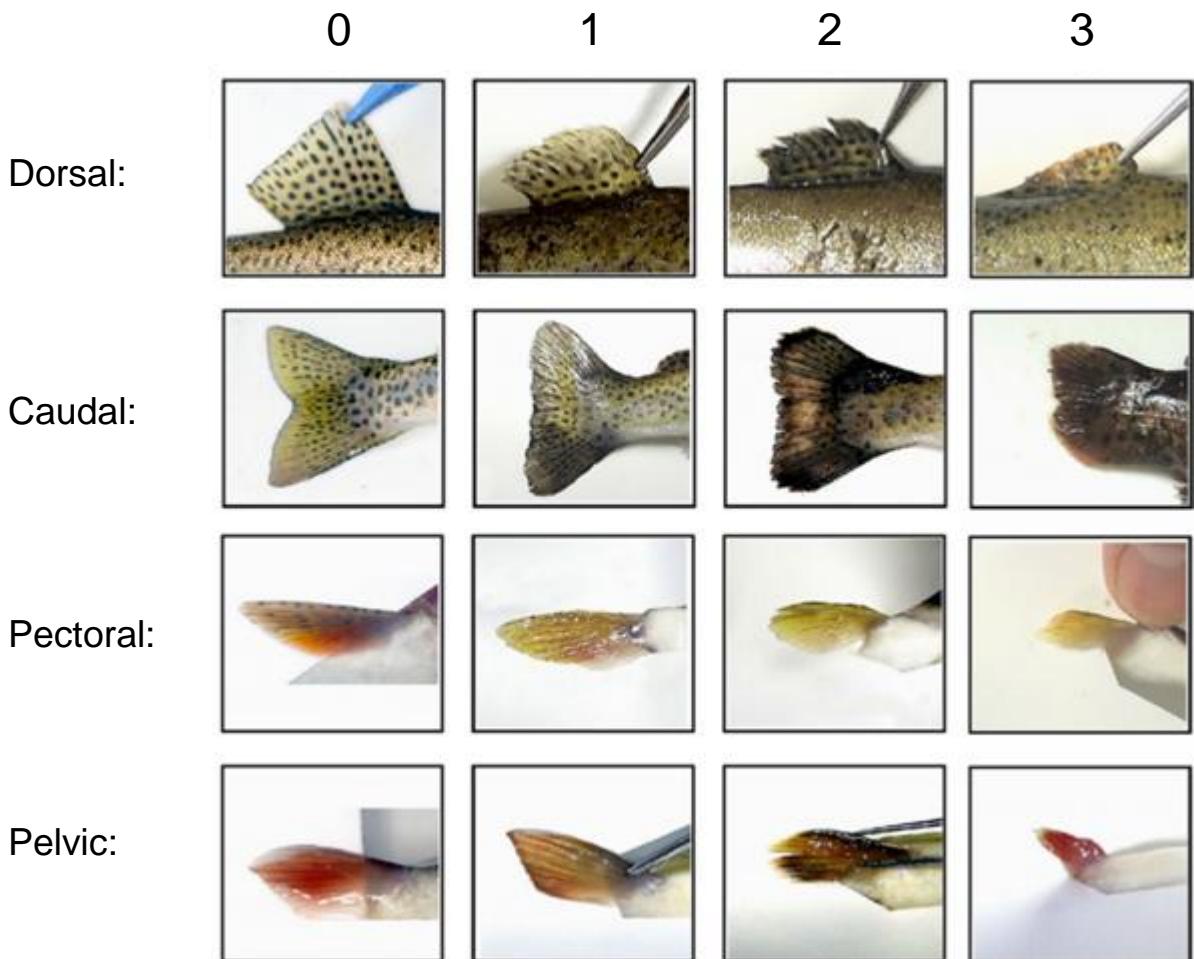
- EVI 4.1 Net pen enclosures must be fallowed as detailed in the Environmental Impact Plan to allow recovery of the benthos.

Aesthetic

- EVI 5.1 Sites must be kept tidy and all waste must be disposed of by an approved method.

Appendix 1

Fin damage assessment guide



Original photographs from the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS)/Imogen Hoyle. Amended by Peter Scott.

* Appendix 2

Animal welfare outcomes

The RSPCA believes that the measurement of key animal welfare outcomes is the most meaningful way of assessing the welfare of the animals in aquaculture systems. The section below lists standards that were included in the 2014 version of the RSPCA welfare standards for Farmed Rainbow Trout but are now no longer treated as auditable standards in the 2018 version. If scheme members wish to continue using these standards then the RSPCA would be very interested to learn of this work, with a view to developing this work for re-adoption into the next version of the welfare standards.

- AWO 1.1** Individual fish – a sample of 100 fish to be examined at the point of killing for the following outcomes:
- a) fin damage (see appendix 1)
 - b) operculae damage
 - c) eye damage
 - d) any notable negative condition, such as abnormal behaviours, poor skin condition, spine or jaw deformities.
- AWO 1.1.1** In relation to standard AWO 1.1, if 10% or more of fish in the sample score above 1, then this must:
- a) be recorded in the VHWP
 - b) investigated to establish the cause of the issue
 - c) be prevented from reoccurring by implementing effective prevention strategies.
- AWO 1.2** On making a visual appraisal of the fish during transfer, grading or any other handling procedure, if 10% or more of the fish are seen to be over a score 1 for any of the outcome measures listed under AWO 1.1, then this must:
- a) be recorded in the VHWP
 - b) investigated to establish the cause of the issue
 - c) be prevented from reoccurring by implementing effective prevention strategies.
- AWO 1.3** The following population measures must be recorded in the VHWP:
- a) the percentage mortality of a population at an agreed time in their life cycle following a significant husbandry event, such as fry grading
 - b) the percentage of viable fish from a population start figure (culls as well as mortality) to the time of killing.

* Appendix 3

Farmed fish welfare risk assessment template



Farmed fish welfare RISK ASSESSMENT

SECTION 1

Company _____

Designated fish welfare officer _____

Type of fish

VET AVAILABLE IF REQUIRED

General description of event, including location and activity

Company _____

Designated fish welfare officer _____

Welfare at risk	Severity	Description
1 Freedom from hunger, (thirst) and malnutrition	1 NEGLIGIBLE	All welfare needs met at all times
2 Freedom from discomfort	2 MINOR	Welfare needs not met for a reasonable duration
3 Freedom from pain, injury and disease	3 SERIOUS	Welfare needs not met for an unreasonable duration
4 Freedom to express normal behaviour	4 MAJOR	Animal suffering unnecessarily
5 Freedom from fear and distress	5 FATALITIES	Animal dies unnecessarily of unnatural causes

PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE

Title	Name	Signed
A Designated fish welfare officer		
B Staff member		
C Staff member		
D		
E		
F		

By signing the above, I understand my responsibilities as set out in section 2 (overleaf).



Farmed fish welfare

RISK ASSESSMENT

SECTION 2

Company _____ Designated fish welfare officer _____

Fish _____

Activity	Duration of activity	Probability/Likelihood of negative welfare impact	Welfare at risk	Severity of risk	Control measure(s)	Person(s) responsible for control	Revised severity
	S		3	5		A, B, C	1

This Farmed Fish Welfare Risk Assessment (WRA) contains summary advice for the purpose of ensuring the welfare of fish. It is not intended to be a comprehensive statement of all the needs of these fish or how to meet them.

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