

**RSPCA Laying Hen Standards Technical Advisory Group meeting  
on Friday 2nd October 2015**

**Meeting Summary Notes**

**Proposed changes to standards/information boxes**

The group considered proposed changes to the RSPCA welfare standards for laying hens for possible inclusion in the next revision of the standards in 2016. The proposals relate to a number of areas of the standards including food and water, environment, floor and litter, lighting, perch provision, multi-tier systems, the range, management, health, beak trimming, welfare outcome assessment, transport and slaughter/killing. These would be taken forwards for further consideration.

**Natural cover - novel approaches**

The group discussed the provision of natural cover and the difficulties for some members on rented land in meeting the natural cover requirements in the laying hen standards. A number of novel approaches were discussed. This would be taken forwards for further consideration.

**Verandas**

The RSPCA were considering the benefits of requiring verandas for barn systems. The group discussed the benefits and possible difficulties surrounding this. This would be explored further.

**Minimising diet changes**

The RSPCA had concerns regarding high numbers of diet changes and a possible link with injurious feather pecking. Diet changes can be a stressor for birds and the different reasons for diet changes were discussed.

**Monitoring & Assessment during A.I. incidence**

The difficulties around validating Freedom Food certification following disease outbreaks was discussed in light of the recent A.I. incidence. Freedom Food Assessors and RSPCA Farm Livestock Officers respect bio-security procedures. Partnership working with industry in this area was discussed and will be considered further.