STANDARDS	RSPCA ASSURED INDOOR	RSPCA ASSURED FREE-RANGE	UK LEGAL MINIMUM	RED TRACTOR INDOOR	RED TRACTOR FREE-RANGE	SOIL ASSOCIATION ORGANIC	WELFARE IMPACT
YEAR OF PUBLICATION	2017			ON-FARM STANDARDS: 2022 CATCHING & TRANSPORT: 2017 PROCESSING (SLAUGHTER/KILLING): 2023		2024	
ENVIRONMENT							
SPACE REQUIREMENTS	Maximum 17kg/m²		Not specified for indoor birds For birds labelled "free-range", "extensive indoor" or "barn-reared", maximum 25kg/m² For organic production, fixed housing, maximum 21kg/m² and 10 birds/m² For organic production, mobile housing with a floor area less than 150m², maximum 30kg/m² and 16 birds/m²	Stocking density increases with bird weight Maximum 24kg/m² (for 4.5kg birds) The maximum stocking density exceeds 17kg/m² from bird weights of 2kg		Follows minimum legal requirements related to organic production For fixed housing, maximum 21kg/m² and 10 birds/m² For mobile housing with a floor area less than 150m², maximum 30kg/m² and 16 birds/m²	Sufficient space is required to enable birds to perform a wide range of important natural behaviours. More space also allows subordinate birds to move away from aggressors more easily and enables resting birds to rest without being disturbed. It also facilitates litter management by reducing the concentration of waste products on the floor of the house.
LITTER PROVISION	The floor of all houses must be completely covered in litter, except around water facilities Unlittered areas around water facilities must occupy no more than 25% of the total floor area of the house		Not specified	Flocks are provided with clean, fresh bedding to a minimum of 2cm. Areas around water facilities and slats may be free of bedding Unlittered areas around water facilities must occupy no more than 25% of the total floor area of the house		At least 50% of the house floor must be covered in litter	Litter provides several functions for poultry. It provides a comfortable resting area, and opportunities for foraging and exploratory behaviours.
BATHING WATER PROVISION	Perimeter access to bathing water from day old, allowing ducks to fully submerge their head, take water up by the bill and shake it over their body without difficulty. Water facilities are at least 4.5cm wide and 4.5cm deep. Dimensions and depth are increased as the birds age Access to bathing water from 21 days of age at the latest. Per 100 ducks, at least 833cm² usable open water space as well as 50cm of usable space around the outside of the facility. Water facilities are at least 50 x 50cm and 10cm deep throughout (excluding any ramps). If deeper water is provided, there must also be 10cm deep water, at least 25cm wide, along one side of the facility where birds can enter Water that birds can enter must be emptied and cleaned out at least every 16 hours, and twice in each 24 hour period When ducks have access to water they can enter, separate drinking water must also be provided, using bell or nipple drinkers All water facilities must be separated from the littered area (e.g. in a separate area of the house or placed on raised, perforated flooring)		Not specified	Perimeter access to water from day old, allowing ducks to cover their head, take water up by the bill and shake it over their body without difficulty. Per 100 ducks, 30cm bathing water space, which can be provided in e.g. troughs, bell drinkers, baths, showers Access to bathing water the ducks can enter not required Additional water is also provided for drinking, such that 50% of total water provision is allocated as bathing water and 50% is allocated as drinking water. Drinking water is provided using troughs, bell or nipple drinkers		Waterfowl must have access to a stream, pond, lake or pool, whenever weather and hygiene conditions allow. The water must be maintained and managed to prevent the build-up of disease If it is not possible to provide ducks with full body access to water (e.g. during extreme weather) water for preening should still be provided. Water of different depths should be provided to meet duck behavioural needs	As ducks are waterfowl they require access to open water sources that enable them to fulfil their water-related preening behaviours. Access to open water has been shown to be essential for improving and maintaining health, which has also been shown to improve as the level of body access to water increases. Ducks have shown the highest preference for water facilities that they can enter (full body access), where a greater range of water-related activities can be performed. It is important that open water facilities are managed hygienically. Ducks will defecate in water, so separate clean drinking water they are unable to enter should also be provided. Bathing water needs to be cleaned regularly. Providing water facilities over a drainage area, not directly on the litter, helps to maintain good litter quality and bird cleanliness.
LIGHTING	Light intensity at least 20 lux for at least 9 hours a day, continuously 6 hours of continuous darkness every day (except up to 5 days of age, where the minimum period of continuous darkness must be at least 1 hour from day 1 and increased by at least 1 hour per day) Outside of these periods, light intensity must be at least 6 lux Natural daylight must be provided by 7 days of age. It must be provided at all times during the natural daylight period. The natural light openings (windows) in the house must correspond to at least 3% of the total floor area of the house Birds are provided with a natural or artificial dawn/dusk period		Adequate lighting must be available to enable inspection of the ducks at any time Artificial lighting must be provided if the natural light available in a building does not meet the needs of the animals kept in it Animals must not be kept in permanent darkness, or without an appropriate period of rest from artificial lighting	Light intensity at least 20 lux over 80% of the usable area within the house during the lighting period. Within 7 days of placement there must be at least 8 hours of natural daylight or artificial light 6 hours of continuous darkness every day, within 7 days of placement Natural daylight in the form of windows equating to 3% of the floor area, is recommended but not required Birds are provided with a natural or artificial dawn/dusk period		Housing must permit plentiful natural light to enter 8 hours of continuous "nocturnal rest" must be given every day Birds are provided with a natural or artificial dawn/dusk period	Wild waterfowl evolved in areas where they were exposed to a range of illuminances – from direct sunlight to patches of shaded areas. Some variation in ambient illuminance to provide a range of light environments over a 24 hour period may benefit duck welfare. Birds can see a wider range of wavelengths than humans, including UV light. Standard artificial lights do not include these wavelengths. Providing natural daylight enables birds to use their full visual spectrum. This is thought to increase activity and enrich the birds' environment. The duck eye adapts more slowly to the dark than the human eye. Providing a dawn/dusk period enables birds to adapt and prepare for the change in lighting.
FREE-RANGE ACCESS	Not applicable	Continuous daytime access to a range area of at least 2.5m² per bird where grass cover is good, or 4m² where grass cover is poor Overhead shelter at 8m² for every 1000 ducks.	Not required For birds labelled "free-range", there must be continuous daytime access to open air runs mainly covered in vegetation, of at least 2m² per duck, for at least half their life	Not applicable	Access to a range area for at least 8 hours each day Shelter/cover provided on the range	Access to a range area of at least 4.5m²/bird for two-thirds of life	A well-managed range can enhance bird welfare because the range provides an enriching environment with opportunities to exercise and express many natural behaviours. The outside area needs to be large enough to keep the ground in good condition, provide sufficient foraging opportunities, and protect animal health by limiting parasite build-up. Shade and shelter facilities are needed to protect animals from inclement weather.
FLOCK SIZE	Not specified		Not specified for indoor or standard free-range birds For birds labelled "traditional free-range", a maximum 4,000 ducks per house	Not specified		Maximum 1,000 ducks per house	Limiting the maximum flock size may help facilitate good stockmanship and flock checks, by restricting the number of birds that need to be inspected.
HUSBANDRY							
MUTILATIONS	Not permitted		Bill trimming permitted De-toeing permitted under 3 days	Only permitted for breeding birds, veterinary approval required for bill trimming		Not permitted	Mutilations are operations performed without pain-relief, and as such likely cause pain and discomfort to birds, and may also interfere with natural behaviours. They are performed to alleviate the potential for birds to injure each other, which can also cause significant welfare problems. Mutilations, including bill trimming, claw trimming and wing clipping are contrary to the principles of the RSPCA.
FEED	Ducks must not have to travel more than 20m anywhere in the house to reach food		Feed containing mammalian or avian derived protein not permitted Antibiotic and hormonal growth promoters not permitted. Routine use of antibiotics not permitted	No requirements on distance travelled to reach food		Organic feed must be used. At least 20% of the feed must be grown on the farm, or other farms in the same region if this is not possible	Mammalian and avian proteins are not permitted in feed due to potential animal health risks. Antibiotic and hormonal growth promoters are not permitted due to potential animal and human health risks. Unnecessary use of antibiotics also risks increasing levels of antibiotic resistant bacteria.
THINNING	Not permitted		Permitted	Permitted		Not mentioned	Thinning involves removing a proportion of the birds on one or more occasions from the building at planned times to ensure the maximum stocking density is not exceeded. As such, the maximum stocking density is achieved on more than one occasion prior to depopulation. Thinning is stressful for the birds and may increase the risk of disease.
FREQUENCY OF WELFARE CHECKS BY FARMER	Three times a day		Once a day	Twice a day		Regularly	Multiple inspections of the flock helps ensure that all birds are checked. If there are any welfare issues these can be addressed quickly.
GENETICS AND BREEDING							
BREED	Not specified		Animals may only be kept for farming purposes if it can reasonably be expected, on the basis of their genetics or physical characteristics, that they can be kept without any detrimental effect on their health or welfare Ducks labelled "free-range", "extensive indoor" or "barn-reared" must be at least 49 days of age at slaughter	Not specified		Indigenous breeds and strains preferred. Breed must be suited to local conditions and have vitality and resistance to disease/ health problems Minimum slaughter age of 49 days of age for Pekin ducks, or else the duck breed must come from slow-growing strains where average daily liveweight gain does not exceed 45g	In general for poultry, selection for fast growth, weight gain, and heavy finishing weights (with particularly large breast muscle) can compromise other aspects of bird health, particularly leg health.
WELFARE STANDARDS FOR BREEDING ANIMALS	Standards do not include requirements for parent flocks		General farmed animal welfare legislation applies to the parent stock (breeding ducks) Natural or artificial breeding procedures which cause, or are likely to cause, suffering or injury to the animals concerned, must not be practised. This does not include procedures that are likely to cause minimal or momentary suffering or injury, or that might necessitate interventions which would not cause lasting injury	Standards include requirements for breeding flocks Ducks must be sourced from Red Tractor breeding flocks		Standards apply to breeding flocks Ducks must be sourced from organic breeding flocks if possible Ducks from non-organic breeding flocks can be used if sourced straight after hatching, and organic ducks are not available	Ideally, the welfare of duck breeding flocks would also be included in welfare schemes. This can be challenging for smaller schemes, because breeding flocks may produce ducks for a range of farms, not just those part of a particular scheme. Breeding ducks have similar needs to ducks reared for meat, but there are also welfare challenges associated with the breeding process. Specific standards need to be developed to ensure duck welfare is maximised throughout the breeding process.
TRANSPORT							
TRANSPORT DURATION	Maximum 6 hours from start of loading to end of slaughter Maximum 4 hours from leaving farm to arriving at processing plant Maximum 10 hours feed withdrawal prior to slaughter		Food and water must be provided after 12 hours (excluding loading and unloading time) Food and water cannot be provided in poultry transport crates, so this restricts the maximum transport duration	Maximum 12 hours from start of loading to end of unloading at a processing plant Maximum 9 hours feed withdrawal prior to catching		Journey times kept to a minimum. Journeys over 8 hours from start of loading to end of unloading must be justified	Longer transport times are associated with higher mortality levels and increased stress for the birds, due to reduced comfort and increased potential for thermal stress. Long feed and water withdrawal times will cause birds to experience severe hunger and thirst. Long transport times also increase the risk of severe hunger and thirst, as food and water cannot be provided in transport crates.
SLAUGHTER/KILLING METHOD							
PRE-STUN SLAUGHTER	Animals must be stunned before bleeding		Animals must be stunned before slaughter (bleeding) unless slaughtered in accordance with a religious method	Animals must be stunned before bleeding		Animals must be stunned before bleeding	Pre-stunning ensures that an animal is unconscious and cannot feel pain before slaughter up until the point of death.
ELECTRICAL STUNNING/ KILLING	Permitted electrical stunning/killing methods: • Electrical waterbath killing (parameters intended to only stun birds not permitted) • Dry electrical stunning		Permitted electrical stunning/ killing methods: • Electrical waterbath stunning/killing • Dry electrical stunning Electrical methods may only stun the animal- bleeding must follow to ensure death"	Permitted electrical stunning/killing methods: • Electrical waterbath stunning/killing		All methods permitted by law (see relevant column) are allowed	In contrast to other poultry species, electrical waterbath stunning remains the conventional method of killing ducks. This method has many disadvantages. It requires live birds to be handled, inverted and hung into shackles while conscious, which causes stress and discomfort. However, suitable gas killing methods for ducks at a commercial scale have still not been developed.
GAS KILLING	Not permitted		Permitted gas killing methods; Exposure to one of the following until death occurs: • carbon dioxide in two phases, from less than 40% to a higher concentration once animals have lost consciousness • carbon dioxide and inert gas mixture, maximum 40% carbon dioxide • inert gases	Permitted gas killing methods; Exposure to the following until death occurs: • carbon dioxide in two phases, from less than 33% to a higher concentration once animals have lost consciousness		All methods permitted by law (see relevant column) are allowed	In other poultry species, it is now more common to use gas killing methods. These do not require manual handling and shackling of conscious birds, which reduces stress at slaughter. However, ducks take longer to kill by gas methods compared to other poultry, and suitable methods have yet to be implemented at commercial scale.
AUDITING							
INSPECTION FREQUENCY	Annual audit of each farm, slaughter facility and catching/ transporters by RSPCA Assured An unannounced independent welfare audit at least twice a year on all houses where the standards are being implemented		Local Authority Trading Standards enforce legislation covering farm animal health and welfare Farms can be inspected by Trading Standards and/or the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) if a complaint is received Slaughter facilities can be inspected by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and an FSA vet is also always present on site Birds marketed using protected terms (free-range, traditional free range, barn reared, extensive indoor) are inspected by the APHA once per flock	Annual audit of each farm, slaughter facility, and catching/ transporters by a third party certification body Spot checks, potentially unannounced, carried out based on risk of non-conformance		Annual audit of each farm and slaughter facility by Soil Association Certification	Frequent inspections help ensure that standards are complied with. Unannounced spot-checks help ensure that standards are complied with at all times, not just when an inspection is expected. Useful approaches may be random, where sites can receive a visit at any time, or risk-based, targeting sites with a higher risk of non-compliance.
WELFARE OUTCOME MONITORING	• Level of foot pad burn and dirty feathers recorded for each flock and reported back to the farmer		Not required	Welfare Outcome scoring undertaken at the slaughter facility The Red Tractor protocol must be used for scoring, where the following are measured and reported back to the farmer and Red Tractor: • Eye health • Nostril health • Feather cleanliness • Feather coverage • Foot health		Not required	Welfare Outcome measures are animal-based metrics that reflect aspects of their welfare. They can include physical factors, such as the level of foot pad burn or other diseases, and behavioural factors, such as the level of aggressive behaviour seen. Welfare Outcome measures are relatively underdeveloped in ducks compared to chickens.