



**JUNE** 2023

**RSPCA welfare standards**

Domestic/  
common ducks

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# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
Guide to the use of the RSPCA welfare standards	4
RSPCA Farm Animals Department	4
<b>Specific provisions for ducklings</b>	<b>5</b>
Duckling sourcing	5
Specific provision for ducklings	5
<b>Food and water</b>	<b>7</b>
Food	7
Water	7
<b>Environment</b>	<b>9</b>
Buildings	9
Floor and litter	11
Lighting	13
Space requirements	17
Air quality and thermal environment	17
Environmental enrichment	18
Verandas	23
Climate change and animal welfare	23
<b>The range</b>	<b>24</b>
Biosecurity on the Range	28
<b>Management</b>	<b>29</b>
Managers	29
Stock-keepers	31
Inspection	31
Independent welfare audits	32
Equipment	33
Protection from other animals	34
Artificial intelligence	38
<b>Health</b>	<b>39</b>
Mutilations	40
On-farm casualty killing (culling)	41
Medication	43
Biosecurity	44
<b>Transport</b>	<b>46</b>
Management	46
Catching	47
Transport	50

<b>Slaughter/killing</b>	<b>53</b>
Training	53
Closed Circuit Television (CCTV)	55
Health monitoring	56
Lairage	57
Shackling	58
Stunning	60
Bleeding	62
<b>Appendix 1</b>	<b>63</b>
Welfare audit form example	63
<b>Appendix 2</b>	<b>67</b>
Transport – standard operating and emergency procedure	67
<b>Appendix 3</b>	<b>68</b>
Open water facility examples	68
<b>Appendix 4</b>	<b>69</b>
Documents required	69
<b>Index</b>	<b>70</b>

# Introduction

The *RSPCA welfare standards for domestic/common ducks* are used to provide the only RSPCA-approved scheme for the rearing, handling, transport and slaughter/killing of domestic/common ducks. The *RSPCA welfare standards for domestic/common ducks* take account of UK legislation, government welfare codes, scientific research, veterinary advice, recommendations of the Farm Animal Welfare Committee (FAWC) and the practical experience of the farming industry.

- **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.


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, as well as representing an important element of farm assurance requirements.

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.**

## Guide to the use of the RSPCA welfare standards

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- The numbered requirements are the standards, all of which must be complied with.
- Boxed sections (indicated by ) give additional information, including: providing the reasoning behind a standard, expand on a standard, state how a standard can/will be assessed and/or highlight areas where the standards will be reviewed in the future.
- It is expected that all relevant UK legislation regarding farm animal husbandry and welfare on-farm, during transport, and at the abattoir, will be fully implemented in addition to the RSPCA welfare standards.
- Some standards have been labelled as shown below, which have the following meaning:
  - LEGAL** refers to a standard that is based on a UK legal requirement.
  - REVISED** refers to a standard or information box that was in the previous edition of these standards but has been amended.
  - NEW** refers to a completely new standard or information box, which must now be adhered to.
- **Farmers are required by law to have a thorough knowledge of the Defra Code of Recommendations for the Welfare of Livestock: Ducks.**



### RSPCA Farm Animals Department

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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.

We always value constructive feedback and ideas for improvement from those who are implementing the RSPCA welfare standards. Comments/feedback can be discussed with the RSPCA Farm Animals Department scientific staff, by contacting them on the below details:

Address: Farm Animals Department  
RSPCA  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor Parkside  
Chart Way  
Horsham  
West Sussex RH12 1XH

Phone: 0300 123 0183

Email: [farm-animals@rspca.org.uk](mailto:farm-animals@rspca.org.uk)

The RSPCA does not approve equipment, but sets standards to ensure any equipment permitted for use is managed appropriately to safeguard the welfare of animals.

# Specific provisions for ducklings

## Duckling sourcing

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- SPD 1.1** Ducklings must:
- be hatched according to the current version of the *RSPCA welfare standards for hatcheries*
  - be sourced from a hatchery that has been approved by the certification scheme assessing against these standards as being compliant with the *RSPCA welfare standards for hatcheries*
  - not be of a Muscovy (Barbary) genotype.



**The domestic (or common) duck and the Muscovy (or Barbary) are two distinct species with different evolutionary origins and biological characteristics. As such, these separate species are likely to have different management requirements. These standards have been written specifically for domestic/common meat duck breeds.**

- SPD 1.2** For producers implementing brood and move operations, birds must be moved to their finishing/rearing accommodation by 21 days of age.

## Specific provision for ducklings

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- SPD 2.1** Buildings must be fully prepared and ready to receive ducklings in sufficient time to allow the environment to meet their thermal requirements.
- SPD 2.2** For the brooding of ducklings:
- the number of feeders and drinkers placed, air quality parameters and ventilation rates must be at least to the levels specified within the breeding company's published management guidelines
  - the stocking rate/density must not exceed that specified within the breed company's published management guidelines.
- SPD 2.2.1** The parameters listed in standard SPD 2.2 must be implemented according to the levels specified within this document at no later than 21 days of age.
- SPD 2.3** Where used, spot brooders must be suspended above the centre of the surround.
- SPD 2.4** The height of the brooder must be adjustable to ensure that the temperature at the level of the litter is maintained at the optimum level.
- SPD 2.5** During unloading and placement, ducklings must be handled carefully.
- SPD 2.6** Care must be taken to avoid heat and cold stress in ducklings.
- SPD 2.7** Brooder surrounds and feeding and watering equipment within the surround must be designed and constructed so that ducklings can move freely towards or away from the brooder.
- SPD 2.8** Particular care must be taken in the placement and maintenance of brooder heaters to ensure against risk of fire and emission of noxious gases, for example carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide.

- SPD 2.9** Care must be taken to ensure that feeders do not become hot, especially when metal feeders are used.
- SPD 2.10** Supplementary feed trays and drinkers must be provided to the ducklings, in addition to the permanent feeders and drinkers, for the first few days at the start of brooding.



**Supplementary drinkers should be phased out by the end of 7 days.**

- SPD 2.11** Feeders and drinkers must be kept clean and free from litter.
- SPD 2.12** The environment for brooding ducklings must be lit at a minimum of 25 lux for the first few days.
- SPD 2.13** Supplementary lighting must be hung next to the brooder for the first few days after placement to attract ducklings to the heat source and provide extra illumination of feeders and drinkers.
- SPD 2.14** Drinker facilities must be of a design that prevents young ducklings from getting very wet or drowning before they have had sufficient time to develop waterproofing on their feathers.
- SPD 2.15** Young ducklings must be given appropriate experience of management practices (particularly feeding and watering systems) and environmental conditions (e.g. natural light, sufficient water to fulfil biological requirements, litter) to enable them to adapt to the husbandry systems they will encounter later in life.
- SPD 2.16** On arrival at the farm, day-old ducklings must be thoroughly inspected for signs of injury or deformities.
- SPD 2.17** All ducklings showing obvious signs of injury or deformity (including wrynecks) must be removed and humanely culled.



# Food and water

**Livestock need to have ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and promote a positive state of well-being.**

## Food

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- FW 1.1** **LEGAL** All units must have a written feeding programme to ensure that ducks are fed a wholesome diet which:
- a) is appropriate to their species and age
  - b) is fed to them in sufficient quantity to maintain them in good health
  - c) satisfies their nutritional needs.
- FW 1.2** Ducks must have access to nutritious food ad libitum each day, except when required by the attending veterinary surgeon, and prior to killing (see T 2.2).
- FW 1.3** Producers must have a written record of the nutrient content of the feed, as declared by the feed compounder.
- FW 1.3.1** Producers must have an agreement with their feed compounder that they will supply information about constituents of compound feeds and feed supplements on request.
- FW 1.4** **LEGAL** No feedstuffs containing mammalian or avian derived protein are permitted.
- FW 1.5** **LEGAL** All foodstuffs must be safely and hygienically transported, stored and delivered to stock to prevent spoiling e.g. infestation, contamination and wetting.
- FW 1.6** **LEGAL** Food must not be allowed to remain in a contaminated or stale condition.
- FW 1.7** There must be a minimum feed space allowance of 50cm per 100 birds.
- FW 1.8** Feeders must be designed to enable birds to scoop up the feed effectively.
- FW 1.9** The siting of feeders must be such that all birds have ready access to food without undue competition.
- FW 1.10** All feeding equipment must be hygienically managed.

## Water

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- FW 2.1** For each house, water meters must be connected to all the birds' drinking systems so daily water usage for the birds can be monitored (see M 1.5 a)).
- FW 2.2** **LEGAL** Ducks must have access to drinking water at all times, except when required by the attending veterinary surgeon.
- FW 2.3** All water supplied must be clean and fresh.

- FW 2.4** Non-mains water must be:
- tested every 12 months to assess its drinking quality (this must be recorded)
  - safe to drink.



**The results of the non-mains water test should conform to the following:**

**Coliforms: less than 100 colony forming units (cfus) per ml.**

**Total viable counts: less than 1,000 cfus per ml.**

- FW 2.5** **LEGAL** Drinking water must not be allowed to become harmfully contaminated.
- FW 2.6** The placement of drinkers must be such that all birds have ready access to water without undue competition.
- FW 2.7** Ducks must not have to travel more than 20m anywhere in the house to reach food and drinking water.
- FW 2.8** Provision must be made to ensure an emergency supply of water in case normal supplies fail.
- FW 2.9** Provision must be made for supplying water in freezing conditions.
- FW 2.10** All equipment must be in good working order.
- FW 2.11** All equipment must be hygienically managed.
- FW 2.12** When ducks are provided with open water facilities that permit full body access (see E 7.6) bell drinkers and/or nipple drinkers must also be provided to supply a separate source of drinking water.



**Although nipple drinkers are currently permitted to provide ducks with drinking water, it is strongly recommended that wide-channel bell drinkers are used.**

- FW 2.13** Where bell drinkers are used to satisfy FW 2.12:
- the water channel must be at least 7cm wide and 7cm deep, and
  - at least 50cm of drinking space must be provided per 100 birds.
- FW 2.14** Where nipple drinkers are used to satisfy FW 2.12:
- they must be designed and suitable for use by ducks
  - they must be of the 360 degree design
  - they must have a high flow rate
  - there must be 1 drinker per 12 ducks where cups are used or per 15 ducks where cups are not used.
- FW 2.15** Drinking water provisions must meet the requirements of E 7.12 to E 7.16.

# Environment

The environment in which livestock are kept needs to take into account their welfare needs, be designed to protect them from physical and thermal discomfort, fear and distress, and allow them to perform their natural behaviour.

**E 1.1** Where management systems, designs or layout of facilities not covered in the RSPCA welfare standards are being employed or considered, these must be referred to, and discussed with, the RSPCA Farm Animals Department before they can be considered for certification.

**E 1.1.1** Where changes are being made to existing buildings, new accommodation is being built or new equipment installed that has not previously been assessed, managers must inform the certification scheme at the time the changes are being planned.



**If there is any uncertainty about whether planned changes to buildings or equipment will meet the RSPCA welfare standards then please contact the RSPCA Farm Animals Department (see page 4).**

**E 1.2** Bird welfare must not be compromised/be likely to be compromised by outside environmental factors, such as noise, atmospheric pollution, adverse weather conditions, predators and, in the case of free-range systems, soil conditions.

**E 1.3** The area immediately surrounding the outside of the house must:

- a) be kept clean and tidy
- b) not offer shelter to wild animals
- c) be well-managed, with any vegetation kept short.

## Buildings

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**E 2.1** **LEGAL** All ducks must be provided with accommodation.


**E 2.2** **LEGAL** Buildings must be fit for purpose to ensure a good level of welfare is achieved and maintained at all times throughout a duck's life.



**Buildings that offer very limited or no control over the birds' thermal environment, such as in fully or near-fully open sided buildings, will not be considered acceptable. Sufficient control is essential to maintain good litter and air quality, especially during colder weather, and to protect birds from thermal stress and discomfort.**

**E 2.3** Buildings must be designed and erected so as to be suitable for expected local weather conditions.

**E 2.4** For all accommodation, a notice containing a checklist of the key points relating to welfare (see E 2.5) must be prominently displayed at, or near, the entrance to each building.

- E 2.5** The checklist to satisfy E 2.4 must include:
- total floor area available to the birds
  - total number of birds placed
  - maximum predicted stocking density at depletion
  - total number of drinkers and feeders/minimum feed and water space in the house
  - target air quality parameters
  - lighting levels and regimes
  - emergency procedures i.e. actions in the case of fire, flood, failure of automatic equipment, and
  - when temperatures move outside acceptable limits.
- E 2.6** There must be nothing in the ducks' environment that is likely to cause injury or distress to the birds that can be avoided.
- E 2.7** Except where preservatives with an insecticidal role are used, ducks must not come into contact with toxic fumes or surfaces, for example from paints, wood preservatives or disinfectants.
- E 2.8** All electrical installations at mains voltage must be:
- inaccessible to the ducks
  - well insulated
  - safeguarded from rodents
  - properly earthed
  - tested at least annually by a qualified or competent person
  - in good working order.
-  **By law electrical installations have to be tested every 3 years as part of the Periodic Inspection Report. However, at least once a year, the 'trip switch' should be tested to ensure it is in correct working order.**
- E 2.9** Housing and equipment must be designed so that all ducks can be clearly seen.
- E 2.10** New housing or housing undergoing major structural change must be designed to allow easy removal and minimal carrying and handling of birds during catching.
- E 2.11** **LEGAL** Managers must:
- have access to a copy of the *Code of practice for using plant protection products* (Defra, 2006, PB 11090)
  - be familiar with its content
  - implement the recommendations as appropriate.

## Floor and litter

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**E 3.1** Duck house flooring must allow effective cleansing and disinfection, preventing significant build-up of parasites and other pathogens.



**Where possible flooring should be concrete.**

**E 3.2** Buildings and equipment must be thoroughly cleansed and disinfected after each flock and/or before the placement of new birds.

**E 3.3** The floor of all houses must be completely covered in litter (except in the case of areas around water facilities see E 3.6).

**E 3.4** The litter must be:

- a) of a suitable material and particle size
- b) managed to maintain it in a dry condition
- c) of a sufficient depth for dilution of faeces
- d) topped up to maintain dry conditions - this must be on a daily basis if necessary
- e) managed hygienically.



**LEGAL** The requirement to keep litter in a well maintained state is detailed in law (Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended)). A poultry flock kept on well maintained litter is healthier and more profitable than one kept on poor quality litter. Poor quality litter can cause unnecessary suffering to the birds and can also result in downgrading of the end product at the slaughterhouse. For example, poor litter can cause degeneration of the outer scales on the feet (i.e. on the pressure points), which can lead to a condition known as pododermatitis (foot pad burn). Poor litter can be avoided.

Litter moisture is a key cause of litter related problems and is affected by drinker design and management; air change rate; litter material and depth; stocking density and rate; diet (i.e. raw material quality and formulation) and flock health.

In poultry houses, three environmental factors have to be considered together, because their control is interdependent. They are environmental temperature, ventilation rate and humidity.

The humidity of the poultry house environment is affected by the number and size of the birds and therefore by their respiratory output and also, of course, by the relative humidity of the air entering the house. When the relative humidity in the house exceeds 70%, the moisture content of the litter tends to increase, leading to poorer conditions. The aim should be to maintain a relative humidity level in the house of between 50 and 70% by supplying sufficient air and added heat when necessary.

A lot of the water, and all of the fat and nitrogen found in the litter, which all have a detrimental impact on litter quality, is excreted from the birds as faeces. Therefore, the higher the stocking rate the more of these factors the litter has to absorb. Also, the rate of evaporation of moisture from the litter falls as stocking rate increases.

Any disease or skeletal abnormality that reduces the birds' mobility is likely to affect their welfare adversely, as they will have increased contact with the litter.

Finally, not all foot pad burn is simply a result of poor litter quality. If birds spend excessive amounts of time squatting down due to leg problems or other diseases they will be more likely to suffer from these lesions regardless of litter condition.

Primary source: Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra). 2004. Poultry Litter Management. Defra, London.

**E 3.5** Litter which is wet, infested with mites, or otherwise harmfully contaminated must:

- a) not be introduced into duck housing
- b) be replaced immediately if within the house.



Depending on the severity of the issue, wet litter may be covered with fresh, dry litter if this is sufficient to prevent the birds becoming wet from water seeping up through the litter.

**E 3.6** Where suitable flooring is provided under water facilities within the main house (see E 7.12 a)), this must occupy no more than 25% of the total floor area of the house.

**E 3.7** Ducks must have access to the litter area at all times.

- E 3.8** Stock-keepers must:
- understand the factors that affect litter condition
  - be aware of the welfare problems associated with poor litter management (e.g. foot burn).
- E 3.9** Where straw is used, stock-keepers must:
- be aware of problems associated with respiratory problems, i.e. aspergillosis
  - only use good quality straw.



**Where possible, straw for the purpose of bedding should be stored under cover.**

## Lighting

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**The structure of the domesticated duck's eye has retained the properties and characteristics of its progenitor species and light and vision have been shown to be important in many aspects of these birds' lives. Wild waterfowl evolved in areas where they were exposed to a range of illuminances – from direct sunlight to patches of shaded areas. They have well-developed eyes with good colour vision, and, as such, sight is a primary sense that requires a good level of light to operate efficiently. However, as wild waterfowl will sometimes feed at night, they have also developed good vision to see in the dark - being able to see at very low light intensities (around 0.15 lux).**

**In a preference test, Pekin ducks were given a choice of 4 compartments lit at either less than 1 lux or at 6, 20 or 200 lux and observed at 2 and 6 weeks of age. Over a 24 hour period, the birds spent approximately equal amounts of time (approximately 6.6 hours) in each of the 6, 20 and 200 lux compartments and spent the least amount of time (about 4 hours) in the less than 1 lux compartment. This preference did not change with age. The results imply that some variation in ambient illuminance to provide a range of light environments over a 24 hour period may benefit duck welfare. The lighting standards have therefore been developed as best as practically possible to reflect this. The results also indicated that ducks fare well in brightly lit environments and are not averse to such conditions. Further research is required to fully establish the lighting requirements for domesticated ducks.**

Primary source: Barber et al. 2004. Preferences of growing ducklings and turkey poults for illuminance. *Animal Welfare*, 13: 211-224.

- E 4.1** In each 24 hour period:
- no area must be lit at less than 20 lux for at least a 9 hour continuous period
  - outside the 9 hour light period, but not during the dark period, no area must be lit at less than 6 lux
  - during the natural dark period, there must be a minimum period of 6 hours continuous darkness, except for birds 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.

**i** The minimum light level of 20 lux does not apply to shadowed areas caused by housing furniture. A maximum of 3% of the floor area is permitted to be less than 20 lux for this reason.

Natural daylight is to be used to achieve the minimum light level of 20 lux. During the shorter winter months, artificial lighting may be used to supplement the natural daylight in order to maintain the minimum light level either side of the 9 hour period and to achieve the 9 hour photoperiod.

The minimum 20 lux light level is to be achieved on a day when the light levels are neither excessively bright (i.e. through direct sunlight entering the shed) or dark (i.e. an overcast/stormy day). On dark days it is acceptable to use artificial lighting to achieve the 20 lux level.

The installation of light sensors that automatically turn artificial lights on/off, to ensure the minimum light level of 20 lux is achieved at all times during the light period, should be considered. This may also help save electricity on days when natural light only is sufficient to achieve the 20 lux level.

Measures of illuminance are to be taken at bird head height.

It is acknowledged that it may not be possible to achieve 6 hours of continuous darkness when the natural period of darkness is shorter than 6 hours.

**i** The introduction of natural daylight into the house is likely to be beneficial to bird welfare by, for example, increasing activity and enriching the bird's environment. Natural daylight can provide a range of illuminance levels in different areas within the house, which changes throughout the day, and is spectrally different to artificial sources.

**E 4.2** Where supplementary lighting is provided at night, this must not exceed 2 lux.

**i** In order to avoid panic, it is accepted that ducks may not be kept in total darkness during the night.

**E 4.3** The use of intermittent lighting patterns to meet the minimum number of hours of darkness is not permitted, with the exception of the first 36 hours after placement.

**E 4.4** Birds must be exposed to natural daylight as soon as possible, and no later than 7 days of age.

**i** Experience has shown that exposing birds to events occurring outside the house at an early stage allows them time to develop recognition and familiarity and therefore reduce their fearfulness towards them.

Some producers expose ducklings to daylight from day old, whilst others have waited until the ducklings are five to seven days of age.



- E 4.5** Natural daylight must be provided:
- at all times during the natural daylight period
  - through all the required openings (see E 4.8).

- E 4.6** The entry of natural light into the house must not be obstructed.

**i** For example, standard E 4.6 applies to the positioning of items within the building. It does not apply to methods used for controlling the amount of light entering through the light opening, as stated in standard E 4.10, which are being used in accordance with the standards.

- E 4.7** Natural daylight must penetrate all areas of the house.

- E 4.8** The light openings in the house must correspond to at least 3% of the total floor area of the house.

**i** It is important to install a sufficient number and size of light inlets to ensure the lighting requirements can be achieved at all times.

Installing light openings down both sides of a house can allow greater control over the light entering the building. For example, if the shutters on one side of the house have to be closed then daylight can still enter the building through the inlets on the opposite side. Similarly, more than the suggested amount of total window space for a building should be provided.

**i** The greater the proportion of window area to floor area achieved, the more natural daylight will enter the shed and consequently the less likely artificial lights will have to be turned on to achieve the minimum lighting level of 20 lux on darker days. This measure could also help save energy.

- E 4.9** Light openings must be of a sufficient size to ensure that streams of light entering the house causing patches of bright light are avoided.

**i** As a guide, each light opening should be no smaller than 0.56m<sup>2</sup>.

**i** Where there are patches of bright light, e.g. when windows are not evenly distributed around the house or when windows are not of a similar size, bird activity may be greater in the more illuminated areas, which could adversely affect litter quality.

- E 4.10** Where there could be a risk of birds becoming heat stressed due to the penetration of direct sunlight into the house, it must be possible to readily control the amount of natural daylight entering the building to the extent that darkness can be achieved.

**i** For example, installing shutters can control the amount of light entering through the light opening. The shutters can also be used to completely block any light entering the house at night where events outside the house could cause birds to panic. To have the greatest amount of control over the light entering the house it should be possible to open/close the shutters by varying degrees. Shutters, especially if insulated, can also help keep the building warm during cold weather, which is important during the brooding phase.

**i** The provision of daylight, particularly via windows, can increase environmental temperature within the house. Therefore, it is important to consider the capacity of the ventilation system and the positioning of the ventilation inlets so that good ventilation and correct house temperature can be achieved.

**E 4.11** Birds must be exposed to dawn and dusk periods.

**E 4.12** If used outside the natural daylight period e.g. to extend the light period, artificial lights must be switched on and off:

- a) in a stepped or gradual manner,
- b) over a period of at least 20 minutes.

**i** Turning artificial lights on/off gradually allows time for the ducks to prepare for daytime and darkness. Before the dark period, it is also likely to promote natural settling behaviour and stimulate birds to have a last meal, which may help increase feed conversion efficiency.

**E 4.13** Lighting patterns in all houses must be recorded.

**i** Where possible, lighting patterns should be recorded automatically.

**E 4.14** Where glass is used, this must be safety/toughened glass.

**i** The use of transparent glass windows is encouraged, as this will allow birds to see out of the building, further enriching their environment. Transparent glass windows also provide good light, with minimal filtering and distortion, and do not discolour with time.

**i** Window material that helps prevent condensation forming should be selected, e.g. double-glazed windows.

**E 4.15** Where used, windows must be properly sealed to maintain correct airflow within the house and avoid draughts.

## Space requirements

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- E 5.1** Stocking density must take account of the ventilation capacity of the building in order to maintain:
- good air quality
  - an adequate temperature to avoid heat stress
  - good litter quality.



**Stocking density should be set at a level that is appropriate to the design of the building and its locality.**

- E 5.2** Stocking density, which is to be calculated using the floor space available to the birds, must never:
- exceed 17kg/m<sup>2</sup>
  - be likely to exceed 17kg/m<sup>2</sup>.



**For certification scheme members, E 5.2 a) not only applies to the current flock but also to all flocks placed since the previous certification scheme assessment, where applicable.**

**The stocking density for the current flock will be based on predicted outcomes using data from the records listed in M 1.5.**

- E 5.3** The number of birds placed in a building must be no more than the number required to rear all the birds to the maximum stocking density once, which is to be at depopulation, hence thinning is not permitted.



**Thinning is characterised by placing additional birds into a building so that the maximum stocking density can be reached on one or more occasions prior to depopulation (the removal of all birds from a building). During the rearing period, a proportion of the birds is removed from the building at planned times to ensure the maximum stocking density is not exceeded. Therefore, thinning is defined as *the planned removal of a proportion of birds, on one or more occasions, from a building so as not to exceed the required maximum stocking density.***

**As an example, as the maximum stocking density is 17kg/m<sup>2</sup>, if you intend to rear the birds to a maximum weight of 4kg at depopulation, then no more than 4.25 birds/m<sup>2</sup> can be placed in the building (i.e.  $17 \div 4 = 4.25$ ).**

## Air quality and thermal environment

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- E 6.1** Ventilation systems must be designed to maintain good air and litter quality.
- E 6.2** Provision must be made to ensure that aerial contaminants do not reach a level at which they are noticeably unpleasant to a human observer.
- E 6.3** Averaged over an 8 hour period:
- dust must not exceed 10mg/m<sup>3</sup>
  - carbon monoxide must not exceed 50ppm.

**i** Air quality parameters should be maintained under all foreseeable climatic conditions, below the following levels at bird head height:

Ammonia	11ppm
Carbon dioxide	5000ppm
Relative humidity	50 to 70%

Air quality parameters, i.e. ammonia, carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide etc., should be measured and recorded on a daily basis. Where possible, these levels should be automatically recorded.

**E 6.4** Where automatic recording of air quality parameters is not possible, producers must monitor and record air quality on a daily basis.

**E 6.5** Ducks must have access to a thermally comfortable environment at all times so that heat/cold stress does not occur.

**i** The number, size and capacity of the fans are an important consideration when determining ventilation rate. A minimum ventilation rate of  $1.6 \times 10^{-4} \text{m}^3/\text{s}$  per  $\text{kg}^{0.75}$  liveweight is recommended. The maximum ventilation capacity should be sufficient to limit a maximum temperature lift to 3°C.

**E 6.6** Daily measurements of the maximum and minimum temperatures must be recorded:

- from the centre of the shed and at either end,
- at bird height.

**E 6.7** **LEGAL** Stock-keepers must:

- have access to a copy of the Defra booklet *Heat Stress in Poultry – Solving the Problem* (PB 10543, 2005)
- be familiar with its content
- adopt its recommendations.

## Environmental enrichment

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**i** As ducks are waterfowl they require access to open water sources that enable them to fulfil key elements of their complex water-related preening behaviours. Producers are therefore required to provide open water facilities that enable ducks to have full body access to water.

**i** There is now a strong scientific basis underpinning the importance of providing ducks with access to water for purposes other than drinking. The Council of Europe states that farmed ducks show a clear preference for open water, even without prior experience, and a number of scientific studies have demonstrated that ducks will use open water sources to perform a range of behaviours, such as wet preening, head dipping, wing rubbing and different types of shaking movements. These behaviours are not only important in the bathing sequence, but are also beneficial to the health of the birds, for example in helping them maintain good plumage condition and clean eyes and nostrils. The RSPCA therefore considers it essential for ducks to be provided with suitable, easily accessible open water facilities that allow them to fully and freely perform their important water-related behaviours.

**E 7.1** Ducks must be provided with open water facilities that are appropriate to their age (see E 7.6, E 7.7 and E 7.7.1).

**E 7.2** All open water facilities must be:

- a) fit for the purpose
- b) constructed from a material that is not likely to harm the birds, for example, by breaking or forming rough or sharp edges
- c) designed and managed so as not to cause harm to the birds
- d) presented in a good state of repair
- e) designed to minimise water spillage
- f) managed to minimise water spillage.

**i** An angled lip along the top of the facility can help prevent water overflowing, and wide feet on the base can help ensure it sits firmly on the floor and does not easily move if knocked by the birds.

It is advisable that the height of the facility is sufficient that, when full with water to the required depth, there is a gap of approximately 5cm between the surface of the water and the top of the facility to help prevent water overflowing.

**E 7.3** Per 100 ducks, there must be a minimum of 50cm of usable open water facility space.

**i** With regards to E 7.3, the term 'usable' relates to the parts of the facility where the ducks can freely and fully submerge their heads in the water, and take water up by the bill, when standing around the outside of the facility.

**E 7.4** A minimum number of two of the required open water facilities must be provided.

**E 7.5** All open water facilities must be designed and managed to ensure all ducks can freely and fully submerge their heads in the water, and take water up by the bill, when standing around the outside of the facility.

**i** Even when provided with full body access to open water, ducks choose to perform a number of water-related behaviours from around the outside of the facility, such as drinking, head dipping and preening. Therefore, it is important that the facility enables the ducks to freely and easily perform these behaviours and that it is not necessary to fully enter the water to perform them.

**E 7.6** Ducks must have access to open water facilities that allow full body access as early as possible and, in any case, from no later than 21 days of age.

**E 7.7** From day old, the open water facilities provided to satisfy E 7.3 must allow water to cover the head fully and be taken up by the bill so the duck can shake water over its body without difficulty and, in any case, have:

- a) a water channel width of at least 4.5cm, and
- b) a water depth of at least 4.5cm.

**i** In order to satisfy standard E 7.5 at all times, the dimensions of the water facilities will need to be increased as the birds grow. As a guide, by 14 days of age, water facilities should be at least 15cm wide with a water depth of at least 8cm.

**E 7.7.1** From no later than 21 days of age, the open water facilities provided to satisfy E 7.3 must allow full body access and:

- a) measure at least 50cm x 100cm (internal measurements)
- b) for every 100 ducks, provide a minimum of 833cm<sup>2</sup> of useable open water facility area
- c) have a water depth of at least 10cm throughout the facility (except for areas where ramps are provided: see E 7.7.2).

**i** If birds are unable to freely access certain areas of the facility due to, for example, the presence of a ball cock, then this area will not count towards the required space allowance.

**i** It is strongly advised that more than the minimum amount of space is given so that more open water facilities are provided. This will help reduce the demand on each individual facility, helping keep the water in each facility cleaner for longer.

**i** In a study where ducks were given the choice between pools with different depths of water, ducks choose to spend more time using water that was 10cm deep compared to 30cm deep, and spent a similar amount of time using water that was 10 or 20cm deep. However, they used the different depths of water for different activities. Ducks spent more time dabbling in water that was 10cm deep, and more time floating and swimming in water that was 20 and 30cm deep. Therefore, ideally, a facility that varies in depth from 10 up to 20, or even 30cm should be provided, as this allows for a wider range of behaviours to be performed (by way of example, see Appendix 3, Fig. 1).

**i** **Hard-wearing, plastic plant pot trays, which can be obtained from garden centres, can be modified to make suitable open water facilities.**

**E 7.7.2** Where necessary, for facilities that allow full body access, ramps can be placed within the facility to help young birds exit the water (see Appendix 3, Fig. 2). Where used, such ramps must:

- a) only be provided where the birds have difficulty exiting the water facility. This is likely to depend on the flock, and must therefore not be provided routinely
- b) be removed at no later than 28 days of age
- c) only be placed at the narrow end/s of the facility
- d) not extend out from the side/s of the facility by more than 12.5cm.

**E 7.8** Open water facilities that permit full body access must:

- a) ensure that any ball cocks are covered, to prevent birds becoming stuck under them
- b) ensure that any ball cocks are mounted at the side of the facility only
- c) with the exception of any ball cock, allow the birds to use the whole area of the facility unhindered
- d) be designed and managed to enable the birds to enter and exit the water freely and easily.

**i** **E 7.8 c) is to, for example, prevent the use of bars being placed across the top of the facility.**

**E 7.9** The height of open water facilities that permit full body access (i.e. the distance between the top of the facility and the surface the birds are standing on) must not hinder the ability of the birds to freely and easily enter the water and, in any case, for ducks from 4 weeks of age, must not be more than 22cm.

**E 7.10** Where ramps are used to help ducks access the open water facilities, there must be a level surface of at least 1m that extends between the edge of the resource and the top of the ramp.

**i** **Providing an area of sufficient width around the facility allows ducks to stand around the outside of the facility to use the water and comfortably pass each other.**

**i** **If ramps are used they should be at an angle of no more than 20 degrees, as ducks may struggle to walk up them if they are too steep.**

**E 7.11** Where the depth of the water is greater than 10cm:

- a) there must be an area where the water is 10cm deep, and
- b) the area referred to in a) must extend out by at least 25cm from along the entire length of one side of the facility where the birds can enter the facility (see Appendix 3, Fig. 2).

**i** **Having a 10cm deep area aids ease of access into and out of the facility and provides an area of shallower water that ducks appear to prefer when carrying out certain behaviours.**

- E 7.12** To minimise contamination of the litter with water all water facilities, including bell drinkers and nipple drinkers, must be:
- provided in dedicated areas out of the main house, such as in verandas, and/or provided in dedicated areas that are physically separated from the birds main littered area and/or placed on raised, perforated (e.g. rubber slats or plastic grids) flooring, and
  - situated so that any spilt water from the facility will not come into direct contact with litter that the birds have access to.



**It is strongly recommended that the open water facilities are provided in verandas, as these provide a dedicated wet area where the facilities can be more easily managed and are less likely to adversely affect the internal house environment.**

- E 7.13** With regards to E 7.12 a), the flooring/dedicated area must extend outwards from all around the accessible parts of the facility by at least one metre.

- E 7.14** If using perforated flooring, this must be of a design and managed in a way that:

- allows any spilt water to drain away quickly and freely
- enables it to be effectively cleaned and disinfected
- does not cause injury to the birds, including injury caused by slipping.

- E 7.15** All water facilities, including nipple drinkers and bell drinkers, must be positioned over properly constructed drainage areas that drain water away from the facility and out of the building.



**Provision of open water over a drainage area, and not on litter, has been shown to help maintain good litter quality, improve bird cleanliness and live-weight, and result in fewer birds with dirty/blocked nostrils. In addition, leg health has been shown to improve with decreasing litter moisture. It has been reported that litter moisture should be maintained at less than 40% for these reasons.**

- E 7.16** All drainage systems must be effective at removing water from the building.

- E 7.17** Where open water facilities are placed on a raised area, the birds must be able to freely and easily access the facility and, in any case, ramps must be provided if the raised area is 10cm or greater above ground level.

- E 7.18** Where birds have access to the water facilities via popholes, the popholes must:

- ensure the birds can access the facilities freely, easily and unhindered
- be compliant with R 1.5 and R 1.7.

- E 7.19** Open water facilities that allow birds full body access must be emptied and cleaned out at least:

- every 16 hours
- twice within each 24 hour period.



**It is important that open water sources are cleaned out regularly to prevent the build-up of any harmful contaminants. Investigating the use of automated filtering systems to clean and recycle water is strongly encouraged.**



## Verandas

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**NEW** It is strongly recommended that verandas are installed on all duck buildings. The RSPCA is considering a requirement for verandas in future editions of the standards.

Verandas provide fresh air and natural light whilst reducing exposure to sun, wind and rain. By reducing the stocking density in the house, verandas can help to better manage and maintain litter condition and encourage greater activity. Verandas also provide an excellent location for open water sources which can help to maintain litter condition inside the main house.

For free-range systems, verandas may also encourage birds to range and can help protect the litter within the main house during wet weather. Further, during a notifiable disease outbreak, a housing order may be put in place for free-range birds. In such situations, a veranda can help offer the additional space, litter and natural light the birds are used to whilst preventing contact with wild bird populations.

Due to the variation in duck building designs, any producers considering installing a veranda should contact the RSPCA Farm Animals Department for further information.

## Climate change and animal welfare

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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, 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.

Examples of important considerations include:

- the need to ensure that the farm buildings can withstand more severe weather conditions will become more necessary
- ensuring that ventilation systems are working efficiently will be even more important, particularly as poultry are vulnerable to adverse temperature changes
- there may be reduced water availability for drinking, so ensuring that drinking water systems are working efficiently will be even more important.

# The range

The RSPCA believes that free-range conditions can offer benefits to bird welfare, provided the range area is well managed and the birds are offered suitable protection against inclement weather and predators. Where a range is provided, the following standards are to be met in addition to all other relevant standards in other sections of this document.



**Buildings should be positioned to ensure the most efficient utilisation of the range area by the birds. A building that is positioned near to the range boundary would require birds to travel a greater distance to make full use of the range area than a building that is positioned within the centre of the range.**

**R 1.1** Birds must be introduced onto the range as soon as they are mature enough.



**For birds being sold as free-range it is a legal requirement for them to have had, during at least half their lifetime, continuous daytime access to the range. The minimum legal slaughter age for free-range Pekin ducks is 49 days.**

**R 1.2** Consideration must be given to the weather conditions before young birds are introduced to the range and, if necessary, this must be delayed to avoid cold stress.

**R 1.3** Ducks kept in free-range systems must have continuous daytime access to the range.

**R 1.4** Popholes must:

- a) be approximately evenly distributed along the entire length of the building
- b) ensure birds have ready access to the range/veranda
- c) ensure birds can access the range/veranda unhindered.

**R 1.5** Each pophole, including those leading through to a veranda, must be:

- a) a minimum of 45cm high, but in any case the height of the pophole must ensure that the tallest birds have sufficient clearance between their head and the top of the pophole to adopt a normal standing position under the pophole
- b) a minimum of 50cm wide to allow the passage of more than one duck at any one time.

**R 1.6** There must be a minimum of two popholes per building.

**i** It is strongly recommended that more than the minimum number of popholes are installed to allow for adjustment during unfavourable weather conditions. For example, to remain compliant on a windy day some popholes could be closed, if there are a sufficient number installed, to help maintain good conditions within the building.

Similarly, it is strongly advised that birds are able to access the range from both sides of the building. Installing popholes on both sides of a house can also allow greater control over environmental conditions within the house. For example, if driving wind/rain is affecting one side of the building then the popholes on this side can be closed whilst the popholes on the opposite side remain open. In addition, installing popholes on both sides of the building can help reduce the impact on the range area immediately surrounding the house.

**R 1.7** Where there is a step at the base of a pophole, such as a concrete plinth, which is higher than 5cm (measured from the floor), a ramp must be provided that runs along the entire length of the pophole.

**i** Ducks can find it difficult to negotiate steps. Research has shown that a step height of 7.5cm can pose some difficulty to ducks.

**i** As the litter on the floor of the house is built-up over time, this may reduce the amount of pophole space available to the birds. Therefore, this must be taken into consideration to ensure that the height of the pophole, which will be measured according to the usable space available to the birds, meets the 45cm requirement at the end of the crop.

**R 1.8** Ducks must be able to have a clear view of the range from within the building when adopting a normal standing position.

**R 1.9** The outdoor area in free-range systems must:

- a) be designed and managed in ways that ensure that the land around the house and shelter does not become poached
- b) consist of pasture mainly covered by living vegetation.

**i** Managing the range area immediately outside the house, an area which can be heavily used by the birds, is particularly important, especially in helping prevent excessive wear and poaching. Examples of materials that could be used to help prevent poaching, and can also help to clean the birds' feet, include gravel (stones of at least 13mm in diameter, as smaller stones can become quickly capped), bark and slats/mesh that do not have the potential to damage the birds' feet. However, materials such as gravel and bark, can be difficult to clean. Alternatively, concrete, which is easier to clean down, could be laid with plastic slats positioned on top. A combination of concrete and the other materials, e.g. gravel, could also be considered. The distance from the house that should be protected will depend on the individual unit, but as a guide should be at least 2m. Appropriate drainage from the roof and the amount of overhang should also be considered. The use of verandas may also help maintain this area. In addition, management of shade/shelters, natural cover and range enrichment should encourage birds to use the full range area and spend less time directly outside the popholes.

- R 1.10** If birds have access to any commercial arable crop then:
- the crop may only be planted outside the perimeter of the range, to allow birds uninterrupted access to all parts of the range,
  - the crop must not be detrimental to bird welfare, and
  - birds must not be exposed to any crop management practice that may cause them harm, e.g. spraying, pesticide use, sowing, cropping etc.



**Commercial arable crops are not regarded as acceptable vegetation and will be excluded from calculations for range stocking density.**

- R 1.11** In paddocks, where pasture management practices such as rotation ensure a good grass sward is maintained throughout the grass period, there must be a minimum of 2.5m<sup>2</sup> of range per bird.

- R 1.12** Where grass cover is poor, there must be a minimum of 4m<sup>2</sup> of range per bird.



**LEGAL** It is a legal requirement that free-range ducks have access to a range that is mainly covered by vegetation, and that each bird be provided with a minimum range area of 2m<sup>2</sup>.

- R 1.13** Ducks must be provided with areas of shelter as a form of protection against adverse weather conditions, such as prevailing wind, rain and strong sunlight.



**Free-range ducks should have access to areas of shelter to not only offer cover from adverse weather conditions but also offer regions of variation and enrichment. Both natural and artificial shelter is recommended. Natural shelter should include the planting of trees and shrubs or semi-permanent vegetation that can be easily established and removed, such as artichoke and kale. Artificial shelter could include the erection of military netting and sun parasols, and the provision of straw bale 'huts' and trailers.**

**Shelters should form 'corridors' leading out from the building to encourage birds onto the range.**

- R 1.14** In summer conditions, free-range ducks must have access to adequate areas of shelter to minimise crowding (thereby risking further heat stress).

- R 1.15** Overhead shelter (natural and/or artificial) must:
- be of sound construction, secure and not pose any welfare risks, including injury, to the birds
  - be of sufficient height to ensure all birds can adopt a normal standing position, with sufficient head space, under it
  - offer adequate protection from inclement weather and overhead predators
  - be provided at an area of at least 8m<sup>2</sup> per 1,000 birds
  - be available at all times, including from when the birds first have access to the range
  - be distributed appropriately to encourage full use of the range
  - be positioned at varying distances from the house.

**i** Calculation of the overhead shade/shelter area referred to in R 1.15 is based on the actual and accessible amount of cover provided underneath. For example, hedgerows may be included if they can provide shade at all times of day and there is enough room underneath for birds to access freely. Where trees are deciduous or immature, other forms of shade/shelter will need to be provided during the period in which they do not provide sufficient cover. Trailers and simple constructions of four downward posts with a solid roof can provide acceptable forms of artificial shelter.

**R 1.16** At least 25% of the shade and shelter provisions must be positioned within 20 metres of the house.

**R 1.17** The range area must be actively managed to:

- a) encourage birds outside, away from the building, and to use the range area fully
- b) prevent and/or manage muddy/worn areas
- c) minimise any build-up of parasites or other disease-causing organisms.

**i** The aims of active range management are to encourage birds to use all of the range, help maintain vegetation quality (including areas under shelters/cover) and offer protection and shelter. In addition to the existing standards, ways of satisfying R 1.17 may include:

- provision of a variety of types of both natural and artificial shade/shelters
- additional provision of well-managed areas of natural enrichment, which may include suitable feed crops, herbs, trees and fruit bushes
- managing muddy/worn areas to aid recovery and prevent it reoccurring in the same area, e.g. improving drainage and rotation of any artificial shade/shelters.

**Taking individual flock behaviour into account: some flocks may be reluctant to range and therefore need additional encouragement by, for example, providing a 'corridor' of shade/shelter and natural cover from the house out onto the further reaches of the range.**

**R 1.18** Strict management procedures must be implemented to reduce the risk of disease outbreak, particularly where a large number of birds are kept within a certain area.

**R 1.19** Where provided, ponds must be well maintained to prevent a build-up of stagnant water with decaying vegetation.

**i** Filtering out plant debris and providing good aeration will help to avoid problems such as botulism in ponds.

**R 1.20** Young ducklings, when first introduced to the range, must be guided towards food and water and shelter areas to facilitate adaptation to their new environment.

**R 1.21** Measures must be taken to prevent the area immediately surrounding any outdoor feeding and water facilities from becoming poached and muddy.

**i** For example, water and feed facilities can be placed on a non-slip, solid concrete surface, or a surface that has good drainage, e.g. slats or perforations, or on a deep gravel bed. This drainage area should extend outwards from the water/feed facility by at least 1m.

## Biosecurity on the Range

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- R 2.1** **NEW** A written Housing Confinement Contingency Plan must be:
- a) developed:
    - i. with advice from your vet
    - ii. to safeguard the welfare and behavioural needs of the birds during periods of confinement
  - b) included in the VHWP.
- R 2.2** **NEW** The Housing Confinement Contingency Plan must be implemented for free-range birds during periods of confinement, for example when there is a high risk of spread of a contagious disease and the government requires birds to be housed.
- R 2.3** **NEW** The Housing Confinement Contingency Plan must detail:
- a) the additional biosecurity measures that will be implemented to protect the birds, where there's a high risk of spread of a contagious disease
  - b) the additional/novel enrichment items that will be provided to promote activity and interest, including the:
    - i. type of items
    - ii. number of items
    - iii. management of the items
  - c) how the litter will be managed to prevent heavily worn or poached areas forming
  - d) the actions to be taken if aggression and feather pecking occur.

# Management

A high degree of caring and responsible management and stockmanship is vital to ensure good animal welfare. Managers and stock-keepers need to be thoroughly trained, skilled and competent in animal husbandry and welfare, and have a good working knowledge of their system and the livestock under their care.

## Managers

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- M 1.1** **LEGAL** All records and other documentation and information that the *RSPCA welfare standards for domestic/ common ducks* require the producer to have, keep and/or maintain, must be made available on request.
- M 1.2** Managers must ensure that all stock-keepers:
- a) have access to a current version of the *RSPCA welfare standards for domestic/common ducks*
  - b) are familiar with its content, and
  - c) understand and apply its content in their specific area of responsibility.
- M 1.3** All staff employed who are responsible for the welfare of the ducks must be identified, and records must be kept of all relevant training (including in-house) and experience received or gained.
- M 1.4** **REVISED** Managers must:
- a) ensure all stock-keepers have completed relevant and adequate training and can demonstrate their competence in practical circumstances
  - b) develop and implement contingency plans and preventative measures for the following emergency situations, to help ensure the welfare of the animals can be safeguarded:
    - i. fire
    - ii. flood
    - iii. interruption of supplies to the farm, e.g. feed
    - iv. notifiable disease outbreaks
    - v. mass on-farm culling, e.g. due to an outbreak of avian influenza where all birds in a house/on the farm need to be culled (see information box below)
    - vi. periods where the animals are required to remain on the farm for longer than planned, e.g. where there is a significant delay in animals being taken to the abattoir
  - c) provide an Emergency Action Board sited in a prominent position, which must include:
    - i. the telephone number of the premises
    - ii. the what3words address and postcode for the location of the unit
    - iii. the procedures to be followed by those discovering an emergency, e.g. fire, flood, power failure, notifiable disease
    - iv. the location of water sources for use by the fire brigade
  - d) develop and implement a biosecurity plan to minimise the risk of introducing disease onto a site
  - e) develop and implement a transport plan to certification scheme approved abattoirs which minimises waiting time for the birds
  - f) develop and implement a waste management plan.



**NEW** A contingency plan is a course of action designed to help a business respond effectively to a significant future possible event/situation.

For each event/situation, the plan includes the potential impacts on the animals and the actions that can be taken to address the issues identified. For example, in the event of an abattoir breakdown that results in the animals having to remain on farm for longer than planned, contingency plans will detail:

- the potential issues caused by this event and the implications to the welfare of the animals
- the actions that can be taken to best safeguard the animals' welfare.



**NEW** With regards to M 1.4 b) v), avian influenza has become more prevalent in recent years, resulting in an increased incidence of mass on-farm culling of poultry. Contingency plans are required to ensure that mass culling can be carried out without delay, effectively and humanely. Contingency plans should include:

- details of the on-farm mass culling method/s that can be used
- access routes for specialist vehicles and equipment to the poultry buildings
- any additional biosecurity measures required
- actions to be taken to ensure bird welfare is protected up to the point of death (e.g. feed and water provision, lighting schedule and ventilation and climate checks)
- the building preparations required for instances where whole house gas killing may be required.

The RSPCA strongly recommends that all poultry buildings are designed to deliver effective and humane whole house gas killing as a last resort, to prevent the need to use less humane culling methods.

The RSPCA will be developing future standards in this area to ensure on farm mass culling is effective and humane.

**M 1.5** **REVISED** Managers must maintain records of production data for each house, which include documentation on:

- a) the breed/s of duck being reared, causes of illness and injury, feed consumption and daily water usage
- b) ventilation (including settings and any necessary changes)
- c) the maximum number of birds permitted within the house, and actual number of birds placed
- d) the daily mortality (the cause of death must be stated if this can be identified)
- e) the number culled (including reasons for culling)
- f) the number of birds removed for killing
- g) the average weight of birds removed for killing
- h) maximum and minimum temperatures
- i) relative humidity.



- M 1.6** Managers must take into account the abilities of the stock-keepers when deciding on stocking densities for present systems, when considering expanding the unit, or when installing more complex equipment.

## Stock-keepers

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- M 2.1** Prior to being given responsibility for the welfare of livestock, stock-keepers must be properly trained and be competent to:
- a) recognise signs of common diseases
  - b) know the appropriate actions for treatment
  - c) recognise signs of normal behaviour, abnormal behaviour and fear
  - d) understand the signs which indicate good health and welfare
  - e) understand the environmental requirements for ducks
  - f) handle ducks in a positive and compassionate manner
  - g) euthanase ducks when necessary to prevent further suffering.
- M 2.2** Stock-keepers must be able to recognise impending welfare problems at their earliest stages, to enable prompt identification of the cause and prevent the condition worsening.
- M 2.3** When an outbreak of abnormal behaviour occurs, it must be tackled immediately by appropriate changes in the system of management.
- M 2.4** Stock-keepers must be able to demonstrate their proficiency in procedures that have the potential to cause suffering, e.g. culling.

## Inspection

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- M 3.1** All ducks must be inspected at least three times a day using an inspection procedure that will identify birds that are sick, injured or behaving abnormally.
- M 3.2** In order that inspections are thorough, the stock-keeper must, at least once a day, walk within approximately 3m of each bird and encourage them to move.
- M 3.2.1** During inspection of the birds, special attention must be paid to:
- a) body condition
  - b) movements and other behaviour patterns
  - c) respiration
  - d) condition of plumage, eyes, skin, bill, legs and feet
  - e) the presence of external parasites
  - f) the condition of droppings
  - g) feed and water intake
  - h) growth.
- M 3.3** Where health problems have been identified, the stock-keeper must increase the number of inspections carried out each day to ensure all sick birds are treated or humanely culled without delay.

- M 3.4** All movement throughout the flock must be slow and deliberate, both to alleviate fear and reduce possible injury to birds.
- M 3.5** On completion of inspection, records must be kept of ill, injured and dead birds.
- M 3.6** Inspection records must be dated, signed and the time of inspection noted.
- M 3.7** Any welfare problems seen during an inspection must be dealt with appropriately and without delay.



**Welfare problems of sufficient severity that they should have been noticed on previous inspections and dealt with, shall be taken as evidence of negligence of duties by the stock-keeper.**

## Independent welfare audits

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**Independent welfare audits are a good way of helping ensure that on-farm standards, particularly those that have a direct impact on bird welfare and can change during the lifetime of a flock, are being implemented and maintained throughout the year and between any formalised farm assurance scheme assessment visits.**



**For clarity, these independent welfare audits, termed 'welfare audits,' do not include those conducted by the certification scheme as part of the certification process.**



**The welfare audit does not have to include an assessment of all the *RSPCA welfare standards for domestic/common ducks*, such as those relating to the presence and upkeep of paperwork. The audit is to focus specifically on those standards that have a direct impact on bird welfare and can change during the lifetime of a flock, including an assessment of stock-keeper ability, performance and competence. See Appendix 1 for a full list of standards to be included within the welfare audit.**

- M 4.1** Producers must ensure that a welfare audit is carried out:
- to include an assessment of all the standards listed in Appendix 1
  - by a welfare auditor (see M 4.4)
  - on all houses where *RSPCA welfare standards for domestic/common ducks* are being implemented
  - on a regular basis and in any case at least twice per year.
- M 4.2** The welfare audits must be approximately evenly distributed throughout the year.
- M 4.3** At least one of the welfare audits must take place in the last 10 days prior to killing of the flock.
- M 4.4** The welfare auditor, who conducts the welfare audits, must be:
- independent from the direct management of the farm
  - suitably qualified and/or experienced to conduct the audit.

**i** A suitable person to conduct the welfare audit would be the company Fieldsman (or, if the company does not have a Fieldsman, someone with an equivalent role within the company); a qualified vet; or an independent consultant with a good knowledge of duck production.

**M 4.5** Welfare audits must be unannounced.

**i** For welfare audits to be most effective, the producer should not be given any advance warning of the visit. However, it is accepted that in some circumstances the producer may need to be contacted up to 24 hours before the audit to arrange a suitable time for the visit.

**M 4.6** For each house, a record of the welfare audit must be kept, which shows:

- a) the date of the audit
- b) the name of the person who undertook the audit
- c) the age of the flock at the time of the visit
- d) the outcome of the audit including a list of all the standards not being fully met
- e) the action to be taken to rectify each standard not being fully met (if relevant)
- f) verification that the audit was unannounced (if the producer was given any advance warning of the visit this must be stated)
- g) the signature and position/role of the person undertaking the audit
- h) the signature of the stock-keeper/farm manager.

**i** Appendix 1 provides a template for the audit process.

**M 4.7** Any welfare problems identified during a welfare audit must be dealt with appropriately and without delay to rectify the problem.

**M 4.8** There must be a process in place to:

- a) ensure that all problems regarding full implementation of the standards raised during the welfare audit are rectified
- b) prevent the same problems with standards implementation being found at future welfare audits.

## Equipment

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**M 5.1** **LEGAL** Stock-keepers must inspect the equipment, including the automatic equipment, upon which ducks depend, at least once daily, to check that there is no defect in it.

**M 5.2** **LEGAL** Where the birds' welfare is dependent on automated equipment, there must be:

- a) an alarm which will give adequate warning of the failure of that system to function properly (the alarm must operate even if the principal electricity supply to it has failed)
- b) additional equipment or alternative means (whether automatic or not) of maintaining a satisfactory environment to prevent the birds from suffering unnecessary distress as a result of a failure.

- M 5.3** **LEGAL** Where a defect in the equipment is found (whether on inspection or at any other time):
- the defect must be rectified immediately
  - if this is impracticable, measures to safeguard the ducks from suffering unnecessary pain or distress as a result of the defect must immediately be taken and be maintained until the defect is rectified.
- M 5.4** For existing or new equipment which is used in management, e.g. heaters and lighting, stock-keepers must be able to:
- demonstrate an ability to operate the equipment competently
  - demonstrate the ability to carry out routine maintenance
  - recognise common signs of malfunction
  - demonstrate knowledge of action to be carried out in event of failures.

## Protection from other animals

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- M 6.1** **NEW** A written Wild Animal Control Plan (WACP) must be:
- in place, and
  - implemented on farm.
- M 6.2** **NEW** Levels of potentially harmful wild animals (e.g. rodents and birds) must be managed humanely to avoid:
- the risk of disease spread to livestock
  - damage to livestock buildings and the services on which livestock depend
  - contamination and spoilage of feed.



**NEW** In England and Wales, the following legislation applies to the management of wildlife:

- **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981**
- **Animal Welfare Act 2006**
- **The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010**
- **Protection of Badgers Act 1992**
- **Pests Act 1954**
- **The Spring Traps Approval (England) Order 2012**
- **The Spring Traps Approval (Wales) Order 2012**
- **The Small Ground Vermin Traps Order 1958**
- **Food and Environment Protection Act 1985**
- **The Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986**
- **Animals (Cruel Poisons) Act 1962**

**Equivalent legislation applies in Scotland and Northern Ireland.**

**M 6.3** **NEW** The primary means of protecting livestock from wild animals, as documented in the WACP, must be by:

- a) physical exclusion methods
- b) the removal of elements in the vicinity that might encourage the presence of wild animals
- c) maintaining units in a clean and tidy condition to minimise the risk of wild animals gaining access to the unit.



**NEW** Physical exclusion measures are the most humane and effective methods of providing protection from wild animals.

Measures should only be applied after the area has been checked and cleared of elements that could encourage the presence of wild animals, as applying some measures can interfere with rodent behaviour and encourage them to spread to other areas. Humane methods of protecting livestock from other animals include:

- construction/maintenance of fencing appropriate for excluding the wild animals in question
- removal of shelter/cover (e.g. weeds, heaps of rubble, broken equipment etc.) in the area surrounding livestock buildings
- removal/protection of obvious food sources
- maintenance of drains
- maintenance/proofing of buildings against wild animals
- storing away from livestock.

In free-range systems it is appreciated that elements, such as natural cover, are provided in order to encourage birds on to the range. Some of the methods listed above are intended to remove unnecessary and unintended harbourage sites, as opposed to elements specifically provided for other purposes.



**NEW** Rodents are less likely to inhabit an area if there is no cover or food supply. Reduced food availability will also increase the likelihood of rodents consuming bait, where applied. When stores or livestock buildings are empty, the opportunity should be taken to clean spaces and introduce any necessary controls before restocking.

**M 6.4** **NEW** Where any method of lethal control is being considered, a site survey of the unit must be carried out before applying the control, i.e. bait or traps, identifying:

- a) the type, level and extent of the problem species
- b) any non-target animals likely to be present (including pets and children)
- c) any maintenance and proofing issues.

**M 6.5** **NEW** Where any lethal method of control is used, its use must have taken into account the results of the site survey (see M 6.4).

**M 6.6** **NEW** The WACP must include provisions that specifically exclude the following methods of control:

- a) snaring
- b) gassing
- c) vertebrate glue traps.

**M 6.7** **NEW** Long-term baiting must not be used as a routine rodent control measure.



**NEW** In relation to M 6.7, site plans should therefore highlight potential high risk areas for wild animal activity (rather than permanent baiting locations).



**NEW** The RSPCA is opposed to the use of poisons that cause animal suffering and it is important not to rely solely on the use of rodenticide. The RSPCA is concerned about the welfare of all animals that have the capacity to suffer, and therefore all alternative forms of deterrent and humane control should be exhausted before resorting to the use of poisons for rodents.



**NEW** Any baiting programme should be considered carefully and justified in risk assessments for each location where used. Consideration should be given to using non-toxic baits in order to ascertain the presence of rodents, which may necessitate the use of rodenticide.

**M 6.8** **NEW** When bait and/or traps are used, records of their use must be kept and:

- a) state the location of the bait/traps
- b) state what bait/traps were used
- c) state the volume/number of bait/traps placed
- d) state the name of the person who placed the bait/trap
- e) be retained for at least two years.

**M 6.9** **NEW** Bait and traps must:

- a) be placed in suitable positions, and
- b) be sufficiently protected to avoid harming non-target animals.

**M 6.10** **NEW** Bait must be used according to the manufacturer's instruction for:

- a) storage
- b) usage, including areas of use and replenishment
- c) disposal.

**M 6.11** **NEW** Traps must be:

- a) used according to the manufacturer's guidelines
- b) maintained in good order
- c) disposed of appropriately if no longer fit for purpose, e.g. have broken
- d) stored safely and securely.

**M 6.12** **NEW** Bait points must:

- a) be monitored regularly, and
- b) records or monitoring must be kept, including:
  - i. levels of any activity at each bait point
  - ii. any missing or disturbed bait
  - iii. the name of the person responsible for monitoring the bait points.

**M 6.13** **NEW** Trap points must:

- a) be monitored at least twice a day, ideally at dawn and dusk, and
- b) records of monitoring must be kept, including:
  - i. levels of activity at each trap
  - ii. any missing or disturbed traps
  - iii. the name of the person responsible for monitoring traps.

**M 6.14** **NEW** Any injured, sick or dying wild animals found – that have been targeted for control – must be humanely dispatched immediately to prevent further suffering.



**NEW** Regular replenishment of bait will help to prevent sub-lethal doses, which can result in a build-up of resistance to the active ingredient.

**M 6.15** **NEW** Where bait is used, dead animals must be disposed of safely, in line with the manufacturer's product label.



**NEW** Safe disposal of wild animals that have died as a result of poisoning reduces the risk of secondary poisoning in non-target species, such as domestic and other wild animals (including birds), that may consume the carcasses.

**M 6.16** **NEW** Once treatment is complete, all traps and traces of bait must be:

- a) removed
- b) disposed of/stored according to the manufacturer's instructions.

**M 6.17** **NEW** Wild animal control methods must be covered by the farm COSHH assessment, where required.

**M 6.18** **NEW** Managers must ensure that all stock-keepers:

- a) have access to a copy of the Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use *UK Code of Best Practice: Best Practice and Guidance for Rodent Control and the Safe Use of Rodenticides*
- b) are familiar with its content
- c) understand and apply its content.



**NEW** Managers are encouraged to complete a training course that is approved by the Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use. Such courses are available at: [www.thinkwildlife.org/training-certification/#int\\_Ink](http://www.thinkwildlife.org/training-certification/#int_Ink)

Further information is available on the AHDB website [ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library/rodent-control-on-farms](http://ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library/rodent-control-on-farms).

**M 6.19** **NEW** Domestic animals must not have access to the unit, other than farm dogs and cats.

**M 6.20** **NEW** Farm dogs and cats must not be permitted in the duck house.

**M 6.21** **NEW** Farm dogs and cats must be:

- a) in a healthy condition
- b) regularly wormed (record to be kept in the medicine book or VHWP).

## Artificial intelligence

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**NEW** The RSPCA is reviewing the role of artificial intelligence and the wide-ranging benefits it can bring to farm animal welfare, particularly in the areas of monitoring growth parameters, behaviour change and welfare assessment. It is strongly recommended that producers investigate the feasibility of such technology to further safeguard animal welfare. Where such technology is being considered, please contact the RSPCA Farm Animals Department.



# Health

The environment in which livestock are housed needs to be conducive to good health.

**H 1.1** A written Veterinary Health and Welfare Plan (VHWP) must be drawn up, reviewed and updated at least annually with the attending veterinary surgeon.

 **The Veterinary Health and Welfare Plan (VHWP) takes into account specific health and welfare issues that are known to affect ducks, for example pododermatitis, and health concerns that have been identified on-farm on an individual basis.**

**H 1.2** The VHWP must include targets set for health aspects and records kept to identify whether targets have been met every year and at each assessment made by the veterinary surgeon.

**H 1.3** **LEGAL** Managers must:

- a) have access to a copy of the *Defra Code of Practice for the Control of Salmonella during the Production, Storage and Transport of Compound Feeds, Premixtures, Feed Materials and Feed Additives* (PB13303).
- b) be familiar with its content, and
- c) adopt its recommendations.

**H 1.4** There must be no recurring injuries of a similar nature seen on a number of birds attributable to physical features of their environment or handling procedures.

**H 1.5** If injuries are found, a programme of preventative action must be specified in the VHWP (see H 1.1).

**H 1.6** If the mortality level within a house is in excess of 0.5% in any 24-hour period, a veterinary investigation must be made and the outcome recorded.

 **Investigation of lower mortality levels is at the discretion of the attending veterinary surgeon.**


**H 1.7** Flock performance data must be continuously monitored for signs of disease and production disorders.

**H 1.8** For each condition listed in S 3.1 ('health monitoring' in Slaughter/killing section), a plan must be developed which is designed to prevent any increase in and/or reduce the average level of that condition existing on the farm.

**H 1.9** The plans referred to in H 1.8 must be incorporated into the VHWP (see H 1.1).

**H 1.10** If any flock performance parameters fall below the tolerance limits identified in the VHWP (see H 1.1):

- a) the veterinary surgeon must be informed
- b) the VHWP must be revised to include a programme of action that will remedy the problem.

 **The use of multi-vitamins is recommended as good practice during the early stages of rearing, in the event of suspected disease challenge and also prior to and following periods of possible stress.**

- H 1.11** Ailing ducks and any ducks suffering from injury, such as open wounds or fractures, must without delay be:
- segregated, but within sight and sound of other ducks,
  - treated, or
  - if necessary, humanely killed (see H 3.3).



**The RSPCA is aware that a number of different factors such as genetics, nutrition and management can all have an effect on the health, especially the leg health, of ducks. When considering the choice of stock, selection of the strain of bird should be made with the aim of reducing welfare problems associated with rapid weight gain, such as leg problems.**

- H 1.12** Management plans must aim to prevent ducks from suffering chronic joint disease or leg deformation.

- H 1.13** There must not be any lame birds.



**Lame is defined as a bird that has an obvious gait defect that affects its ability to move. The bird may have a limp, jerky or unsteady strut, or may splay one leg as it moves. The bird is likely to prefer to sit when not coerced to move, and is likely to be unable to run.**

- H 1.14** Any bird that is:

- in uncontrollable pain,
- found not to be recovering from illness or injury, or
- is lame

must be humanely killed without delay.

- H 1.15** Where used, facilities to segregate sick or injured birds must:

- be within the main house
- provide birds with food and water, which is accessible without undue effort or discomfort, as specified in the Food and water section
- be stocked at a density lower than the rest of the house to allow birds to rest quietly
- be well littered, as specified in the Environment section
- be inspected at least 3 times daily and an assessment made of each bird – this must be recorded.

- H 1.16** Stock-keepers must:

- take care when placing a duck into the segregation pen
- not, under any circumstances, drop it over the surround.

- H 1.17** Following depopulation, all houses must be thoroughly cleansed, disinfected and tested free from infectious agents as specified in the VHWP.

## Mutilations

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- H 2.1** Bill trimming, claw trimming, wing clipping and any other forms of mutilation are not permitted.

## On-farm casualty killing (culling)

**H 3.1** **LEGAL** Each farm must have provisions for the humane killing of casualty birds without delay.

**H 3.2** **LEGAL** Casualty killing must be carried out by either:

- a) a named, trained, competent member of staff, or
- b) a licensed slaughterman, or
- c) a veterinary surgeon.



It is not illegal to kill a bird to prevent further severe suffering if a method of humane killing is available on the premises and there is someone competent to undertake the procedure.



The Humane Slaughter Association (HSA) has produced a booklet *Practical Slaughter of Poultry: A Guide for the Small Producer*. Producers should obtain a copy of this booklet, from HSA: [www.hsa.org.uk/downloads/publications/practicalslaughterofpoultrydownload-cm-updated.pdf](http://www.hsa.org.uk/downloads/publications/practicalslaughterofpoultrydownload-cm-updated.pdf)

**H 3.3** **LEGAL** Birds must only be killed on-farm using the following methods:

- a) captive bolt (e.g. Cash Poultry Killer)
- b) hand held electrical stunning, immediately followed by neck cutting
- c) neck dislocation (see information box for legal requirements relating to this practice).



**LEGAL** The following are legal requirements under Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 (The protection of animals at the time of killing):

- Neck dislocation must not be used as a routine method but only where there is no other permitted method available for stunning.
- No person shall kill by neck dislocation more than 70 animals per day.
- Manual neck dislocation must not be used on animals of more than 3kg live weight.



Although the captive bolt device has been designed to effectively kill poultry, under current legislation it must be followed by neck dislocation or bleeding; except when used for emergency culling or during disease control operations. The RSPCA would strongly recommend the use of a captive bolt device for the culling of birds.

N.B. The term 'emergency' can be used to refer to the culling of casualty birds.

**H 3.4** Equipment that crushes the neck (e.g. killing pliers) must not be used.



Equipment that crushes the neck is neither quick nor humane.

- H 3.5** Neck dislocation must involve stretching the neck to sever the spinal cord and cause extensive damage to the major blood vessels.
- H 3.6** Where a captive bolt device is used:
- a) it must be maintained according to the manufacturer's published guidelines
  - b) it must be used according to the manufacturer's published guidelines
  - c) it must be tested at least once per week
  - d) it must be tested on each day of use, prior to being used
  - e) birds must be restrained appropriately to enable accurate positioning of the device
  - f) the muzzle of the device must be placed on the highest point of the head between the eye and the ear, on the midline, with the bolt aimed straight down
  - g) the convex head, which is suitable for ducks, must be used
  - h) Cash Powerload 'E'.22 cartridges must be used, for cartridge powered devices
  - i) for compressed air devices, the air pressure must be at least 135 psi
  - j) the operator must check that the birds show signs indicating they have been properly stunned/killed
  - k) if there are any signs that a bird has not been properly stunned/killed, it must be immediately re-stunned and killed using a back-up method.



**The bolt velocity should be tested using testing equipment supplied by the manufacturer. If this is not available, the condition of the components of the stunner should be thoroughly checked, with particular attention given to the state of the recuperator sleeves and the breech area.**



**With regards to the positioning of the captive bolt device, it is crucial that the muzzle is positioned between the eye and the ear of the duck. This is because the brain is situated just behind the eye (in the direction of the body).**



**In relation to H 3.6 j), unconsciousness can be checked by the absence of a blink reflex when the cornea (the surface of the eyeball) is lightly touched. Presence of a blink reflex must be acted upon immediately: it does not necessarily indicate full consciousness but the return of this reflex after stunning is a sign of some brain function returning and indicates the possibility that the bird is regaining consciousness.**

- H 3.7** Those responsible for using the captive bolt must:
- a) have received appropriate training
  - b) be competent when using this equipment.
- H 3.8** If there is any doubt as to how to proceed, the veterinary surgeon must be called at an early stage to advise whether treatment is possible or whether humane killing is required to prevent suffering.
- H 3.9** **LEGAL** All carcasses must be disposed of strictly according to current legislation.
- H 3.10** **LEGAL** A record must be kept of how and where carcasses are disposed of.

## Medication

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**H 4.1** **LEGAL** Any medication used must be:

- a) legal for use in the UK
- b) administered in accordance with UK legislation.



**It is recommended that producers obtain, read and where appropriate, apply the advice contained within the latest version of:**

- a) *Guidelines on Responsible Use of Antimicrobials in Poultry Production*, issued by the Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture (RUMA) Alliance, [www.ruma.org.uk](http://www.ruma.org.uk)
- b) *Code of practice on the responsible use of animal medicines on the farm*, issued by the Veterinary Medicine Directorate
- c) *Veterinary Medicines: safe use by farmers and other handlers*, issued by the Health and Safety Executive.

**H 4.2** All personnel involved in the administration of animal medicines must be competent to do so.

**H 4.3** Medicine administration records must include the following information:

- a) identity of medicine or therapy
- b) batch numbers
- c) quantity of medicine or therapy administered
- d) identification of the bird or group of birds to which administered
- e) the number of birds treated
- f) date of administration
- g) date treatment finished (if multiple treatment)
- h) name of person administering the medicine or therapy
- i) reason for treatment.

**H 4.4** **LEGAL** Medicines must be:

- a) clearly labelled, stored and used in accordance with the label instructions
- b) kept in a secure, lockable store that is:
  - i. safe from animals, children and birds, and
  - ii. separate from food producing areas.

**H 4.5** **LEGAL** Written procedures must be in place, and must be followed at all times, for the safe disposal of pharmaceutical waste, needles and other sharps.

**H 4.6** **NEW** Antibiotics must only be used when necessary, and always used responsibly.



**NEW** Prevention is better than cure, and it is the implementation of prevention strategies alongside the adoption of farming practices that prioritise and promote animal welfare that are key to reducing antibiotic use. For more information on this issue, please see our information sheet, *Antimicrobial resistance and farm animal welfare*, available on our website [www.rspca.org.uk](http://www.rspca.org.uk).

**H 4.7** **NEW** The prophylactic use of antibiotics is not permitted.



**NEW** Prophylactic treatment is intended to prevent sickness or disease developing in a group of healthy animals where a veterinary surgeon has identified that there could be a high risk of bacterial infection. We believe that, in poultry, there should be no need for the prophylactic use of antibiotics when following these standards. However, we acknowledge there may be very exceptional circumstances, e.g. in the case of an emergency, where a veterinary surgeon may feel it is in the best interests of the affected animal's welfare for antibiotics to be given preventatively. We would expect these occasions to be extremely rare. Metaphylactic treatment is intended to control disease spreading in groups of animals where some are already showing clinical signs of disease and is not covered by standard H 4.7.

**H 4.8** **NEW** The use of antibiotics on-farm must be reviewed annually and this review must form part of the VHWP.

**H 4.8.1** **NEW** In light of the findings of the antibiotic use review (see standard H 4.8) an action plan must be drawn up aimed at reducing the use of antibiotics on the farm through improvements in animal husbandry.

**H 4.8.2** **NEW** When reviewing the use of antibiotics on-farm, the following must be included in the plan (see standard H 4.8.1):

- a) the different classes of antibiotic drug used
- b) which group/s\* of animals were treated, and for which condition/s
- c) the number of animals treated per occasion
- d) the total amount of each individual drug within a class that was used (in mg/kg or mg/pcu) per occasion
- e) a specific section covering all the above for 'Critically Important Antibiotics' (CIAs).

\*A group of animals refers to animals of a similar age and/or stage of production.



**NEW** This review is intended to highlight which groups of animals are suffering from particular diseases and therefore aid the development and implementation of targeted prevention strategies.

## Biosecurity

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**H 5.1** A record of all visitors to the farm must be maintained.

**H 5.1.1** The record must include the following details of the visitor:

- a) name
- b) organisation
- c) date and time of arrival
- d) recent visits to poultry sites and farms, including dates, species and locations
- e) certification that they are not suffering with any enteric illness.

- H 5.2** Visitors that could reasonably be considered to pose a risk of compromising the health and welfare of the birds must not be allowed onto the site.
- H 5.3** The wheels of all vehicles entering and leaving the farm must be disinfected.
- H 5.4** Farm dedicated protective clothing must be worn by all visitors.
- H 5.5** On each occasion on entering/leaving a poultry house, all farm personnel and visitors must:
- a) disinfect footwear
  - b) sanitise their hands.
- H 5.6** Defra approved disinfectants must be used.



**Producers should contact Defra for information on Defra approved disinfectants. Contact details can be found on the Defra website: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs)**

- H 5.7** All disinfectants must be used in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.
- H 5.8** The house must operate a period free of all livestock between flock cycles.

# Transport

Animal transport systems need to be designed and managed to ensure livestock are not caused unnecessary distress or discomfort. The transport and handling of livestock needs to be kept to an absolute minimum.

## Management

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**Managers should consider the construction of buildings and bear in mind the access to and from the area where birds are placed and removed. Particular attention should be paid to the width of doors.**

- T 1.1** At least one nominated senior member of the catching team, e.g. foreman or gang leader, must:
- be approved by the certification team assessing these standards as being compliant with the RSPCA welfare standards relating to catching ducks
  - be made responsible for supervising, monitoring and maintaining the RSPCA welfare standards throughout the catching process, including loading of birds onto the transport vehicle.

- T 1.2** All personnel involved in the catching and transportation of birds must be properly trained and competent.



**Where possible, training relating to T 1.2 should be validated.**

- T 1.3** Catching team leaders must:
- be familiar with the content of the Humane Slaughter Association DVD *Poultry Welfare – Taking Responsibility*
  - convey the relevant content to other members of the catching team
  - ensure that the recommendations are applied where appropriate.



**Where possible all members of the catching team should be familiar with the content of the Humane Slaughter Association DVD *Poultry Welfare – Taking Responsibility*.**

- T 1.4** Managers must prepare full and detailed written catching instructions for the catching staff.

- T 1.5** All catching staff must:
- have a copy of the written catching instructions
  - be aware of their duties.

- T 1.6** The farm manager/assistant must be made responsible for supervising and maintaining high welfare standards throughout the depopulation of the house and loading of birds onto the transport vehicle.

- T 1.7** The farm manager/assistant must be present at all times during the catching operation.



- T 1.8** Procedures must be in place to ensure that any concerns of the catching team/farm personnel regarding the welfare of the birds during catching are:
- recorded
  - raised with the appropriate farm personnel/catching team leader (as appropriate)
  - reported to the area manager or relevant senior personnel.
- T 1.8.1** Any concerns raised must be dealt with appropriately to prevent the same concern/s being present for subsequent flocks.
- T 1.9** The farmer/farm manager/catching foreman must ensure that all birds are fit to travel, i.e. are in good health and without injury.
- T 1.10** The haulier must ensure that the welfare of the birds is safeguarded from the time they are loaded onto the vehicle until they are unloaded from the vehicle.
- T 1.11** If catching teams will be required to cull birds, at least one member of the catching team must be:
- nominated to be responsible for the humane culling of any birds that are deemed unfit for travel (casualty birds), and
  - trained and competent to cull birds humanely in accordance with standards H 3.3 to H 3.7.

## Catching

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- T 2.1** Sufficient time must be made available to ensure birds are handled with care.
- T 2.2** Ducks must not suffer prolonged hunger, thirst, deprivation of rest, or thermal distress – specifically:
- birds must have access to water up to the time of catching
  - no bird must be deprived of food for more than 10 hours prior to killing
  - during hot weather (in excess of 20°C) sufficient ventilation must be provided for uncaught birds until the time they are loaded and, if necessary, additional mobile fans must be provided during the catching operation
  - during cold weather adequate draught-free ventilation at bird height must be provided for uncaught birds up to the time of loading.
- T 2.3** Birds that are not in good health or are injured must:
- not be transported
  - be humanely culled immediately.
- T 2.4** Catching must take place in low or blue lighting to minimise fear reactions of the birds.
- T 2.5** When only a proportion of birds are to be removed from a building, those birds not being caught must have access to food and water during the catching operation.
- T 2.5.1** In relation to T 2.5, where it is not practicable to provide food during the catching operation, i.e. because of a continuous feeder line, then food must be provided within 30 minutes of the catch finishing.
- T 2.6** When only a proportion of birds are to be removed from a building, a partition must be erected to separate those birds being caught from those remaining in the shed.

- T 2.6.1** The partition must:
- be mobile
  - not cause physical injury to the birds
  - be erected at a suitable time prior to catching to allow birds time to settle
  - minimise any disruption caused by the catching team to those birds remaining in the shed
  - not reduce the floor area available to those birds not being caught to such an extent that the maximum stocking density of 17kg/m<sup>2</sup> is exceeded.



**Partitions often comprise of 244 x 61cm (8 x 2ft) plywood sheets on framing.**



**Where a proportion of birds are removed from a house for killing this can compromise the wellbeing of those birds not being caught. For example, those birds remaining in the house can be affected by:**

- **setting up the house for catching**
- **temporary withdrawal of feed and water**
- **noise and disruption from the catching process**
- **forklift operation in the house**
- **the condition of the house after catching**
- **the disturbance caused by returning the house to its condition after catching**
- **compromises in biosecurity, e.g. the introduction of transport containers and a forklift, which may not have been cleaned properly thus introducing infectious agents.**

**Where a proportion of birds are removed from a house for killing the catching process should be managed sympathetically to minimise such problems.**

- T 2.7** The vehicle transporting the birds to the processing plant must be positioned to allow easy loading of the transport containers.
- T 2.7.1** The distance birds are carried/have to walk must be minimised, for example, by bringing transport containers as close to the birds as possible.
- T 2.8** The catching of birds must be carried out quietly and confidently, exercising care to avoid unnecessary struggling and stress.
- T 2.8.1** Care must be taken to ensure that birds do not come into contact with moving vehicles whilst being caught.
- T 2.9** During catching, actions must be taken to prevent ducks from crowding together.
- T 2.10** Where crowding occurs, the house lights must be raised, the birds spread out calmly and quietly, then allowed to settle before catching is resumed.
- T 2.11** If ducks are caught by their necks, there must be no more than two birds in each hand.
- T 2.11.1** If lifting birds by the neck, care must be taken to ensure the bird's windpipe is not likely to be obstructed.

**T 2.11.2** Where birds are lifted by their necks to be placed into transport containers, this must be completed as a single, gentle, smooth and fluid movement and not involve a sudden change in direction.



**It is accepted that catchers will often start with their backs to the transport container; turning smoothly and carefully is essential.**

**T 2.12** When carrying birds, the weight of the bird must be supported either by:

- a) taking the weight of the bird by a hand or arm placed under its body, or
- b) by holding the bird with a hand on either side of its body with the wings in the closed position.

**T 2.12.1** Ducks must not be carried:

- a) hanging head downwards
- b) by the legs
- c) by the wing(s)
- d) by the neck
- e) by the head
- f) by the tail.



**Poor catching and handling can easily lead to ducks becoming lame, hence they should never be carried by the legs.**

**T 2.13** Birds weighing more than 4kg must:

- a) be carried individually
- b) have their body weight supported
- c) be put into containers one at a time.

**T 2.14** Ducks must be put in transport containers in the house.

**T 2.15** The top drawer of the transport container must be loaded first.

**T 2.16** Birds must be placed carefully into the transport container drawer.

**T 2.17** Birds must not be dropped or thrown into the drawer.

**T 2.18** Care must be taken to avoid injury to the birds when loading them into the drawer.

**T 2.19** Drawers must be closed carefully to ensure that the birds' heads, wings and legs are not trapped in any way.

**T 2.20** Managers must ensure that when birds are placed in transport crates, the handling of birds, design of crates, and method of transportation, minimise the soiling of feathers.

**T 2.21** The stocking density must not exceed 62kg/m<sup>2</sup> of floor area.



**Based on the standard Anglia Autoflow tray (0.8m<sup>2</sup>) the stocking density in T 2.21 equates to:**

<b>Weight</b>	<b>Birds per tray</b>
Up to 3kg	16
3.1 to 3.5kg	14
3.6 to 4.0kg	12

- T 2.22** Stocking density must be reduced by 10% when birds are being transported during temperatures in excess of 20°C.
- T 2.23** Transport containers must be taken from the shed slowly and care must be taken to ensure no damage is caused to the birds.

## Transport

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- T 3.1** All birds must be killed within 6 hours of loading the first bird into a transport container.
- T 3.2** The time from when the birds leave the farm to arriving at the processing plant must be no longer than 4 hours.
- T 3.3** All hauliers must have a written Standard Operating and Emergency Procedure to implement during transportation (see Appendix 2).
- T 3.4** Fixed crate transport systems are prohibited.
- T 3.5** Modular transport vehicles must be parked as near as practically possible to the house being depopulated.
- T 3.6** Modular transport systems must:
- have completely open tops with a depth of not less than 210mm
  - permit adequate ventilation and protect birds from adverse climatic conditions
  - be well maintained
  - be thoroughly cleansed after carrying each consignment of birds.
- T 3.7** There must be no sharp edges or protrusions on the transport containers or vehicle that could cause injury to the birds.
- T 3.8** The cleanliness of the vehicle must be checked by the appointed supervisor before any birds are loaded onto it.
- T 3.9** Personnel in charge of duck transporters must:
- have completed an approved training course
  - be able to demonstrate their competence in handling ducks when loading and unloading them and while in transit.
- T 3.10** All transporters must have a livestock capacity document on board at all times.



**The livestock capacity document will give data on the size of the transporter and the calculated carrying capacity for different livestock species under different climatic conditions.**

- T 3.11** An on-farm record must be maintained of all incidents causing death or injury to the birds during transport.
- T 3.12** Where causes of mortality have been identified, prompt action must be taken to prevent further deaths, injury or suffering occurring.
- T 3.13** If on any day mortality exceeds 0.25% for a single flock of ducks during transport:
- the level of mortality must be recorded
  - there must be an investigation, that is recorded, to establish the cause/s of death
  - effective preventative measures must be put in place without delay to remedy the problem.
- T 3.14** The vehicle transporting the birds to the processing plant must be positioned to allow easy unloading of the transport containers.
- T 3.15** On arrival at the destination, all birds must be unloaded immediately.
- T 3.16** Noise levels, from all sources, must be minimised during loading, unloading and transport.
- T 3.17** Every effort must be made to ensure:
- journeys are completed without unnecessary delays
  - that drivers are aware of any potential traffic problems and plan their journey accordingly.
- T 3.18** The person supervising the catching and loading of birds must liaise closely with the abattoir to minimise the time birds spend waiting on the vehicle.
- T 3.19** If it is necessary to keep birds on board a stationary vehicle, the driver must take action to avoid heat/cold stress to the birds.



**In hot weather (in excess of 20°C) one of the most effective ways of providing a cooling draught is to keep the vehicle moving.**

- T 3.20** Plans must be made in advance, and appropriate action taken, to reduce the risk of heat stress, including the routine monitoring of weather forecasts of predicted temperatures.
- T 3.21** Ducks must have shelter from extremes of weather during transport.



**The technology is now becoming available to monitor temperature and humidity on-board transport vehicles. This allows drivers to take appropriate action to maintain ideal conditions for birds. The use of such equipment is encouraged by the RSPCA. The RSPCA will monitor the development of such technology and review its use for inclusion in future development of these standards.**



**At times of high ambient temperature or when high humidity poses a threat to the birds, catching, loading and transportation create particular risks of heat stress.**

- T 3.22** Drivers must carry some form of communication, e.g. mobile telephone, in case of an emergency when he/she may need to contact relevant personnel.

# Slaughter/killing

**All slaughter/killing systems need to be designed and managed to ensure livestock are not caused unnecessary distress or discomfort. The pre-slaughter/killing handling of livestock needs to be kept to an absolute minimum.**

- S 1.1** For those seeking RSPCA Assured approval, the standards relating to the killing of ducks (standards with the 'S' prefix) must be assessed by the RSPCA's Farm Animals Department, prior to approval.
- S 1.2** Ducks must be killed as close as possible to the point of production.
- S 1.3** Where management systems, designs or layout of facilities not covered in the RSPCA welfare standards are being employed or considered, these must be referred to, and discussed with, the RSPCA Farm Animals Department in order to ascertain whether they are/could be compliant with RSPCA welfare standards.

## Training

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- S 2.1** Managers must develop and implement an animal welfare policy.
- S 2.2** The animal welfare policy must:
  - a) include written procedures with regard to maintaining animal welfare in the abattoir, including the responsibilities and duties of staff for emergency procedures, such as escaped, trapped or injured ducks
  - b) be reviewed and updated at least annually, or when there are changes to the design or operation of the handling, stunning or killing system.
- S 2.3** **LEGAL** Managers must appoint at least one trained Poultry Welfare Officer (PWO), who is responsible for the implementation of the animal welfare policy.



**Where possible, the PWO should have attended a recognised, validated training course e.g. Bristol University Animal Welfare Officer Training programme. Where possible, this training should be validated.**

- S 2.4** **REVISED** Managers, in conjunction with the PWO must:
  - a) develop and implement a training programme for all staff involved in the handling and slaughtering/killing of ducks
  - b) ensure that these staff are trained and competent to carry out their duties
  - c) only mark staff training as completed once a self-declaration of competence has been signed by both the trainee and management staff.



**NEW LEGAL** For staff undertaking the following operations, a certificate of competence in accordance with Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009<sup>1</sup> can be used to demonstrate compliance with standard S 2.4 b):

- a) the handling and care of animals before they are restrained;
- b) the restraint of animals for the purpose of stunning or killing;
- c) the stunning of animals;
- d) the assessment of effective stunning;
- e) the shackling of live animals;
- f) the bleeding of live animals.

<sup>1</sup>Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing, Article 7, Paragraph 2.

**S 2.5** **NEW LEGAL** When developing the staff training programme (S 2.4 a)) the following areas must be included, as appropriate:

- a) duck welfare
- b) duck behaviour
- c) handling and movement of ducks
- d) lairage, including lairage conditions and care of ducks during lairage
- e) restraint of ducks
- f) slaughter/killing method/s, including emergency back-up methods
- g) assessment of an effective stun/kill
- h) bleeding.



**REVISED** In relation to S 2.5, The Humane Slaughter Association (HSA) *Poultry Welfare - Taking Responsibility* training package can be used to help inform the content of the training programme.

**S 2.6** The PWO must make frequent checks throughout the day to ensure that birds are being effectively stunned/killed and are insensible throughout the killing operation.

**S 2.7** **LEGAL** Records relating to standard S 2.6 must be kept.

**S 2.8** Where the birds are not being effectively stunned/killed the PWO must take remedial action without delay.

**S 2.9** The manager and PWO must:

- a) have access to a copy of the Defra booklet *The Welfare of Poultry at Slaughter or Killing* (PB 13539, 2007)
- b) be familiar with its content
- c) ensure that the recommendations are applied where appropriate.



## Closed Circuit Television (CCTV)

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**i** The use of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) in areas where live animals are present can assist those responsible for monitoring and enforcing animal welfare within the abattoir in ensuring that standards are maintained. It is strongly recommended that CCTV footage is also used for in-house training programmes and to provide an additional level of security at the abattoir.

- S(TV) 1.1** **LEGAL** A functional CCTV system must be installed and operational to monitor animals undergoing the following processes at the abattoir:
- unloading from vehicles into the lairage
  - shackling
  - stunning, including exiting the electrical waterbath
  - neck cutting.
- S(TV) 1.2** **LEGAL** CCTV cameras must be positioned to ensure a clear view of the processes being monitored is achieved at all times.
- S(TV) 1.3** **LEGAL** It must be possible to observe clearly the view from each camera at all times via one or more monitors.
- S(TV) 1.4** **LEGAL** CCTV footage must be recorded at all times where animals are undergoing any of the processes listed under standard S(TV) 1.1.
- S(TV) 1.5** **LEGAL** The recorded CCTV footage must be:
- retained by the abattoir for a period of at least three months, and
  - available for viewing on site on request.

**i** Where possible it may be useful for managers to retain CCTV footage for longer than the three months specified in standard S(TV) 1.5, for their own monitoring and security purposes.

**i** **NEW** The RSPCA is currently reviewing Intelligent Camera Surveillance systems for use in slaughter plants. These systems can alert relevant slaughter plant staff to potential welfare concerns in real time, allowing situations to be dealt with quickly and efficiently. They can also be used to identify areas where staff require additional training or where staff safety is at risk. It is strongly recommended that slaughter plants adopt such technologies to help further safeguard animal welfare in their plant. Where such technology is being considered, please contact the RSPCA Farm Animals Department for further information.

## Health monitoring

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**S 3.1** The level of the following must be recorded for each flock:

- a) pododermatitis (classified as score 1 or above in the information box below S 3.2)
- b) dirty feathers (classified as score 1 or above in the information box below S 3.2).

**i** Lesions to the foot pad (pododermatitis) are caused by contact with litter which is both wet and contains a high level of ammonia from faeces. Such lesions can cause pain and can act as a gateway for bacterial infection.

**i** The term 'flock' here refers to a group of ducks that are placed in a house of holding and present in this house at the same time.

**S 3.2** The method used to score each condition outlined in S 3.1 must be objective and:

- a) differentiate between minor, mild and severe conditions
- b) provide consistent results within and between observers
- c) provide reliable and accurate data for the level of a condition within a flock.

**i** The following scoring system should be used to classify pododermatitis:

<b>0 (None):</b>	<b>No lesion/s present</b>
<b>1 (Minor):</b>	<b>Very small and superficial lesion/s, slight discolouration on a limited area, mild hyperkeratosis.</b>
<b>2 (Mild):</b>	<b>Substantial discolouration, superficial lesion/s, dark papillae</b>
<b>3 (Severe):</b>	<b>Ulcers or scabs of significant size, signs of haemorrhages or swollen foot pad/hock</b>

If there is an absence of severe foot pad burns, but a lot of class 1 lesions are observed in a flock, then this should be seen as not necessarily a major welfare problem in itself, but as an indication that things can rapidly get worse and that remedial action should be taken.

**i** A minimum of 200 feet per flock should be assessed to estimate the average level of pododermatitis for that flock. The number of feet in each category should be recorded. The feet should be clean prior to assessment and should be individually examined under good light.

**i** The following scoring system should be used to classify dirty feathers:

- |                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| <b>0 (None):</b>   | <b>clean – not significantly dirty</b> |
| <b>1 (Minor):</b>  | <b>lightly soiled</b>                  |
| <b>2 (Mild):</b>   | <b>medium soiling</b>                  |
| <b>3 (Severe):</b> | <b>heavily soiled</b>                  |

**i** Assessing birds for dirty feathers should take place on the farm during catching. This will avoid scoring birds that may have become dirty during transport and therefore provide a better picture of on-farm conditions. The stock-keeper and/or catching foreman should assess the birds.

**S 3.3** Data relating to S 3.1 must be reported back to the producing farm.

## Lairage

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**S 4.1** All birds must be killed as soon as possible on arrival at the processing plant and in any case within 2 hours.

**S 4.2** The lairage must be designed to minimise any distress caused to the birds.

**i** The design of the lairage includes aspects such as the flooring. Uneven flooring can cause physical discomfort to birds when moving them through the lairage in transport containers.

**S 4.3** On arrival at the slaughter plant all birds must be:

- unloaded immediately
- placed in an environmentally controlled lairage.

**S 4.4** If birds are injured, heat or cold stressed then:

- immediate action must be taken to alleviate suffering
- effective measures must be put in place to ensure similar occurrences are prevented.

**S 4.5** Any bird identified as suffering from injury, heat or cold stress, must be killed immediately and humanely.

**S 4.6** Ducks that are held in killing facilities must be:

- protected from direct rays of sun and from adverse weather, i.e. wind, rain, hail, snow, etc.
- provided with adequate ventilation to avoid heat and cold stress
- humanely killed immediately if found to be suffering.

**S 4.7** Contingency plans must be in place to deal with occasions when unavoidable delays may occur.

- S 4.8** When a breakdown occurs which results in a delay in the killing process, birds may be held in lairage for up to 3 hours from the time of arrival, after which time they must be killed using a permitted back-up method.
- S 4.9** The lairage temperature and humidity must be regularly monitored and controlled.
- S 4.10** The lairage must have reduced or blue lighting.
- S 4.11** Once ducks have arrived at the premises at which they are intended to be killed, they must not be moved on to other premises for killing.
- S 4.12** Standby equipment e.g. a generator must be available for emergency breakdowns.
- S 4.13** Care must be taken when removing birds from the transport containers.
- S 4.14** Where live birds are removed from crates prior to shackling, unloading must take place as close to the shackle line as possible to minimise carrying distance and to avoid any stress caused to the birds.
- S 4.15** All deaths and injuries must be recorded and reported to the:
- a) driver
  - b) haulier
  - c) PWO
  - d) farm manager
- before the next consignment from the same source is collected.
- S 4.16** Records of all deaths and injuries must be kept.

## Shackling

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**The RSPCA will phase out the inverted shackling of conscious ducks as soon as a commercially viable and more humane alternative method of killing is available.**

- S 5.1** Shackling teams must be:
- a) thoroughly trained and competent to handle the birds in such a way as to avoid injury
  - b) made fully aware of the risk of breakages that the hanging-on procedure can cause to ducks
  - c) supervised by a trained and competent person during the shackling process.
- S 5.2** Slaughterhouse managers must ensure that sufficient personnel are employed on shackling lines at all times to ensure due care and diligence.
- S 5.3** Shackles must be of a size and type, and the killing line run at a speed, which permits ducks to be hung on without causing unnecessary pain or distress.
- S 5.4** There must be no unevenness in the line causing the shackles to jolt.
- S 5.5** Birds must be hung on by both legs.

**S 5.6** The shackler must use a handling technique that calms the bird as it is being shackled.

**i** Holding the bird's legs for 0.5 seconds after shackling, and/or running the hands gently down the legs and body of the bird, may help calm the bird and reduce the incidence of wing flapping.

**S 5.7** From the point of shackling to entry into the stun bath there must be:

- a) a breast comforter to prevent wing flapping and birds raising their heads
- b) no noises that cause unnecessary disturbance to the birds
- c) a maximum light level of 5 lux.

**i** The area of the shackle line that transports live birds may be lit with blue light.

**i** The provision of a breast comforter and a reduction in noise and light levels all help to calm the bird and prevent it raising its head, vocalising and wing flapping. Breast comforters should be constructed from firm rubber or plastic curtain and extend below the eye level of the bird.

**i** The shackle line, from the point of shackling to entry into the stun bath, should follow as straight a line as possible, i.e. bends in the line should be avoided.

**S 5.8** Birds must appear calm on the shackle line.

**S 5.9** Care must be taken to ensure that birds cannot escape from the holding area or fall from the shackle line.

**S 5.10** Where loose birds are found they must be taken immediately to the hanging on area or, if injured, immediately humanely killed.

**S 5.11** Ducks must not be suspended for more than 50 seconds before they are stunned.

**i** Shackling a bird causes discomfort and pain, so it is important to reduce the shackling period to as short a period as possible. However, for an effective stun, it is necessary for the bird to be shackled for a short period to allow it time to relax and stop wing flapping. Therefore, live ducks should not be suspended for more time than is necessary for wing flapping to cease.

**S 5.12** All transport containers must be checked to ensure no ducks are left inside them.

## Stunning

- S 6.1** **LEGAL** The following types of stunning equipment are permitted:
- electrically live stunning bath
  - dry stunner incorporating an electrically-live metal grid or bar
  - hand operated stunner
  - pneumatically powered poultry killer - however, this must not be used for routine killing purposes, i.e. only used in the event of a breakdown of one of the permitted methods employed (above).
- S 6.2** It must be possible to visually observe birds at all stages of the stunning procedure, i.e. on entry, during, and immediately on exit from the stunning bath.
- S 6.3** Unstunned birds must be screened from dead birds.
- S 6.4** Where electrical water stunning baths are used:
- the stunning bath must be set at a height appropriate for the size and number of birds
  - the height must be set to ensure the heads of the birds are fully immersed in the water
  - there must be a voltage sufficient to produce a minimum current of 130mA (0.130A) per bird
  - a sinusoidal (AC) waveform must be used (stunning using a DC waveform is prohibited)
  - they must operate at a frequency of 50Hz
  - each bird must be in contact with the electrical current for a minimum of 4 seconds
  - the water bath must be of sufficient size and depth and the water must not overflow at the entrance
  - the electrode, which is immersed in the water, must extend the length of the water bath
  - birds must not receive pre-stun shocks
  - the water bath must be fitted with an ammeter to accurately monitor current flow through the bath when loaded with birds.



**50Hz sine wave (AC) is the optimum frequency and waveform for inducing cardiac arrest. The heart muscle is particularly sensitive to this frequency and when sufficient current is applied to the heart it ceases to beat normally and pump blood around the body. Therefore, an effective stun-to-kill can be achieved when using this frequency, which is the most preferred outcome to achieve good welfare during killing.**



**A steeply inclined flat ramp bolted on to the entrance of the waterbath can be effective in avoiding pre-stun shocks. The ramp should extend over the water so the birds get drawn up the ramp by the shackle line and then swing down into the water in one smooth movement. This results in the bird's head entering the water first and the bird is stunned immediately.**

**Care must be taken to ensure birds do not receive pre-stun shocks from the ramp itself. This may occur if the ramp is electrically live because of water flowing from the bath onto the ramp or if it is not isolated from the rest of the stunner.**

**Source: Humane Slaughter Association (HSA). 2006. HSA Technical Note 16: *Prevention of Pre-Stun Shocks in Electrical Waterbaths*. HSA, Wheathampstead, Herts., UK ([www.hsa.org.uk](http://www.hsa.org.uk)).**

**S 6.5** The shackle – at the point where it meets the duck's foot – must be wet prior to the bird entering the stun bath.



**Ideally, the wetting of the shackle should be before the bird is hung.**

**S 6.6** Where electrical hand-held stunners are used:

- a) ducks must be restrained in a cone or on a shackle
- b) birds must be stunned without delay after being restrained
- c) care must be taken to ensure that the stunning electrodes are applied in the optimum position, i.e. applied firmly to either side of the head between the eye and ear
- d) hand-held stunners must deliver 400mA for at least 10 seconds and until initial wing flapping ceases (or if held in a cone, until legs become rigid and extended)
- e) neck cutting must be carried out immediately (see S 7.1).

**S 6.7** All stunning and bleeding equipment must be properly and regularly maintained, cleaned and checked daily to ensure that it is in full and proper working order.

**S 6.8** An independent, qualified person must inspect the stunning equipment to test its efficacy.

**S 6.9** Any problems must be reported to the PWO and rectified immediately.

**S 6.10** Contingency plans must be made to deal with occasions when unavoidable delays may occur and it is not possible to process birds.

**S 6.11** If the killing line is stopped for longer than one minute, birds between the point of shackling and the killer must be humanely killed immediately.

**S 6.12** There must be sufficient time after stunning and prior to neck cutting to assess the effectiveness of the kill.

**S 6.13** All birds must be checked to ensure they have been effectively stunned and killed.

**S 6.14** Birds which fail to be properly stunned must be immediately stunned using a permitted method as in accordance with S 6.1, and humanely killed before entering the scalding tank.

**S 6.15** Staff must be trained to recognise the signs of an effective stun, and use these signs to recognise that birds have been effectively stunned or are dead.



The most reliable indicator that a bird is properly stunned by the low voltage method is the electroplectic fit. The characteristics of this condition are:

1. no rhythmic breathing
2. neck arched with head directed vertically
3. open eyes
4. absence of a third eyelid (nictitating membrane) reflex<sup>a</sup>
5. wings held close to the body
6. rigidly extended legs and constant rapid body tremors.

The physical conditions of the electroplectic fit are shorter lasting and less pronounced when cardiac arrest is induced at stunning. They are followed by:

- completely limp carcass
- no breathing
- loss of nictitating membrane reflex<sup>a</sup>
- dilated pupil.

<sup>a</sup> Unconsciousness can be checked by the absence of a blink reflex when the cornea (the surface of the eyeball) is lightly touched. Presence of a blink reflex must be acted upon immediately: it does not necessarily indicate full consciousness but the return of this reflex after stunning is a sign of some brain function returning and indicates the possibility that the bird is regaining consciousness.

## Bleeding

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- S 7.1** Post-stunning, carotid arteries and jugular veins must be effectively severed using a ventral cut.
- S 7.2** The neck cut must be checked by an appointed member of staff who must be given sufficient time to sever the blood vessels manually, if necessary.
- S 7.3** No more than 10 seconds must elapse between stunning and neck cutting.
- S 7.4** Where the neck of the bird is cut manually, a sharp knife, at least 12cm long, must be used.
- S 7.5** If the automatic neck cutter is not working effectively:
- a) the affected bird/s must be killed without delay
  - b) the shackling of live birds must be stopped without delay until the problem has been rectified.
- S 7.6** All birds must be dead before they enter the scald tank.
- S 7.7** Frequent checks (at least one per hour) to ensure birds are dead before entering the scald tank must be made.
- S 7.8** **LEGAL** No further processing must take place until at least 90 seconds have elapsed since the major blood vessels in the bird's neck have been severed.



# Appendix 1

## Welfare audit form example

Relating to standards M 4.1 to M 4.8

Standards to be included as part of the welfare audit (see standards M 4.1 to M 4.8) and an example of a suitable welfare audit form.

<b>Date</b>		<b>Unannounced</b>	Yes / No
<b>Auditor</b>			
<b>Producer</b>			
<b>Flock age</b>			
<b>Comments</b>			

<b>Standard number/s</b>	<b>Summarised standard</b>	<b>Check</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Food &amp; water</b>			
<b>FW 1.1 &amp; FW 1.2</b>	Feed provided: a) is appropriate for species and age b) maintains birds in good health c) satisfies nutritional needs d) is available at all times.		
<b>FW 1.6</b>	Food not contaminated/stale.		
<b>FW 2.1 &amp; FW 2.2</b>	Drinking water is available at all times and is clean and fresh.		
<b>FW 2.4</b>	Drinking water not harmfully contaminated.		
<b>Environment</b>			
<b>E 1.2</b>	Outside environmental factors, e.g. noise, atmospheric pollution, adverse weather conditions, & other animals, are not compromising, or likely to compromise, bird welfare.		
<b>E 2.6</b>	There's nothing in the environment that could cause unavoidable injury/distress.		
<b>Litter</b>			
<b>E 3.4</b>	The litter: a) is of a suitable material & particle size b) is in a dry condition (being replaced where necessary) c) is of a sufficient depth for dilution of faeces d) is managed hygienically.		

Standard number/s	Summarised standard	Check	Comments
<b>Lighting</b>			
E 4.1 & E 4.2	In each 24 hours: a) no area less than 20 lux (for minimum 9 hours/day) b) no area less than 6 lux (outside 9 hour period) c) minimum 6 hour continuous dark period d) any supplementary light provided at night is less than 2 lux.		
E 4.4	Birds exposed to natural daylight no later than 7 days of age.		
E 4.5	Natural daylight provided at all times during natural daylight period, through all required openings.		
E 4.7	Natural daylight to penetrate all areas of the house.		
E 4.11	Birds exposed to dawn & dusk periods.		
E 4.12	If used outside natural daylight period, e.g. to extend the light period, artificial lights switched on/off in stepped/gradual manner over a period of at least 20 minutes.		
<b>Space requirements &amp; environment</b>			
E 5.2	Stocking density not likely to exceed 17kg/m <sup>2</sup> .		
E 6.2	Aerial contaminants not noticeably unpleasant.		
E 6.5	The birds have thermally comfortable environment.		
<b>Environmental enrichment</b>			
E 7.2, E 7.8 and E 7.9	Open water sources are: a) in good working order b) at correct height to allow birds to enter water.		
E 7.1, E 7.6, E 7.7 and E 7.7.1	Open water facilities provided are appropriate for age of birds.		
E 7.5	Birds can freely and fully submerge their heads in water when standing around the facility.		
E 7.19	Open water facilities have been cleaned out twice in 24 hours with no longer than 16 hours between each clean.		

Standard number/s	Summarised standard	Check	Comments
<b>Free-range</b>			
R 1.1	Birds have access to range as soon as they are mature enough.		
R 1.3	Birds have continuous daytime access to the range.		
R 1.9	The range: a) consists of pasture mainly covered with living vegetation b) surrounding the house is not poached.		
R 1.15	There is a minimum 8m <sup>2</sup> of overhead shade and shelter per 1,000 birds.		
R 1.15	Shade and shelter facilities are appropriately distributed to encourage full use of range.		
R 1.17	The range is being managed to provide the most suitable conditions to encourage the birds to roam.		
<b>Stock-keepers &amp; management</b>			
M 2.4	Stock-keepers can demonstrate their proficiency in procedures that have the potential to cause suffering, e.g. culling.		
M 3.1	Birds are inspected at least three times per day sufficient to identify sick/injured birds and those behaving abnormally.		
M 3.7	Welfare problems are dealt with appropriately and without delay.		
M 5.1	Equipment upon which birds depend is inspected at least once per day.		
<b>Health</b>			
H 1.13	There are no lame birds.		
H 1.14	Good culling practice being adopted – no birds that require culling are present in the flock.		
H 5.1 to H 5.6	Good biosecurity practice is being followed.		

Standard number	Action required & comments	Date to be actioned	Date actioned and signature

Signature of auditor	
Auditor position/role	
Signature of producer	

## Appendix 2

### Transport – standard operating and emergency procedure

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#### Items to be included

1. Out of hours telephone numbers and emergency procedure.
2. Accident procedure.
3. Certificate of motor insurance.
4. Tyres – punctures – codes of practice.
5. Mobile phones or other communication equipment (and procedures for use).
6. Guidelines on correct environmental conditions during the journey, depending on length of journey and ambient temperature.
7. RSPCA welfare standards relating to transport of ducks.
8. Procedure for loading/unloading of poultry transporters.
9. Procedure for delivery of poultry to customer sites.
10. FTA – *The Drivers' Handbook* (2022), including tachograph regulations.
11. Fire extinguishers.
12. Operating procedures for roadside checks.
13. Defra leaflet *Guide to Alleviation of Thermal Stress in Poultry in Lairage* (Defra PB 3724, 1998).
14. Daily journey sheet.
15. Torch.

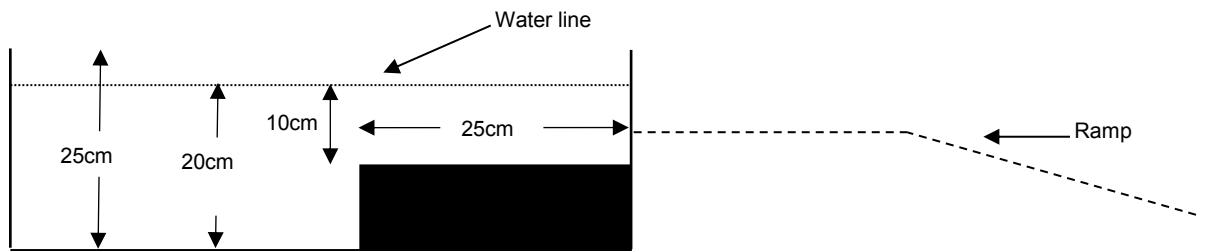
# Appendix 3

## Open water facility examples

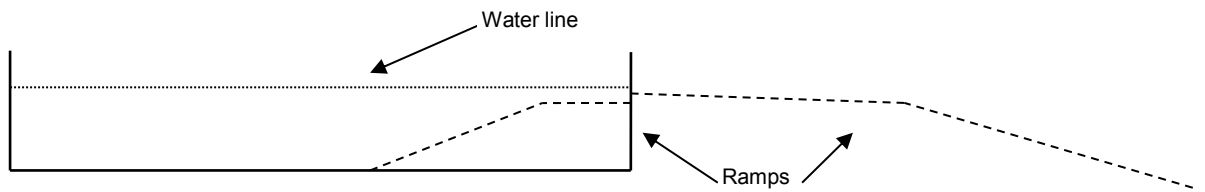
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(relating to standards E 7.1 to E 7.19)

**Figure 1: deeper open water facility design with raised base at one end to provide shallower (10cm deep) area and an entry ramp**



**Figure 2: open water facility with entry and exit ramps for ducklings**



## Appendix 4

### Documents required

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#### On-farm:

Producers/stock-keepers are required to have on-farm access to the following publications:

- Defra *Code of practice for using plant protection products* (Defra, 2006, PB 11090) (see E 2.11)
- Defra booklet *Heat Stress in Poultry – Solving the Problem* (PB 10543, 2005) (see E 6.7)
- Current version of the *RSPCA welfare standards for domestic/common ducks* (see M 1.2)
- Defra *Code of Practice for the Control of Salmonella during the Production, Storage and Transport of Compound Feeds, Premixtures, Feed Materials and Feed Additives* (PB 13303) (see H 1.3)

It is also recommended that producers obtain, read and where appropriate, apply the advice contained within the latest version of:

- Humane Slaughter Association (HSA) booklet *Practical Slaughter of Poultry: A Guide for the Small Producer* (see information box below H 3.2)
- *Guidelines on Responsible Use of Antimicrobials in Poultry Production*, issued by the Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture (RUMA) Alliance (see information box below H 4.1)
- *Code of practice on the responsible use of animal medicines on the farm*, issued by the Veterinary Medicine Directorate (see information box below H 4.1)
- *Veterinary Medicines: safe use by farmers and other handlers*, issued by the Health and Safety Executive (see information box below H 4.1)

#### Transport:

Catching team leaders must be familiar with the contents of:

- Humane Slaughter Association DVD *Poultry Welfare – Taking Responsibility* (see T 1.3)

Where possible all members of the catching team should be familiar with the content of:

- Humane Slaughter Association DVD *Poultry Welfare – Taking Responsibility* (see information box below T 1.3)

For drivers please see Appendix 2.

#### Slaughter/killing:

Managers and Poultry welfare officers (PWOs) must have access to a copy of:

- Defra booklet *The Welfare of Poultry at Slaughter or Killing* (PB 13539, 2007) (see S 2.9)

Managers and Poultry welfare officers (PWOs) could use the following content to inform staff training:

- Humane Slaughter Association DVD *Poultry Welfare – Taking Responsibility* (see information box below S 2.5)

# Index

<b>Air quality</b>			
E 2.5		10	
E 5.1		17	
E 6.1 to E 6.4		17–18	
SPD 2.2		5	
<b>Antibiotics</b>			
H 4.6 to H 4.8.2		43–44	
<b>Behaviour</b>			
E 4.12		16	
E 7.3		19	
M 2.1, M 2.3		31	
M 3.1, M 3.2.1		31	
R 1.17		27	
<b>Bill trimming</b>			
H 2.1		40	
<b>Biosecurity</b>			
H 5.1 to H 5.8		44–45	
M 1.4		29	
<b>Bleeding</b>			
S 7.1 to S 7.8		62	
<b>Buildings</b>			
E 1.1, E 1.1.1		9	
E 2.1 to E 2.11		9–10	
E 3.2		11	
E 4.10		15	
E 5.1		17	
E 7.15, E 7.16		22	
R 1.4, R 1.6		24	
SPD 2.1		5	
<b>Carbon monoxide/dioxide</b>			
E 6.3		17	
SPD 2.8		5	
<b>Casualty killing (culling)</b>			
H 1.11		40	
H 1.14		40	
H 3.1 to H 3.10		41–42	
M 1.4		29	
M 1.5		30	
S 4.6		57	
S 5.10		59	
SPD 2.17		6	
T 1.11		47	
T 2.3		47	
<b>Catching</b>			
T 1.1 to T 1.9		46–47	
T 1.11		47	
T 2.1 to T 2.23		47–50	
<b>Claw trimming</b>			
H 2.1		40	
<b>Cleaning/disinfection</b>			
E 1.3		9	
E 3.1, E 3.2		11	
E 7.14		22	
E 7.19		22	
FW 1.10		7	
FW 2.11		8	
H 1.17		40	
H 5.3, H 5.5 to H 5.7		45	
S 6.7		61	
SPD 2.11		6	
T 3.6, T 3.8		50	
<b>Cold stress</b>			
See Thermal environment			
<b>Contingency plan</b>			
M 1.4		29	
R 2.1 to R 2.3		28	
S 4.7		57	
S 6.10		61	
<b>Crates</b>			
T 2.20		49	
T 3.4		50	
<b>Culling</b>			
See Casualty killing (culling)			
<b>Depopulation</b>			
See Catching			
<b>Disease</b>			
H 1.12		40	
H 1.7, H 1.10		39	
M 1.4		29	
M 2.1		31	
R 1.17, R 1.18		27	
<b>Drinkers</b>			
E 2.5		10	
E 7.15		22	
FW 2.12 to FW 2.15		8	
FW 2.6, FW 2.7		8	
SPD 2.10, SPD 2.11, SPD 2.13, SPD 2.14		6	
SPD 2.2, SPD 2.7		5	



<b>Ducklings</b>				
E 4.4		14		
E 7.7		20		
R 1.20		27		
SPD 1.1 to SPD 2.17		5–6		
<b>Electrical installations</b>				
E 2.8		10		
<b>Emergencies</b>				
E 2.5		10		
FW 2.8		8		
H 3.3		41		
H 4.7		44		
M 1.4		29		
S 2.2		53		
S 2.5		54		
S 4.12		58		
T 3.22		52		
T 3.3		50		
<b>Environmental enrichment</b>				
E 7.1 to E 7.19		18–22		
R 1.13, R 1.15		26		
R 1.17		27		
SPD 2.15		6		
<b>Feeders</b>				
E 2.5		10		
FW 1.7 to FW 1.10		7		
SPD 2.2, SPD 2.7		5		
SPD 2.9 to SPD 2.11, SPD 2.13		6		
<b>Flooring</b>				
E 3.1		11		
E 3.6		12		
E 7.12 to E 7.14		22		
S 4.2		57		
<b>Food</b>				
FW 1.1 to FW 1.10		7		
FW 2.7		8		
H 1.15		40		
M 1.5		30		
R 1.20		27		
T 2.2		47		
T 2.5, T 2.5.1		47		
<b>Foot lesions</b>				
See Leg health				
<b>Handling</b>				
H 1.4		39		
M 2.1		31		
S 2.2, S 2.4		53		
S 4.13		58		
S 5.1		58		
S 5.6		59		
SPD 2.5		5		
T 2.1		47		
T 2.12, T 2.12.1, T 2.13		49		
T 2.16 to T 2.18		49		
T 2.20		49		
T 3.9		50		
<b>Humidity</b>				
E 3.4		12		
M 1.5		30		
S 4.9		58		
T 3.21		51		
<b>Injury</b>				
E 2.6		10		
E 7.14		22		
H 1.11		40		
H 1.14, H 1.15		40		
H 1.4, H 1.5		39		
M 1.5		30		
M 3.1		31		
M 3.4, M 3.5		32		
R 1.15		26		
S 2.2		53		
S 4.15, S 4.16		58		
S 4.4, S 4.5		57		
S 5.1		58		
S 5.10		59		
SPD 2.16, SPD 2.17		6		
T 2.18		49		
T 2.6.1		48		
T 3.11, T 3.12		51		
T 3.7		50		
<b>Inspection</b>				
H 1.15		40		
M 3.1 to M 3.7		31–32		
SPD 2.16		6		
<b>Killing pliers</b>				
H 3.4		41		
<b>Lairage</b>				
L 4.1 to L 4.16		57–58		
S(TV) 1.1		55		

<b>Leg health</b>					
E 3.4			11		
H 1.12 to H 1.14			40		
M 3.2.1			31		
S 3.1, S 3.2			56–57		
<b>Lighting</b>					
E 2.5			10		
E 4.1 to E 4.15			13–16		
S 4.10			58		
S 5.7			59		
SPD 2.13, SPD 2.15			6		
T 2.10			48		
T 2.4			47		
<b>Litter</b>					
E 3.3 to E 3.5			11–12		
E 3.7, E 3.8			12–13		
E 5.1			17		
E 6.1			17		
H 1.15			40		
<b>Managers</b>					
E 1.1.1			9		
E 2.11			10		
H 1.3			39		
M 1.1 to M 1.6			29–31		
M 4.6			33		
S 2.1			53		
S 2.3, S 2.4			53–54		
S 2.9			54		
S 4.15			58		
S 5.2			58		
T 1.4			46		
T 1.6 to T 1.9			46–47		
T 2.20			49		
<b>Medicines</b>					
H 4.1 to H 4.8.2			43–44		
<b>Mortality</b>					
H 1.6			39		
M 1.5			30		
T 3.12, T 3.13			51		
<b>Mutilations</b>					
H 2.1			40		
<b>Neck cutting</b>					
See Slaughter/killing					
<b>Noise</b>					
E 1.2			9		
S 5.7			59		
T 3.16			51		
<b>Other animals</b>					
E 1.2				9	
<b>Paints and preservatives</b>					
E 2.7				10	
<b>Pests and predators</b>					
See Other animals					
<b>Pododermatitis</b>					
See Leg health					
<b>Poultry Welfare Officer</b>					
S 2.3 to S 2.9				53–54	
S 4.15				58	
S 6.9				61	
<b>Protection from other animals</b>					
M 6.1 to M 6.21				34–38	
<b>Range</b>					
E 1.2				9	
R 1.1 to R 1.21				24–27	
<b>Records</b>					
E 4.13				16	
E 6.4, E 6.6				18	
FW 1.3				7	
FW 2.4				8	
H 1.15				40	
H 1.2, H 1.6				39	
H 3.10				42	
H 4.3				43	
H 5.1, H 5.1.1				44	
M 1.3				29	
M 1.5				30	
M 3.5, M 3.6				32	
M 4.6				33	
S 2.7				54	
S 3.1				56	
S 4.15, S 4.16				58	
S(TV) 1.5				55	
T 1.8				47	
T 3.11, T 3.13				51	
<b>Segregation when sick/injured</b>					
H 1.11				40	
H 1.15, H 1.16				40	
<b>Shackling</b>					
S 4.14				58	
S 5.1 to S 5.12				58–59	
S 6.5				61	
S 7.5				62	
S(TV) 1.1				55	

<b>Shelter</b>			
R 1.13 to R 1.16		26–27	
T 3.21		51	
<b>Slaughter/killing</b>			
S 1.1 to S 7.8		53–62	
T 3.1		50	
<b>Stocking density</b>			
E 2.5		10	
E 5.1 to E 5.3		17	
H 1.15		40	
SPD 2.2		5	
T 2.21, T 2.22		49–50	
T 2.6.1		48	
<b>Straw</b>			
E 3.9		13	
<b>Stunning</b>			
H 3.3		41	
H 3.6		42	
S 2.2		53	
S 2.6, S 2.8		54	
S 6.1 to S 6.15		60–62	
<b>Thermal environment</b>			
E 4.10		15	
E 5.1		17	
E 6.5, E 6.7		18	
R 1.14		26	
R 1.2		24	
S 4.4 to S 4.6		57	
SPD 2.1		5	
SPD 2.6		5	
T 2.2		47	
T 3.19, T 3.20		51	
<b>Training</b>			
H 3.2		41	
H 3.7		42	
M 1.3, M 1,4		29	
M 2.1		31	
S 2.1 to S 2.9		53–54	
S 5.1		58	
S 6.15		61	
T 1.11		47	
T 1.2		46	
T 3.9		50	
<b>Transport</b>			
M 1.4		29	
T 1.1 to T 3.22		46–52	
<b>Transport containers</b>			
S 4.13		58	
S 5.12		59	
T 2.14 to T 2.16		49	
T 2.21		49	
T 2.22		50	
T 2.7.1		48	
T 3.6, T 3.7		50	
<b>Ventilation</b>			
E 5.1		17	
E 6.1		17	
M 1.5		30	
S 4.6		57	
SPD 2.2		5	
T 2.2		47	
T 3.6		50	
<b>Veterinary Health and Welfare Plan</b>			
H 1.1, H 1.2, H 1.5, H 1.9, H 1.10		39	
H 1.17		40	
<b>Veterinary surgeon</b>			
FW 1.2		7	
FW 2.2		7	
H 1.1, H 1.2		39	
H 1.10		39	
H 3.2		41	
H 3.8		42	
<b>Water provision</b>			
E 2.5		10	
FW 2.1 to FW 2.15		7–8	
H 1.15		40	
M 1.4, M 1.5		29–30	
M 3.2.1		31	
R 1.19, R 1.20		27	
SPD 2.15		6	
T 2.2		47	
T 2.5		47	
<b>Wing clipping</b>			
H 2.1		40	
<b>Wrynecks</b>			
SPD 2.17		6	



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