

laying hens

code of recommendations for the welfare of livestock



CODE OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE WELFARE OF LIVESTOCK:

LAYING HENS

NOTE

⁴After consultation, this Code, (which consists of paragraphs 1 to 82), has been put before both Houses of Parliament for authority to issue it under Section 3 of the Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1968.

This Section allows “the Ministers” to produce codes of recommendations for the welfare of livestock, and to issue such codes once they have been approved in draft by both Houses of Parliament. However, the original definition of “the Ministers” (see section 50 of the 1968 Act) has been changed to reflect devolution for Scotland and Wales and the creation of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. In England, the powers of “the Ministers” were first transferred to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food by the Transfer of Functions (Agriculture and Food) Order 1999 (S.I. 1999/3141) and then transferred to the Secretary of State by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Dissolution) Order 2002 (S.I. 2002/794).

In Scotland, the powers of “the Ministers” had previously been transferred to the Scottish Ministers by Section 53 of the Scotland Act 1998 (1998 c.46) and, in Wales, the powers of “the Ministers” had previously been transferred to the National Assembly for Wales by article 2 (a) of the National Assembly for Wales (Transfer of Functions) Order 1999 (S.I. 1999/672).

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This preface is not part of the Code but is intended to explain its purpose and to indicate the broad considerations upon which it is based. Similarly, the legislation quoted in boxes throughout the document is not part of the Code but is intended to highlight some of the legal requirements. The law, as quoted in these boxes, is that in force either on the date of publication or reprinting of the Code (please turn to the back cover for this information). Readers should be aware that any of the legal requirements quoted might be subject to change - they should seek confirmation before assuming that these are an accurate statement of the law currently in force.

Regulation 10 of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2000 (S.I. 2000 No. 1870) provides that:

Any person who employs or engages a person to attend to animals shall ensure that the person attending to the animals:

- is acquainted with the provisions of all relevant statutory welfare codes relating to the animals being attended to;
- has access to a copy of those codes while he is attending to the animals; and
- has received instruction and guidance on those codes.

Any person who keeps animals, or who causes or knowingly permits animals to be kept, shall not attend to them unless he has access to all relevant statutory welfare codes relating to the animals while he is attending to them, and is acquainted with the provisions of those codes.

In Regulation 2 it states that “statutory welfare code” means a code for the time being issued under Section 3 of the Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1968.

To cause unnecessary pain or unnecessary distress to any livestock on agricultural land is an offence under Section 1(1) of the Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1968. The breach of a code provision, whilst not an offence

in itself, can nevertheless be used in evidence as tending to establish the guilt of anyone accused of causing the offence of causing unnecessary pain or distress under the Act (Section 3(4)).

Regulation 3(1) of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2000 (S.I. 2000 No.1870) states that owners and keepers of animals shall take all reasonable steps:

- to ensure the welfare of the animals under their care; and
- to ensure that the animals are not caused any unnecessary pain, suffering or injury.

Regulation 3(3) of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2000 (S.I. 2000 No. 1870) states that:

- In deciding whether the conditions under which animals are being bred or kept comply with the requirements set out in Schedule 1 of the Regulations, the owner and keeper of the animals shall have regard to their species, and to their degree of development, adaptation and domestication, and to their physiological and ethological needs in accordance with established experience and scientific knowledge.

Regulation 11 of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2000 (S.I. 2000 No. 1870) states that:

- Where an authorised person considers that animals are being kept in a way which is likely to cause unnecessary pain, suffering or injury, or in any other way in contravention of any provision of these Regulations, he may serve a notice on the person appearing to him to be in charge of the animals requiring that person, within the period stated in the notice, to take any action that the authorised person considers to be reasonably necessary to ensure compliance with these Regulations and the authorised person shall give his reasons for requiring that action to be taken.



Regulation 13 (2) of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2000 (S.I. 2000 No. 1870) states that:

- In any proceedings against an owner or keeper of animals for a failure to comply with Regulation 3(1) or 3(2), the owner or keeper as the case may be, may rely on his compliance with any relevant recommendation contained in a statutory welfare code as tending to establish his compliance with the relevant regulation.

The Code is intended to encourage all those who care for farm animals to adopt the highest standards of husbandry. Without good stockmanship, animal welfare can never be adequately protected. Adherence to these recommendations will help flock-keepers to reach the required standard.

The welfare of laying hens is considered within a framework, elaborated by the Farm Animal Welfare Council, and known as the 'Five Freedoms'. These form a logical basis for the assessment of welfare within any system, together with the actions necessary to safeguard welfare within the constraints of an efficient livestock industry.

The Five Freedoms are:

1. FREEDOM FROM HUNGER AND THIRST

- by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour;

2. FREEDOM FROM DISCOMFORT

- by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area;

3. FREEDOM FROM PAIN, INJURY OR DISEASE

- by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment;

4. FREEDOM TO EXPRESS NORMAL BEHAVIOUR

- by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animals' own kind;

5. FREEDOM FROM FEAR AND DISTRESS

- by ensuring conditions and treatment to avoid mental suffering.

In acknowledging these freedoms, those who have care of livestock should practise: -

- caring and responsible planning and management;
- skilled, knowledgeable and conscientious stockmanship;
- appropriate environmental design (for example, of the husbandry system);
- considerate handling and transport;
- humane slaughter.

The Protection of Animals Acts (the Protection of Animals Acts 1911- 1988 and the Protection of Animals (Amendment) Act 2000) contain the general law relating to cruelty to animals. Broadly it is an offence (under Section 1 of the 1911 Act) to be cruel to any domestic or captive animal by anything that is done or omitted to be done.

Section 12(2) of the 1911 Act empowers a police constable to place, in safe custody, animals in the charge of persons apprehended for an offence under the Act until the end of proceedings or the court orders the return of the animals. The reasonable costs involved, including any necessary veterinary treatment, are recoverable by the police from the owner upon conviction.

Under section 1 of the Protection of Animals (Amendment) Act 1954, as amended by the 1988 Act, the court has the power to disqualify a person convicted under these Acts from having custody of any animal. The ban can specify a particular kind of animal or all animals for such period as the court thinks fit.

The Protection of Animals (Amendment) Act 2000 supplements the 1911 Act by allowing a court to make an order relating to the care, disposal or slaughter of animals kept for commercial purposes that are the subject of a prosecution brought under the 1911 Act by a 'prosecutor'. A 'prosecutor' is defined in the 2000 Act to include certain public bodies that conduct prosecutions (Crown Prosecution Service, government departments and local authorities) and any person or bodies approved by DEFRA or National Assembly for Wales. The 2000 Act then allows reasonable costs to be recovered from the owner by the 'prosecutor'.

This Code applies in England only and has been issued by the Secretary of State for the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (following approval in draft by both Houses of Parliament). It replaces (also as regards England only) that part of the existing Domestic Fowls Code (issued in 1987), relating to the welfare of laying hens.

Similar Codes are being produced in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Until these new Codes are issued, the existing Domestic Fowls Code will continue to apply in Scotland and Wales. Separate arrangements exist in Northern Ireland.

**THIS WELFARE CODE WAS ISSUED ON
22nd July 2002**



- 1 This code (which applies in England only) applies to laying hens kept in various production systems. For the purposes of this code “flock-keeper” means the owner of the birds or the person responsible for looking after them. The recommendations are relevant to laying hens in all types of husbandry system, although a different balance of welfare benefits and dis-benefits applies to birds kept in different systems. Following these recommendations will help to ensure that the welfare of the birds is safeguarded.
- 2 No person should operate or set up a laying hen unit unless the welfare of all the birds can be safeguarded. This can be achieved by ensuring that the buildings and equipment, and the skills and ability of the flock-keeper, are appropriate to the husbandry system and the number of birds to be kept.
- 3 The relevant animal welfare legislation applies to owners as well as any person looking after the birds on their behalf, wherever the birds are located. A written contract can be of value in ensuring that all parties are clear about their responsibilities in respect of welfare. However, the obligations imposed by law will still apply.
- 4 The strain of bird selected must be suitable for the production system.

The Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2002 (S.I. 2002 No.1646) lays down minimum standards for the protection of laying hens.

This does not apply to:

- establishments with fewer than 350 laying hens

Such establishments shall, however, continue to be subject to the relevant requirements of Directive 98/58/EC, which has been made into law in England by the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2000 (S.I. 2000 No.1870) as referred to in the text below.

Regulation 2 (1) of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2002 (S.I. 2002 No.1646) provides the following definitions:

“laying hen” - means a hen of the species *Gallus gallus* which has reached laying maturity and is kept for production of eggs not intended for hatching;

“litter” - means any friable material enabling the hens to satisfy their ethological needs;

“nest” - means a separate space for egg laying, the floor components of which may not include wire mesh that can come into contact with the birds, for an individual hen or a group of hens;

“usable area” - means an area, other than any nesting area, used by laying hens at least 30cm wide with a floor slope not exceeding 14%, and with headroom of at least 45cm.

Schedule 1, Paragraph 1 of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2000 (S.I. 2000 No.1870) states that:

- Animals shall be cared for by a sufficient number of staff who possess the appropriate ability, knowledge and professional competence.

- 5 It is essential that sufficient, well-motivated and competent personnel are employed to carry out all necessary tasks. Staff should be well managed and supervised, fully conversant with the tasks they will be required to undertake and competent in the use of any equipment.
- 6 All flock-keepers should demonstrate full understanding of the welfare needs and basic biology of the birds and have shown that they are capable of safeguarding them under all foreseeable conditions before being given responsibility for a flock. A good flock-keeper will have a compassionate and humane attitude, will be able to anticipate and avoid many potential welfare problems, and have the ability to identify those that do occur and respond to them promptly.
- 7 Staff, including those employed by contractors, should be given appropriate training. This requires the acquisition of specific stockmanship skills which may be developed on-farm, working with an experienced person, or by following a course offered by a suitable training provider. Flock-keepers should demonstrate competence and understanding before they are given responsibility for the birds. Training should continue throughout the duration of the employment, and suitable refresher courses should be undertaken regularly. Wherever possible, the training should be of a type which leads to formal recognition of competence.
- 8 A training plan should be implemented to ensure that those working with laying hens recognise not only normal behaviour and good health but also signs of illness or disease or impending health problems. If specialised tasks are to be performed, for example vaccination or humane culling, then specific training should be given. Alternatively, the services of a competent contractor using trained staff should be obtained.
- 9 Staff should establish a methodical routine in completing the range of tasks involved in keeping laying hens. As part of this they should be particularly vigilant in checking that the systems are operating properly and birds are behaving normally. This will enable flock-keepers to detect problems in their earliest stages and acquire a good understanding of the action to be taken if a problem is noticed. If the cause is not obvious, or if the flock-keeper's action is not effective, immediate veterinary or technical advice should be obtained.
- 10 It is essential to ensure that enough time is available within the flock-keepers daily work routine for birds to be properly inspected and for any remedial action to be taken. The flock-keeper should have adequate knowledge of the husbandry system used to be able to appreciate the suitability of the total environment for the birds' health and welfare. The system used, the number of birds kept and their stocking rate should depend on the suitability of the conditions and the skill of the flock-keeper.
- 11 Young birds should be given, where possible, appropriate experience of management practices (e.g. particular feeding and watering systems) and environmental conditions (e.g. natural light, perches, litter) to enable them to adapt to the husbandry systems which they will encounter later in life. In order to develop a positive relationship between man and bird there shall be frequent, quiet but close approach from an early age.



Schedule 1, paragraph 2 of the Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations (England) 2000 (S.I. 2000 No. 1870) requires that:

- All animals kept in husbandry systems in which their welfare depends on frequent human attention shall be thoroughly inspected at least once a day to check that they are in a state of well-being.
- Animals kept in systems other than husbandry systems in which their welfare depends on frequent human attention shall be inspected at intervals sufficient to avoid any suffering.

Schedule 1, paragraph 3 states that:

Where animals are kept in a building adequate lighting (whether fixed or portable) shall be available to enable them to be thoroughly inspected at any time.

Schedule 3D, paragraph 1 of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2002 (S.I. 2002 No.1646) states that:

All hens must be inspected by the owner or person responsible for the hens at least once a day.

Schedule 3D, paragraph 6 of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2002 (S.I. 2002 No.1646) states that:

Accommodation comprising two or more tiers of cages must have devices or appropriate measures must be taken to allow inspection of all tiers without difficulty and facilitate the removal of hens.

movements, respiratory distress, condition of plumage, eyes, skin, beak, legs, feet and claws, and where appropriate, combs and wattles. Attention should also be paid to the presence of external parasites, to the condition of droppings, to feed and water consumption, to growth and to egg production level. Where appropriate the birds should be encouraged to walk. Individual examination should be made of those birds for which the overall inspection indicates this to be necessary. A second daily inspection is recommended at a different time of day.

- 12 A thorough inspection should take place at least once a day. Such inspections should be made independently of any automatic surveillance equipment. This inspection should be sufficiently thorough to detect illness and injury of individual hens, and special attention should be paid to bodily condition,
- 13 The healthy individual bird should have sounds and activity appropriate to its age, breed or type, clear bright eyes, good posture, vigorous movements if unduly disturbed, clean healthy skin, good feather condition, well formed shanks and feet, effective walking and active feeding and drinking behaviour.
- 14 The early signs of ill health may include changes in food and water intake, in preening, in 'chatter' and in activity. There may also be a drop in egg production and changes in egg quality such as shell defects.
- 15 Housing and Equipment must be designed so that all the birds can be clearly seen. Supplementary lighting may be needed for the inspection of birds in the bottom tier of cage systems.

Schedule 1, paragraph 5 of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2000 (S.I. No. 1870), states that any animals which appear to be ill or injured:

- shall be cared for appropriately without delay; and
- where they do not respond to such care, veterinary advice shall be obtained as soon as possible.

Schedule 1, paragraph 6 states:

Where necessary, sick or injured animals shall be isolated in suitable accommodation with, where appropriate, dry comfortable bedding.

Regulation 4 of the Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or Killing) Regulations 1995 (S.I. 1995 No. 731) requires that slaughter or killing is carried out in a way that does not cause the bird any avoidable excitement, pain or suffering and by staff who have the necessary knowledge and skill to perform the task humanely and efficiently. The permitted methods of killing poultry include decapitation and neck dislocation.

Schedule 3D paragraph 4 of the Welfare of Animals (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2002 (S.I. 2002 No.1646) states that:

Those parts of buildings, equipment and utensils which are in contact with the hens shall be thoroughly cleansed and disinfected regularly and in any case every time depopulation is carried out and before a new batch of hens is brought in. While the cages are occupied, the surfaces and all equipment shall be kept satisfactorily clean. Droppings must be removed as often as necessary and dead hens must be removed every day.

- 16 A health and welfare programme should be implemented for each unit which sets out health and husbandry activities. It should also establish management procedures and control measures to reduce the risk of infections and injury. The health and welfare programme should be developed with appropriate veterinary advice, reviewed against performance and updated accordingly.
- 17 If the poultry are apparently not in good health, or if they are showing obvious signs of behavioural alterations, the flock-keeper must take appropriate action without delay to establish the cause. If the immediate remedial action taken by the flock-keeper is not effective a veterinarian must be consulted and, if necessary, expert advice must be sought on other technical factors involved. Where there are signs of recurring injuries which may be related to the environment, these must be investigated and rectified as soon as possible to prevent any further damage to the birds.
- 18 Injured, sick or distressed birds must be treated without delay and if necessary separated from the rest of the flock in suitable accommodation available for this purpose, or killed in accordance with the legislation. Dead birds must be removed promptly.



record keeping

Schedule 1, paragraph 7 of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2000 (S.I. 2000 No. 1870) states that a record shall be maintained of:

- Any medicinal treatment given to animals, and
- The number of mortalities found on each inspection of animals carried out in accordance with any of the following provisions:
 - in the case of laying hens kept in all systems Paragraph 1 of Schedule 3D of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2002 (S.I.2002 No.1646) states that all hens must be inspected by the owner or the person responsible for the hens at least once a day.
 - in any other case (Paragraph 2) states that animals kept in systems other than husbandry systems in which their welfare depends on frequent human attention shall be inspected at intervals sufficient to avoid any suffering.

Schedule 1, paragraph 8 states that the record referred to in Schedule 1, paragraph 7 shall be retained for a period of at least three years from the date on which the medical treatment was given, or the date of the inspection, as the case may be, and shall be made available to an authorised person when carrying out an inspection or when otherwise requested by such person.

- 19 Records are an essential aid to management and those kept should include feed and water consumption, egg quality, health checks, behavioural abnormalities, maximum and minimum temperatures and ammonia levels.
- 20 Mortality, culling and, if possible, morbidity levels should be closely monitored. Autopsies should be carried out in cases where mortality levels are significant or higher than breeder's targets. Records should be kept of all these results.

Schedule 1, paragraphs 22-27 of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2000 (S.I. 2000 No. 1870), state that:

- Animals shall be fed a wholesome diet which is appropriate to their age and species and which is fed to them in sufficient quantity to maintain them in good health, to satisfy their nutritional needs and to promote a positive state of well-being.
- No animals shall be provided with food or liquid in a manner, nor shall such food or liquid contain any substance, which may cause them unnecessary suffering or injury.
- All animals shall have access to feed at intervals appropriate to their physiological needs (and, in any case, at least once a day), except where a veterinary surgeon acting in the exercise of his profession otherwise directs.
- All animals shall either have access to a suitable water supply and be provided with an adequate supply of fresh drinking water each day or be able to satisfy their fluid intake needs by other means.
- Feeding and watering equipment shall be designed, constructed, placed and maintained so that contamination of food and water and the harmful effects of competition between animals are minimised.
- No other substance, with the exception of those given for therapeutic or prophylactic purposes or for the purpose of zootechnical treatment shall be administered to animals unless it has been demonstrated by scientific studies of animal welfare or established experience that the effect of that substance is not detrimental to the health or welfare of the animals.

Schedule 3A, paragraphs 3 (a) and (b), provisions applicable to laying hens kept in non-cage systems, of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2002 (S.I. 2002 No.1646) states that:

All systems must be equipped in such a way that all laying hens have:

- (a) either linear feeders providing at least 10cm per hen or circular feeders providing at least 4cm per hen; and
- (b) either continuous drinking troughs providing 2.5 cm per hen or circular drinking troughs providing 1cm per hen,

and, in addition, where nipple drinkers or cups are used, there shall be at least one nipple drinker or cup for every 10 hens. Where drinking points are plumbed in, at least two cups or two nipple drinkers shall be within reach of each hen.

- 21 Feed and water must be readily accessible to all birds and particular attention should be given to its provision in areas used by subordinate birds. In the case of birds which have difficulty in feeding or drinking, appropriate measures should be taken.
- 22 Feeding and watering equipment should be designed, constructed, placed, operated and maintained in such a way that:
 - it minimises spillage or contamination of feed and water;
 - all birds have sufficient access to it to avoid undue competition between individuals;
 - it does not cause or result in injury to birds;
 - it operates in all weather conditions;
 - the consumption of water and feed can be monitored.
 In addition, all equipment, including bulk feed bins, must be able to be easily and effectively cleaned and disinfected.
- 23 Feeder space allocation should be sufficient to enable the birds to obtain adequate feed with the minimum of competition. For linear feeders this space must be 10cm of trough side per bird provided that birds have access to both sides and that feeders are placed sufficiently far apart for birds to make full use of the available space.



If feed is not provided *ad libitum*, sufficient space must be available to allow all birds to eat at the same time.

- 24 Sudden changes in the type or quantity of feed and feeding procedures, other than those appropriate to the physiological needs of the birds, shall be avoided except in case of emergency.
- 25 Systems which call for the complete withholding of feed and water on any day must not be adopted. In no circumstances may birds be induced to moult by withholding feed and water. However, feed, but not water, may be withheld for up to 12 hours prior to slaughter. This period of 12 hours must be an inclusive period to include the catching, loading, transport, lairaging and unloading time prior to slaughter.
- 26 Stale or contaminated feed or water should not be allowed to accumulate and should be replaced immediately. Precautions must be taken to minimise the risk of drinking water freezing.
- 27 In alternative systems, whole grain may be scattered over the litter each day to encourage foraging and scratching and reduce the possibility of feather pecking outbreaks. Birds should also have regular access to insoluble grit to aid digestion.
- 28 Arrangements should be made in advance to ensure that adequate supplies of suitable feed and water can be made available in emergencies such as interruptions in power supplies.
- 29 Body condition, weight, egg quality and production should be used to monitor the effectiveness of the feeding regime.

Schedule 1, paragraph 9 of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2000 (S.I. 2000 No. 1870) states that:

- The freedom of movement of animals, having regard to their species and in accordance with established experience and scientific knowledge, shall not be restricted in such a way as to cause them unnecessary suffering or injury;

Schedule 1, paragraph 10 states that:

- Where animals are continuously or regularly confined, they shall be given the space appropriate to their physiological and ethological needs in accordance with established experience and scientific knowledge.

Schedule 3A, paragraphs 1, 2, 6 and 7, provisions applicable to laying hens kept in non-cage systems, of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2002 (S.I. 2002 No.1646) states that:

All newly built or rebuilt non-cage systems of production for keeping laying hens and all such systems of production brought into use for the first time, shall comply with the requirements of this Schedule.

On and after 1 January 2007, all non-cage systems of production for keeping laying hens shall also comply with the following requirements.

Subject to paragraph 7 below, the stocking density must not exceed nine laying hens per square metre of usable area.

Where on 3 August 1999 the establishment applied a system where the usable area corresponded to the available ground surface, and the establishment is still applying this system when the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2002 (S.I. 2002 No.1646) come into force, a stocking density of 12 hens per square metre is authorised until 31 December 2011.

30 When determining the stocking rate, consideration should be given to breed, system of housing, strain and type of bird, colony size, temperature, ventilation and lighting, as well as to the number of platforms, perches or other suitable installations available in the third dimension.

31 If disease or evidence of a behavioural problem becomes apparent, by observation or by receipt of unsatisfactory grading returns from egg packing stations or by rejections from processing plants, expert qualified advice should be sought promptly to deal with the problem. Stocking and ventilation rates should also be checked and variations in stocking and ventilation should be considered in order to minimise the likelihood of recurrence of the problem.



general

Schedule 1, paragraphs 11 and 12 of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2000 (S.I. 2000 No. 1870), state that:

- Materials used for the construction of accommodation, and, in particular for the construction of pens, cages, stalls and equipment with which the animals may come into contact, shall not be harmful to them and shall be capable of being thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.
- Accommodation and fittings for securing animals shall be constructed and maintained so that there are no sharp edges or protrusions likely to cause injury to them.

Schedule 3D, paragraph 5 of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2002 (S.I. 2002 No.1646) states that:

Cages must be suitably equipped to prevent hens escaping.

Schedule 3D, paragraph 7 of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2002 (S.I. 2002 No.1646) states that:

The design and dimensions of the cage door must be such that an adult hen can be removed without undergoing unnecessary suffering or sustaining injury.

- 32 The design, construction and maintenance of enclosures, buildings and equipment for laying birds should be such that they:
- allow the fulfilment of essential biological needs and the maintenance of good health;
 - facilitate good management of the birds;
 - allow for easy maintenance of good conditions of hygiene and air quality;
 - provide shelter from adverse weather conditions;

- limit the risk of disease, disorders manifested by behavioural changes, traumatic injuries to the birds, injuries caused by birds to each other and, as far as possible, contamination of the birds by droppings;
- exclude predators, rodents, and wild animals and minimise insects;
- allow for the prevention and treatment of infestations of internal and external parasites;
- incorporate damp-proof membranes to prevent insulation breakdown, and measures to prevent easy access by vermin to the insulation material.

- 33 Emergency planning: Farmers should make advance plans for dealing with emergencies such as fire, flood or disruption of supplies, and should ensure that all staff are familiar with the appropriate emergency action. At least one responsible member of the staff should always be on call to take the necessary steps. Fire precautions should be a major priority for all flock-keepers. Where buildings need to be locked, arrangements shall be made to allow rapid entry in case of emergency.
- 34 Flock-keepers should have access to and be familiar with the content of the DEFRA booklet 'Farm Fires'.
- 35 Where birds are housed, floors, perches and platforms should be of a suitable design and material and not cause discomfort, distress or injury to the birds. They must provide sufficient support, particularly for the forward facing claws of each foot; moreover, perches should be of sufficient length to allow all birds to roost at the same time. Floors, perches and platforms should be kept sufficiently dry and clean.
- 36 Birds shall be kept in such a way that they can keep themselves clean.
- 37 Ventilation, heating, lighting, feeding, watering and all other equipment should be designed, sited and installed so as to avoid risk of injuring birds.

non - cage systems

The details given below apply to all newly built or rebuilt non-cage systems of production for keeping laying hens and all such systems of production brought into use for the first time. From 1 January 2007, these requirements apply to all non-cage systems of production for keeping laying hens.

Schedule 3A, paragraphs 3 (c) (d), and (e), 4 and 5 (a), provisions applicable to laying hens kept in non-cage systems, of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2002 (S.I. 2002 No.1646) state that:

All systems must be equipped in such a way that all laying hens have:

at least one nest for every seven hens. If group nests are used, there must be at least 1m² of nest space for a maximum of 120 hens;

perches, without sharp edges and providing at least 15 cm per hen. Perches must not be mounted above the litter and the horizontal distance between perches must be at least 30 cm and the horizontal distance between the perch and the wall must be at least 20 cm; and

at least 250 cm² of littered area per hen, the litter occupying at least one third of the ground surface.

The floors of installations must be constructed so as to support each of the forward-facing claws of each bird's foot.

If systems are used where the laying hens can move freely between different levels -

there shall be no more than four levels;
the headroom between the levels must be at least 45 cm;
the drinking and feeding facilities must be distributed in such a way as to provide equal access for all hens; and
the levels must be so arranged as to prevent droppings falling on the levels below.

You should also refer to the Egg Marketing Standards (see reference section) regarding "free range" and "barn" eggs.

- 38 Usable area may be made up of the ground surface of the building where accessible to the hens and any additional raised areas or platforms at least 30cm wide, including perforated floors providing arrangements are in place to prevent fouling of hens below.
- 39 Nests should be provided with a floor substrate which encourages nesting behaviour. This is especially important at the start of lay, when the provision of loose litter may be used to encourage the pullets to use the nests. Individual nests should be designed to accommodate only one bird at a time. Communal nests should be designed using divisions and suitable access points to minimise overcrowding.
- 40 Nest floors may be made of wire mesh provided that this is overlain by another material such as straw or plastic.
- 41 Only perches at 30cm centres or more apart should be calculated as part of the perching space, although more perches may be provided adjacent to one another to make a perforated floor. Perforated floors can be considered as perching space when they have perches incorporated within the floor structure or attached on top of the floor surface.
- 42 There should be a sufficient gap on either side of any perch to allow the hens to grip the perches without risk of trapping their claws. If foot condition is poor then the provision of perches should be reviewed.
- 43 Multi-tier systems with perforated platforms should have droppings belts or trays beneath. Perches must be positioned to minimise fouling of any hens perched below and droppings falling in drinking and feeding facilities. Where possible, perches should be over a droppings pit.
- 44 Even where ladders are provided, nests, roosting areas, perches and platforms should not be so high above floor level that birds have difficulty in using them or risk injury.



conventional cages

The details given below apply to all conventional (unenriched) cage systems from 1 January 2003. From 1 January 2003, no person shall build or bring into service for the first time any such cage system for the keeping of laying hens. From 1 January 2012, no person shall keep any laying hen in any such cage system.

Schedule 3B, paragraph 1, provisions applicable to conventional (unenriched) cages, of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2002 (S.I. 2002 No.1646) states that, on and after 1 January 2003 all conventional (unenriched) cage systems shall comply with the following requirements :

- (a) at least 550 cm² per hen of cage area, measured in a horizontal plane, which may be used without restriction, in particular not including non-waste deflection plates liable to restrict the area available, must be provided for each laying hen. However where the non-waste deflection plate is placed so as not to restrict the area available for the hens to use, then that area may be included in the measurement;
- (b) a feed trough which may be used without restriction must be provided. Its length must be at least 10 cm multiplied by the number of hens in the cage;
- (c) unless nipple drinkers or drinking cups are provided, each cage must have a continuous drinking channel of the same length as the feed trough mentioned in subparagraph (b). Where drinking points are plumbed in, at least two nipple drinkers or two cups must be within reach of each cage;
- (d) cages must be at least 40 cm high over at least 65% of the cage area and not less than 35 cm at any point; the area being obtained by multiplying 550cm² by the number of birds kept in the cage;
- (e) floors of cages must be constructed so as support each of the forward-facing claws of each foot of each bird. Floor slope must not exceed 14% or 8 degrees when made of rectangular wire mesh and 21.3% or 12 degrees for other types of floor; and

(f) cages shall be fitted with suitable claw-shortening devices.

You should also refer to the Egg Marketing Standards (see reference section) regarding “eggs from caged hens”.

- 45 Cages should be designed and maintained so as to minimise discomfort and distress and to prevent injury to the birds.
- 46 Droppings should not be allowed to fall on birds in lower tiers of cages. Droppings pits below battery cages should be closed off to prevent birds gaining access.
- 47 If there is evidence that the claws of hens are found to be overgrown or broken, then the provision of claw shortening devices should be enhanced. Excessively abrasive devices may cause injury so caution should be exercised in specifying such devices.

enriched cages

Schedule 3C, provisions applicable to all cage systems (other than those referred to in Schedule 3B) of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2002 (S.I. 2002 No.1646) states that:

All cage systems (other than those referred to in Schedule 3B) shall be enriched to comply with the requirements of this Schedule.

Laying hens must have -

- (a) at least 750 cm² of cage area per hen, 600 cm² of which shall be usable; the height of the cage other than that above the usable area* shall be at least 20 cm at every point and no cage shall have a total area that is less than 2000 cm²;
- (b) a nest;
- (c) litter such that pecking and scratching are possible;
- (d) appropriate perches allowing at least 15 cm per hen.

A feed trough which may be used without restriction must be provided. Its length must be at least 12 cm multiplied by the number of hens in the cage.

Each cage must have a drinking system appropriate to the size of the group; where nipple drinkers are provided, at least two nipple drinkers or two cups must be within the reach of each hen.

To facilitate inspection, installation and depopulation of hens there must be a minimum aisle width of 90 cm between tiers of cages and a space of at least 35 cm must be allowed between the floor of the building and the bottom tier of cages.

Cages must be fitted with suitable claw-shortening devices.

* Minimum cage height at the lowest point in the usable area is 45cm.

You should also refer to the Egg Marketing Standards (see reference section) regarding “eggs from caged hens”.

- 48 If there is evidence that claws of hens are found to be overgrown or broken the provision of claw shortening devices should be enhanced. Excessively abrasive devices may cause injury so caution should be exercised in specifying such devices.
- 49 The aisle width should be measured as the unobstructed width between the outer edges of the feed troughs. The distance to the floor should be measured to the mesh base of the cage.



ventilation, temperature

Schedule 1, paragraph 13 of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2000 (S.I. 2000 No.1870) states that:

- Air circulation, dust levels, temperature, relative air humidity and gas concentrations shall be kept within limits which are not harmful to the animals.

- 50 Provision of insulation and ventilation should be designed to avoid heat and cold stress. Care should be taken to protect confined birds from draughts in cold conditions.
- 51 Birds, particularly those in cages, should not be exposed to strong direct sunlight or hot surroundings long enough to cause heat stress as indicated by prolonged panting.
- 52 In the event of feather loss, steps should be taken wherever possible to ensure that hens are not subjected to cold stress; for example, hens should be given more food.
- 53 The ventilation system, and facilities for storing and handling litter and manure should be designed, maintained and managed to prevent the exposure of birds to gases such as ammonia, hydrogen sulphide, carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide in concentrations which cause discomfort to the birds or which are detrimental to their health.

light

Schedule 1, paragraphs 14-16 of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2000 (S.I. 2000 No. 1870), state that:

- Animals kept in buildings shall not be kept in permanent darkness.

- Where the natural light available in a building is insufficient to meet the physiological and ethological needs of any animals being kept in it then appropriate artificial lighting shall be provided.

- Animals kept in buildings shall not be kept without an appropriate period of rest from artificial lighting.

Schedule 3D, paragraph 3 of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2002 (S.I. 2002 No.1646) states that:

All buildings shall have light levels sufficient to allow all hens to see one another and be seen clearly, to investigate their surroundings visually and to show normal levels of activity. Where there is natural light, light apertures must be arranged in such a way that light is distributed evenly within the accommodation.

After the first few days of conditioning, the lighting regime shall be such as to prevent health and behavioural problems. Accordingly it must follow a 24-hour rhythm and include an adequate uninterrupted period of darkness lasting, by way of indication, about one third of the day, so that the hens may rest and to avoid problems such as immunodepression and ocular anomalies. A period of twilight of sufficient duration ought to be provided when the light is dimmed so that the hens may settle down without disturbance or injury.

- 54 In normal conditions, in cage and multi-level systems, light intensity should be at least 5 lux, and preferably not less than 10 lux, measured at any feed trough level; in other systems, light intensity in the perching, walking and feeding areas should be at least 10 lux measured at bird eye height. However, a temporary reduction in lighting level may assist in addressing behavioural problems such as feather pecking or cannibalism.
- 55 In all houses, especially those with natural light, measures should be taken to ensure that light distribution is as even as possible.
- 56 A period of twilight should be provided to give birds time to roost; this is of particular importance in alternative systems and enriched cages.

litter

Schedule 3 of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2002 (S.I. 2002 No.1646) states that:

Where any poultry (other than those kept in the systems referred to in Schedules 3A, 3B and 3C) are kept in a building they shall be kept on, or have access at all times to, well-maintained litter or to a well-drained area for resting.

Schedule 3A, paragraph 3(e), provisions applicable to laying hens kept in non-cage systems, of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2002 (S.I. 2002 No.1646) states that:

All systems must be equipped in such a way that all laying hens have:

- at least 250 cm² of littered area per hen, the litter occupying at least one third of the ground surface.

Schedule 3C, paragraph 2(c), provisions applicable to laying hens kept in enriched cages, of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2002 (S.I. 2002 No.1646) states that:

Laying hens must have -
litter such that pecking and scratching are possible.

- 57 In alternative systems, all birds should have access to a littered area which should be maintained in a friable condition and at an adequate depth for dust bathing, approximately 10 cm. To ensure good litter management, this depth of litter may be made up over the first two months of use. Birds should have access to good quality substrate for dust bathing and to prevent health problems, in particular foot, leg and breast lesions.

- 58 Mouldy litter should not be used. There should be frequent checks to ensure that litter does not become infested with harmful organisms parasitic to birds.
- 59 Attention should also be paid to the advice given in the DEFRA booklet "Poultry Litter Management".

noise

Schedule 3D, paragraph 2 of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2002 (S.I. 2002 No.1646) states that:

The sound level shall be minimised. Constant or sudden noise shall be avoided. Ventilation fans, feeding machinery or other equipment shall be constructed, placed, operated and maintained in such a way that they cause the least possible noise.



Schedule 1, paragraph 17 of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2000 (S.I. 2000, No. 1870) states that:

Animals not kept in buildings shall, where necessary and possible, be given protection from adverse weather conditions, predators and risks to their health and shall, at all times, have access to a well-drained lying area.

Schedule 3A, paragraphs 5 (b) (i) and (ii), provisions applicable to laying hens kept in non-cage systems, of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2002 (S.I. 2002 No.1646) states that:

If laying hens have access to open runs:

- (i) there must be several popholes giving direct access to the outer area, at least 35 cm high and 40 cm wide and extending along the entire length of the building; in any case, a total opening of 2 m must be available per group of 1,000 hens; and
- (ii) open runs must be of an area appropriate to the stocking density and to the nature of the ground, in order to prevent any contamination, and equipped with shelter from inclement weather and predators and, if necessary, appropriate drinking troughs.

You should also refer to the Egg Marketing Standards (see reference section) regarding “free range eggs”.

- 60 Where birds are kept extensively and are free to range it is important to provide some overhead shelter. Reasonable precautions should be taken to protect birds against predators, dogs and cats. Shelter from rain, sun and cold should always be available when necessary. Windbreaks should be provided on exposed land.
- 61 Housing used by range birds should be of sufficient standard to ensure that the birds are not subject to distress caused by extremes of temperature.
- 62 Factors such as soil type, drainage and size of colony and frequency of flock rotation are very important in deciding the number of birds that a particular area can carry. Heavy, poorly drained soil can carry fewer birds than land that is light and well drained.
- 63 It is important to establish a system of rotation of grazing or house movement in order to prevent poaching and build up of parasitic infection and disease. Where houses in free-range systems are to remain in one location, steps should be taken to prevent the ground immediately around the house becoming poached and the soil should be sampled for evidence of worm eggs. Flocks and portable houses should be moved with sufficient regularity to avoid continuously muddy conditions and / or contamination of the land with organisms which cause or carry disease to an extent which could seriously prejudice the health of poultry. Unless the house is moved frequently it is good practice to protect the ground immediately adjacent to it, e.g. by providing slatted or wire mesh platforms, covered verandas or areas of gravel.
- 64 Birds should be encouraged to use the outdoor area by the provision of adequate suitable, properly managed vegetation, outdoor scratch whole grain feeding, a fresh supply of water and overhead cover, all sufficiently far from the house to encourage the birds to range.
- 65 When birds are transferred to range houses, precautions should be taken to avoid crowding and suffocation, particularly during the first few nights. Cannibalism is a danger under this system, and birds should not normally be confined for too long during hours of daylight or subjected to direct sunlight during confinement.
- 66 Where the area within a veranda attached to a free range house is included in the calculation of floor space, it must have the same artificial lighting system as within the inner part of the unit, the popholes must meet the requirements of the legislation and continuous pophole access must be provided between the house and the veranda.

Schedule 1, paragraphs 18 of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2000 (S.I. 2000 No. 1870) states that:

- All automated or mechanical equipment essential for the health and well being of the animals shall be inspected at least once a day to check that there is no defect in it.

Schedule 1, paragraph 19 states that:

- Where defects in automated or mechanical equipment of the type referred to in paragraph 18 of Schedule 1 are discovered, these shall be rectified immediately, or if this is impossible, appropriate steps shall be taken to safeguard the health and well-being of the animals pending the rectification of such defects, including the use of alternative methods of feeding and watering and methods of providing and maintaining a satisfactory environment.

On artificial ventilation systems, Schedule 1, paragraph 20 states that where the health and well-being of the animals is dependent on such a system:

- (a) provision shall be made for an appropriate back-up system to guarantee sufficient air renewal to preserve the health and well-being of the animals in the event of the failure of the system; and
- (b) an alarm system (which will operate even if the principal electricity supply to it has failed) shall be provided to give warning of any failure of the system.

Schedule 1, paragraph 21 states that:

- The back-up system referred to in paragraph (20a) of Schedule 1 shall be thoroughly inspected and the alarm system referred to in paragraph (20b) of Schedule 1 shall each be tested at least once every seven days in order to check that there is no defect in the system and, if any defect is found (whether when the system is inspected or tested in accordance with this paragraph or at any other time), it shall be rectified immediately.

67 Prior to installing more complex or elaborate equipment than previously used, consideration should be given to the question of animal welfare. In general the greater the restriction imposed on the bird and the greater the complexity of the system or degree of control which is exercised over temperature, air flow or food supply, the less the bird is able to use its instinctive behaviour to modify the effect of unfavourable conditions and the greater the chance of suffering if mechanical or electrical failures occur. Thus systems involving a high degree of control over the environment should only be installed where conscientious staff skilled in both poultry husbandry and the use of the equipment will always be available.

68 All equipment and services including feed hoppers, drinkers, ventilating fans, heating and lighting units, fire extinguishers and alarm systems should be cleaned and inspected regularly and kept in good working order. All automated equipment, upon which the birds' welfare is dependent, must incorporate a fail-safe and/or standby device and, on automated ventilation systems, an alarm system to warn the flock-keeper of failure. Defects should be rectified immediately or other measures taken to safeguard the health and welfare of the birds. Alternative ways of feeding and of maintaining a satisfactory environment should therefore be ready for use.

69 All electrical installations at mains voltage should be inaccessible to the birds and properly earthed.



Schedule 3D, paragraphs 8 and 9 of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2002 (S.I. 2002 No.1646) laying down conditions applicable to laying hens in all systems states that:

Subject to paragraph 9 (below), no person shall mutilate any laying hen.

In order to prevent feather pecking and cannibalism, until 31 December 2010, beak trimming of birds is permitted in all systems set out in Schedules 3A, 3B and 3C provided it is carried out –

- (a) by persons over 18 years of age
- (b) on chickens that are less than 10 days old and intended for laying; and
- (c) in accordance with the Veterinary Surgery (Exemptions) Order 1962 (SI 1962/2557).

The Welfare of Livestock (Prohibited Operations) Regulations 1982 (S.I. 1982 No. 1884) prohibits any operation on a bird with the object or effect of impeding its flight (other than feather clipping) or the fitting of any appliance which has the object or effect of limiting vision to a bird by a method involving the penetration or other mutilation of the nasal septum.

When not carried out by a veterinary surgeon beak-trimming must be carried out in accordance with the Veterinary Surgery (Exemptions) Order 1962 (S.I. 1962 No. 2557) i.e.: removal from a bird by means of a suitable instrument of :-

- (i) not more than a one-third part of both its upper and lower beaks, measured from the tip towards the entrance of the nostrils, if carried out as a single operation; or
 - (ii) not more than a one-third part of its upper beak only, measured in the same way; and the arrest of any subsequent haemorrhage from the beak by cauterisation.
- Nothing in the foregoing provisions shall authorise the performance of any minor treatment, test or operation by a person under the age of 18.

- 70 Where beak trimming is carried out it should, wherever possible, be restricted to beak tipping; that is, the blunting of the beak to remove the sharp point which can be the cause of the most severe damage to other birds.
- 71 Beak trimming should be carried out to the highest possible standards by trained operators. Operators should continually be re-evaluated for efficiency of their beak trimming skills.
- 72 If behavioural problems occur, which manifest themselves in injurious feather pecking, they should be tackled immediately by appropriate changes in the system of management; for example, by reduction of the lighting intensity. Research also indicates that availability of good quality litter, particularly shavings, encourages foraging and dustbathing and hence reduces the feather-pecking tendency.

Schedule 1, paragraph 28 of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2000 (S.I. 2000 No. 1870) states that:

- Subject to sub-paragraph (2) (below), natural or artificial breeding or breeding procedures which cause, or are likely to cause, suffering or injury to any of the animals concerned shall not be practised.

- Sub-paragraph (1) (above) shall not preclude the use of natural or artificial breeding procedures that are likely to cause minimal or momentary suffering or injury or that might necessitate interventions which would not cause lasting injury.

Schedule 1, paragraph 29 states that:

- No animals shall be kept for farming purposes unless it can reasonably be expected, on the basis of their genotype or phenotype, that they can be kept without detrimental effect on their health or welfare.

- 73 When considering the establishment or replacement of a flock, the choice of hybrid should be made with the aim of reducing the risk of welfare and health problems.



The Welfare of Animals (Transport) Order 1997 (S.I. 1997 No. 1480) covers the transport of animals, including birds. Among other requirements:

Article 4 states that: no person shall transport any animal in a way which causes or is likely to cause injury or unnecessary suffering to that animal.

Article 6 states that no person shall transport any animal unless: -

- (a) it is fit for its intended journey, and
- (b) suitable provision has been made for its care during the journey and on arrival at the place of destination.

For these purposes an animal shall not be considered fit for its intended journey if it is ill, injured, infirm or fatigued, unless it is only slightly injured, ill, infirm or fatigued and the intended journey is not likely to cause it unnecessary suffering.

Article 10(1) requires that any person transporting animals shall ensure that the animals are transported without delay to their place of destination.

Article 10(2) requires that in the case of animals transported in a receptacle, any person in charge of the animals shall ensure that they are not caused injury or unnecessary suffering while they are in the receptacle either waiting to be loaded on to the means of transport or after they have been unloaded.

Schedule 3 (Part I) requires that means of transport and receptacles shall be constructed, maintained, operated and positioned to provide adequate ventilation and air space. Receptacles in which animals are carried shall be constructed and maintained so that they allow for appropriate inspection and care of the animals. Receptacles in which animals are carried shall be of such a size as to protect the animals from injury and unnecessary suffering during transport. Receptacles in which birds are transported shall be constructed and maintained so that they prevent any protrusion of the heads, legs or wings from them.


74 Birds should not be deprived of feed or water before transport; however, feed, but not water, may be withheld for up to 12 hours prior to slaughter. This period of 12 hours must be an inclusive period to include the catching, loading, transport, lairaging and unloading time prior to slaughter.

75 Every effort should be made to co-ordinate collection times with production requirements at the slaughterhouse, in order to limit the time birds are held in containers before and after transport.

76 Before de-populating houses, any hindrance from fixtures and fittings, especially sharp edges and protrusions, must be removed. Care must be taken in catching birds in order to avoid panic and subsequent injury to and smothering of the birds, for example by reducing the intensity of the light or using a blue light.

77 Particular care should be taken when moving birds within a house to ensure that no bird is injured by the equipment or handling process. The proper handling of birds requires skill, and it should be undertaken only by competent persons who have been appropriately trained. It should be carried out quietly and confidently, exercising care to avoid unnecessary struggling which could bruise or otherwise injure the birds. For catching birds in cages, they must be removed from the cage singly and to avoid injury or suffering and must be held by BOTH legs. The breast should be supported during removal from the cage. Loose-housed birds must be caught and held by BOTH legs to avoid injury or suffering.

78 In all systems, birds should only be carried by both legs and care taken to avoid hitting solid objects particularly if wings are flapping. They should not be carried by their wings, heads or necks. The number of birds carried will depend upon the size of the bird and the ability of the carrier but a maximum of 3 per hand must not be exceeded. Distances birds are carried should be minimised, for example by bringing transport containers as close as possible to the birds.

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- 79 Transport containers with large openings should be used to avoid damage to the birds; the design, size and state of repair of any container used to carry birds should allow them to be put in, conveyed and taken out without injury.
 - 80 During the time birds are held in the containers they should be protected from bad weather and excessively hot or cold conditions. They should not be allowed to become stressed (as indicated by prolonged panting) by being left in containers exposed to strong direct sunlight. Adequate ventilation for the birds is essential at all times.
 - 81 Care should also be taken when crates are loaded on to vehicles, and in their transportation and unloading, to avoid physically shocking the birds.
 - 82 Birds that cannot be transported because they are unfit to travel due to being ill, injured, infirm or fatigued should be given prompt veterinary treatment or humanely despatched on farm without delay.

references

For labelling purposes only, Commission Regulation (EEC) No 1274/91 (OJ No L 121 of 16.5.91) as amended, requires that poultry enterprises must comply with the following minimum criteria in order to mark their small egg packs with the terms shown:

(a) "Free range eggs" must be produced in poultry establishments which satisfy at least the conditions specified in Article 4 of Directive 1999/74/EC with effect from the dates referred to in that Article and in which:

- hens have continuous daytime access to open-air runs, except in cases of temporary restrictions imposed by veterinary authorities;
- the open-air runs to which hens have access is mainly covered with vegetation and not used for other purposes except for orchards, woodland and livestock grazing if the latter is authorised by the competent authorities;
- the open-air runs must at least satisfy the conditions specified in Article 4 (1) (3) (b) (ii) of Directive 1999/74/EC whereby the maximum stocking density is not greater than 2,500 hens per hectare of ground available to the hens or one hen per 4m² at all times and the runs are not extending beyond a radius of 150m from the nearest pophole of the building; an extension of up to 350m from the nearest pophole is permissible provided that a sufficient number of shelters and drinking troughs within the meaning of that provision are evenly distributed throughout the whole open-air run with at least four shelters per hectare

(b) "Barn eggs" must be produced in poultry establishments which satisfy at least the conditions specified in Article 4 of Directive 1999/74/EC with effect from the dates referred to in that Article.

(c) "Eggs from caged hens " must be produced in poultry establishments which satisfy at least:

- the conditions specified in Directive 88/166/EEC until 31.12.2002;
- the conditions specified in Article 5 of Directive 1999/74/EC as from 1.1.2003 until 31.12.2011, or:
- the conditions specified in Article 6 of Directive 1999/74/EC as from 1.1.2002.

useful publications

Publications available from DEFRA

PB No.	Title
0621	Farm Fires: Advice on Farm Animal Welfare
1147	Emergencies on Livestock Farms
1315	Heat Stress in Poultry: solving the problem
1739	Poultry Litter Management
2594	Explanatory Guide to the Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or Killing) Regulations 1995
2630	Code of practice for the Prevention of Rodent Infestations in Poultry Flocks
3476	Welfare of Poultry at Slaughter: A Pocket Guide
3724	Guide to Alleviation of Thermal Stress in Poultry in Lairage
6490	The Welfare of Hens in Free Range Systems
1435	A Guide to the Poultry Breeding Flocks and Hatcheries Order 1993

Copies of the above publications can be obtained, free of charge, from: -

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further information

If you would like any further information or advice relating to this code please contact DEFRA's Animal Welfare Division on 020 7904 6512

Other useful information can be found in:

“Joint Industry Welfare Guide to the Handling of End of Lay Hens and Breeders”.

The Humane Slaughter Association's Booklet: “The Practical Slaughter of Poultry – A Guide for the Small Producer” ISBN number 1 871561 167.

Available from
www.defra.gov.uk/foodrin/poultry:
Explanatory leaflet on the EC egg marketing standards regulations
(Explanatory Leaflet EMR 1)
Explanatory leaflet on the production methods for eggs marketed under the special marketing terms
(Explanatory Leaflet EMR 14)

Available from
www.defra.gov.uk/foodrin/poultry or
www.europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/lif/index.html:
Consolidated version of Commission Regulation (EEC) No. 1274/91
(OJ No L 121 of 16.5.1991) as amended.





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