

RSPCA APPROVED FARMING SCHEME STANDARDS

# MEAT CHICKENS

APRIL 2019



*RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme Standards - Meat Chickens*  
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# OVERVIEW

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## Introduction

The RSPCA established the Approved Farming Scheme as part of its efforts to continuously improve the lives of Australia's farmed animals. The RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme is a not-for-profit program that works by:

- establishing animal welfare standards that go beyond regulatory requirements
- enabling differentiation and marketing of products from RSPCA Approved farms
- offering consumers a higher animal welfare alternative.

The *RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme Standards - Meat Chickens* (from here on referred to as “the Standards”) outline production practices and animal welfare requirements that aim to meet the animal's behavioural and physiological needs and are designed to assist the industry to continually improve and demonstrate good animal welfare outcomes.

These Standards take into consideration RSPCA Australia policy, available scientific research, current legislation applied in Australia, codes of practice, government standards and guidelines for animal welfare, veterinary, technical and producer advice, as well as current industry good practice.

## Principles underpinning the RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme Standards

The Standards are underpinned by the principles of the ‘Five Freedoms’:

- 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, 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 treatment which avoid mental suffering.

In addition, the Scheme aims to provide enhanced animal welfare by presenting the animal with opportunities to experience positive, rather than neutral or negative welfare states. Covering both behavioural and physiological needs, these principles provide a comprehensive framework for the assessment of chicken welfare.

The Scheme requires that those responsible for the care of chickens provide:

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

## Eligibility

These Standards apply to meat chickens kept for meat production in eligible systems in Australia. Systems eligible under the RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme must meet the specifications of the Standards.

Eligible housing systems under the Scheme include:

- *indoor systems* where chickens are housed within a shed (with or without access to a veranda) which meets the specifications of these Standards
- *indoor systems* where chickens are housed within a shed (with or without access to a veranda) which meets the specifications of these Standards and have, by choice, access to an outdoor area which does not meet the outdoor specifications of these Standards

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- *outdoor systems* where chickens are housed within a shed (with or without access to a veranda) and have, by choice, access to an outdoor area, with both shed and outdoor area meeting the specifications of these Standards.

Products that are eligible for approval under the RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme must be derived from meat chickens reared, housed, transported and slaughtered in accordance with these Standards.

Eligible systems may operate in parallel with non-eligible systems; however, appropriate separation and traceability arrangements must be in place to ensure that chickens and chicken products associated with the Scheme are clearly identified.

Licensees are responsible for ensuring that the farming system, in addition to meeting the Standards, also meets the labelling (production descriptor) requirements of the industry and/or retailer as well as all relevant legislative labelling requirements.

RSPCA Australia has the discretion to determine the suitability or eligibility of the system as applicable within the context of the Scheme.

### Application

The documentation that supports the RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme consists of:

- *Operations Manual* - which details the operation of the Scheme for both Approved producers and Licensees, including the application process and the Assessment procedures
- *Standards and glossary* (specific to each species) - which provide the requirements for the rearing, handling, housing, transport and/or slaughter of the species
- *Traceability policy* - which outlines chain of custody requirements for the Scheme
- *Information notes* (specific to each species) - which provide information about a range of aspects relating to species-specific standards and to the production process generally.

### Requirements of the RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme

It is a requirement of participants in the Scheme that:

1. The *RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme Standards – Meat chickens* are complied with.
2. The requirements in the relevant state or territory legislation applicable to the farming enterprise are complied with, including but not limited to animal welfare, animal health, water and land use, environmental impact management and monitoring, effluent management, biosecurity, transportation, processing, food safety and product labelling.

RSPCA Australia has the discretion to request proof of compliance with regulatory requirements through the provision of documentation from the relevant local council, state/territory government, quality assurance program or other appropriate body.

3. The following documents are to be completed and reviewed on an annual basis and made available to RSPCA Australia at any time:
  - *Animal Care Statement* – specifying general management and standard operating procedures
  - *Veterinary Health Plan* – specifying animal health management procedures.

Existing quality assurance manuals for other programs or accreditation schemes and/or existing standard operating procedures, and records to support production activities may be utilised to meet the requirements of these Standards, provided the specific provisions in these Standards are demonstrated. Equivalence is determined by RSPCA Australia.

4. Each enterprise nominate a dedicated person (or persons) who has:
  - responsibility for the operation of the enterprise
  - responsibility for overseeing the management and application of the requirements of the scheme.

The owner of the birds raised under the RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme has the final responsibility for ensuring the welfare of the birds and on-going compliance with these Standards.

## GLOSSARY

**NOTE:** The glossary defines words/phrases highlighted in bold within the Standards and which form part of the requirement(s) of the relevant standard.

<b>abattoir</b>	A facility where animals are slaughtered for the purpose of food for human consumption.
<b>ammonia readings</b>	Measurements of ammonia concentration at bird head height using an ammonia meter or ammonia test paper at locations representative of litter condition in the shed.
<b>antimicrobial</b>	An agent that kills or stops the growth of microorganisms such as bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites. Antimicrobials may be used therapeutically for the treatment of a diagnosed disease or they may be used to prevent the occurrence or spread of disease. Ionophores and non-ionophore coccidiostats are a subcategory of antimicrobials. They are not used in human medicine but are used in meat chickens to kill or inhibit protozoal infections. For the purpose of these Standards, the term ‘antimicrobial’ excludes anthelmintics, antiseptics, disinfectants, essential oils, feed enzymes, prebiotics, probiotics, and organic acids.
<b>barrier</b>	Partition within the shed designed to prevent bird movement between or across the sections of the shed separated by the partition.
<b>batch</b>	A group of birds of the same or similar age raised together within the same usable area of a shed until pick-up. Where two or more groups of birds are housed within the same shed, each group of birds must have equipment (drinkers, feeders, perches, enrichment) that operates independently of the other batch(es) for each group to be considered a batch. A batch, in the context of slaughter, refers to a group of birds slaughtered together.
<b>brood area</b>	Area in the shed in which chicks are placed and contained for at least the first 7 days and no longer than 14 days (unless the brood area comprises the entire usable area within a shed) and in which an appropriate brooding environment and temperature is provided for the chicks.
<b>brooder barrier</b>	Temporary partitions within the shed which are used to contain chicks within a certain area (the brood area), with the purpose of achieving an appropriate brooding environment and temperatures for the chicks.
<b>brood-and-move system</b>	A housing system whereby day-old chicks are placed and reared in one shed and then transferred at an older age to another shed for grow-out.
<b>cold stress</b>	A condition in which a bird is unable to maintain core body temperature within the normal range during periods of cold ambient temperature resulting in core body temperature falling below the normal range. Signs of cold stress include huddling, shivering, feather fluffing, pale comb, lethargy and collapse.
<b>competent</b>	Having the necessary knowledge, experience, skill and ability to undertake a task successfully.
<b>corneal reflex</b>	Blinking in response to touching the bird’s eye.
<b>electrical stunning parameters</b>	Factors that affect the outcome of an electrical stun including voltage (V), total current (mA), frequency (Hz), average current per bird (mA), stun duration (secs) at x birds/min, and number of birds in the waterbath.
<b>entrapment/entrapped</b>	A situation in which a bird’s body or part of its body is trapped, and the bird is unable to freely move.

<b>environmental enrichment</b>	Improvement of the environment of the birds, which increases their behavioural opportunities (e.g. pecking and ground-scratching) and the opportunity to experience positive affective states. For birds to maintain interest in environmental enrichment, the materials and/or objects must be manipulable, kept clean, and changed as necessary. Environmental enrichment may include, but is not limited to, organic and non-organic manipulable materials such as pecking blocks, balls, and other moveable objects, food items such as broccoli and cabbage, and bales of straw.
<b>euthanasia/ euthanased</b>	Humanely ending the life of an animal when it is in the interest of the animal's welfare and using a technique that avoids further pain, suffering or distress.
<b>extreme weather</b>	Weather event - including heavy and/or prolonged rain, hail, snow, wind, or extremely high or low temperatures - that may affect the welfare of the exposed bird.
<b>farm</b>	The site at which birds are raised.
<b>fit for the intended journey</b>	A bird that satisfies all the criteria for catching, loading and transport: strong enough to undertake the journey, can walk normally and bear weight on both legs, is not emaciated or visibly dehydrated, is not blind in both eyes, is not in a condition that could cause it increased pain or distress during transport, and is not suffering from visible distress or injury.
<b>flight zone</b>	The area around an animal that if encroached upon by a potential threat, will trigger escape behaviour. This is the distance a bird will let a person approach before moving away.
<b>foot pad lesion score</b>	An assessment of foot pad lesions based on the <a href="#">AssureWel</a> scoring system (or equivalent with such equivalence determined by RSPCA Australia): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 0 = none (no lesion/s or very small superficial lesions (1-2mm), slight discolouration in a limited area, mild hyperkeratosis (thickening of the skin))</li> <li>• 1 = mild (area affected does not extend over the entire plantar pad, substantial discolouration, dark papillae, superficial lesion, and no ulceration)</li> <li>• 2 = severe (greater surface of plantar pad usually affected, sometimes with lesions on toes. Deeper lesion/s with ulceration, sometimes haemorrhage, scabs of significant size, severely swollen foot pad)</li> </ul>
<b>gait score</b>	An assessment of walking ability and lameness based on the Dawkins gait-scoring system (or equivalent with such equivalence determined by RSPCA Australia): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 0 = normal (bird walks at least 10 steps with ease, has regular and even strides and is well-balanced)</li> <li>• 1 = abnormal (bird walks abnormally for at least 10 steps with an irregular and uneven stride and is unbalanced)</li> <li>• 2 = unacceptable (bird is reluctant to move and is unable to walk at least 10 steps before sitting down, or not able to walk)</li> </ul>
<b>growth promotant</b>	Any agent, typically an antimicrobial, which is administered to increase an animal's growth and production efficiency. This may be achieved through an improved efficiency of feed conversion, weight gain, and/or growth rate.
<b>heat stress</b>	A condition in which a bird is unable to maintain core body temperature within the normal range during periods of hot ambient temperature resulting in core body temperature exceeding the normal range. Signs of heat stress include loss of appetite, increased respiration rate, excessive drinking, open mouth breathing, lethargy, and reluctance to move.



<b>hock burn score</b>	An assessment of hock burn based on the <u>AssureWel</u> scoring system (or equivalent with such equivalence determined by RSPCA Australia): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 0 = none (no lesion/s or very small and superficial (&lt;1mm), slight discolouration in a limited area, mild hyperkeratosis)</li> <li>• 1 = mild (area affected does not extend over hock, substantial discolouration, dark papillae, superficial lesion, no ulceration)</li> <li>• 2 = severe (greater surface of hock affected. Deeper lesion/s with ulceration, sometimes haemorrhage, scabs of significant size, severely swollen area)</li> </ul>
<b>lairage</b>	Designated area at the abattoir used for the purpose of holding birds just prior to slaughter.
<b>lameness</b>	Impaired movement or abnormal gait usually caused by bone, foot, tendon, joint, or muscle issues and/or pain. Signs of lameness include birds that are reluctant to walk or stand up or put weight on their legs, birds that have difficulty walking, and birds with an abnormal gait.
<b>Licensee</b>	An entity that has entered into a Trademark Licence Agreement with RSPCA Australia and is permitted to use the RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme logo on product sourced from RSPCA Approved farms.
<b>light intensity</b>	The illuminance expressed in lux emitted by a light source providing the full electromagnetic spectrum visible to humans.
<b>major reportable event</b>	A circumstance that has a significant adverse impact on the welfare of the birds. A major reportable event includes sustained at or above-trigger mortality rate(s) or unusual/unexpected incidences of high mortality; injury or disease including those resulting from endemic and/or exotic disease outbreaks; natural events; predator incursions; infrastructure or equipment failure; feed supply and/or formulation issues; transportation (including chick transport mortalities); bird handling; or other circumstance deemed reportable by company/producer standard operating procedures. In the case of a suspected exotic animal disease, the relevant state/territory government department must also be notified.
<b>nictitating membrane reflex</b>	The third eyelid slides across horizontally in response to touching the bird's eye.
<b>non-mechanically ventilated systems</b>	Housing systems that rely on natural airflow to manage air exchange, air quality and bird comfort within the shed. Stirring fans may be used to assist with air movement within the shed.
<b>other mechanically ventilated systems</b>	Housing systems, other than tunnel ventilated or extractive systems, that rely on the use of air inlets, stirring fans, water-based cooling (not including evaporative cooling), with or without extraction fans to manage air exchange, air quality and bird comfort within the shed.
<b>outdoor area</b>	An outside space immediately adjacent to the shed. Netting may be used to cover or enclose the outdoor area.
<b>overhead cover</b>	Artificial or natural shade and shelter (not including the shed) that is provided in an outdoor area and which offers birds protection from overhead predators and the sun, and is safe and easily accessible for birds. Overhead cover is measured as the area directly underneath the artificial structure or natural feature. Shade cast by the shed or eaves is not included as satisfying the requirement for overhead cover.
<b>perches</b>	Structures above the floor on which birds, depending on age, step up or jump on to sit, stand or roost. Typically perches are rigid horizontal structures on which birds balance, although perches may be provided in the form of platforms to facilitate use.

<b>pick-up</b>	Removal of live birds from the shed. This includes partial or full depopulation for slaughter, or transfer of birds in a brood-and-move system.
<b>placement</b>	The action of putting a group of chicks (or birds of an older age if part of a brood-and-move system) which arrive at the farm together into a shed for brooding (or grow-out if part of a brood-and-move system). On day of placement, chicks arriving from the hatchery are considered to be 1 day old.
<b>red bird</b>	A bird carcass which is red in colour at exit of scalding and has not had the neck cut.
<b>shed</b>	A housing structure consisting of at least four walls and a roof that provides all birds with protection from cold, heat, wind, and rain.
<b>signs of unconsciousness</b>	Indicators used at the abattoir after stunning which demonstrate that a bird is no longer aware of its surroundings and able to feel pain. Signs of unconsciousness may include an absence of spontaneous blinking, lack of corneal reflexes, no rhythmic breathing, no vocalising, no wing-flapping, no swallowing, no head-shaking, no reaction to comb pinch, and no muscle tone.
<b>site</b>	The location at which one or more facilities for housing or slaughtering birds is situated.
<b>split placement</b>	The placing of more than one group of chicks (usually two) into the same shed.
<b>stocking density</b>	Space allowance expressed in kg/m <sup>2</sup> calculated on the basis of bird live weight and the usable area available to the number of birds in the shed.
<b>stun/stunned/ stunning</b>	A procedure (or the act of carrying out a procedure) that has as its primary purpose to render the bird unconscious and insensible to pain. A stun is effective where, following the stunning procedure, the bird is unconscious and will not regain consciousness prior to cutting (bleed out) and prior to entering the scalding tank.
<b>transporter</b>	The company responsible for a livestock transport vehicle and its driver.
<b>trigger level</b>	A predetermined threshold which sets in motion a course of action to investigate and address the cause of a breach of that threshold. For flock mortality, the trigger level is $\geq 1\%$ in 24 hours. For feed consumption and water consumption, the trigger level is any decline of 5% per day for two consecutive days. For stunning, the trigger level is $\leq 99\%$ effectively stunned for electrical stunning systems and gas stunning systems.
<b>tunnel ventilated or extractive systems</b>	Housing systems that rely on the use of air inlets, evaporative cooling and extraction fans capable of at least 1 air exchange per minute to manage air exchange, air quality and bird comfort within the shed. Stirring fans may be used to assist with air movement within the shed.
<b>usable area</b>	Littered indoor floor area.
<b>veranda</b>	A roofed area joined to the shed in which birds can forage and dust bathe. The veranda protects birds from weather extremes while still providing natural light and natural ventilation through a combination of solid and permeable (for example, wire netting) walls.
<b>veterinary advice</b>	Recommendation(s) provided by a registered veterinarian with expertise in poultry health.

# THE STANDARDS

**NOTE:** Words/phrases highlighted in bold within a standard form part of the requirement(s) of the relevant standard and are defined in the glossary.

## 1 STAFF TRAINING AND ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES

### Training and competency (on-farm, during catching, during transport, at the abattoir)

- 1.01 Persons responsible for the management and/or handling of birds must be appropriately trained and **competent** in their required tasks, including:
- catching, handling, loading, transport and unloading of birds
  - observation of birds and identification of normal and abnormal bird behaviour
  - maintaining the housing environment
  - management, husbandry and care
  - recognising signs of ill-health
  - appropriate care or treatment of injury, disease, or distress
  - euthanasia** of birds (including observing all signs of death)
  - slaughter of birds (including observing **signs of unconsciousness**)
  - accurate record keeping.
- 1.02 Staff induction/training programs and standard operating procedures must include the requirements of these Standards.
- 1.03 Records of staff training and **competency** assessments must be maintained and be provided to RSPCA Australia upon request.
- 1.04 Staff must be available to respond promptly to problems that arise.
- 1.05 Instances of animal neglect, cruelty or other breaches of animal welfare legislation must be promptly reported to the relevant regulatory authority and RSPCA Australia.

### Internal assessment

- 1.06 All **sites** must:
- have internal assessment systems in place to facilitate on-going compliance with these Standards
  - maintain records of completed internal assessments
  - provide records of completed internal assessments to RSPCA Australia upon request.

### Animal Care Statement

- 1.07 An Animal Care Statement must be drawn up and complied with.
- 1.08 The Animal Care Statement must specify general management and standard operating procedures as relevant, including but not limited to:
- supply and **placement** of chicks
  - feed and water, including a contingency plan for problems with supply
  - environment and housing (including **environmental enrichment**)
  - maintaining appropriate internal **shed** temperatures
  - lighting program, including dark periods
  - maintaining **stocking density** so as not to exceed the maximum **stocking density** at any point in time

- g) maximum chick **placement** number for each **shed**
- h) husbandry and animal management procedures
- i) internal assessment systems, including regularity of assessments
- j) litter treatment, including composting processes where litter is treated and/or composted for re-use
- k) bird handling
- l) bird observation
- m) contingency plans and procedures in the event of power failure, **extreme weather** conditions, or other **major reportable events**, including changes to lighting or feed provision during hot weather
- n) procedures for reporting breaches of animal welfare legislation
- o) depopulation
- p) transport (including emergency arrangements and measures to minimise the risk of **heat stress** and **cold stress**)
- q) slaughter.

1.09 The Animal Care Statement must be reviewed on an annual basis.

1.10 The current Animal Care Statement must be provided to RSPCA Australia upon request.

### **Records**

1.11 A record of the birds supplied to the **Licensee** (in live weight kg and in bird numbers) must be maintained for each **batch**.

1.12 All records required to be kept and maintained must be:

- a) available on **site** at the time of an assessment (applicable to facility and live bird records only)
- b) provided to RSPCA Australia upon request
- c) retained for at least 1 year (applicable to bird records only).

## 2 HEALTH

### Veterinary Health Plan

- 2.01 A Veterinary Health Plan must be drawn up and complied with.
- 2.02 The Veterinary Health Plan must specify bird health management and monitoring procedures including but not limited to:
- a) biosecurity (including quarantine, cleaning and sanitation procedures)
  - b) routine health monitoring procedures (including identification and treatment of weak, ill or injured birds)
  - c) vaccination schedule and procedures (including vaccinations received at the hatchery)
  - d) use of veterinary medicines (including **antimicrobials**)
  - e) any other treatments or additives including probiotics
  - f) **euthanasia** (including emergency mass **euthanasia**)
  - g) physical injury (including **lameness** and hock/foot pad lesions and **trigger level**)
  - h) identification and treatment of disease
  - i) internal and external parasites
  - j) mortalities and **trigger level**
  - k) pest animal control procedures.
- 2.03 The Veterinary Health Plan must be reviewed on an annual basis and authorised by the designated veterinarian.
- 2.04 The current Veterinary Health Plan must be provided to RSPCA Australia upon request.

### Health monitoring

- 2.05 Quarantine and biosecurity procedures must be in place to minimise the risk of introducing and spreading disease among birds.
- 2.06 Birds that have been identified as injured must be treated or **euthanased** promptly.
- 2.07 Where birds have been identified as diseased and/or where the cause of ill health or disease and/or the appropriate treatment is unable to be identified:
- a) **veterinary advice** must be sought promptly
  - b) **veterinary advice** must be followed accordingly.
- 2.08 Dead birds must be removed from the **shed** and disposed of in a safe and hygienic manner as soon as practical.
- 2.09 Any **major reportable event** must be reported to RSPCA Australia within 24 hours of observation.

### Vaccination

- 2.10 The Veterinary Health Plan must incorporate a vaccination program to protect birds from diseases for which an effective vaccine is available and which may represent a risk to the birds at a particular **site** as determined by **veterinary advice**.

## Medicines

- 2.11 **Antimicrobials** must only be administered under **veterinary advice**.
- 2.12 Any **antimicrobial** classified by the Australian Strategic and Technical Advisory Group on Antimicrobial Resistance as being of 'high' or 'medium' importance for human medicine is not permitted for use in meat chickens, unless **veterinary advice** indicates that the only effective treatment option is an **antimicrobial** from these categories.
- 2.13 Where **antimicrobials** are used, an **Antimicrobial Stewardship Plan** must:
- be drawn up and complied with
  - up to 30 June 2021, specify current type and nature (therapeutic or preventative) of **antimicrobial** use
  - from 1 July 2021, specify current type, quantity and nature (therapeutic or preventative) of **antimicrobial** use in a format to be agreed with RSPCA Australia
  - consider available evidence of **antimicrobial** resistance in the Australian meat chicken flock
  - specify a year-on-year strategy which considers the reduction, refinement and/or replacement of preventative **antimicrobial** use
  - specify husbandry, management strategies and any alternative preventative treatments, where used, to manage disease risk during any planned reduction, refinement and/or replacement of **antimicrobials**
  - be reviewed on an annual basis in order to inform the following year's strategy
  - be authorised by the designated veterinarian
  - be provided to RSPCA Australia as part of the Veterinary Health Plan.

## Additives

- 2.14 The use of **growth promotants** is not permitted.

## Records

- 2.15 Health records for each **batch** must contain details of the following:
- vaccinations
  - treatments or medicines administered, including **antimicrobials** for both preventative and therapeutic use
  - diseases
  - injuries
  - dates of any veterinarian visits, notes of any problems identified and action taken
  - incidences of any **trigger level** reached, notes of problems identified and action taken.
- 2.16 Bird mortality must be recorded daily, from **placement** to final **pick-up**, with details of the following:
- total mortalities
  - mortalities separated into deaths and birds **euthanased**
  - the main reasons for **euthanasia**
  - if any birds are **euthanased** due to injury, the type of injury must be recorded.

### 3 SOURCING, PLACEMENT AND REARING OF CHICKS

#### Pre-placement activities

- 3.01 The **shed** must be appropriately prepared prior to the arrival of the chicks, including:
- cleaning and sanitation
  - flushing of water lines
  - checking water and feed availability and quality
  - provision of litter
  - demarcation of the **brood area** (**brooder barriers** and paper) where applicable
  - appropriate temperature, air quality and ventilation.
- 3.02 A record specifying completion of pre-placement **shed** preparation must be kept.

#### Chick placement

- 3.03 All chicks must be placed within the **shed** as soon as possible after arrival of the transport vehicle.
- 3.04 When emptying chicks from transport trays onto the **shed** floor:
- the tray must be tipped carefully
  - the tray must be lowered close to the **shed** floor
  - chicks must not be tipped from a height >30cm.
- 3.05 Where **split placement** of chicks occurs, all chicks must be placed within 48 hours of **placement** of the first chick unless, in the event of an unforeseen circumstance where an additional 24 hours to complete the **placement** is permitted.
- 3.06 Where the duration of **placement** exceeds 48 hours, RSPCA Australia must be notified.
- 3.07 Where **split placement** of chicks occurs:
- lighting period and **light intensity** adjustment between light and dark periods must be managed to accommodate the oldest chicks
  - light intensity** must be managed to accommodate the youngest chicks
  - ammonia levels must be managed to accommodate the youngest chicks
  - chicks must have access to litter by the time the oldest chicks are 7 days of age
  - perches** must be provided by the time the oldest chicks are 7 days of age
  - environmental enrichment** must be provided by the time the oldest chicks are 7 days of age.
- 3.08 Chicks from each **placement** must be observed at least four times in the first 24 hours following **placement** to check that their appearance, vocalisations and behaviour are normal, including feeding and drinking.

#### Rearing of chicks

- 3.09 Fresh litter must be used in the **brood area**.
- 3.10 For chicks  $\leq 7$  days of age, **shed** conditions in the **brood area** must be managed so so ammonia levels do not exceed 10ppm at chick head height.
- 3.11 If re-used litter is placed in other areas of the **shed** while chicks are confined to the **brood area**, **ammonia readings** must be taken in the **brood area**:

- a) immediately prior to the **placement** of chicks
  - b) each morning and
  - c) recorded.
- 3.12 In every 24-hour period, chicks  $\leq 7$  days old must be provided with a minimum period of continuous darkness of at least 1 hour.
- 3.13 Chicks  $\leq 7$  days old must be provided with a minimum **light intensity** of 20 lux (measured at bird head height) across the full floor area of the **brood area**.
- 3.14 Where **brooder barriers** are used, they must be:
- a) constructed and maintained to avoid entrapment or escaping
  - b) removed by the time birds (or oldest birds in the case of split placement) are 14 days of age.

### Records

- 3.15 The following must be recorded for each **placement** of chicks:
- a) name of the hatchery from which the chicks are sourced
  - b) date and time chicks depart the hatchery
  - c) date and time chicks are placed in each **shed**
  - d) number of chicks placed in each **shed** (or in each **batch** if two or more batches are placed in the same **shed**)
  - e) number of chick transport mortalities
  - f) genetic strain.



## 4 FEED AND WATER

- 4.01 Birds must have continuous access to feed and water from when they are first placed in the **shed**, unless:
- being treated under **veterinary advice**
  - during catching or preparation for catching
  - when necessary during litter management activities.
- 4.02 Feeding and drinking equipment must be operating effectively to ensure the birds' daily requirements for feed and water are met.
- 4.03 Feeding and watering equipment design, position and height must allow all birds to access feed and water with minimal effort and using normal posture.
- 4.04 Feed and water distribution across the **shed** must ensure that a uniform supply is available to all birds.

### Feed

- 4.05 Feed must be available in sufficient quantity and quality to meet the birds' requirements.

### Water

- 4.06 Water must be clean and suitable for drinking.
- 4.07 Water must be available in sufficient quantity to meet the birds' requirements.
- 4.08 Drinking systems must be effectively managed to:
- ensure appropriate water pressure
  - avoid crowding at drinker lines
  - minimise dripping of water onto the litter.

## 5 ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING

### Shed facilities

- 5.01 All birds must have continuous access to a **shed**.
- 5.02 Floors, surfaces, fittings, equipment and other facilities in and around the **shed** must be designed, constructed, operated and maintained to:
- a) minimise the risk of smothering, injury or disease
  - b) be free from rough edges and sharp protrusions
  - c) facilitate cleaning.
- 5.03 Where infrastructure or objects could cause or are observed to cause injury to birds, prompt action must be taken to address the situation.
- 5.04 Where **barriers** are used, they must not prevent access to feed, water, **environmental enrichment**, **perches** and any other resources required for the birds within that part of the **shed**.
- 5.05 Floors must be maintained to provide a level surface that ensures all feeders and drinkers are accessible to birds.
- 5.06 Equipment for ventilation, heating or cooling must be designed, constructed, operated and maintained to:
- a) manage air exchange, air quality and bird comfort within the **shed**
  - b) minimise the risk of **heat stress** or **cold stress**.
- 5.07 Where present, automatic equipment for ventilation, heating or cooling must:
- a) be operational
  - b) be inspected daily when in use
  - c) be maintained as required.
- 5.08 Where present, automatic equipment for ventilation must:
- a) be fitted with automatic alarms that warn immediately of equipment failure
  - b) have a back-up power supply that is tested weekly
  - c) have date of alarm checks, any problems identified and action taken recorded
  - d) have staff available to respond to alarms promptly.
- 5.09 A maintenance program must be in place to ensure that:
- a) facility defects are promptly identified
  - b) facility defects are promptly rectified.
- 5.10 Procedures must be in place to manage **shed** conditions and provide feed and water to birds in the event of fire, flood, drought, feed supply and/or formulation issues, equipment failure or other breakdown that may impact on bird welfare.
- 5.11 Facilities (including feed and litter storage areas) must be maintained to limit the entry of pathogens, pests, and animals that could cause distress or transmit diseases to birds.
- 5.12 Pest animal control programs must:
- a) use the most humane effective techniques that are applicable to the situation
  - b) achieve the program aims
  - c) reduce the risk of impact on non-target species.

### Temperature

- 5.13 Minimum and maximum **shed** temperatures at bird head height must be recorded daily.
- 5.14 Immediate action must be taken to rectify **shed** temperatures which may cause **heat stress** or **cold stress** to the birds.

### Ventilation

- 5.15 Ventilation systems must provide adequate air exchange to manage airflow, temperature, humidity, and dust.
- 5.16 Dust levels at bird head height must be managed to avoid negative impacts on bird welfare.
- 5.17 For birds >7 days of age, **shed** conditions must be managed so ammonia levels do not exceed 15ppm at bird head height.
- 5.18 **Ammonia readings** must be taken in every **shed**:
  - a) at least twice per week upon first entering the **shed** in the morning, or
  - b) at least twice per week within one hour after any litter maintenance activities have ceased.
- 5.19 Records must be kept of **ammonia readings**.

### Litter (in the shed and veranda where applicable)

- 5.20 Birds must have continuous access to litter unless, for chicks  $\leq 7$  days old in **sheds** where chick paper is in use.
- 5.21 Litter supplies must be accompanied by documentation specifying source, type and volume.
- 5.22 The floor of the **shed** must be covered in litter:
  - a) continuously from **placement**
  - b) completely and evenly
  - c) to a minimum average depth of 50mm
  - d) that allows birds to dust bathe, scratch and forage
  - e) that is actively maintained in a dry and friable condition.
- 5.23 Litter management equipment must be available on **farm**.
- 5.24 Records must be kept of any treatment of re-used litter including type of treatment that was applied.

### Lighting

- 5.25 Birds >7 days of age, in each 24-hour period, must have a minimum of:
  - a) 8 hours continuous light
  - b) 6 hours darkness, of which at least 4 hours is continuous, unless on the day of catch when <4 hours continuous darkness is permitted.
- 5.26 The minimum 6-hour dark period must:
  - a) be provided at night
  - b) occur with all lights off.

- 5.27 Continuous lighting, without a dark period, is not permitted.
- 5.28 For birds >7 days of age, **light intensity** between light and dark periods must be adjusted gradually (using dimmers or switching individual lights on/off) over at least 15 minutes.
- 5.29 Gradual adjustment of **light intensity** must not be included as part of the dark or light period.
- 5.30 For birds >7 days of age, the **light intensity** in the **shed** (at bird head height) must ensure that, during the light period:
- no area of the **shed** floor is lit at <10 lux
  - the average **light intensity** across the entire **shed** floor is  $\geq 20$  lux (unless during catching).
- 5.31 By 1 July 2021, artificial lighting must provide at least the broad spectrum visible to humans, unless during catching.
- 5.32 Flickering lights and non-functional lights must be replaced promptly.

### Perches

- 5.33 Birds  $\geq 7$  days of age must have access to **perches**.
- 5.34 **Perches** must be provided at a minimum length of 2.7 metres per 1000 birds based on **shed placement** number, unless:
- for chicks in a **brood area**, where minimum **perch** length must at least equal the total **perch** length based on **shed placement** number multiplied by the proportion of the **shed** represented by the **brood area**.
- 5.35 **Perches** must:
- be evenly distributed throughout the **shed**
  - provide a flat surface
  - support the whole of the bird's foot
  - be positioned and of a height to allow birds to perch at all ages
  - be provided in a way that they are accessible at all times, unless the **shed** is being prepared for catching or where temporary removal is required for litter maintenance
  - where they have been temporarily removed for litter maintenance, be returned immediately following completion of litter maintenance.

### Environmental enrichment

- 5.36 Birds  $\geq 7$  days of age must be provided with **environmental enrichment**.
- 5.37 At least one pecking object must be provided as **environmental enrichment** for every 1000 birds based on **shed placement** number, unless:
- for chicks in a **brood area**, where minimum number of pecking objects must at least equal the total number of pecking objects required (based on **shed placement** number) multiplied by the proportion of the **shed** represented by the **brood area**.
- 5.38 **Environmental enrichment** must:
- be provided with an even distribution throughout the **shed** to allow ease of access for all birds
  - be provided in a way that is accessible at all times, unless the **shed** is being prepared for catching or where temporary removal is required for litter maintenance
  - where it has been temporarily removed for litter maintenance, be returned immediately following completion of litter maintenance.

- 5.39 **Environmental enrichment** must be maintained, replaced or changed as necessary to ensure birds have continuous access.
- 5.40 Straw bales may be used as **environmental enrichment**, but must not be included as fulfilling minimum length requirements for **perches**.
- 5.41 Where straw bales are used, one bale is the equivalent of 5 pecking objects.

## 6 VERANDA

RSPCA Standards do not require that birds have access to a veranda, however, where the veranda is included in the calculation of usable area, the following additional standards must be met.

- 6.01 The **veranda** must be designed and constructed to provide:
- a) shade and shelter
  - b) natural light
  - c) adequate air exchange to manage airflow, temperature, humidity, and dust.
- 6.02 The floor of the **veranda** must be entirely covered in litter.
- 6.03 The roof of the **veranda** must be waterproof.
- 6.04 The design, number and positioning of openings that provide access to the **veranda** must meet the following requirements:
- a) be of a minimum height and width and free of objects or protrusions to allow birds to pass through using normal posture
  - b) be evenly distributed along the entire length of the **shed**
  - c) give birds a clear view of the **veranda** from within the **shed**
  - d) avoid birds obstructing the movement of other birds
  - e) avoid injury to birds
  - f) take into account prevailing weather conditions
- 6.05 Where one side of the **shed** provides access to the **veranda**, the openings must comprise at least 50% of the length of the **shed**.
- 6.06 Where both sides of the **shed** provide access to a **veranda**, the openings must comprise at least 30% of the length of the **shed** on both sides.
- 6.07 Any ramps for birds to access the **veranda** must:
- a) be of a minimal slope to allow birds to walk up and down the ramp with normal gait
  - b) provide a non-slip surface.
- 6.08 The **veranda** must be actively managed and maintained to:
- a) encourage birds to access all areas
  - b) control disease and parasites
  - c) avoid injury or mortality.

## 7 OUTDOOR AREA

RSPCA Standards do not require that birds have access to an outdoor area, however, where the product label indicates that birds have had access to an outdoor area, the following standards must be met.

- 7.01 Birds must be given the choice to access the **outdoor area** as soon as they are reasonably feathered and by 21 days of age at the latest, unless:
- under direct **veterinary advice** for treatment of injury or disease
  - extreme weather** requires birds to be temporarily kept indoors.
- 7.02 All birds must have access to the **outdoor area** during daylight hours for a minimum of 8 hours per 24-hour period, unless:
- under direct **veterinary advice** for treatment of injury or disease
  - extreme weather** requires birds to be temporarily kept indoors.
- 7.03 Daily **outdoor area** access records must be kept, including:
- the date and times that openings to the **outdoor area** were opened and closed
  - the dates and reasons where fewer than 8 hours access per 24-hour period was provided.
- 7.04 The design, number and positioning of openings that provide access to the **outdoor area** must meet the following requirements:
- be of a minimum height and width and free of objects or protrusions to allow birds to pass through using a normal posture
  - be evenly distributed along the entire length of the **shed**
  - give birds a clear view of the range from within the **shed**
  - avoid birds obstructing the movement of other birds
  - avoid injury to birds
  - take into account prevailing weather conditions.
- 7.05 Access to the **outdoor area** must ensure openings comprise at least 30% of the length of the **shed** on both sides, unless the available **outdoor area** is limited by the overall **farm** footprint.
- 7.06 Where, due to limitations of the overall **farm** footprint, access to the **outdoor area** is provided on only one side of the **shed**, openings must comprise at least 50% of the length of the **shed**.
- 7.07 The **outdoor area** must be designed and actively managed and maintained to:
- encourage birds to go outside
  - encourage birds to access all areas
  - provide birds with palatable vegetation
  - provide **overhead cover**
  - be well drained to avoid muddiness and the accumulation of water
  - control disease and parasites
  - avoid injury or mortality
  - minimise the risk of fire.
- 7.08 Any ramps for birds to access the **outdoor area** must:
- be of a minimal slope to allow birds to walk up and down the ramp with normal gait
  - provide a non-slip surface.
- 7.09 The total available **outdoor area** must be:
- at least 1.5 times the size of the total **shed** floor area for **sheds** where the available **outdoor area** is not limited by the overall **farm** footprint

## OUTDOOR AREA

- b) at least the size of the total **shed** floor area for **sheds** where the available **outdoor area** is limited by the overall **farm** footprint
- 7.10 Access to the **outdoor area** must be provided evenly on each side of the **shed** where access is given on both sides, unless the available **outdoor area** is limited by the overall **farm** footprint.
- 7.11 Where access to the **outdoor area** is given on both sides and, due to limitations of the overall **farm** footprint, the **outdoor areas** cannot be distributed evenly across both sides of the **shed**, the smallest **outdoor area** must comprise at least 30% of the total available **outdoor area**.
- 7.12 Up to 30 June 2020, at least 8m<sup>2</sup> of **overhead cover** per 1000 birds (based on **shed placement** number) must be provided.
- 7.13 From 1 July 2020, at least 12m<sup>2</sup> of **overhead cover** per 1000 birds (based on **shed placement** number) must be provided.
- 7.14 **Overhead cover** must be:
- a) distributed evenly across the **outdoor area**
  - b) of sufficient height for birds to stand under it using normal posture
  - c) constructed, placed and maintained to encourage bird access and use.



## 8 STOCKING DENSITY

8.01 Stocking density must not exceed, for the usable area within the shed:

- a) 34 kg per m<sup>2</sup> for tunnel ventilated or extractive systems
- b) 34 kg per m<sup>2</sup> for other mechanically ventilated systems to 31 December 2022
- c) 32kg per m<sup>2</sup> for other mechanically ventilated systems from 1 January 2023
- d) 28kg per m<sup>2</sup> for non-mechanically ventilated systems

### Records

8.02 A record of the size of the usable area must be maintained for each shed.

8.03 The following records must be maintained for each batch:

- a) number of birds (daily)
- b) age and weight of birds (weekly)
- c) final bird slaughter program, including pick-up dates

## 9 ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND MANAGEMENT

- 9.01 Movements and activities by people in the **shed** must:
- be slow and deliberate
  - minimise fear and injuries in the birds.
- 9.02 Where birds are found to be **entrapped** or have escaped:
- they must be freed if **entrapped**, or caught promptly if they have escaped
  - prompt correction must be taken to avoid **entrapment** or escaping from reoccurring
  - where correction to avoid **entrapment** or escaping requires infrastructure changes, this must be done as soon as practical
  - nature of the correction to avoid reoccurrence must be recorded.
- 9.03 Management or husbandry procedures that directly impact bird welfare and are not specified in these Standards must not be performed unless prior approval has been obtained from RSPCA Australia.

### Bird observation

- 9.04 Birds (except chicks in the first 24 hours following **placement**) must be observed at least three times in a 24-hour period to check that their appearance, vocalisations and behaviour within the **shed** are normal.
- 9.05 From 21 days of age, weekly assessments must be made on a sample of 25 birds representative of the flock per **shed**, recording for each bird:
- hock burn score**
  - foot pad lesion score.**
- 9.06 Where a **major reportable event** is identified during bird observations, including severe hock burn and/or foot pad lesions:
- correction must be undertaken promptly to rectify the problem
  - nature of the problem must be recorded
  - date the problem was identified must be recorded
  - nature of correction undertaken must be recorded
  - date correction was undertaken must be recorded
  - nature of the corrective action to avoid reoccurrence must be recorded.
- 9.07 Bird observations must be increased during periods of adverse environmental conditions (including during hot weather), disease outbreak, and any other circumstances in which bird health or welfare may be compromised.

## 10 ANIMAL HANDLING (on-farm, during catching, during transport, at the abattoir)

- 10.01 Birds must be handled in a manner that minimises pain, suffering or distress.
- 10.02 Bird handling time must be kept to a minimum.
- 10.03 Birds must be approached and handled:
- calmly and quietly
  - with an awareness of the bird's natural **flight zone**
  - in a manner that avoids injuries and/or mortalities.
- 10.04 Birds must not be:
- moved or handled roughly
  - thrown or swung
  - hit
  - dragged
  - dropped
  - kicked
  - piled on top of one another.
- 10.05 Birds must not be caught, picked up or carried by the head, neck, wing, tail, or feathers.
- 10.06 Birds must be caught, picked up and carried individually with both hands supporting the bird's body while holding the wings against the bird's body or with one hand securing the legs and the other holding the bird against the person's body, unless:
- during catching for slaughter or shackling when birds may be caught, picked up and carried by the leg
  - during catching for bird husbandry procedures when birds may be caught by one leg, and picked up and carried by both legs
  - where birds are transferred between **sheds** as part of a **brood-and-move system** when birds may be caught, picked up and carried by the body using one hand
  - for chicks, where they may be caught, picked up and carried by the body using one hand
  - prior to **euthanasia**, where the bird may be picked up by the base of both wings and supported by the breast.
- 10.07 Where birds are carried by the leg during catching for slaughter, no more than four birds may be carried in one hand.
- 10.08 Catching aids which may cause injury, entanglement, or result in birds being dragged must not be used.

## 11 EUTHANASIA (on-farm, during catching, during transport, at the abattoir)

- 11.01 Birds must be **euthanased** in a manner that avoids pain, suffering or distress.
- 11.02 Birds must be **euthanased** promptly if they meet any of the following criteria:
- are sick or injured and are not able to respond to treatment or recover or
  - are unable to reach feed or water due to a physical impediment or
  - have a **gait score** of 2.
- 11.03 The permitted methods for **euthanasia** of birds are:
- manual cervical dislocation or
  - captive bolt device.
- 11.04 Cervical dislocation must be performed:
- manually
  - without the use of objects to assist, unless for birds less than 7 days old (or of an equivalent size to a 7 day old bird), where a sharp, fixed, rigid object may be used to assist in cervical dislocation
  - holding the bird with both legs in one hand, the head in the other, unless the bird is being culled for poor leg health or the bird has apparent leg problems, in which case the base of both wings must be held in one hand instead of the legs
  - using a single quick and controlled stretching motion that dislocates the neck vertebrae from the cranium and severs the spinal cord and carotid arteries and causes immediate death at the first attempt.
- 11.05 Captive bolt devices must be designed, manufactured, maintained and operated to be:
- appropriate for the size of the bird
  - fit for purpose
  - able to achieve immediate death at the first attempt.
- 11.06 The operator of a captive bolt device must:
- appropriately restrain the bird to enable accurate positioning of the device
  - rest the captive bolt device on the top of the bird's head on the midline between the eyes where the brain is located, aim straight down, and administer the bolt directly over the skull on the top of the head.
- 11.07 Each bird must be checked to confirm it is dead immediately following the applied **euthanasia** method, evidenced by the following signs:
- for cervical dislocation:
- complete severance between the brain and the spinal cord, evident by feeling a gap in the neck vertebrae (where cervical dislocation has been performed)
- for captive bolt device:
- no **nictitating membrane reflex**
  - no rhythmic breathing
  - no neck tension
  - no vocalisation.
- 11.08 Where the **euthanasia** method has not resulted in immediate loss of consciousness and subsequent death:

- a) the method must be immediately repeated or another permitted method must be immediately applied
- b) equipment and/or method which resulted in failure must be checked and adjusted to correct any fault.

11.09 The following methods of **euthanasia** are not permitted:

- a) killing pliers or other equipment that crushes the neck
- b) methods of cervical dislocation that require spinning or flicking of the bird
- c) mechanical methods of cervical dislocation
- d) decapitation (unless as an unintended result of applying a permitted **euthanasia** method).

11.10 Where gas killing is being considered as a **euthanasia** method on farm,

- a) RSPCA Australia must be provided with a detailed standard operating procedure outlining the method
- b) it must not be performed unless prior approval has been obtained from RSPCA Australia.

11.11 **Euthanasia** methods not specified in these Standards must not be performed without prior approval from RSPCA Australia.

## 12 CATCHING AND TRANSPORT

- 12.01 All persons involved in the catching, loading, transport and unloading of birds must:
- a) meet on-farm biosecurity procedures
  - b) be aware of and be able to implement emergency arrangements.
- 12.02 Action must be taken to minimise the risk of **heat stress** or **cold stress** to birds at catching, loading, unloading, during transport and while the vehicle is stationary.
- 12.03 The timing of catching, transport and slaughter must be coordinated to minimise the time birds spend on the transport vehicle.
- 12.04 Birds must not be off feed or water for more than 18 hours prior to slaughter.

### Pick-up

- 12.05 From 1 January 2021, bird **pick-ups**, including final depopulation, must not take place on more than five occasions per **batch**.
- 12.06 Where birds are transferred between **sheds** as part of a **brood-and-move system**, this transfer:
- a) must not occur more than once per **batch**
  - b) is included as a **pick-up**.
- 12.07 **Pick-ups** must not occur on two consecutive days in the same **batch**, unless in exceptional circumstances where it is required to complete full depopulation.
- 12.08 Where **pick-ups** have occurred on two consecutive days, RSPCA Australia must be notified.

### Preparation for catching

- 12.09 Water facilities must not be removed until immediately before catching commences.
- 12.10 Removal of **perches** and **environmental enrichment** must coincide with removal of feed or water to minimise disturbance to the birds.
- 12.11 A visual assessment of birds must be made before catching commences to confirm they are **fit for the intended journey**.
- 12.12 Any birds not **fit for the intended journey** must be promptly treated or promptly **euthanased**.

### Catching

- 12.13 At least one senior member of the catching team must be made responsible for supervising and maintaining RSPCA Standards throughout the catching process.
- 12.14 The catching process must be designed and managed to minimise any impact on any remaining birds.
- 12.15 Transport modules and crates must:
- a) be clean and intact
  - b) not be able to cause injury to birds during loading, transport or unloading

- c) be of a depth and have openings of sufficient size to avoid injury to birds
- d) not be tilted at an angle where bird welfare may be compromised by piling or smothering.

- 12.16 Transport modules and crates must be inspected prior to birds being loaded, and any modules or crates that may cause injury to birds must be removed for disposal or repair.
- 12.17 Loading birds into transport modules and crates must take place inside the **shed**.
- 12.18 Transport modules and crates must provide sufficient floor space to allow all birds to sit comfortably at the same time.
- 12.19 Transport modules and crates must be closed in a manner that avoids any part of a bird's body becoming **entrapped**.

### Post catching

- 12.20 Where part of a **batch** of birds is removed prior to final depopulation and birds remain in the **shed**:
- a) birds must be checked and encouraged to re-distribute evenly throughout the **usable area** immediately after catching
  - b) the remaining birds must be provided with feed and water promptly after catching
  - c) all **perches** and **environmental enrichment** must be redistributed within the **shed** as soon as practical.

### Transport

- 12.21 Only **transporters** that have been routinely assessed by RSPCA Australia and shown to comply with these transport standards may be used to transport RSPCA Approved birds.
- 12.22 **Transporters** must provide information relevant to these standards promptly to RSPCA Australia upon request.
- 12.23 **Transporters** must have emergency arrangements in place that include out of hours contacts and standard procedures for protecting bird welfare in the case of breakdowns, unexpected delays, accidents, and other circumstances that may affect the welfare of the birds during the journey.
- 12.24 Access roads and **pick-up** pads must be kept clear and be well-maintained to provide a level and compacted surface.
- 12.25 Transport modules and crates must be placed onto the transport vehicle at a speed and angle that minimises tilting and avoids injuries to the birds.

### Records

- 12.26 A record must be maintained for each **pick-up**, including:
- a) the name of the person responsible for the birds at catching
  - b) time and date feed and water is withdrawn
  - c) time and date catching commenced and concluded
  - d) number of birds caught
  - e) time and date of bird departure from **farm**
  - f) time and date of bird arrival at the **abattoir**
  - g) any problems identified and action taken.

## 13 SLAUGHTER

- 13.01 Only **abattoirs** that have been routinely assessed by RSPCA Australia and shown to comply with these slaughter Standards may be used to slaughter RSPCA Approved birds.
- 13.02 **Abattoirs** must provide information relevant to these Standards to RSPCA Australia promptly upon request.
- 13.03 The **abattoir** must nominate a designated person (or persons) who is:
- responsible for the oversight of animal welfare at the facility
  - responsible for ensuring that animal welfare assessment and monitoring of animal handling and slaughter is part of the **abattoir** quality assurance system
  - on **site** when live birds are being unloaded, handled and slaughtered
  - knowledgeable in all facets of handling and slaughter
  - responsible for monitoring adherence to these Standards
  - responsible for ensuring that breaches of animal welfare legislation are reported to the relevant regulator.
- 13.04 A Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) system must be installed and operational to allow a clear, unobstructed view and recording of live birds, including at:
- unloading: from transport vehicles into **lairage** area
  - loading of transport modules and crates onto the system prior to **stunning**
  - removal of birds from transport modules and crates prior to **stunning**
  - all shackling points prior to **stunning**
  - electrical **stunning**: at **stunning** unit entry and exit and along entire waterbath
  - gas **stunning**: at **stunning** unit exit
  - neck cutting, including back-up.
- 13.05 Procedures for the use and review of CCTV footage must be in place and include at least the following:
- routine monitoring by authorised staff at least once every 7 days to ensure these Standards are maintained
  - availability for viewing (both stored and real-time footage) by RSPCA Australia
  - storage of footage for a minimum of 14 days
  - recording of dates of routine monitoring together with notes of any problems identified and action taken.
- 13.06 **Stunning** and slaughter equipment must be:
- designed, manufactured, maintained and operated to provide effective restraint, **stunning** and killing
  - checked at least at the start of each shift and change in bird size.
- 13.07 Procedures must be in place to manage equipment failure and other breakdowns that may impact bird welfare.
- 13.08 Methods of **stunning** and/or killing not specified in these Standards must not be performed without prior approval from RSPCA Australia.

### Lairage

- 13.09 Upon arrival at the **abattoir**, birds must be placed in a **lairage** area that is:
- covered to provide shelter and shade
  - fitted with fans and misting equipment



- c) designed and operated to provide adequate air exchange between and within transport modules and crates
- d) able to allow effective inspection of birds.

13.10 Birds must be checked:

- a) on arrival to identify birds suffering from injury, **heat stress** or **cold stress** or other signs of distress.
- b) hourly for signs of **heat stress** or **cold stress** or other signs of distress.

13.11 Where a problem is identified during bird checks, correction must be undertaken promptly to rectify the problem.

13.12 Where a problem is identified during bird checks, the following must be recorded:

- a) nature of the problem
- b) date and time the problem was identified
- c) nature of correction undertaken
- d) date and time correction was undertaken
- e) nature of the corrective action to avoid reoccurrence.

13.13 Where birds are tipped from transport modules, the system must be fitted with slides to minimise the distance between the transport module and the conveyor belt.

13.14 Where transport mortalities have occurred:

- a) they must be promptly reported to the consignor with any problems identified
- b) action must be taken by the consigner to address problems identified.

13.15 Transport modules and crates must be inspected following unloading of birds, and any modules or crates that may cause injury to birds must be repaired or disposed of.

### **Shackling — Electrical stunning systems**

13.16 The shackling line, until immediately prior to **stunning**, must be operating to minimise wing-flapping, head-raising, or disturbance to birds at any stage on the line.

13.17 A breast comforter must be present from the point at which the bird is shackled to the stunner entry and:

- a) be operating effectively to minimise wing-flapping and head-raising
- b) maintain contact with the breast of the bird in a manner that does not cause injury, discomfort or distress.

13.18 Shackling crews must place both of the bird's legs in the shackles:

- a) firmly but gently
- b) in a manner that birds cannot fall from the shackle line
- c) only if shackles are clear of obstructions.

13.19 Birds must not be suspended from the shackle line for more than 60 seconds prior to **stunning**.

13.20 Where used, a shackling carousel must be constructed and/or provided with sufficient shacklers to avoid overcrowding and/or birds falling to the floor.

13.21 Shackles must be wet at the point where the bird's feet touch the shackle.

13.22 Shackles must have water applied in a manner that does not disturb the birds.

- 13.23 The shackling area must be checked regularly to ensure that no birds have been left behind.
- 13.24 Transport modules and crates must be checked for birds that remain behind.
- 13.25 Transport modules and crates must have birds that remain behind immediately removed.
- 13.26 Birds with severe visible injury and runt birds must:
- a) not be shackled
  - b) be **euthanased** promptly.

### **Stunning**

- 13.27 Birds must be **stunned** prior to slaughter using one of the following methods:
- a) electrical **stunning**
  - b) controlled atmosphere **stunning**.
- 13.28 Where birds are identified as ineffectively **stunned**, correction must be undertaken immediately.

### **Electrical stunning systems**

- 13.29 Equipment, calibration, and procedures for electrical **stunning** must have as their primary purpose that:
- a) **electrical stunning parameters** are effective for the size of the birds
  - b) birds do not receive pre-**stun** shocks
  - c) the bird's head is in immediate contact with the electrode
  - d) the bird's head is in contact with the electrode for the entire length of the waterbath or wet plate as relevant
  - e) current setting is accurately displayed and monitored
  - f) deviation from current setting is promptly rectified.
- 13.30 Birds must have their neck cut within 15 seconds of **stunning**.
- 13.31 The bird's neck must be cut in a manner that severs both carotid arteries.

### **Controlled atmosphere stunning systems**

- 13.32 The transport module unloader must be checked for any birds that may have fallen to the floor or become trapped.
- 13.33 Fallen or trapped birds must be either placed into the entry of the controlled atmosphere **stunning** system or **euthanased** promptly.
- 13.34 Where conveyor systems are used, unloading of birds from transport modules onto the conveyor must be managed to avoid birds being on top of other birds within the controlled atmosphere **stunning** system.
- 13.35 Birds must not be exposed to carbon dioxide gas concentration >40% until they have lost consciousness.
- 13.36 Following exit from the controlled atmosphere **stunning** system at the point of shackling, birds must be monitored for signs of injury.

- 13.37 Where bird injury is evident at the point of shackling following exit from the controlled atmosphere **stunning** system:
- correction must be undertaken immediately, including equipment checks and adjustment
  - birds must not enter the controlled atmosphere **stunning** system until the problem has been rectified
  - nature of the corrective action to avoid reoccurrence must be recorded.
- 13.38 Gas concentration monitors that accurately indicate the gas concentrations at different phases must be present.
- 13.39 Gas concentration monitors must be calibrated regularly, as per the manufacturer's recommendations.
- 13.40 Dates of calibration of gas concentration monitors must be recorded together with notes of any problems identified and action taken.
- 13.41 **Stunning** equipment must be fitted with a visual or audible alarm which is automatically triggered when the equipment is not functioning effectively.
- 13.42 Persons must be available at all times when the controlled atmosphere **stunning** system is in operation to adjust the gas concentration immediately when required.
- 13.43 Birds must not enter the controlled atmosphere **stunning** system when:
- alarms have been activated
  - there is any defect in the system.
- 13.44 Where used, the shackling carousel outside the controlled atmosphere **stunning** system must be constructed and/or provided with sufficient shacklers to avoid birds exiting the **stunning** unit falling to the floor.

### **Bleeding out**

- 13.45 **Stunned** birds must be cut to bleed out without regaining consciousness.
- 13.46 Bleeding out time prior to scalding must be at least 120 seconds.
- 13.47 Manual and automated cutting systems must at all times have at least one back-up knife-hand ensuring that all birds are cut to bleed out without regaining consciousness.
- 13.48 If there are any **red birds**:
- immediate action must be taken to rectify the problem and avoid any further birds being cut ineffectively
  - records must be kept of action taken
  - records must be kept of the number of **red birds per batch**.

### **Animal-based welfare assessment**

- 13.49 The **abattoir** must have an internal animal-based welfare assessment system in place that:
- describes an objective and consistent protocol for measuring bird welfare outcomes
  - establishes and records **trigger levels** associated with these welfare outcomes
  - ensures feedback is provided to the **farm** or **abattoir** (as relevant) when a **trigger level** is reached
  - ensures correction is undertaken when a **trigger level** relating to handling, **stunning** and/or bleeding of birds at the **abattoir** is reached

- e) ensures the nature of the correction undertaken is recorded
- f) ensures the date/time the correction was undertaken is recorded
- g) ensures corrective action is undertaken to avoid reoccurrence of **trigger level** being reached.

13.50 For a random sample of 100 RSPCA Approved birds processed, the number of birds with the following must be recorded at least daily using the protocol described in the **abattoir's** internal animal-based assessment system:

for birds from a randomly selected **farm**:

- a) foot pad lesions
- b) hock lesions
- c) breast lesions
- d) the severity of the lesions
- e) broken and dislocated bones and bruises, including leg damage and leg injuries
- f) scratches

following each calibration of equipment and at least daily:

- g) number of birds receiving pre-**stun** shocks (electrical waterbath systems only)
- h) number of birds where the head is not in contact with the electrode for the entire length of the waterbath or wet plate as relevant (electrical waterbath systems only)
- i) number of birds at stunner exit (at point of shackling for gas **stunning** systems) not effectively **stunned**
- j) number of birds not effectively cut.

## Records

13.51 The following must be recorded for each **batch**:

- a) hourly checks of the birds in **lairage** to monitor bird welfare and signs of **heat stress** or **cold stress** or other signs of distress
- b) number of birds dead on arrival (**trigger level** and actual rates)
- c) reason(s) for death on arrival, if **trigger level** reached
- d) slaughter date
- e) holding time (time in **lairage**)
- f) number of birds slaughtered
- g) total number of **red birds**
- h) segregation of RSPCA Approved birds.

## Traceability

13.52 RSPCA Approved birds must be separated from other birds at all times.

13.53 All carcasses (and product) from RSPCA Approved birds must be checked for source identification and clearly marked as RSPCA Approved before leaving the **abattoir**.

13.54 Supporting documentation and evidence of physical separation of RSPCA Approved birds, carcasses and products from other birds (and products) must be demonstrated.

**END OF STANDARDS**



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