



Whole Foods Market Animal Welfare Standards for Laying Hens

- Whole Foods Market has an obligation to safeguard the welfare of animals that provide food for its customers. The company has been engaged in developing detailed animal welfare standards applying them to a growing number of meat, egg, and dairy products in its stores since 2004.
- The following animal welfare standards for laying hens were developed after hundreds of farm visits and consultations with farmers, pullet growers, poultry geneticists, and animal welfare scientists.
- These standards are developed and periodically updated for each production system in which laying hens are raised for eggs sold or used at Whole Foods Market. The intention of these standards is not to imply that one production system is better than another, but rather that each system is unique and has different ways to achieve good animal welfare.
- All standards that apply to a production system must be met for the farm to receive certification.
- Standards that are critical to welfare of birds are identified with an asterisk following the standard number and has a more stringent corrective action process.

Further stipulations:

- If any standard in this document conflicts with local, State, or national regulations of laws, please contact Whole Foods Market Quality Standards.
- If adhering to a standard as written might compromise the welfare of birds on farm, the producer should submit a Deviation Request to Whole Foods Market Quality Standards for a determination.
- A food safety certification must be in place for all packing facilities that do not fall under USDA scrutiny.

Production Systems



Birds must be able to move about freely in a housing environment with amenities that support their natural behavior.



Birds must have access to an outdoor area that is at least equivalent to the area of the house.



Birds must have access to rangeland or grassland.



Birds must be raised in an outdoor system that supports life on rangeland or grassland for their entire production cycle.

Notes:

Standards as written are required for all four production systems unless otherwise specified.

Mobile housing has emerged as an option for both Pasture Raised and Outdoor Living systems. Farms with small permanent coops, housing approximately 500 birds are also more common and may qualify as Outdoor Living.

Standards specific to mobile housing are so indicated.

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Section 1: Traceability

1.1:* Traceability at farms, producer groups and packing plants:

There must be a traceability program in place to ensure all eggs are traceable from the carton to the farm and production system in which they were produced.

1.2: Different production systems:

Eggs from different production systems must be segregated.

Section 2: Records and Documentation

2.1: Farm Plan or SOP

The farm must have a written farm plan or SOPs that includes all the following:

1. Biosecurity procedures and protocols.
2. Health plan, including:
 - a. Vitamin and mineral supplementation.
 - b. Additions to feed or water.
 - c. Vaccination programs.
 - d. Parasite control.
3. Pest control.
4. Predator control.
5. Temperature in housing.
6. Inspection, handling, and catching.
7. Depopulation.
8. Training for all tasks required for employees who work with birds including:
 - a. Recognition and management of morbid (ill) or injured birds.
 - b. Competence in euthanasia using a preferred or acceptable method as outlined in Standard 3.2.
 - c. Competence in handling birds.
9. Plan for maintaining acceptable feather condition.
10. Maintenance of buildings, fixtures, and equipment.
11. Emergency plan for delivery of feed, water, and air flow during power outages.
12. List of essential and emergency contacts.

2.2: Outdoor Plan

If the farm provides outdoor or pasture access, the farm plan or SOPs must also include the following:

1. Maintenance of the outdoor area.
2. Aerial image of farm (preferred) or diagram of the outdoor area that shows:
 - a. Overall dimensions and total area.
 - b. Position of house(s).
 - c. Position of shade, both natural and/or constructed shade structures.
 - d. Any divisions within the larger outdoor area.
3. If a mobile system, coop/house movement plan.

2.3: Feed records

1. Feed ingredients.
2. Type of edible foraging material.
3. Dates of induced molting, including feed regimen and lighting schedule for molting period.

2.4: Barn or house specifications

A spec sheet for barns or houses must be maintained that includes:

1. Length and width of structure.
2. Total floor area.
3. Total area of solid flooring available to birds.
4. Total area of platforms and tiers, excluding nests.
5. Area of nest tops, if available to birds.
6. Number of individual or community nests.
 - a. Area of each community nest.
 - b. Total area of community nests.
7. Type and number or length of feeders.
8. Type and number or length of drinkers.
9. Length of qualifying elevated perches. (see Standard 6.10)
10. Type and number of objects provided for cover and/or blinds.

2.5: Outdoor specifications

For farms on which birds have access to the outdoors, the spec sheet must also include:

1. Number and location of doors or popholes.
2. Height and width of doors or popholes.
3. Height of doors or popholes above the house floor.
4. Height of doors or popholes above the ground.
5. Total outdoor area.
6. If rotational access is used, the areas of each segment through which birds are moved.
7. Type, locations, and total area of cover/shade, both natural and constructed.
8. Type, number, and location of outdoor drinkers.
9. Type, number, and location of outdoor feeders, if used.

2.6: Training records

1. Records must be kept that confirm all employees who work with birds are trained in all aspects of husbandry required in Standard 2.1.
2. Training sheets must list all tasks included in the training and be signed by the employee(s) and the trainer.

Note: *Training records are not required for family members.*

2.7: Flock records

Clear, written records must cover the life of each flock (see definition of flock in Appendix I) and must include a unique flock name, number, or other method of identification. These records must include:

2.7.1: Delivery records

1. Information for either chick or pullet delivery:
 - a. NPIP documentation.
 - b. Strain of birds.
 - c. Invoice or bill of lading showing:
 - i. Hatchery
 - ii. Hatch date and number of birds delivered.
 - iii. Date of delivery of birds.
 - d. Number of birds dead on arrival.
 - e. Beak trimming details:
 - i. Date and age when beak trimming occurred.
 - ii. Method of beak trim.
 - iii. Service or person conducting beak trims.
2. If pullets are purchased, the name of the pullet grower.
3. If chicks are purchased, the date the birds are moved into the laying house.

2.7.2: Litter records: Permanent housing

1. Date litter is placed prior to flock placement.
2. Dates of litter replenishment.
3. Litter material.
4. Amount of litter placed/added.

2.7.3: Light records

Light levels in housing must be recorded at least quarterly at bird height in multiple locations on both sides of the house.

2.7.4: Flock health records

1. Date and number of birds affected by any health issue, such as piling, feather pecking, feather loss, or disease.
2. If a medical treatment is prescribed for any illness, injury, parasitic infestation, etc., the following must be recorded:
 - a. Copy of veterinary prescription.
 - b. Date and duration of treatment.
 - c. Withdrawal period.
 - d. Dates that eggs will be restricted from Whole Foods Market supply.
3. A copy of any regulatory letter or communication mandating restriction of birds to housing due to disease risk.

2.7.5: Adverse event records

Records must be kept of all events that impact the health, welfare, or functioning of the birds, including any disease, treatment, equipment breakdown, or unscheduled depopulation.

2.7.6: Depopulation records

Records must be kept of:

1. Employee training.
2. Depopulation date of each flock.
3. Number of birds depopulated.
4. Method of depopulation. (live haul, CO2, or cervical dislocation)
5. A functionality check of any equipment used prior to each depopulation.
6. Destination or disposal details.

2.8: Daily records

2.8.1: Indoor records

The following must be recorded daily for each group of birds kept separately:

1. Air quality using the sensory guide in Appendix VI.
 - a. If ammonia is detected during the sensory evaluation, a reading must be taken with an ammonia meter or ammonia strips and recorded.
2. Daily high and low temperatures in housing.
3. Time lights are turned on and off each day.
4. Time feeders and drinkers are filled, or, if automatic, confirmation they are operating
5. Morbid or injured birds, using guide in Appendix V.
6. Number of birds found dead and cause of death.
7. Number of birds euthanized (culled) and reason for culling (must be kept separately from mortality)
8. Hazards to bird health such as equipment failures (including nest closeout malfunction)
 - a. Remedial actions taken for any issues found.

2.8.2: Outdoor records

The following must be recorded daily for farms with outdoor or pasture access:

1. Times doors or popholes are opened and closed each day.
 - a. Indicate AM or PM when the time could be interpreted incorrectly, as 4:00
2. Outdoor high and low temperatures and weather conditions.
3. Reason for restriction of birds to housing.
4. Presence of drinking water in the outdoor area.
5. Predator activity and actions taken.
6. Dates mobile houses are moved.

Note: Use AM or PM when the time doors open or close if there could be confusion. 4:00, for instance, could be very early in the morning or later in the afternoon, depending on weather conditions, other tasks on farm, etc.

2.9: Weekly records

2.9.1: Indoor records

The following must be recorded weekly for each flock of birds kept separately:

1. Number of birds at the beginning or end of each week.
2. Cleanliness and functionality of feeders and waterers.
3. Cleanliness of nests using scoring guide in Appendix VII.
4. Condition of buildings and fixtures.

2.9.2 Outdoor records

The following must be recorded for farms on which birds have outdoor or pasture access:

1. Maintenance in the outdoor area, including fencing, shade/cover, vegetation, etc.
2. Actions taken to mitigate hazards or contamination of the outdoor area.
3. If flock rotation is practiced, the date the birds are redirected to a new segment.

Section 3: Health and Wellbeing

3.1:* Prohibited substances

1. Subtherapeutic antibiotic use is prohibited.
2. Eggs from individual birds or flocks that have been treated therapeutically with antibiotics, sulfa drugs, or ionophores must be withheld from Whole Foods Market supply and Quality Standards informed.
 - a. If medication is prescribed by the flock veterinarian, the drugs must be administered.
 - b. Prior approval must be obtained by Quality Standards before eggs are re-introduced to Whole Foods Market supply.
3. Mammalian or avian by-products in feed are prohibited.
4. Administration of growth hormones is prohibited per USDA regulation.

3.2:* Euthanasia

1. Birds must be euthanized immediately when:
 - a. They cannot walk or stand.
 - b. They are morbid or injured and unlikely to recover.
2. Euthanasia must be conducted using only preferred or acceptable methods.
3. Euthanasia must result in immediate insensibility and death.
4. The person conducting euthanasia must verify death.
5. The person conducting euthanasia must be trained.
 - a. If a trained person is available, euthanasia must occur immediately upon discovering the morbid or injured bird.
 - b. If a trained person is not immediately available, the morbid or injured bird must be segregated from the flock and euthanized within four hours of discovery.

Note: Preferred methods of euthanasia are manual cervical dislocation. Decapitation is acceptable, but not preferred. Use of crushing tools to result in cervical dislocation are not acceptable.

3.3: Age at placement in laying house

Birds must be placed in the laying house as pullets prior to the onset of lay.

3.4: On-farm brooder and pullet rearing

1. There must be a minimum of 1ft² (0.09m²) per bird in on-farm pullet housing.
2. When heaters are no longer required for thermoregulation, the following resources must be provided:
 - a. Litter that covers the entire the floor.
 - b. Perches.
 - c. Cover or blinds.
 - d. Adjustable, elevated platforms under feeders and drinkers so pullets learn to jump and become accustomed to the feel of plastic material under foot.
3. Lighting in pullet and laying environments must be synchronized as birds are moved to laying houses.
4. Brooding structures composed of drawers or compartments are prohibited.

3.5:* Bird Handling

1. It is prohibited to treat birds in a cruel manner, such as striking, throwing, kicking, etc.
2. Birds must not be carried by their feet or wings.
3. Birds must be carried in an upright position.
4. No more than two birds can be carried at the same time.

3.6: Hospital pens

Hospital pens are not required, but if used, must meet the following standards:

1. Hospital pens must only be used for birds that are likely to recover and return to the flock.
 - a. If a bird is not likely to return to the flock, it must be euthanized.
 - b. Birds that are not eating or drinking must be euthanized within 24 hours.
 - c. If a bird has not recovered in three days, it must be euthanized.
2. Hospital pens must meet all housing requirements outlined in Section 6, including space, litter, nests, perches, cover/blinds.
3. The provisions in the hospital pen must be accessible to birds that are morbid or injured.
 - a. Perches closer to the floor than 12" are acceptable to accommodate weaker birds.
4. Healthy birds must be prevented from entering the hospital pen.
5. Eggs laid in the hospital pen must not be supplied to Whole Foods Market.

3.7: Temperature in permanent housing

1. Indoor temperature must be managed to provide a comfortable environment for the birds.
2. When temperature in housing exceeds 90F (32C) or falls below 35F (2C) a method of temperature control must be implemented, such as fans, misters, or supplemental heating or cooling.

3.8: Feather condition

1. Feather condition must be monitored and recorded at least monthly using the scoring guide in Appendix III.
2. There must be a plan to respond to feathering issues.
3. If feather condition drops below the age-related production system tolerances defined below, it must be recorded and a response plan must be implemented immediately to identify causes and correct the problem.

4. If a sudden flock-wide feather loss event occurs, Whole Foods Market Quality Standards must be notified immediately and provided with a response plan for rectifying the situation.

3.8.1: Production system tolerances for feather condition

1. **Cage-Free Plus**

Feather condition for the flock must not exceed a score of:

- a. 2 at 25 weeks
- b. 3 at 35 weeks
- c. 3.5 at 45 weeks and older

2. **Outdoor Access**

Feather condition for the flock must not exceed a score of:

- a. 1.5 at 25 weeks
- b. 2.5 at 35 weeks
- c. 3 at 45 weeks and older

3. **Pasture Raised**

Feather condition for the flock must not exceed a score of:

- a. 1 at 25 weeks
- b. 1.8 at 35 weeks
- c. 2 at 45 weeks and older

4. **Outdoor Living**

Feather condition for the flock must not exceed a score of:

- a. 1 for the first 30 weeks
- b. 1.5 at 45 weeks and older

3.9: Keel bone assessment

1. There must be a plan in place to minimize keel bone injuries
2. Keel bone condition must be monitored for each flock at placement and then every 16 weeks for the life of the flock using the scoring guide in Appendix IV.
3. If keel bone deformities that score 1 or higher exceed 75% prevalence, an immediate action plan must be developed. The following criteria must be evaluated:
 - a. Pullet rearing
 - b. Nutrition
 - c. Stocking density
 - d. Number or position of ramps or steps
 - e. Perch design/space

3.10:* Depopulation

Depopulation can be live haul or on-farm depopulation using cervical dislocation or CO₂.

1. If birds are removed from the farm alive:
 - a. Destinations for live birds must be either a slaughter facility or live market.
 - b. Birds must be crated at night or in dim lighting.
 - c. Transport must occur as soon as all birds are crated and loaded onto the truck.
2. On-farm depopulation methods:
 - a. There must be an SOP governing the use of on-farm euthanasia practices to ensure birds are killed quickly and do not suffer.
 - b. Only cervical dislocation or use of CO₂ under specific situations are acceptable.

- c. Acceptable CO₂ uses include CO₂ chambers or whole-house depopulation.
- d. Partial house CO₂ euthanasia is prohibited.
- e. If using a CO₂ chamber:
 - i. The chamber must not be overfilled with birds to the point that unconsciousness is delayed for birds near the top.
 - ii. Precautions must be taken to ensure birds are not subjected to freezing.
 - iii. Birds inside the chamber must be visible from the outside.
 - iv. When emptying the chamber, death must be confirmed before disposal.
 - v. Chamber functionality must be checked prior to every use.
- f. If using whole-house CO₂ depopulation:
 - i. Only houses that can be completely sealed are eligible for whole-house CO₂ depopulation.
 - ii. Entry points for CO₂ delivery must be designed to prevent birds from coming into contact with the frigid CO₂.
 - iii. Sufficient CO₂ must infuse the house for a long enough timespan to cause rapid unconsciousness and death of all birds.
 - iv. Death of all birds must be confirmed when the house is opened after the infusion is complete and any birds still alive euthanized using cervical dislocation.
 - v. Functionality of all equipment must be checked prior to every use.
- g. Dead birds must be disposed of in a hygienic manner.

Section 4: Water and Feed

4.1.* Water

1. Birds must have free and continuous access to clean drinking water in all locations to which they have access with the following exceptions:
 - a. Water is not required inside **mobile housing** if doors are open 24/7.
 - b. Water is not required outdoors when temperatures are below freezing.
2. In outdoor areas from **permanent** housing, water must be provided in multiple locations on both sides of the house.

4.2.* Feed

Birds' nutritional needs must be met through a comprehensive daily feeding program.

1. Birds must have continuous access to feed or foraging material.
2. Feed must be provided in a manner that minimizes competition.
3. Feed must be fresh and not contaminated.

4.3: Modified molting

Modified molting is only permitted when the following circumstances are in place:

1. Feed availability must consistently meet Standard 4.2.
2. Lighting must consistently meet Standard 6.8.

4.4: Edible foraging material in permanent housing

Birds must have free and continuous access to edible foraging material.

1. Edible foraging material must be distributed throughout the house.
2. Insoluble, inorganic grit must be available if whole grains are provided.

***Note:** Edible foraging material supports the birds' need to forage and reduces the likelihood of feather pecking. Hay bales, scattered grains or grain hulls make excellent foraging materials. Hay bales also qualify as blinds and meet the requirements of Standard 6.11.*

Section 5: Physical Alterations

5.1:* Physical alterations

Physical alterations are prohibited apart from beak trimming.

1. Prohibited physical alterations include wing clipping, dubbing, de-spurring, the application of blinkers, etc.

5.2: Beak trimming

1. Beak trims must not occur more than once in the lifetime of the birds.
2. Upper and lower beaks must meet evenly at the tip.
3. No more than ¼ of the beak can be removed.

5.2.1: Production system requirements:

1. **Cage-Free Plus, Outdoor Access**

Beak trimming must be either:

- a. Infrared Beak Trimming (IRBT) at the hatchery.
- b. Hot blade trimming by a trained person or crew before 10 days of age.
- c. The average beak trim score for the flock must not exceed 2.25 on the Whole Foods Market Beak Trim Scoring Scale in Appendix II.

2. **Pasture Raised**

IRBT trims at the hatchery are the only acceptable method of beak trimming.

- a. The average beak trim score for the flock must not exceed 2.0 on the Whole Foods Market Beak Trim Scoring Scale in Appendix II.

3. **Outdoor Living**

Beak trimming is prohibited.

Section 6: Housing

6.1:* Cages

It is prohibited to confine birds to cages or cage-like structures at any point in their lives except during transport or depopulation using CO₂ chambers.

6.2: Indoor space in permanent housing

The area in permanent housing must allow birds to move freely and safely among resources (feed, water, nests, perches, litter, and cover/blinds), to flap their wings, run, dust bathe, and forage.

1. There must be a minimum of 1.2 ft² (0.11 m²) per bird from placement, including all solid flooring, platforms, and nest tops to which birds have access.
2. A wintergarten can only be included in the total area of the house if doors between the house and the wintergarten are permanently open.
3. Shelves along the walls do not qualify as part of the area of the house.
4. Nest interiors cannot be included in the housing area calculation.

***Note:** Small permanent houses with 500 or fewer birds can qualify as Outdoor Living if all standards for that production system are met, including perch space, outdoor access onset and duration, etc.*

6.3: Indoor space in mobile housing

There must be enough space in mobile houses for all birds to move freely and safely among resources.

6.4: Solid flooring in permanent housing

1. Housing must have solid flooring composed of concrete, clay, dirt, or wood.
2. Solid flooring must be at least 30% of the total area of the house, as described in Standard 6.2.
3. Wooden boxes, whether on slats or on nest tops, do not qualify as solid flooring.

6.5:* Litter provision and quality in permanent housing

1. From placement and throughout the life of the flock, all solid flooring must be entirely covered with litter.
2. Litter must be composed of absorbent, non-toxic, plant based organic material.
3. Litter must not become degraded or pose a risk to bird health.
4. Litter material must be distinguishable throughout the life of the flock.
5. Litter must support dust-bathing behavior.
6. Litter must be friable.

6.6: Platform requirements

In **permanent** housing:

1. Platforms must be composed of material that supports good foot health.
2. Platforms over a manure pit must be maintained to prevent birds from accessing the space underneath.

***Note:** Preferred platform material is either wood slats or plastic grid. Areas on nest tops are considered part of the platform area.*

6.7:* Hot wire use in permanent housing

Hot wires must meet all the following criteria:

1. Hot wires are only permitted in the scratch area.
2. Hot wire use in front of nests is prohibited.
3. Hot wires must be within six inches of the wall or platform.
4. The use of more than one hot wire along the wall is prohibited.
5. Hot wires must not restrict access to doors or popholes.
6. Hot wires are prohibited after birds reach 23 weeks of age.
7. Hot wires must be removed from the house or lifted when not in use, except non-electrified lines above water lines.
8. If hot wires are used, a plan must be in place to reduce use in subsequent flocks.

***Note:** Pullet training (Standard 3.4) reduces the need for hot wires which are a convenient substitute for good management and vigilant attention to the birds. The goal is to eliminate hot wire use which will be predicated on developing comprehensive pullet training standards.*

6.8:* Air quality

1. Air quality must be monitored daily and recorded as required in Standard 2.8.1.
2. The results of the daily sensory air quality evaluation must be no higher than 1 on the Sensory Evaluation Scale in Appendix VI.
 - a. If an ammonia meter readings or pH strip references are used, ammonia levels must be below 20ppm.

3. If the sensory evaluation is higher than 1 or a meter or pH strip indicates higher levels than 20ppm, immediate action must be taken to improve air quality.
 - a. Actions taken and results must be recorded.

6.9: Lighting

1. A light intensity of at least 20 lux must be maintained throughout the house during daylight hours.
2. When artificial lighting extends the natural daylength, each 24-hour cycle must consist of at least six hours of uninterrupted darkness and at least eight hours of uninterrupted, compliant light.

6.10:* Nests

1. There must be enough nests that all birds can meet their laying needs.
 - a. If using individual nests, there must be at least one nest for every seven hens.
2. Nests must contain substrate that birds can manipulate. (Straw, wood shavings, or padding such as AstroTurf)
3. Nests must enable hens to seek seclusion during their nesting period.
 - a. For systems with community nests, at least every second curtain must be down to provide sufficient seclusion.
 - b. For individual nests, seclusion can be achieved by curtains and/or an elevated front panel.
4. Nests must have a staging platform or rail.
5. Nest substrate must maintain an average score of no higher than 1 on the Nest Cleanliness Scale in Appendix VII.
6. Manipulable nest pads with more than a third of the fingers eroded must be replaced.

6.11: Perches

1. To be considered a perch, the rail must be elevated and at least 12" (30.5cm) above the floor or platform and allow birds to adopt a secure roosting posture with their feet wrapped around the rail.
 - a. Floor slats, edges of platforms, and nest staging rails do not qualify as perches.
2. In **permanent housing** there must be at least 4.5" (11.5cm) of perch space per bird.
3. In **mobile housing** there must be at least 6" (15.25cm) of perch space per bird.
4. Perch design and placement must not pose a risk of injury to the birds.
5. Perches must be distributed throughout the house.
6. If square rails are used, the corners must be blunted to protect the birds' feet.
7. Adjacent perch rails must be at least 12" (30.5cm) apart.
8. Birds must be able to perch on the top rail of a perch structure without touching the ceiling.

6.12: Cover or blinds in permanent housing

1. Objects that act as cover or blinds must be provided in housing no later than four weeks after placement.
2. Cover or blinds must be positioned to be accessible from no more than 30 ft (9m) from any point in the house.
3. If a platform runs down the middle of the house, objects must be provided equally on both sides of the platform.

Note:

- *If cover is inherent in the design of the house, no other structures are required.*
- *Nests do not qualify as cover except for accessible space under individual nest structures.*
- *Plastic buckets, tunnels, or tubes that do not accommodate multiple birds or enable birds to stand erect do not meet this requirement.*
- *Neither feed pans nor bell waterers meet this standard.*

6.13: Aviary systems

1. Combi systems that enable conversion to cages are prohibited.
2. Birds must not be restricted from freedom of movement throughout the aviary.
 - a. Solid flooring directly under aviary structures can only be restricted for nest training until birds reach 23 weeks of age.
3. The aisles between aviary structures, and the aisles between aviary structures and the wall, must be at least 8' (2.44m) wide.
4. In all areas of the aviary, including under the lowest tier and above the highest tier, there must be sufficient height that birds can adopt a natural standing position.
5. Ramps, steps, or arrangement of tiers must facilitate movement of birds among all tiers of the aviary, including the solid floor.
 - a. Ramps must be no steeper than 45° and wide enough for birds to stand comfortably and walk normally.
 - b. Steps must be no higher than 16" (40cm).
6. Lighting throughout the aviary, including under the bottom tier, must meet Standard 6.8.
7. Aviaries must allow daily visual inspection of all birds on all tiers.

6.13.1 Height tolerances in aviaries

1. Cage Free Plus, Outdoor Access

The base of the top tier cannot be more than 9' (2.74m) from the concrete floor.

2. Pasture Raised

The base of the top tier cannot be more than 7' (2.13m) from the concrete floor.

Note:

- *Aviaries with an existing WFM certification are grandfathered.*

Section 7: Outdoor Environment

7.1: Doors and popholes

1. Doors and/or popholes must open directly from the house to the outdoor area.
2. Doors and/or popholes must be visible to the birds from any point in the house.
3. Doors and/or popholes must be provided in sufficient number to provide easy outdoor access from any point in the house.
4. Doors and/or popholes must be large enough to permit more than one bird to pass through at the same time without obstruction.
5. A ramp or steps must be provided if there is a differential of 16" (41cm) or more between the floor of the house or the ground outdoors and the bottom of the door and/or pophole.
 - a. Ramps must be no steeper than 45°.
 - b. Ramps must be at least as wide as the pophole or door.
 - c. Ramps must have a non-slip surface.

6. Birds must be able to enter and exit the house throughout the day.

Note: *Optimally doors or popholes should be located on both sides of the house. This will become a requirement in the next revision of Standards.*

7.2:* Condition of outdoor area

1. The outdoor area must not present a risk to the bird or human health due to fecal contamination, or the presence of hazardous substances.
2. The outdoor area to which birds have access must be maintained in a manner such that birds can move about and avoid standing in water or mud.
3. Feathers must not become soiled with mud, fecal material.
4. The outdoor area must be free of objects that pose a danger to the birds.

Note: *Hazardous substances could be the result of industrial use, refuse disposal, etc. Large gravel in a perimeter around house helps mitigate wear and the accumulation of mud in high traffic areas.*

7.3: Outdoor area

1. **Outdoor Access**

The outdoor area must be equal to or greater than the total area of the house or houses that open onto the area.

2. **Pasture Raised, Outdoor Living**

Rangeland or grassland environments as required in Standards 7.4 through 7.7 must be continuously maintained at all times of the year.

7.4: Rangeland composition

To qualify as rangeland, there must be sufficient accessible areas of tall plants, bushes, and/or trees surrounding the house or coops that are plentiful enough to accommodate all the birds in the flock. See Vegetative Assessment Guide in Appendix VIII.

7.5: Grassland composition

To qualify as grassland, the outdoor area must consist of a mixture of various naturally occurring or planted grasses, forbs, and legumes.

7.6: Grassland qualification from permanent housing

1. **Pasture Raised**

To qualify as grassland, the area must average at least 50% rooted vegetative cover, measured across the outdoor area beginning at 50ft (15.2m) from the house and extending 500ft (152m) or to the fenceline, whichever is closer.

2. **Outdoor Living**

To qualify as grassland, the area must average at least 75% rooted vegetative cover, measured across the outdoor area beginning at 50ft (15.2m) from the house and extending 500 ft (152m) or to the fenceline, whichever is closer.

Note: *See Vegetative Assessment Guide in Appendix VIII.*

7.7: Grassland qualification from mobile housing

To qualify as grassland, the area must average at least 75% rooted vegetative cover, measured across the outdoor area beginning 25ft (7.6m) from the mobile unit and extending 500ft (152m) or to the fenceline, whichever is closer.

Note: *See Vegetative Assessment Guide in Appendix VIII.*

7.8: Movement of mobile housing

Mobile housing must be moved frequently enough to meet the requirements of Standards 7.3 and 7.7.

7.9: Cover and shade placement

Cover and/or shade must be distributed throughout the outdoor area and visible to the birds from the doors of the house.

7.10: Amount of cover and shade

1. **Outdoor Access**

There must be enough cover/shade to provide 25% of the number of birds in the flock with at least 0.4ft² (0.04 m²) of effective cover/shade at all hours of the day.

2. **Pasture Raised (permanent housing)**

There must be enough cover/shade to provide 50% of the number of birds in the flock with at least 0.4ft² (0.04m²) of effective cover/shade at all hours of the day.

3. **Pasture Raised (mobile housing) Outdoor Living (permanent or mobile housing)**

There must be enough cover/shade to provide all birds in the flock with at least 0.4ft² (0.04m²) of effective cover/shade at all hours of the day.

***Note:** Cover/shade is best provided using natural components of the environment. Tall plants that were previously considered weeds make excellent cover if allowed to grow. Bushes, woodlands, brushy areas, fallen trees, or piles of cut branches are the preferred environments for birds. Meeting this standard using artificial shade structures can be more expensive and more difficult to maintain.*

7.11: Mobile housing component of cover and shade

1. Mobile units can be included as part of the cover/shade requirement providing:
 - a. The floor of the mobile unit is at least 2ft (0.6m) above the ground.
 - b. The ground under the mobile unit is not contaminated with fecal matter to the extent it poses a risk to the health of the birds.

Section 8: Outdoor Access

8.1: Onset of outdoor access

1. **Outdoor Access**

Access to the outdoors must begin by 24 weeks of age with full daily outdoor access as required in Standard 8.2 by 26 weeks of age.

2. **Pasture Raised**

Access to rangeland or grassland must begin by 22 weeks of age with full daily outdoor access as required in Standard 8.2 by 24 weeks of age.

3. **Outdoor Living:**

Full daily access to rangeland or grassland as required in Standard 8.2 must begin by 10 weeks of age.

8.2: Duration of daily outdoor access

Note: The website used to determine if these standards are met is linked below. Select the closest location to your farm to view the sunrise/sunset/day length for each day.

<https://www.timeanddate.com/sun/usa/>

1. Outdoor Access

To qualify as an outdoor access day, all doors or popholes must be open for more than half of daylight hours.

- a. Up to half the doors can be closed in weather extremes and still qualify as an outdoor access day.

2. Pasture Raised (permanent housing)

All doors or popholes must be open from within three hours of sunrise to no earlier than one hour before sunset.

- a. Up to half the doors can be closed in weather extremes and still qualify as a pasture access day.

3. Pasture Raised (mobile housing) Outdoor Living (permanent or mobile housing)

All birds must have continuous daily access to rangeland or grassland within one hour of sunrise to no earlier than one hour before sunset.

8.3: Outdoor access requirements

1. Each day must be evaluated for risk to the birds, and if the weather is amenable, birds must be given access to the outdoor area. Reasons for restriction to housing must be recorded as required in Standard 2.8.2.

1. Outdoor Access

Birds must not be restricted to housing for more than 14 days in a calendar month to qualify as an Outdoor Access month.

- a. There must be at least six Outdoor Access months within a 12-month period to qualify for certification as **Outdoor Access**.

2. Pasture Raised (permanent housing)

Restriction to housing must not exceed seven days in any calendar month with a maximum of 28 days in a calendar year.

3. Pasture Raised (mobile housing) Outdoor Living (permanent or mobile housing):

Restriction cannot exceed 48 hours in duration, and there must be no more than seven days of restriction in any 12-month period.

Appendix I: Definitions

Animal by-products

Feed ingredients derived from the slaughter process.

Aviary

A multi-tiered environment for hens in permanent housing.

Blinds

Objects birds can hide behind, such as vertically placed boards, hay bales placed in the middle of the floor, etc. Blinds provide an area of limited visibility where birds can seek protection from aggressive flock mates.

Cage

A cage is any boxlike enclosure of bars, slats or wires, or a brooding structure composed of drawers or compartments, within which birds are confined.

Cover

Because of their innate fear of overhead predators, chickens seek out areas where they can be under objects that make them feel safe, whether indoors or out. In their native habitat, this would be bushes and low-growing trees and plants.

Indoor cover:

Low objects or installations birds can go under for protection. Note that the laying area of the nest is not considered cover.

Outdoor cover:

Natural vegetation, low objects, or structures that birds can go under for protection. Outdoor cover generally also provides shade.

Depopulation

Removal of a flock when birds have reached the end of production or when there has been a disease outbreak.

Edible Foraging Material

Chickens' natural behavior is to forage for food throughout the day. In modern production systems feed is provided in such a manner that their nutritional needs are met without the need to forage, but the behavior pattern is embedded in their DNA. One of the principal causes of feather pecking and cannibalization is the driving need to forage with nothing in their environment to satisfy that urge. Providing supplemental edible foraging material, separate from feed, that encourages foraging behavior helps mitigate negative behaviors. Edible foraging material can be provided in pans, scattered in litter, or can be hung in net slings. Examples of edible foraging materials are whole or sprouted grains, seeds, hay, vegetables, or insects. Hay bales are an excellent choice because they provide vegetative components the birds can eat and act as blinds behind which they can find shelter.

Farm

A farm is a contiguous property on which laying hens are raised.

Farm plan

A written outline of farm practices and protocols that both ensure consistency in farm operations and provide a guide for anyone who steps in to manage the farm, such as during family vacations or emergencies.

Feather loss

Different from feather pecking, feather loss is generally the response of large numbers of birds to stressors in their environment. Feed-related issues are the most common cause of feather loss. Feed can be rancid or spoiled, it can contain different ratios of components than normal, or the amount of feed can be inadequate. Sudden changes in lighting or air quality can also stimulate a spontaneous molt, as can other stressful conditions such as heat, cold, disease and lack of adequate amounts of water.

Flock

Birds that are housed together in a discrete group. In permanent housing, this can mean all birds in one house or the birds in part of a house if there is a partition between groups of birds. In mobile housing, this can mean all birds in one mobile house or birds in a group of mobile houses if they can use any of the mobile houses at will.

Friable

Dry and crumbly, a qualifier for functional litter and ground condition in areas outside the house.

Hospital or sick pen

A confined area where birds that are injured or ill can recover. If a bird's injury is severe or illness is non-recoverable, it must be euthanized.

Integrated production

Coordinated production of all stages of the life of the bird from the placement of chicks in the pullet house, transition to laying environment and extending through depopulation.

Litter

Organic material used on solid flooring to provide comfort as well as dust bathing and foraging opportunities for the birds. Fecal matter is not litter.

Lux

A unit of illumination that is used for defining the amount of ambient light in an area.

Morbid

The outward display of being unhealthy.

Outdoor management plan

Farm protocols and practices that result in continuously robust outdoor environments for the birds, including rotation protocols, inspection criteria and management of stocking rate, contamination, and cover and shade.

Pasture environments

Rangeland

A type of pasture environment comprised of a variety of tall plants, forbs, shrubs, bushes, rocks, woodlands, orchards, etc. that attracts birds by providing cover, shade, and foraging. Rangeland vegetation must be visible to birds from the door of the house and close enough to be accessible to the birds.

Essential attributes of rangeland are overhead cover to encourage ranging and vegetative material that stimulates foraging. Trees, bushes, and tall plants are examples of overhead cover. Fallen branches, twigs and leaf litter are examples of productive and interesting foraging opportunities. A properly managed rangeland will also offer a variety of insect populations that attract birds to forage.

Grassland

A type of pasture environment with rooted vegetative ground cover composed primarily of low growing grasses, legumes, and herbs. Vegetation can be growing or dormant, depending on the season, but must have intact roots.

Perches

Perches enable birds to wrap their feet around a rail and balance whether standing or roosting. Perches are elevated above the floor or platform. Sections of slats, even when raised above the floor level, do not qualify as perches.

Production system

The type of system the farm uses for raising laying hens. The production systems we accept are Cage-Free Plus, Outdoor Access, Pasture Raised, and Outdoor Living.

Staging platform or rail

A rail or platform in front of nests to provide birds with a place to stand as they wait for a nest and as they perform nesting rituals.

Traceability

Protocols and records that show the path of eggs from the farm to the carton at Whole Foods Market stores. Traceability protocols must ensure all eggs are from farms that have been certified to meet Whole Foods Market Animal Welfare Standards for Laying Hens for the production system that is on the label. Traceability must also include compliance with the FDA Egg Rule or Whole Foods Market Food Safety Standards for Small Farms.

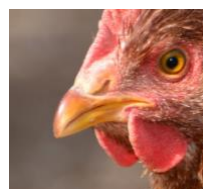
Appendix II: Beak Trim Scoring

Beak Trim Score – Brown Birds

Score 30 birds per house and calculate the average

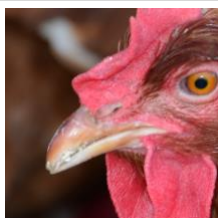
0

- No beak trim



1

- Infrared trim at hatchery or excellent hand trim
- Beak trim just visible
- Upper and lower beaks even



2

- More than $\frac{3}{4}$ beak remains
- Upper and lower beaks even



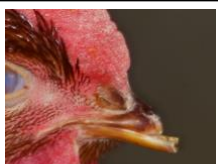
3

- More than $\frac{1}{2}$ beak remains
- Difference between upper and lower beaks minor



4

- Between $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ of beak
- Imbalance between beaks
- Minor neuroma possible



5

- Less than $\frac{1}{4}$ beak remains
- Major difference between beaks
- Major neuroma
- Major splitting, cracking or damage



Beak Trim Score – White Birds

Score 30 birds per house and calculate the average

0

- No beak trim



1

- Infrared trim at hatchery or excellent hand trim
- Beak trim just visible
- Upper and lower beaks even



2

- More than $\frac{3}{4}$ beak remains
- Upper and lower beaks even



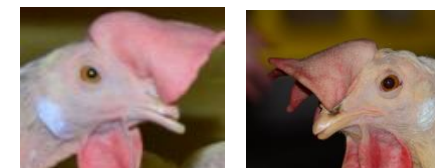
3

- More than $\frac{1}{2}$ beak remains
- Difference between upper and lower beaks minor



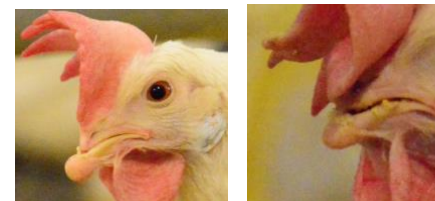
4

- Between $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ of beak
- Imbalance between beaks
- Minor neuroma possible



5

- Less than $\frac{1}{4}$ beak remains
- Major difference between beaks
- Major neuroma
- Major splitting, cracking or damage



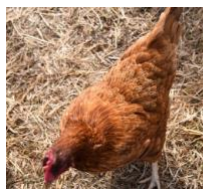
Appendix III: Feather Condition Scoring

Feather Score Guide

Score 30 birds per house and calculate the average

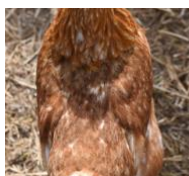
0

- Intact feathers
- No sign of damage



1

- Signs of damage or disturbance to feathers
- Very few feathers missing



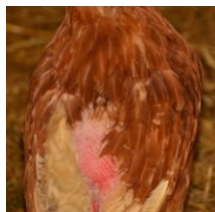
2

- Feathers are clearly missing



3

- Obvious bare patch that is less than 50% of the back/rump area



4

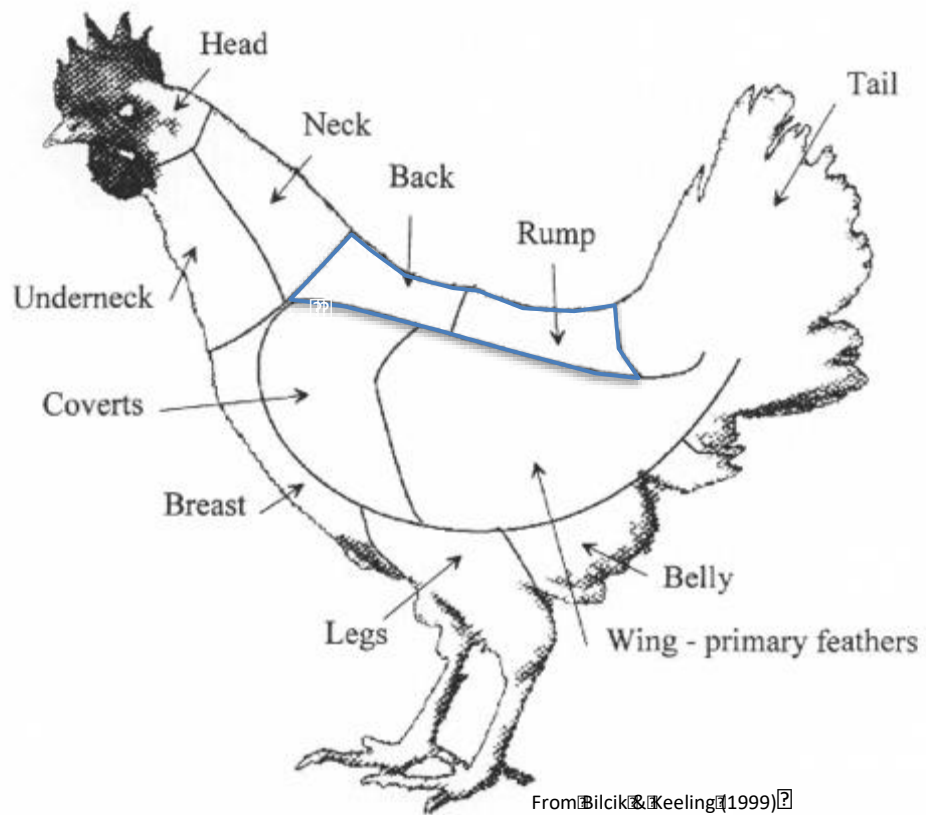
- Bare patch that is greater than 50% of the back/rump area



5

- Back is completely bare

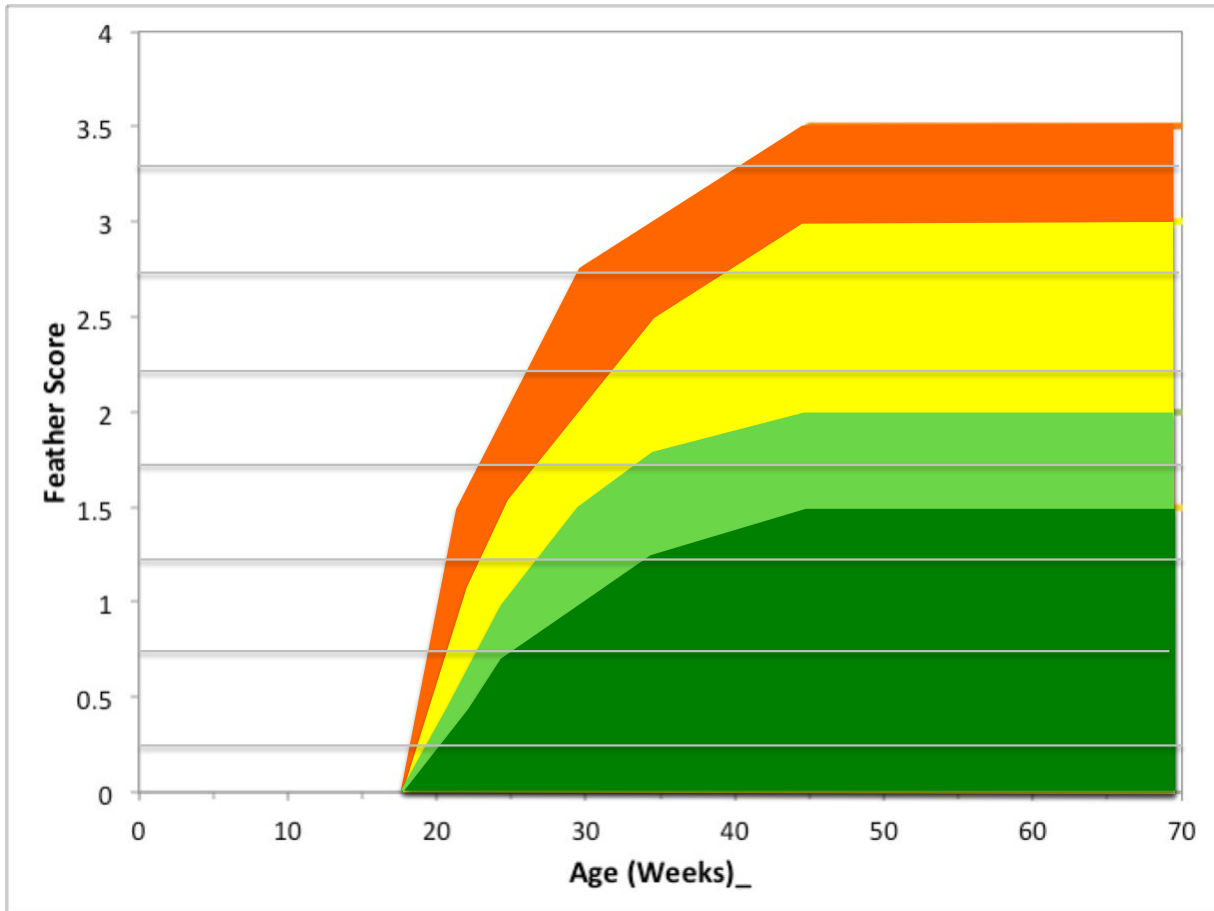




SCORING REGION IN BLUE

Photograph from behind to see the back easier

71



Feather score level calculator

Calculate the average feather score and trace across horizontally until you reach the age of the flock in weeks

Week	18	22	25	30	35	45	50	60	70
Cage Free Plus	0	1.5	2	2.75	3.0	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5
Outdoor Access	0	1.0	1.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Pasture Raised	0	0.6	1.0	1.5	1.8	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Outdoor Living	0	0.4	0.7	1.0	1.25	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5

Appendix IV: Keel Bone Assessment

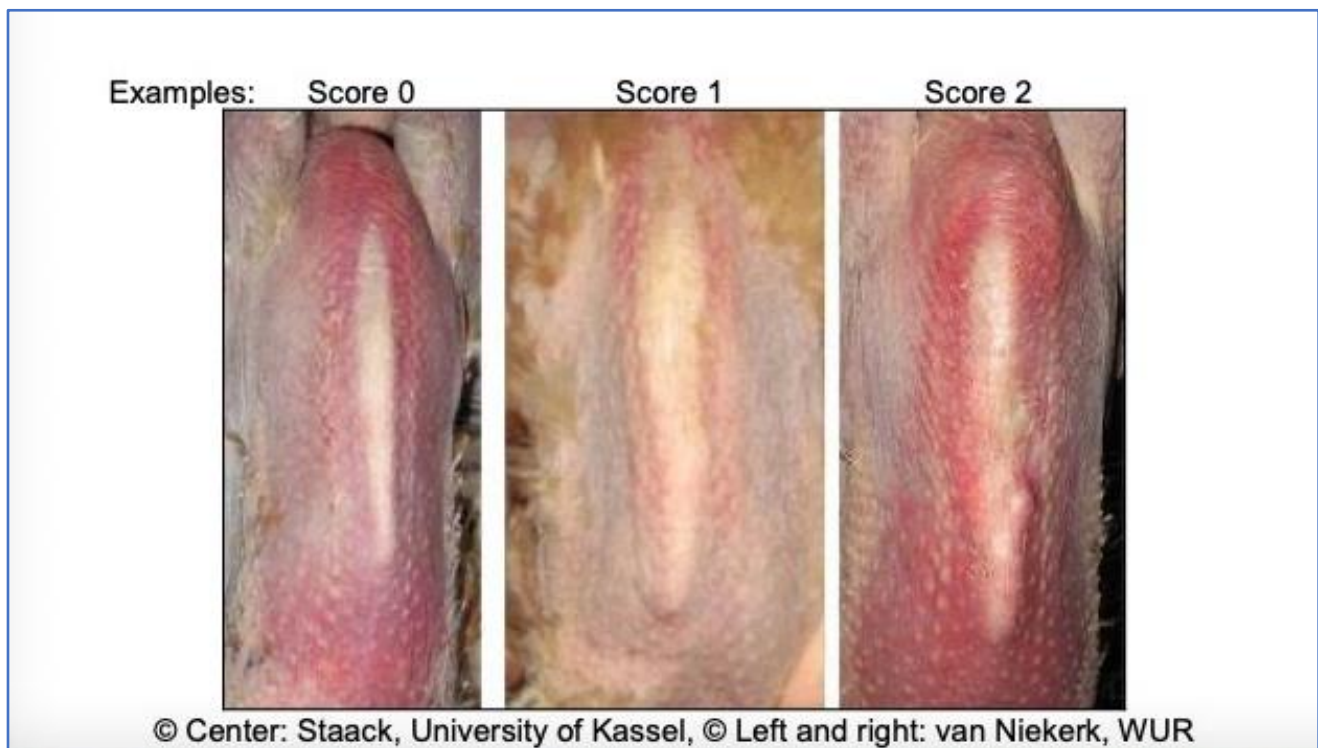
Assess 30 birds for keel bone deformations at placement and every 16 weeks thereafter. Average the scores. At audit, the 30 birds can be the same ones picked up for beak and feather photos to minimize disturbance to the flock.

Palpate the keel bone and feel for dips, lumps, thickenings, or other abnormalities. Compare what you feel with the photos below, score each bird and record. If keel bone deformities that score 1 or higher exceed 75% prevalence, an immediate action plan must be developed.

0 = No deformations or thickened sections, keel bone is completely straight

1 = Moderate deformations (flattening, s-shape, bending) or thickened sections can be felt

2 = Significant deformations of keel bone, including thickened sections



Appendix V: Ill or Injured birds

Ill or Injured Bird Identification

Vent gleet

- Oozing white or yellow discharge from vent
- Feathers generally wet and sticky



Prolapse

- Red tissue emanating from the vent
- Can attract flies
- Can exacerbate pecking behavior
- Can be covered with litter or soil



Morbid

- Posture abnormal
- May be crouched in corners or high away from other birds
- Look dull, often the head is pulled back on the neck so it nestles into the body



Broken limb

- Can be leg or wing, clearly dysfunctional

Cuts or wounds

- Fresh blood, often on the comb or vent if the result of pecking
- Injuries resulting from equipment edges or other objects
- Don't include wounds that are healed



Blind birds

- Eyes are missing or creamy
- Can be the result of pecking or a spike in ambient ammonia levels



Appendix VI: Air Quality Scoring Scale

Sensory Air Quality Scoring Scale

Score air quality when you first enter the house and when you are about to leave the house. A score higher than 2 is unacceptable and requires immediate action to reduce levels of ammonia and dust.

0 Zero: Odor or dust not noticeable (easy to breathe)

1 Weak: Odor or dust hardly noticeable

2 Moderate: Odor or dust distinct, annoying

3 Strong: Odor or dust irritating (watery eyes and/or coughing)

4 Very Strong: Odor or dust just bearable (stinging eyes and mouth, excessive coughing and/or pain when swallowing)

5 Overpowering: Odor or dust unbearable, you need to leave the house (hurts to breathe)

Appendix VII: Nest Cleanliness Scale

0 Clean: there is no fecal material visible in the nests

1 Low: less than 1/4 of the nest floor is covered with fecal material

2 Moderate: between 1/4 and 1/2 of the nest floor is covered with fecal material

3 Excessive: more than 1/2 of the nest floor is covered with fecal material

Appendix VIII: Vegetation Assessment

Vegetation Assessment for Grassland

100%



75%



50%



<25%



Separately score all outdoor areas through which birds are rotated, whether currently occupied or not. For a permanent house system, beginning 50 ft from the house, take photos looking straight down at the ground. In a mobile house system, begin 25 ft from the mobile unit. Walk across the entire outdoor area, stopping and taking photos every 6-10 paces. Take a minimum of 10 photos, optimally closer to 20 for accurate assessment. Farm self assessments do not require photos, but it creates a good record and is advisable.

Rangeland Vegetation Assessment

**Low tree or
bush cover**



Tall plants



**Orchard or
woodland**



**Unique natural
objects**



Describe vegetation in terms of the above four categories in each outdoor area. Take photos of the entire outdoor area outside the house or houses and everywhere vegetation provides cover for birds. If the area includes both grassland and rangeland, assess vegetation according to both grassland and rangeland assessment protocols with photos to show the distribution of vegetative areas available to the birds. If there are different environments available in different areas of rotation, try to show the entire area and each division of the larger area so it is clear what resources the farm is using for the birds.