Whole Foods Market Animal Welfare Standards for Laying Hens
December 2025

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to state Whole Foods Market's Animal Welfare Standards for Laying Hens.

Background

Whole Foods Market has long championed farm animal welfare. Since 2017, we have gone beyond cage-free to uphold Animal Welfare Standards for Laying Hens. These standards were developed after hundreds of farm visits and consultations with farmers, pullet growers, poultry geneticists, and animal welfare scientists. The standards are designed to improve the level of animal welfare and meet the expectations of our customers.

Scope

These standards apply to chicken eggs sold in our U.S. Dairy departments and used in our own kitchens, including shell eggs, liquid eggs, and hard-boiled eggs.

Standards Overview

Eggs are produced using different systems. These standards recognize that each system is unique with its own specific requirements for achieving good animal welfare. To receive certification, farms must meet all standards that apply to their specific production system. Some standards are identified as critical to bird welfare and therefore have a more rigorous corrective action process, which is detailed in the Program Manual.

In cases where any standard conflicts with local, State, or national regulations or laws, producers must contact Whole Foods Market Quality Standards for guidance. Similarly, if following a standard as written could potentially compromise bird welfare on the farm producers may request a temporary deviation by submitting a formal request to Whole Foods Market Quality Standards for determination and approval before making any changes. For example, to manage disease risk, standards 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3 can be deviated from for specific periods provided the request for a deviation is accompanied by a current state or regional regulatory letter or communication mandating or recommending restriction of birds to housing (see Appendix IX for example document).

All farms must maintain a current certificate to supply eggs to Whole Foods Market. Additionally, any packing facilities not under USDA scrutiny must obtain and maintain a Whole Foods Market Small Egg Supplier Food Safety Standards certification, with complete standards available in Appendix VIII.

Production Systems

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

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

Pasture Raised
Birds must have year-round access to an outdoor area with rooted vegetative cover.

Mobile housing is an option for Pasture Raised systems with specific requirements denoted in the standards.

Table of Contents

Section 1: Traceability

1.1: Traceability for farms, producer groups and packing plants [Critical]

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: Multiple production systems

Eggs from different production systems must be segregated and tagged and/or packed accordingly.

Section 2: Records and Documentation

2.1: Farm plan or SOP [Critical]

A farm must have a written farm plan or SOP that includes all the following:

1. Biosecurity procedures and protocols including:
   a. Response to disease risk including bird management and veterinary contact details.
   b. Movement and visitor control.
   c. Vaccination program.
   d. Emergency depopulation.
   e. Collection and hygienic disposal of dead birds.
2. Health plan including:
   a. Vitamin and mineral supplementation
   b. Additions to feed and water.
   c. Parasite control.
3. Pest control.
4. Predator control.
5. Management of temperature in permanent housing.
6. Handling, and catching.
7. Depopulation.
8. Training for all tasks required for employees who work with birds, including:
   a. Recognition and management of morbid (sick) or injured birds.
   b. Competence in euthanasia as outlined in Standard 3.5.
   c. Competence in handling birds.
   d. Competence in all tasks required at depopulation if carried out on and by the farm.
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.
13. If the farm provides a Wintergarden and/or outdoor access, the farm plan or SOP must also include the following:
    a. Maintenance of the Wintergarden and outdoor area, including mitigation of contamination, absence of debris, rubbish, etc.
    b. Aerial image of farm (preferred) or diagram of the outdoor area that shows:
       i. Position of house(s).

ii. Boundary of the area to which birds have access.
iii. Any divisions within the larger outdoor area.

14. Mobile systems must include a house movement plan.

2.2: Farm specification sheet

1. A specification sheet for barns, houses and wintergardens must be maintained that includes:
   a. Length and width of buildings to which birds have access.
   b. Total indoor area available to birds including:
      i. Total area of solid floor available to birds.
      ii. Total area of platforms and tiers, excluding nests.
      iii. Total area of nest tops if available to birds.
   c. Number of individual or community nests.
      i. Area of each community nest.
      ii. Total area of community nests.
   d. Type, number or length of feeders.
   e. Type, number or length of drinkers.
   f. Length of qualifying elevated perches as required in Standard 6.12.
   g. Type and number of objects provided for cover and/or blinds.
2. For farms on which birds have access to a wintergarden and/or outdoors, the specification sheet must also include:
   a. Number and locations of doors or popholes.
   b. Dimensions of doors or popholes.
   c. Height of doors or popholes above the house floor.
   d. Height of doors or popholes above the ground outdoors.
   e. Total area of wintergardens or outdoors.
   f. Resources in wintergardens.
   g. If rotational access is used outdoors, the divisions and areas of each segment through which birds are moved.
   h. Type, location and total area of constructed cover/shade.
   i. Description of natural cover or shade.
   j. Type and number of outdoor drinkers.
   k. Type and number of outdoor feeders, if used.

2.3: Feed records

1. List of ingredients in feed, for each type of feed used.
2. List of edible foraging materials and dates provided.
3. Dates of induced modified molting, including feed regimen and lighting schedule for molting period.

2.4: 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

a. Training records must list all tasks included in the training and be dated and signed by the employee(s) and the trainer.

2.5: 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. Flock records must include:

2.5.1: Delivery records

1. Information for either chick or pullet delivery including:
   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 chicks or pullets to the farm.
   d. Number of birds dead on arrival.
   e. Number of birds delivered.
   f. Beak trimming details:
      i. Date and age when beak trimming occurred.
      ii. Method of beak trim.
      iii. Service or person conducting beak trim.
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.

2.5.2: Litter records: Permanent housing

1. Date, type and amount of litter when first provided and subsequent replenishment.

2.5.3: Light records

1. Light settings and the reasons for any changes, such as for feather pecking.
2. Light intensity readings at least quarterly at bird height in multiple locations throughout the house.

2.5.4: Flock health records

1. All health-related issues such as piling, feather pecking, feather loss, keel bone injuries, or disease, must be recorded along with the date and number of birds affected.
2. Feather condition must be assessed at least monthly using the scoring guide in Appendix III.
3. Keel bone condition must be assessed for flocks in aviary systems at placement and then every 16 weeks for the life of the flock using the scoring guide in Appendix IV.
4. Medical treatment prescribed for any illness, injury, parasitic infestation, etc., must have the following details recorded:
   a. Copy of veterinary prescription.
   b. Date and duration of treatment.

c. Withdrawal period for medication.
d. Dates that eggs will be withheld from Whole Foods Market supply.

2.5.5: Adverse event records

1. Records must be kept of all non-health related events, such as equipment breakdown or severe weather that impact the birds along with the date and number of birds affected.

2.5.6: Depopulation records

1. Records must be kept of:
   a. Depopulation date for each flock.
   b. Number of birds depopulated.
   c. Method of depopulation. (live haul, Controlled Atmosphere Killing (CAK), or cervical dislocation).
   d. Destination or disposal details.
2. If depopulation is carried out by the farm, there must be an SOP on site that outlines the process reflected in Standard 3.10.
   a. If CAK depopulation used, for each depopulation the type of system used, gas or gas mixture used and a functionality check for equipment prior to use must be recorded.
   b. Any deviations from the SOP must be recorded.
3. If depopulation is carried out by a commercial company, the name, contact and system used by the company must be recorded.

2.6: Daily records

The following daily records must be maintained for each flock of birds kept separately in permanent housing or as a flock with access to one or more mobile houses.

2.6.1: Indoor daily records

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 (see Standard 6.8).
2. Temperature in permanent housing.
3. Time lights are turned on and off each day if light is managed.
4. Time feeders and drinkers are filled, or if automatic, confirmation they are operating correctly.
5. Cleanliness of feeders and drinkers.
6. Morbid or injured birds, using the guide in Appendix V.
7. Number of birds found dead and cause of death (mortality).
8. Number of birds euthanized (culled) and reason for culling, kept separately from mortality.
9. Hazards to bird health such as equipment failures, including nest closeout malfunction and actions taken.

2.6.2: Outdoor daily records [Critical]

For farms with outdoor access:

1. Times that doors or popholes are opened and closed each day.

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 to address predation.

2.7: Weekly records

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

1. Number of birds at the beginning or end of each week.
2. Functionality of equipment, including close-out nests, feeders, and drinkers.
3. Cleanliness of nests using scoring guide in Appendix VII.
4. Condition of outdoor area.
5. For mobile systems, the dates mobile houses are moved.

Section 3: Health and Wellbeing

3.1: Medication protocols [Critical]

1. Subtherapeutic antibiotic use is prohibited.
2. If medication is prescribed by a veterinarian, the medication must be administered and details including the prescription recorded.
3. Flocks or birds treated with antibiotics, sulfa drugs, or ionophores are prohibited from supplying eggs to Whole Foods Market for the remaining lifetime of the flock.
4. Whole Foods Market must be notified immediately of all flocks prohibited from supplying eggs after treatment with antibiotics, sulfa drugs, or ionophores, using the "Submit new antibiotic notice" form, and the farm will be withdrawn from supply for the current flock.
5. The farm can be reinstated once the same form confirming flock removal and completion of all required cleaning and hygiene protocols is submitted and approved.

3.2: Feather condition

1. There must be a plan in place to respond to feathering issues.
2. If feather condition drops below the age-related production system tolerances defined in Appendix III, a response plan must be implemented immediately to identify cause and correct the problem.
3. Feathers must not be soiled with mud, fecal material, etc.

3.3: Keel bone assessment: Aviary systems

1. If keel bone deformities or injuries as defined and assessed in Appendix IV exceed 75% prevalence of score 1 or higher, an immediate action plan must be developed and put in place that addresses potential causes such as:
   a. Nutrition.
   b. Number or position of ramps or steps.
   c. Perch design/space.
   d. Handling during transport.
   e. Stocking density.

3.4: Ill, injured and dead birds [Critical]

1. Birds must be euthanized immediately when:
    a. They cannot walk or stand.
    b. They are morbid or injured and are unlikely to recover.
2. Dead birds must be removed from the house within a day and disposed of in a hygienic manner.

3.5: Euthanasia [Critical]

1. Euthanasia must be conducted only using cervical dislocation, decapitation or CAK.
2. Euthanasia must result in immediate insensibility and death.
3. Death must be confirmed before any further action is taken or leaving the area.
4. The person conducting euthanasia must be trained in the procedure being used.
    a. If a trained person is available, euthanasia must occur immediately upon discovery of a morbid or injured bird.
    b. If a trained person is not immediately available, morbid or injured birds must be segregated from the flock and euthanized within four hours of discovery.

3.6: Age at placement in laying house

Birds must be placed in the laying house or mobile system prior to the onset of lay.

3.7: Brooding and pullet rearing for placement on farm

1. Pullet 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.
2. When heaters are no longer required for thermoregulation, the following resources must be provided:
    a. Litter that covers the entire floor.
    b. Perches.
    c. Cover or blinds.
    d. Edible foraging material.
    e. If the laying house includes platforms, the pullet house must include adjustable, elevated platforms that are raised as the birds grow.
        i. If the laying house includes water and/or feed on the platforms, the adjustable elevated platforms must include water lines and/or feed.
3. Lighting in pullet and laying environments must be synchronized before birds are moved to laying houses.
4. Brooding structures composed of drawers or compartments are prohibited.

3.8: Bird handling [Critical]

1. It is prohibited to treat birds in a manner that causes pain, injury or distress, such as striking, throwing, kicking, etc.
2. Birds must not be carried solely by their wings.
3. No more than two birds can be carried at the same time except during depopulation.

3.9: Hospital pens

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

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 in the hospital pen 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, and cover/blinds.
3. The provisions in the hospital pens must be accessible to the birds that are morbid or injured.
    a. Perches closer to the floor than 12 in (30 cm) 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.

3.10: Depopulation

1. Birds must be handled according to Standard 3.8 during depopulation.
2. A plan for emergency depopulation must be in place (see Section 2.1. Farm Plan).
3. Carcasses must be disposed of in a hygienic and safe manner such as composting, incineration or deep burial.

3.10.1: Live removal

1. Birds must be loaded at night or in dim lighting.
2. Birds must not be in cages for longer than 6 hours.

3.10.2: On-farm CAK depopulation

On-farm CAK depopulation can be achieved using whole-house gassing, partial-house gassing, chambers or containers / trailers.

1. Partial house CAK euthanasia using tarps is prohibited.
2. Functionality of all equipment must be verified prior to every use.
3. Gas concentration and duration of exposure must cause rapid unconsciousness and death of all birds.
4. Birds must not be exposed to freezing temperatures from administration of the gas.
5. There must be visibility into the house, chamber, container or trailer during gas infusion.
6. Death must be confirmed prior to leaving the site or disposal of the carcasses.
7. Any birds still alive must be euthanized in compliance with Standard 3.5.
8. Chambers must not be overfilled with birds to the point where pressure must be used to close the door and the number of birds loaded for each use must be within the manufacturer's specification.
9. Cages or poultry carts placed within a sealed container or trailer must be positioned to allow effective exposure of all birds to the gas.

Section 4: Water and Feed

4.1: Water [Critical]

1. Birds must have free and continuous access to clean drinking water in all locations to which they have access, including houses, wintergardens and outdoor areas.
2. Water must be available from multiple sources outdoors while the temperature is above freezing.
    a. If birds have access to the outdoors from both sides of a permanent house, water must be provided on both sides of the house.
    b. If the outdoor area is divided into different segments, water must be available in each segment birds have access to.

4.2: Feed [Critical]

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. Mammalian and avian by-products are prohibited.

4.3: Forced molting

Forced molting is prohibited unless a modified protocol is used in which the following must occur:

1. Feed availability must comply with Standard 4.2.
2. Lighting must comply with Standard 6.9.

4.4 Edible foraging material in permanent housing

1. Birds must have free and continuous access to edible foraging material such as hay, grains or pecking stones that contain edible organic material when confined to housing during the following periods:
    a. The period from placement until full outdoor access is in place.
    b. Any day that outdoor access qualifies as a restricted access day as specified in Standard 8.2.
    c. Periods of restriction to housing during a deviation for biosecurity.
2. Edible foraging material must be present on site.
3. Insoluble, inorganic grit must be available if whole grains are provided.

Section 5: Physical Alterations

5.1: Physical Alterations [Critical]

Physical alterations except for beak trimming are prohibited.

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

5.2: Beak trimming

1. Beaks must not be trimmed more than once in the lifetime of the birds.

Outdoor Access

2. Beak trimming must be either infrared beak trimming (IRBT) at the hatchery or hot blade trimming conducted by a trained person or crew before 10 days of age.
   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.

Pasture Raised

3. IRBT trims at the hatchery are the only acceptable method of beak trimming.
4. 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.

Mobile housing

5. Beak trimming is prohibited.

Section 6: Housing

6.1: Cages [Critical]

It is prohibited to confine birds in cages or cage-like structures except during transport or depopulation.

6.2: Indoor space in permanent housing

1. The space 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.
2. There must be a minimum of 1.2 ft^2 (0.11 m^2) per bird from placement, including all solid flooring, platforms, and nest tops to which birds have access.
3. A wintergarden can only be included in the total area of the house if doors between the house and the wintergarden are permanently open.
4. Shelves along the walls and nest interiors do not qualify as part of the total area of the house.
5. Birds trapped under a platform must be removed immediately and the entry point(s) sealed.
6. Potential hazards to birds such as platform design, sharp edges, protruding nails, and frayed wires must be made safe.

6.3: Indoor space in mobile housing

1. There must be enough space in mobile houses for birds to move freely and safely among resources.
2. If birds in mobile housing systems must be restricted from outdoor access to manage disease risk, the indoor space and other resources must meet all the requirements for permanent housing (see Standard 6.2.).

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 indoor space of the house, as described in Standard 6.2.

6.5: Litter provision and quality in permanent housing [Critical]

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 such as wood shavings, straw, etc. must be distinguishable throughout the life of the flock.
5. Litter must be friable.
6. Caking of more than 10% of the litter area must be addressed immediately.
7. Litter in wooden boxes does not qualify as litter provision.

6.6: Platform requirements

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 in front of nests are prohibited.
2. The use of more than a single hot wire in each area is prohibited.
3. Hot wires must not restrict access to doors or popholes and if in front of a door or pophole must be covered or insulated.
4. Hot wires are prohibited after birds reach 25 weeks of age.
5. Hot wires must be removed from the house, lifted, or disabled/disconnected when not in use.

6.8: Air quality [Critical]

1. Ammonia levels must be no higher than 1 on the Sensory Evaluation Scale in Appendix VI or a reading below 20 ppm if an ammonia meter or pH strips are used.
2. If the sensory evaluation is higher than 1 or ammonia levels higher that 20 ppm using a meter or pH strips, immediate action must be taken to improve air quality.

6.9: Lighting

1. A light intensity of at least 20 lux must be maintained in permanent housing 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: Temperature in housing

1. Temperature in permanent and mobile housing must be managed to provide a comfortable environment for the birds.
2. When temperature in housing exceeds 90°F (32°C), or there are signs of heat stress in birds (open mouth panting and or wings held out from the body) a method of cooling must be implemented, such as fans, misters, or supplemental cooling.
3. When temperature in housing falls below 35°F (2°C) or there are signs of cold stress in birds (fluffed up feathers, holding up a foot, huddling, shivering or lethargy) a method of supplemental heating must be implemented such as heaters, lamps or reduced heat loss.

6.11: Nests [Critical]

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.
   b. Community nests must provide at least 0.9 ft^2 (0.08 m^2) for every 10 birds.
2. Nests must contain substrate that birds can manipulate (Straw, wood shavings, or padding with fingers such as AstroTurf).
3. Manipulable AstroTurf nest pads with more than 30% of the nest area of fingers worn off must be replaced.
4. Nests must enable birds to seek seclusion and darkness by the provision of curtains or an elevated nest front.
   a. At least every second curtain of community nests must be down in front of the nests to provide sufficient seclusion.
5. Nests must have a staging platform or rail in front.
6. Nest cleanliness must not have an average score of more than 1 on the Nest Cleanliness Scale in Appendix VII.

6.12: Perches

1. Perch rails must be elevated and have a drop of at least 12 in (30.5 cm) above the floor, platform, or ground on at least one side of the perch.
2. Perch rails must allow birds to adopt a secure roosting posture with their feet wrapped around the rail.
   a. Rails immediately in front of nests do not qualify as perches.
3. Perch design and placement must not pose a risk of injury to the birds.
4. Perch rails must not have any sharp edges or corners.
5. Adjacent perch rails must be at least 12 in (30 cm) apart.
6. Birds must be able to perch on a rail in a natural posture without touching the ceiling.

6.12.1: Perch provision

1. In all new permanent housing, there must be at least 4.5 in (11 cm) of perch space per bird.
2. Existing housing that cannot be modified to meet the perch space requirement of this standard for structural reasons, must provide the maximum perch space possible and may be grandfathered at that perch allowance.
3. Mobile houses must have at least 6 in (15 cm) of perch space per bird.

6.13: 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 (9 m) from any point in the house.
3. If a platform runs down the middle of the house and is divided by a nest structure in the center, objects must be provided equally on both sides of the platform.

   Note:
   - *If cover or blinds are inherent in the design of the house, no other structures are required.*
   - *Nests do not qualify as cover except for accessible space under elevated community nests or 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.*

6.14: 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.
3. The aisles between aviary structures must be less than or equal to 36 in (91.5 cm) or greater or equal to 8 ft (2.4 m). These measurements include overhangs or perching on the structure.
4. Aviary structures must be at least 8 ft (2.4 m) away from a wall.
5. 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.
6. Ramps, steps, or arrangement of tiers must facilitate movement of birds among all tiers of the aviary and down to 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 in (40 cm).
7. Lighting throughout the aviary, including under the bottom tier, must meet Standard 6.9.
8. Aviaries must allow daily visual inspection of all birds on all tiers.
9. Existing aviaries that cannot be modified to meet the structural requirements of this standard may be grandfathered.

6.14.1: Height tolerance in aviaries

1. **Cage Free Plus, Outdoor Access**
   The base of the top tier cannot be more than 9 ft (2.7 m) from the concrete floor.
2. **Pasture Raised**
   The base of the top tier cannot be more than 7 ft (2.1 m) from the concrete floor.

Section 7: Outdoor Environment

7.1: Doors and Popholes

1. Doors and/or popholes must be accessible from any point in the house and open directly from the house to a Wintergarden or outdoors.

   7.1.1: For new barn constructions or for farms being added to the Whole Foods Market supply chain, there must be doors and/or popholes in multiple locations on both sides of the house.

   7.1.2: Existing houses with doors and/or popholes on one side of the house will be grandfathered.
2. Doors and/or popholes must be large enough to permit more than one bird to pass through at the same time without obstruction.
3. A ramp or steps must be provided if there is a differential of 16 in (41 cm) or more between the floor of the house or the ground outdoors and the bottom of the doors and/or popholes.
   a. Ramps must be no steeper than 45°.
   b. Ramps must be wide enough to allow one bird to pass another.
   c. Ramps must have a non-slip surface.
4. Birds must be able to enter and exit the house throughout the day.
5. Door arrangement must provide access to the wintergarden or outdoor area to all birds in the house or in all sections of the house.
   a. During extreme weather half of the number of doors may be closed to maintain the environment within the house and not count as restricted access.
   b. Weather conditions and duration of door closures must be documented.

7.2: Condition of outdoor areas

1. Outdoor areas must not present a risk to bird or human health due to fecal contamination, hazardous substances or objects that pose a danger or health risk to the birds.
2. Outdoor areas to which birds have access must be maintained in a manner such that birds can move about and avoid standing in water or mud.

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, but there are no vegetation requirements unless vegetation is part of the cover/shade requirement in Standards 7.9 and 7.10.
2. **Pasture Raised**
   The outdoor area must consist of at least 50% rooted vegetative cover at all times of the year, measured across the outdoor area beginning at 50 ft (15 m) from the house and extending

500 ft (152 m) or to the fenceline, whichever is closer. Rooted vegetative cover consists of grasses, plants, shrubs, bushes or trees.

7.8: Movement of Mobile Housing

Mobile houses must be moved frequently enough to maintain the vegetative cover requirements of Standard 7.3.

7.9: Cover and Shade

Cover and shade must be visible from the doors of the house.

1. Cover/shade can be woodland, brushland, vegetation or artificial structures that are maintained to be consistently as tall as the birds.
2. Awnings attached to housing can be considered part of the available cover/shade, but there must be additional cover/shade distributed throughout the outdoor area.
3. Mobile houses can be considered part of the cover/shade requirement providing the floor of the mobile house is at least 2 ft (0.6 m) above the ground.
   Note: *Cover/shade is best provided by tall plants, bushes, woodlands, brushy areas, fallen trees, or piles of cut branches that make excellent cover and are attractive to pollinators and other beneficial insects. Artificial structures can be costly and difficult to maintain.*

7.10: Area of cover and shade

1. **Outdoor Access**
   There must be at least 0.4 ft^2 (0.04m^2) of cover and shade for 25% of the number of birds in the flock in the outdoor area that birds have access to (e.g. 100 ft^2 per 1000 birds).
2. **Pasture Raised**
   Permanent houses. There must be at least 0.4 ft^2 (0.04m^2) of cover and shade for 50% of the number of birds in the flock in the outdoor area that birds have access to (e.g. 200 ft^2 per 1000 birds).
   Mobile housing. There must be at least 0.4 ft^2 (0.04m^2) of cover and shade for all the birds in the flock in the outdoor area that birds have access to (e.g. 200 ft^2 per 500 birds).

Section 8: Access to the Outdoors

8.1: Onset of access to the outdoors

Permanent houses. Access to outdoors must begin by 22 weeks of age with full daily access as required in Standard 8.2 by 24 weeks of age.
Mobile houses. Access to the outdoors must be fully in place by 16 weeks of age as required in Standard 8.2.

8.2: Duration of daily access to the outdoors [Critical]

Each day must be evaluated for risk to the birds, and if the weather is amenable, birds must be given access to the outdoors.
Reasons for restriction of birds to housing must be recorded as required in Standard 2.6.2.

1. **Permanent housing.** Doors or popholes must be open for at least 6 daylight hours per day or the day must be recorded as a restricted access day.
2. **Mobile housing.** All birds must have continuous outdoor access within one hour of sunrise to no earlier than one hour before sunset.

8.3: Monthly restriction of outdoor access [Critical]

1. **Outdoor Access**
   There must be no more than 14 restricted access days, as defined in Standard 8.2, in a calendar month or the month must be recorded as a restricted access month.
2. **Pasture Raised**
   Permanent housing. There must be no more than seven restricted access days, as defined in Standard 8.2, in a calendar month, or the month must be recorded as a restricted access month.
   Mobile housing. Birds must not be restricted to mobile housing on any days in a month.

8.4: Annual restriction of outdoor access [Critical]

1. **Outdoor Access**
   There must be no more than six restricted access months, as defined in Standard 8.3, in each 12-month period.
2. **Pasture Raised**
   Permanent housing. There must be no restricted access months and no more than 28 restricted access days, as defined in Standard 8.2, in each 12-month period.
   Mobile housing. Birds must not be restricted to mobile housing for any days or months in a year.

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, trees and plants that are taller than the birds.

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 the birds have been infected by 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 cannibalism 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 or live together. In permanent housing, this can mean all birds from the same delivery in one house even if there is a partition between groups of birds. In mobile housing, this can mean all birds in one mobile house or birds with access to multiple 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 be temporarily separated from the flock to recover.

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
An environment comprised of a variety of grasses, tall plants, forbs, shrubs, bushes, rocks, woodlands, orchards, etc. that attracts birds by providing cover, shade, and foraging.

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 outlined in these Standards are Cage-Free Plus, Outdoor Access and Pasture Raised.

Restricted access day
A day when doors or popholes are not open for six or more daylight hours.

Restricted access month
A calendar month in which the maximum number of restricted access days is exceeded.

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.

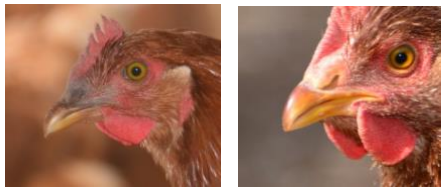
Appendix II: Beak Trim Scoring

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 ¾ beak remains
- Upper and lower beaks even

3

- More than ½ beak remains
- Difference between upper and lower beaks minor

4

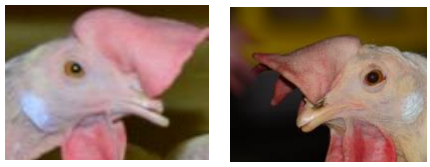
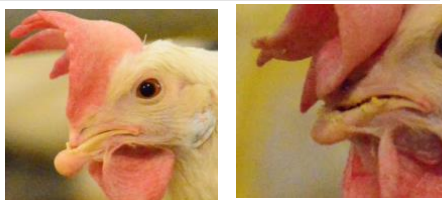
- Between ¼ and ½ of beak
- Imbalance between beaks
- Minor neuroma possible

5

- Less than ¼ 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 ¾ beak remains • Upper and lower beaks even	
3	• More than ½ beak remains • Difference between upper and lower beaks minor	
4	• Between ¼ and ½ of beak • Imbalance between beaks • Minor neuroma possible	
5	• Less than ¼ 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

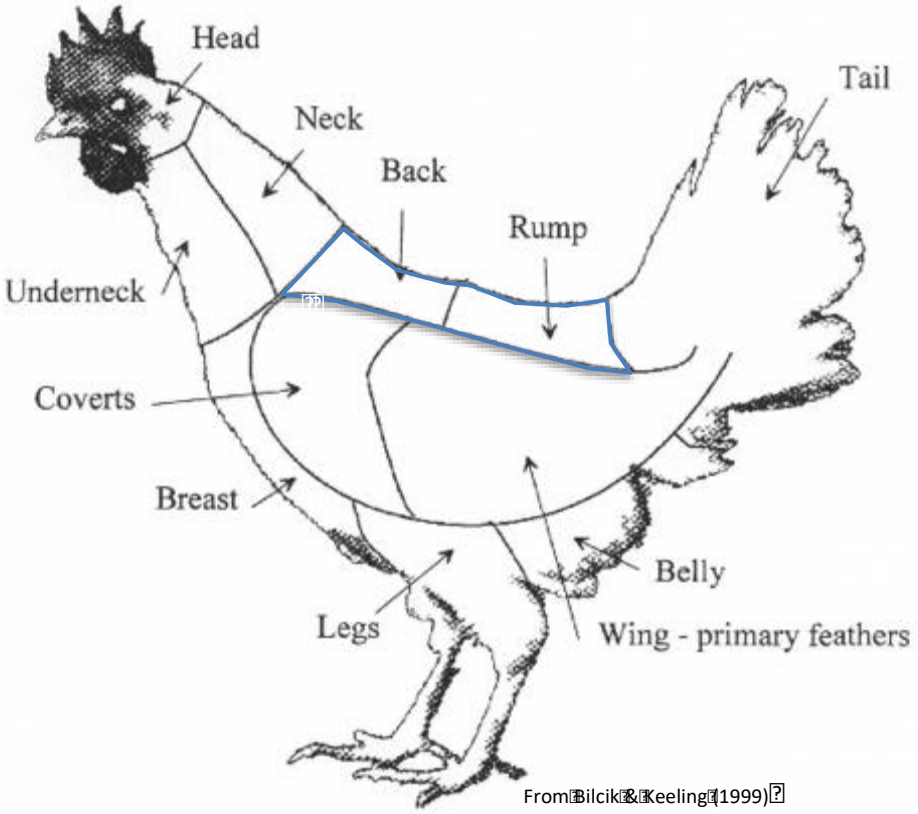
- Obvious bare patch that is less than 50% of the back/rump area


4

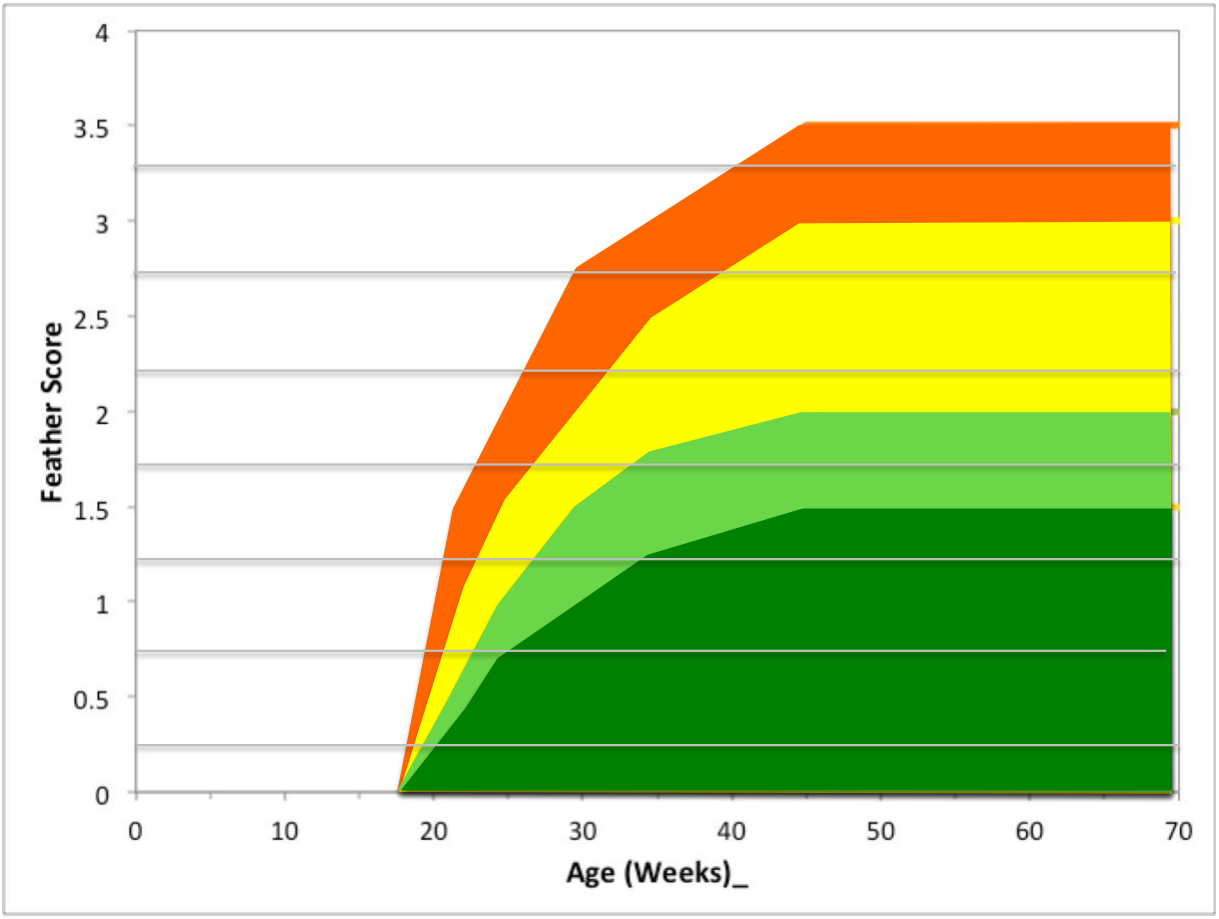
- Bare patch that is greater than 50% of the back/rump area

5

- Back is completely bare

Scoring region, Back and Rump, outlined in blue above



Feather score level calculator

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

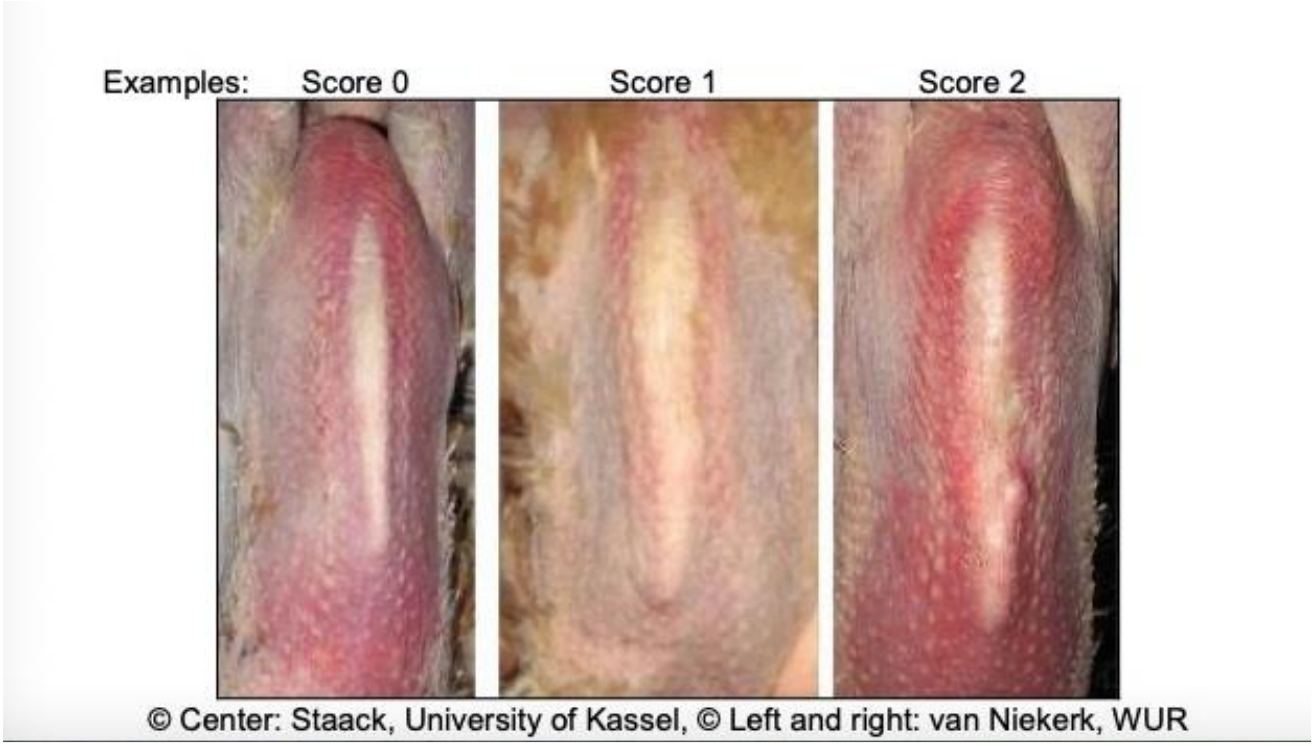
Week	18	22	25	30	35	45	50	60	70
Cage Free Plus	0	1.5	2	2.75	3.0	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5
Outdoor Access	0	1.0	1.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Pasture Raised	0	0.6	1.0	1.5	1.8	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Mobile Housing	0	0.4	0.7	1.0	1.25	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5

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



© Center: Staack, University of Kassel, © Left and right: van Niekerk, WUR

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 VII: Example Letter from State Recommending Confinement

BOAH
INDIANA STATE
BOARD of ANIMAL HEALTH

Office of the State Veterinarian
Discovery Hall , Suite 100
1202 East 38th Street
Indianapolis, IN 46205 2898
Phone: 317/544-2400
Kyle Shipman, DVM, State Veterinarian

TO: Indiana Poultry Producers

FROM: Kyle Shipman, DVM, Indiana State Veterinarian

DATE: November 10, 2025

SUBJECT: Biosecurity Recommendations for Poultry Raised Outdoors

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) has been diagnosed in several poultry flocks across the country over the past few weeks including a few cases in neighboring states and numerous cases in Northern Indiana. Additionally, wild birds in the Mississippi flyway continue to be affected with HPAI, including wild birds recently sampled in more than a dozen counties across Indiana. Domestic flocks at highest risk are those that may come into contact with wild birds or their droppings.

To reduce the risk of disease exposure, the Indiana State Board of Animal Health strongly recommends that flocks raised with outdoor access be kept inside at this point. Additionally, review of your biosecurity plan and implementation of the highest level of biosecurity practical is encouraged.

Please immediately report signs of illness or increased mortality to your flock veterinarian or BOAH. Signs of HPAI infection may include sudden death without clinical signs; lethargy; decreased feed or water consumption; decreased egg production; soft-shelled or misshapen eggs; swelling or purple discoloration of the head, eyelids, comb, or hocks; nasal discharge; coughing; sneezing; lack of coordination; and diarrhea.

Updates on previous cases in Indiana can be found online at: https://www.in.gov/boah/species-information/avianbirds/highly-pathogenic-avian-influenza/ You may visit that webpage to subscribe for updates delivered via text and/or email by clicking the red subscription message at the top. Thank you for your partnership and tremendous efforts as we continue to face this challenge.

Sincerely,

Kyle Shipman, DVM
Indiana State Veterinarian

Safeguarding Indiana's animals, food supply and citizens for more than 135 years.
An equal opportunity employer and provider.

Appendix VIII: Whole Foods Market Small Egg Supplier Food Safety Standards

On July 9, 2009, FDA published the FDA Egg Safety Rule that established a regulation, part 118 (21 CFR part 118), entitled Prevention of Salmonella Enteritidis (SE) in Shell Eggs During Production, Transportation, and Storage (74 FR 33030). It required producers to maintain records concerning their compliance with the Rule and to register with FDA.

FDA took this action because SE is among the leading bacterial causes of foodborne illness in the United States, and shell eggs are a primary source of human SE infections. According to FDA, this final egg rule will reduce SE-associated illnesses and deaths by reducing the risk of shell eggs being contaminated with SE.

The Rule originally was implemented for farms with 50,000 hens or more. Then in July 2012, farms with 3,000 hens or more were also required to be in compliance. Farms with fewer than 3,000 birds were, and are still, exempt from the Rule.

Since these small suppliers produce a portion of the eggs supplied to Whole Foods Market locally, it is important to support these small suppliers as they work toward implementing compliant food safety measures to ensure a wholesome product for our consumers.

These food safety standards and certification was designed to help small egg producers with flocks of 3,000 or fewer hens that are not under FDA regulation meet food safety standards while taking all aspects of the business into account.

According to FDA, an egg processor is an establishment that conducts any of the following: cleaning, candling, grading, sorting, or packaging eggs.

For egg processors, annual licensing through the State may be required. In some States, a seal from the State's Department of Agriculture may also be required. Please check with your State Department of Agriculture or regulatory agency with jurisdiction over eggs in your area for more information.

It the egg processor has a GMP or GFSI audit that includes a full food safety evaluation, that audit may be shared with Whole Foods Market to substitute for the Whole Foods Market Small Egg Supplier Food Safety Standard audit.

Section 1: Salmonella Enteritidis (SE) protocols

1.1. Source of birds:

All laying hens supplying eggs to Whole Foods Market must be sourced from monitored SE free stocks.

a. Birds must come from NPIP stocks or equivalent with records kept on farm.

1.2. SE Testing protocols

Laying areas must be tested for SE at the following intervals using the same FDA protocols found in the FDA Egg Safety Rule.

a. For all flocks, testing for SE in the environment must occur for each group of layers between 40 and 45 weeks of age.
b. For flocks that undergo a molt, in addition to the 40-45 week test, additional testing must be undertaken 4-6 weeks after every molting cycle is completed.
c. Samples may be taken by a veterinarian, regulatory agency, or someone trained in obtaining samples for shipping to certified private, academic, or State laboratories equipped to test for SE.
d. Test results must be kept and made available at the audit.
   Note: *If trained, the farmer or an employee can conduct the sampling.*

1.3. Positive SE test of the laying area:

If a test is positive for SE, the following sequence must be followed:

a. Egg supply to Whole Foods Market must be paused.
b. Two additional tests must be conducted at one week and two weeks after the initial positive test.
c. If both the second and third tests are negative, egg supply to Whole Foods Market may resume.
    a. Document all the test results for substantiation.
d. If either the second or third test is positive, egg supply to Whole Foods Market is prohibited until the following is in place;
    a. The flock is depopulated or
    b. Eggs are sent for SE testing as described in 1.4 and return 4 negative tests.

1.4. Egg testing

Upon a second positive test in the laying barn, one third of the flock's daily production, up to a maximum of 1,000 eggs, must be sent to a laboratory for SE testing.

Four egg tests must be conducted on the flock in the positive poultry house at 2-week intervals

a. If the four egg tests are negative, the farm may resume supplying eggs to Whole Foods Market.
b. If any of the four tests are positive, then testing at this frequency must continue for the life of the flock or until all four tests are negative.

After 4 negative tests, egg supply may resume but eggs must continue to be tested monthly until depopulation and if any test is positive, supply must stop for that flock.

1.5. Repopulation

After depopulation of an SE positive flock, the house must be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized.

a. After cleaning and sanitizing, a negative environmental test for SE must occur before the house may be repopulated.

1.6. SE testing of packing facility

Work surfaces and all equipment used for washing or collecting eggs must be tested for SE twice per year.

a. If the facility tests positive for SE, Whole Foods Market must be notified immediately, and egg supply stopped.
b. All equipment must be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized.
c. The equipment must be retested within one week and the process repeated weekly until the test is negative.
d. Eggs must not be supplied to Whole foods Market until the facility has tested negative for SE on four successive tests.

Section 2: Egg packing facility requirements

2.1 Egg packing area

The egg packing area must allow all functions to be carried out efficiently and hygienically. Egg packing functions include collecting, cleaning, candling, grading, and packaging eggs.

a. The egg washing and packing area must be weatherproof.
b. The egg packing area must be sufficiently well lit to allow efficient and safe work practices.
c. The egg packing area must be used only for egg packing.
    i. A dedicated area in the basement, garage, or an outbuilding is permitted.
    ii. All egg packing activities are prohibited in domestic living areas such as kitchens, laundry rooms, and bathrooms.
d. Hand washing facilities must be provided, either with running water or a portable water container that can maintain water above 100°F.
    i. Soap and paper towels must be provided for hand washing.
    ii. Hand washing sink must be separate from the sink used for egg washing.
e. Domestic animals must be excluded from storage and from the egg packing area.
f. Pest control must be in place to eliminate rodents and insects and records kept of both rodent and control activity.
g. Sewage disposal must be provided for the building used for washing and packing.

2.2. Water for egg washing

Potable water must be used for egg washing.

a. Water must be tested annually for potability.
b. If water is from a municipal or public supply, verification of annual test results must be provided by the supplier.
c. If water is delivered by a third party, substantiation of annual testing and the results must be provided.

2.3. Work area

The work area must meet the following requirements:

a. The floor, walls, and ceiling must be of sound construction and cleaned after each use.
b. The work area must be equipped with a smooth, durable, and easily cleanable sanitary work surface for sorting and drying eggs.
c. The facility must have a two or three compartment sink if egg washing is manual.
d. The work area must have facilities for sanitation of all equipment and surfaces.
e. The work area must be suitable for cleaning eggs using one of the methods in the Section 3, Egg Handling below.
f. There must be a refrigerator or cooler used solely for the storage of eggs in the work area or an adjacent location.
    i. The refrigerator or cooler must be equipped with a thermometer that is accurate to +-3°F.
    ii. Humidity must be measured and maintained at 70-85%. Eggs must never have condensation of moisture present on the surface.
    iii. Records must be kept of both temperature and humidity in refrigeration units.

2.4. Toilet facilities

Workers must have access to toilet facilities that include a sink for hand washing, soap, and disposable towels.

a. Toilets must not open directly into the area where eggs are washed and packed.

2.5. Storage

Employees' property must be kept in a separate location from packaging materials, chemicals and equipment.
Packing materials must be stored out of direct contact with the floor.
Chemicals must be stored in a secure location.

2.6. Cleanliness

a. All work surfaces, including sinks, drain boards, and any other equipment or installations used for egg handling must be cleaned and sanitized before and after each use.
b. A sanitation log must be kept with dates and times of cleaning.
c. Workers must maintain personal cleanliness and wear clean outer garments, footwear, and headwear.
d. Workers must wash hands thoroughly before, and at least once mid-shift to minimize cross-contamination between unwashed and washed eggs.

Section 3: Egg handling

3.1. Refrigeration of eggs

Eggs must be refrigerated within 36 hours of lay.

3.2. Cleaning eggs

Eggs must be cleaned, candled, and dried (free of dripping water or condensation) before they are packaged.

a. Acceptable egg cleaning methods:
    i. Use of a commercial egg washing machine.
    ii. Sprayed with potable water in an egg basket and then allowed to air dry.
    iii. Hand dried with single-use paper towels.
b. Unacceptable egg cleaning methods:
    i. Eggs must not be submerged.
    ii. Eggs must not be oiled after washing.

3.3. Water used for egg washing

a. Water used to wash eggs must be at least 20°F warmer than the eggs with a minimum of 90°F.
b. Rinse water must be warmer than the wash water and may include an approved sanitizer.
c. Wash water must be changed every four hours or more often if needed to maintain sanitation.
d. If replacement water is needed for an automatic egg washer, the replacement water must be potable.
    i. Rinse water, including any acceptable sanitizers, may be used as replacement water.
e. Iodine sanitizers are prohibited.
f. Facilities that do not have automatic temperature control for water must use a non-glass thermometer to verify and document water temperature as often as necessary to demonstrate water temperature control.

3.4. Acceptable cleaning compounds

All cleaning compounds and sanitizers used for egg washing or sanitation of surfaces and equipment must be food grade, have original packaging available, used according to the directions on the package, and approved for egg cleaning or sanitizing. *http://www.nsf.org/usda/psnclistings.asp*

3.5. Refrigeration of cleaned eggs

a. After packing, eggs must be immediately placed in a cooler with a temperature of 45°F or less and relative humidity between 70 and 85%.
b. Temperature and humidity of the cooler must be recorded at least daily.
c. Non-food items must not be stored in the cooler with eggs.
d. Other food items stored in the cooler with eggs must be packaged to reduce or eliminate possible cross contamination and be physically separated from the eggs.

3.6. Employee Training

All egg workers must be trained in safe egg handling practices and records kept of training. Training must include:

a. Hand washing.
b. Management of illness.

c. Environmental requirements including sanitation, temperature and humidity.
d. Chemical requirements, handling and storage.
e. All tasks they are required to perform.

Section 4: Packaging, Labeling and Distribution

4.1. Egg packaging

a. Only new cartons are permitted for eggs delivered to Whole Foods Market.
b. Eggs in cartons or box cases must be stacked on pallets and must never sit directly on the floor of the storage area or cooler.
c. Eggs delivered in bulk must be packaged, in clean, sturdy containers.
d. If the farm has more than one label, there must be an appropriate physical break in packing between labels when the following must occur:
    i. Eggs and packaging from the previous label are cleared from the line before the second label is packaged.
    i. The time of the break between labels must be recorded.

4.2. Egg labeling

Egg cartons or cases must be labeled with the following information:

a. Name and address of the egg producer.
b. Common name of the food, i.e. eggs, duck eggs, etc.
c. Number of eggs in the package, i.e. one dozen, 6 eggs, etc.
d. Egg size* i.e. jumbo, extra large, large, etc.
e. Egg grade* AA, A, etc.
f. Sell-by, best-by, use-by dates, or Julian dates depending on State regulation.
g. Lot code (the last day of sale may be used as a lot code).
h. Sell-by, use-by, or best-by dates must be no more than 45 days past the date of packing.
i. The statement “Keep Refrigerated”.
j. The statement, “SAFE HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS: To prevent illness from bacteria, keep eggs refrigerated, cook eggs until yolks are firm, and cook foods containing eggs thoroughly.”
k. Egg cartons must not bear labeling that is false or misleading.
l. Packaging and labeling must be clear and legible.
m. Any labeling claims such as Omega 3, antibiotic free, non-GMO, Organic, Kosher, Halal, fertile, etc. must have documented support or certification of the claim.

* If the eggs are ungraded and not weighed, the packages/cartons should not be labeled with a grade or size.

4.3. Distribution

Whether in a refrigerated truck or in a cooler with gel packs, the temperature of eggs must be recorded and managed in the following ways:

a. Refrigerated vehicles must maintain a cooler temperature of 45º F or less during egg delivery.

b. Non-refrigerated vehicles must use a cooler with gel packs to maintain the temperature of the cooler at 45º F or less during egg delivery.
c. The ambient temperature of the container or cooler must be recorded when it leaves the egg packing facility.

Section 5: References

USFDA Egg Safety Final Rule

21 CFR 110

21CFR101.17(h)

USDA FSIS Egg Production from Farm to Table

USDA Regulations Governing the Voluntary Grading of Shell Eggs