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 developed detailed animal welfare standards for a growing number of animal 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. They are updated periodically.
• Eggs are produced in different systems. 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 requirements for achieving 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 have a more stringent corrective action process.
• For rules for the program, please refer to the Whole Foods Market Program Manual for Animal Welfare Standards for Laying Hens.

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 wants to deviate from that standard for period of time, a deviation request must be submitted to Whole Foods Market Quality Standards for a determination.
• A Whole Foods Market Food Safety Standards 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 from 26 weeks of age that is at least equivalent to the area of the house.

Birds must have access to rangeland or grassland from 24 weeks of age.

Birds must be raised in an outdoor system from 10 weeks of age that supports life on rangeland or grassland.

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.
Table of Contents

Section 1: Traceability .......................................................... 4
Section 2: Records and Documentation ................................... 4
Section 3: Health and Wellbeing ........................................... 8
Section 4: Water and Feed .................................................... 11
Section 5: Physical Alterations ............................................. 12
Section 6: Housing .............................................................. 13
Section 7: Outdoor Environment .......................................... 16
Section 8: Outdoor Access ................................................... 19
Appendix I: Definitions ....................................................... 20
Appendix II: Beak Trim Score Guide ...................................... 23
Appendix III: Feather Score Guide ........................................ 25
Appendix IV: Keel Bone Assessment Guide ......................... 28
Appendix V: Ill or Injured Birds .......................................... 29
Appendix VI: Air Quality Score Guide .................................. 30
Appendix VII: Nest Cleanliness Scale ................................. 30
Appendix VIII: Cover/Blinds in Permanent Housing ............. 30
Appendix IX: Vegetation Assessment Guide ......................... 31
Section 1: Traceability

1.1: Traceability for 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: 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:
The farm must have a written farm plan or SOP that includes all the following:
1. Biosecurity procedures and protocols.
   a. Health plan including:
      i. Vitamin and mineral supplementation
      ii. Additions to feed and water.
      iii. Vaccination program.
      iv. Parasite control.
      v. Reduction of keel bone injuries for all permanent and mobile housing.
      vi. Response to feathering issues.
2. Pest control.
3. Predator control.
4. Temperature in housing.
5. Inspection, handling, and catching.
6. Depopulation.
7. 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 using a preferred or acceptable method. (Standard 3.2)
   c. Competence in handling birds.
   d. Competence in all tasks required at depopulation if carried out by farm employees.
8. Plan for maintaining acceptable feather condition.
10. Emergency plan for delivery of feed, water, and air flow during power outages.
11. List of essential and emergency contacts.
12. If the farm provides outdoor or pasture access, the farm plan or SOP must also include the following:
   a. Maintenance of 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. Position of shade if in permanent locations, both natural and/or constructed shade structure.
iii. Boundary of the area to which birds have access.
iv. Any divisions within the larger outdoor area.

13. Mobile systems must include a coop/house movement plan.

2.2: Farm specification sheet:
1. A specification sheet for barns or coops must be maintained that includes:
   a. Length and width of houses or coops to which birds have access.
   b. Total 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 and number or length of feeders.
   e. Type and number or length of drinkers.
   f. Length of qualifying elevated perches as required in Standard 6.11.
   g. Type and number of objects provided for cover and/or blinds.

2. For farms on which birds have access to the 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.
   e. Total outdoor area.
   f. If rotational access is used, the areas of each segment through which birds are moved.
      g. Type, location and total area of constructed cover/shade.
   h. Description of natural cover or shade.
   i. Type and number of outdoor drinkers.
   j. Type and number of outdoor feeders, if used.

2.3: Feed documentation:
1. Feed tags or ingredient lists must be kept on site between audits.
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 sheets 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. These 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 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 litter is first provided.
2. Dates of litter replenishment.
3. Litter material.
4. Amount of litter placed.

2.5.3: Light records
1. Light settings and the reasons for any changes, such as for feather pecking, must be recorded.
2. Light reading must be taken and recorded at least quarterly at bird height in multiple locations throughout the house.

2.5.4: Flock health records
1. Date and number of birds affected by any health issue, such as piling, feather pecking, keel bone injuries, or disease.
2. For flocks in aviaries, 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 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 for medication used.
   d. Dates that eggs will be restricted from Whole Foods Market supply.
4. For restriction to housing due to disease risk, a copy of any regulatory letter or communication mandating or recommending restriction to housing due to a disease risk must be submitted with a Request for Deviation and kept on file.

2.5.5: Adverse event records
Records must be kept of all flock-wide events that affect the welfare of the birds, such as HPAI, e. Coli, feather loss due to feed quality issues, etc.

2.5.6: Depopulation records
1. If depopulation is carried out on farm, there must be an SOP on site that outlines the process reflected in Standard 3.10.
2. Records must be kept of:
   a. Depopulation date for each flock whether at end of lay or early depopulation.
   b. Number of birds depopulated.
   c. Method of depopulation. (live haul, CAK, or cervical dislocation)
   d. If CAK depopulation is used, for each flock depopulation, records of:
      i. Type of system used.
      ii. Gas or gas mixture with proportions recorded.
      iii. A functionality check for the chamber or sealed container prior to use.
   e. Any deviations from the SOP must be recorded.
3. Destination or disposal details.

2.6: Daily records:
2.6.1: Indoor daily 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. (See Standard 6.8)
2. Temperature 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 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. Any equipment repairs.

2.6.2: Outdoor daily 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 times could be interpreted incorrectly, i.e. 4:00AM or 4:00PM.
2. Outdoor high and low temperatures and weather conditions.
3. Reason for any restriction of birds to housing.
4. Presence of drinking water in the outdoor area.

2.7: Weekly 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. 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.

Section 3: Health and Wellbeing

3.1: Medication protocols*
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 notified.
   a. If medication is prescribed by the flock veterinarian, the medication must be administered.
   b. Prior approval must be obtained from Quality Standards before eggs are reintroduced to Whole Foods Market supply.

3.2: Euthanasia*
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. Euthanasia must be conducted using cervical dislocation or asphyxiation using CO2 or inert gases.
   a. Decapitation is acceptable, but not preferred.
   b. The use of crushing tools is prohibited.
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.

3.3: Age at placement in laying house
Birds must be placed in the laying house prior to the onset of lay.

3.4: Brooding and pullet rearing for placement on farm
1. The area in pullet rearing 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. If the laying house includes platforms, the pullet house must include adjustable, elevated platforms that can be raised as the birds grow to train them to jump up to the platform.
      i. If the laying house includes water and/or feed on the platforms, the adjustable elevated platforms must include water lines and/or fee to train the birds to find resources when they are placed.
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.

3.5: 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 solely by their wings.
3. No more than two birds can be carried at the same time except during depopulation.
4. Birds must not be handled in a manner that causes damage injury.

3.6: 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” 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. 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.
2. If a sudden flock-wide feather loss event occurs, the cause must be investigated and Whole Foods Market Quality Standards notified immediately and provided with a response plan for rectifying the situation.

3.9: Keel bone assessment
1. If at audit keel bone assessments identify deformities or injuries that score 1 or higher exceed 75% prevalence, an immediate action plan must be developed and put in place that considers causes such as:
   b. Number or position of ramps or steps.
   c. Perch design/space.
   d. Handling during transport.
   e. Stocking density.

3.10: Depopulation*
At the end of lay, spent hens can be sold to individuals, removed from the farm live, or euthanized on-farm using cervical dislocation or CAK.
1. Regardless of depopulation method, birds must be handled according to Standard 3.5.
2. Partial house CAK euthanasia using tarps is prohibited.
3. Composting and incineration are the preferred means of carcass disposal.

3.10.1: Live removal
1. Birds must be loaded at night or in dim lighting.
2. Transport must occur as soon as all birds are loaded onto the truck.

3.10.2: On-farm CAK depopulation
1. Functionality of all equipment must be verified prior to every use.
2. CAK concentration and duration of exposure must be sufficient to cause rapid unconsciousness and death of all birds.
3. Birds must be protected from freezing temperatures during administration of the gas.
4. There must be visibility into the chamber, container, trailer, or house during CAK infusion.
5. Death must be confirmed prior to removal and disposal of the carcasses.
6. Any birds still alive must be euthanized in compliance with Standard 3.2.

3.10.2.1: CAK chamber
1. The chamber must not be overfilled with birds to the point where pressure must be used to close the door.
3.10.2.2: Poultry carts (batteries) placed in sealed trailer or container.
1. The number of birds loaded into the cart/battery must be within the manufacturer’s specification for density.
2. The container or trailer must be sealed so that gas does not escape.
3. Poultry carts/batteries must be positioned in the trailer or container to admit CAK gas without presenting a barrier to flow.

Note: Poultry carts, sometimes called batteries are used for transport as well as depopulation.
http://www.fpmne.com/poultry-carts/

3.10.2.3: Whole-house CAK depopulation
1. All locations where air can transfer into or out of the house must be sealed, including:
   a. The area where the egg belt enters the egg room from the laying area.
   b. All cracks around doors or popholes.
   c. Any open areas around ventilation ducts.
2. Sufficient gas must infuse the house for a long enough timespan to cause rapid unconsciousness and death of all birds.

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, both indoors and outdoors.
2. Water must be provided in multiple locations outdoors while the temperature is above freezing.
   a. Outdoor Access 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. Pasture Raised Water must be available in multiple locations in multiple locations throughout the range/pasture.
   c. If using nipple lines, there must be at least one line available in each area to which the birds have access.

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. Mammalian and avian by-products are prohibited.

4.3: Modified molting
Modified molting is prohibited unless:
1. Feed availability complies with Standard 4.2.
2. Lighting complies with Standard 6.9
4.2: **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:* Pecking blocks that comprised entirely of inorganic material do not qualify as edible foraging material. Edible foraging material supports the birds’ need to forage and reduces the likelihood of feather pecking. Hay bales or netting containing hay suspended from the ceiling, scattered grains or grain hulls, vegetable matter, and pecking blocks that contain edible material make excellent foraging materials. Hay bales also qualify as blinds and meet the requirements of Standard 6.12.

### Section 5: Physical Alterations

#### 5.1: Physical Alterations*

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. 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

**Cage-Free Plus, Outdoor Access**

1. 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.
   a. 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**

1. 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.

**Outdoor Living**

1. Beak trimming is prohibited.
Section 6: Housing

6.1: Cages*
It is prohibited to confine birds in cages or cage-like structures at any point in their lives except during transport or depopulation.

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 total area of the house.
4. Nest interiors cannot be included in the housing area calculation.

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.

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 such as wood shavings, straw, etc. must be distinguishable throughout the life of the flock.
5. Litter must support dust-bathing behavior.
6. Litter must be friable.
   a. Caking in excess of 10% of the litter area must be addressed immediately.
7. Litter in wooden boxes does not qualify as litter provision.

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 in front of nests are prohibited.
2. The use of more than one hot wire is prohibited.
3. Hot wires must not restrict access to doors or popholes.
   a. If hot wires run in front of doors or popholes, they must be covered or insulated.
4. Hot wires are prohibited after birds reach 23 weeks of age.
5. Hot wires must be removed from the house, lifted, or disconnected when not in use.
   **Note:** Electrified wires above water lines can be used to prevent damage to the equipment.

6.8: **Air quality***
1. Ammonia levels must be no higher than 1 on the Sensory Evaluation Scale in Appendix VI or a reading below 20ppm if an ammonia meter or pH strips are used.
2. If the sensory evaluation is higher than 1 or ammonia levels higher that 20ppm using a meter or pH strips, immediate action must be taken to improve air quality. (See Standard 2.6.1)

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: **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.
   b. Community nests must provide at least 0.9 ft² (0.08cm²) for every 10 birds.
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, such as by provision of curtains or an elevated nest front.
   a. For systems with community nests, at least every second curtain must be down in front of the nests to provide sufficient seclusion.
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 AstroTurf nest pads with more than a third of the fingers missing 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, platform, or ground.
2. The perching rails must 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.
3. Perch design and placement must not pose a risk of injury to the birds.
4. Perches must be distributed throughout the house.
5. Perch rails must not have sharp edges or corners.
6. Adjacent perch rails must be at least 12” (30cm) apart.
7. Birds must be able to perch without touching the ceiling.

6.11.1: Perch provision
1. In all mobile housing and small permanent Outdoor Living housing, there must be at least 6” (15cm) of perch space per bird.
2. In all new Cage-Free Plus, Outdoor Access, and Pasture Raised permanent housing, there must be at least 4.5” (11cm) of perch space per bird.
   a. In existing housing that cannot be modified to meet the perch space requirement of this standard, the maximum perch space possible must be provided.
   b. The maximum perch space possible must be detailed in a plan that includes:
      i. Year the house was built or last modified.
      ii. Reason(s) 4.5” of perch space cannot be met.
      iii. Length of elevated perch provided per bird prior to this standard.
      iv. Evidence that all options for adding perch space have been explored, including perches:
         1. suspended from the ceiling
         2. on top of nests or platforms
         3. free standing such as A-frames
         4. angled against the wall
      v. Total length of perches and inches per bird that will be available upon execution of the plan.
      vi. Timeline for execution.

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. (See Appendix VIII)
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 the length 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 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.
- 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.
3. In a conventional aviary design, the aisles between aviary structures and the aisles between aviary structures and the wall must be at least 8’ (2.4m) wide.
4. In an open aviary system with nests in one section and feed, water, and perches in adjacent sections, the distance between the structures must be no greater than 32” (81cm)
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, 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)
7. Lighting throughout the aviary, including under the bottom tier, must meet Standard 6.8.
8. Aviaries must allow daily visual inspection of all birds on all tiers.

6.13.1: Height tolerance in aviaries
1. Cage Free Plus, Outdoor Access
   The base of the top tier cannot be more than 9’ (2.7m) from the concrete floor.
2. Pasture Raised
   The base of the top tier cannot be more than 7” (2.1m) from the concrete floor.

Section 7: Outdoor Environment

7.1: Doors and/or popholes
1. Doors and/or popholes must open directly from the house or wintergarten to the outdoor area.
2. Doors and/or popholes must provide easy access to the outdoors or pasture from any point in the house.
3. Doors and/or popholes must be large enough to permit more than one bird to pass through at the same time without obstruction.
4. 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 doors and/or popholes.
   a. Ramps must be no steeper than 45°.
   b. Ramps must be at least as wide as the pophole.
   c. Ramps must have a non-slip surface.
5. Birds must be able to enter and exit the house throughout the day.
6. For new barn construction or for farms being added to the Whole Foods Market supply chain, birds must be able to access the outdoors or pasture from multiple locations on both sides of the house.
7. Door and/or pophole arrangement must provide outdoor or pasture access to all birds in the house or in all sections of the house, if divided.
   a. During extreme weather some doors and/or popholes may be closed to maintain the environment within the house.
   b. For Outdoor Access at least \( \frac{1}{4} \) of the doors and/or popholes must remain open.
   c. For Pasture Raised at least \( \frac{1}{2} \) of the doors and/or popholes must remain open.
   d. For smaller houses that have only one or two large doors, all must remain open.
   e. Weather conditions and duration of door and/or pophole closures must be documented.

7.2: Condition of the outdoor or pasture area
1. The outdoor or pasture area must not present a risk to bird or human health due to fecal contamination or the presence of hazardous substances.
2. The outdoor or pasture 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 be soiled with mud, fecal material, etc.
4. The outdoor or pasture area must be free of objects that pose a danger to the birds.
   Note: 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, 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, Outdoor Living
   The pasture area must be large enough to continuously maintain rangeland or grassland as required in Standards 7.4 though 7.7 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 IX)

7.5: Grassland composition
To qualify as grassland, the outdoor area must consist of a mixture of 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 50 ft (15m) from the house and extending 500 ft (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 50 ft (15m) from the house and extending 500 ft (152m) or to the fenceline, whichever is closer.
7.7: Grassland qualification from mobile housing
To qualify as grassland, the area must average at least 75% rooted vegetative cover as described in Appendix IX measured across the outdoor area beginning 25 ft (8m) from the mobile unit and extending 500 ft (152m) or to the fenceline, whichever is closer.

7.8: Movement of mobile housing
Mobile housing must be moved frequently enough to meet the requirements of Standards 7.2 and 7.7.

7.9: Cover and shade
Cover and shade can be natural, artificial, or a combination of both and must be visible from the doors of the house.
1. Natural cover/shade can be woodland, brushland, or vegetation that can be maintained to be consistently as tall as the birds.
2. Artificial cover/shade structures must be maintained to be functional and not allowed to fall into disrepair.
3. Awnings attached to either permanent or mobile housing can be considered part of the available cover/shade, but there must be additional cover/shade distributed throughout the outdoor area.
4. Mobile units can be considered part of the cover/shade requirement providing the floor of the mobile unit is at least 2 ft (0.6m) above the ground.
   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 and are attractive to pollinators and other beneficial insects. Bushes, woodlands, brushy areas, fallen trees, or piles of cut branches are the preferred environments for birds. The use of artificial structures can be costly and difficult to maintain.

7.10: Amount of cover and shade
1. Outdoor Access
   Whether cover/shade is natural, artificial, or a combination, it must be sufficient to accommodate at least 25% of the number of birds in the flock with at least 0.4 ft² (0.04m²) of effective cover/shade at all hours of the day.
2. Pasture Raised (permanent housing)
   Whether cover/shade is natural, artificial, or a combination, it must be sufficient to accommodate at least 50% of the number of birds in the flock with at least 0.4 ft² (0.04m²) of effective cover/shade at all hours of the day.
3. Pasture Raised (mobile housing), Outdoor Living (permanent or mobile housing)
   Whether cover/shade is natural, artificial, or a combination it must be sufficient to accommodate all birds in the flock with at least 0.4 ft² (0.04m²) of effective cover/shade at all hours of the day,
Section 8: Access to the Outdoors

8.1: Onset of access to the outdoors
1. **Outdoor Access**
   Access to the outdoors must begin by 24 weeks of age with full daily access as required in Standard 8.2 by 26 weeks of age.

2. **Pasture Raised (permanent housing)**
   Access to rangeland or grassland must begin by 22 weeks of age with full daily access as required in Standard 8.2 by 24 weeks of age.

3. **Pasture Raised (mobile housing) Outdoor Living (permanent or mobile housing)**
   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 access to the outdoors
1. **Outdoor Access**
   To qualify as an outdoor access day, doors or popholes must be open in compliance with Standard 7.1 for more than half of daylight hours.

2. **Pasture Raised (permanent housing)**
   To qualify as a pasture access day, all doors or popholes must be open from within three hours of sunrise to no earlier than one hour before sunset.

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.
   
   **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/

8.3: Requirements for certification as an outdoor system
Each day must be evaluated for risk to the birds, and if the weather is amenable, birds must be given access to the outdoors or to pasture. Reasons for restriction to housing must be recorded as required in Standard 2.6.2.

1. **Outdoor Access**
   Birds must not be restricted to housing for more than 14 days in any 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 nor 28 days in any 12-month period.

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

Aviary
A multi-tiered environment for hens in permanent housing.

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/Blinds
Cover/blinds in indoor housing adds complexity to the environment and breaks up the indoor area visually and physically, thereby helping to reduce the level of fear in the flock. 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.

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 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 or hay hanging in nets over the floor are excellent choices 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. A producer group’s SOP is considered a farm plan.

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 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 in a group of mobile houses if they have access to any of the mobile houses at will.

**Friable**
Dry and crumbly, a qualifier for functional litter and soil 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.

**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.

**Mammalian or avian by-products**
Feed ingredients derived from the slaughter process.

**Morbid**
The outward display of being unhealthy.

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

**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 outlined in these Standards 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 select 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Images</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>No beak trim</td>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Infrared trim at hatchery or excellent hand trim</td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beak trim just visible</td>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Upper and lower beaks even</td>
<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>More than ( \frac{3}{4} ) beak remains</td>
<td><img src="image5.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Upper and lower beaks even</td>
<td><img src="image6.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>More than ( \frac{1}{2} ) beak remains</td>
<td><img src="image7.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Difference between upper and lower beaks minor</td>
<td><img src="image8.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Between ( \frac{3}{8} ) and ( \frac{3}{4} ) of beak</td>
<td><img src="image9.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imbalance between beaks</td>
<td><img src="image10.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minor neuroma possible</td>
<td><img src="image11.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Less than ( \frac{3}{8} ) beak remains</td>
<td><img src="image12.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Major difference between beaks</td>
<td><img src="image13.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Major neuroma</td>
<td><img src="image14.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Major splitting, cracking or damage</td>
<td><img src="image15.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Beak Trim Score – White Birds

Score 30 birds per house and calculate the average

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>• No beak trim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>• Infrared trim at hatchery or excellent hand trim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Beak trim just visible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Upper and lower beaks even</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>• More than ¾ beak remains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Upper and lower beaks even</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>• More than ½ beak remains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Difference between upper and lower beaks minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>• Between ¼ and ½ of beak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Imbalance between beaks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Minor neuroma possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>• Less than ¼ beak remains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Major difference between beaks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Major neuroma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Major splitting, cracking or damage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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
**Feather score level calculator**

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>18</th>
<th>22</th>
<th>25</th>
<th>30</th>
<th>35</th>
<th>45</th>
<th>50</th>
<th>60</th>
<th>70</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cage Free Plus</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Access</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasture Raised</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Living</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**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
## 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
  - 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

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

### Blind birds
- 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: Cover or blinds in permanent housing

Cover or blinds create visual and spatial complexity in housing. Innovative use of cover/blinds in housing include:

- Installing plywood panels perpendicular to nests that guide birds to use nests along the length of the house rather than crowding at one end of the nest row and creating risk of suffocation.
- Hanging hay in nets above the floor to double as edible foraging material.
- Using two squares of platform material as ramps from the floor to the platform.
Appendix IX: 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.