



RSPCA welfare standards for

DOMESTIC/COMMON DUCKS



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Contents

Introduction	(iii)
Specific provisions for ducklings	1
Duckling sourcing	1
Specific provisions for ducklings	1
Food and water	3
Food	3
Water	3
Environment	7
Buildings	7
Floor and litter	8
Lighting	10
Space requirements	14
Air quality and thermal environment	15
Environmental enrichment	16
Climate change and animal welfare	16
The range	17
Management	21
Managers	21
Stock-keepers	22
Inspection	23
Independent welfare audits	24
Equipment	25
Protection from other animals	26
Health	27
Mutilations	29
On-farm casualty slaughter/killing (culling)	30
Transport	33
Management	33
Catching	34
Transport	37

Slaughter/killing	39
Training	39
Closed Circuit Television (CCTV)	40
Health monitoring	41
Lairage	42
Shackling	43
Stunning	44
Bleeding	47
 Appendix 1	 48
Welfare audit form example	
 Appendix 2	 52
(Transport – standard operating and emergency procedure)	
 Index	 53

Introduction

The '*RSPCA welfare standards for domestic/common ducks*' are used to provide the only RSPCA-approved scheme for the rearing, handling, transport and slaughter of ducks. They take account of legislation, government welfare codes, scientific research, veterinary advice and practical experience of the farming industry.

The standards are based upon the 'Five Freedoms' as defined by FAWC (hence the name 'Freedom Food' - see page iv). Although these 'freedoms' define ideal states, they provide a comprehensive framework for the assessment of animal welfare on farm, in transit and at the place of slaughter, as well as representing an important element of farm assurance requirements.

- **Freedom from hunger and thirst**
by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.
- **Freedom from discomfort**
by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
- **Freedom from pain, injury or disease**
by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
- **Freedom to express normal behaviour**
by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.
- **Freedom from fear and distress**
by ensuring conditions and care which avoid mental suffering.

These freedoms will be better provided for if those who have care of livestock practise/provide:

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

Guide to the use of the RSPCA welfare standards

- (i) The numbered requirements are the standards, all of which must be complied with.
- * (ii) Boxed sections (indicated by ⓘ) give additional information, including: providing the reasoning behind a standard, expanding on a standard, stating how a standard can/will be assessed and/or highlighting areas where the standards will be reviewed in the future.
- * (iii) It is expected that all relevant legislation regarding farm animal husbandry and welfare on-farm, during transport, and at the abattoir, will be fully implemented in addition to the RSPCA welfare standards.
- (iv) **Farmers are required by law to have a thorough knowledge of the '*Defra Code of Recommendations for the Welfare of Livestock: Ducks*'.**



RSPCA Farm Animals Department

The RSPCA's Farm Animals Department develops the RSPCA welfare standards for farm animals. These detailed documents are intended to represent 'best practice' in the care and welfare of farm animals.

The RSPCA works to continually develop and improve the welfare standards using a range of information, including the latest scientific research and practical farming experience. We regularly consult with other animal welfare and agricultural scientists, veterinary surgeons, and farming industry representatives. This helps to ensure that the RSPCA welfare standards continue to be at the forefront of farm animal care and welfare, and are also achievable on commercial farms.

The standards also take account of feedback from RSPCA Farm Livestock Officers, who carry out monitoring of the Freedom Food scheme, Freedom Food assessors who audit scheme members, and the scheme members themselves.

We always value constructive feedback and ideas for improvement from those who are implementing the RSPCA welfare standards. Comments/feedback can be discussed with:

- a) RSPCA Farm Animals Department scientific staff, by contacting them on the below details:

Address: Farm Animals Department

RSPCA
Wilberforce Way
Southwater
Horsham
West Sussex
RH13 9RS

Telephone: 0300 123 0183

Email: farm_animals@rspca.org.uk

- b) RSPCA Farm Livestock Officers, who can discuss any issues during farm visits and offer advice, and can provide feedback to the RSPCA Farm Animals Department team.



Freedom Food Ltd

Freedom Food is the RSPCA's farm assurance and food labelling scheme. Freedom Food assesses and approves farms, hauliers and abattoirs that meet all of the applicable RSPCA welfare standards. Processors and packers must also apply for scheme membership for traceability and licence fee purposes.

Only approved suppliers and outlets using approved suppliers may use the Freedom Food certification mark subject to traceability and licence fee. Membership is subject to an annual membership fee and successful assessment as well as risk based monitoring visits by Farm Livestock Officers employed by the RSPCA's Farm Animals Department.

Freedom Food is a charity in its own right and not for profit. Any surplus goes back into improving farm animal welfare.

Specific provisions for ducklings

Duckling sourcing

SPD 1.1 Ducklings must:

- a) be hatched according to the current version of the '*RSPCA welfare standards for hatcheries*'
- b) be sourced from a Freedom Food-approved hatchery
- c) not be of a Muscovy (Barbary) genotype.

i The domestic (or common) duck and the Muscovy (or Barbary) are two distinct species with different evolutionary origins and biological characteristics. As such, these separate species are likely to have different management requirements. These standards have been written specifically for domestic/common meat duck breeds.

SPD 1.2 * For producers implementing brood and move operations, birds must be moved to their finishing/rearing accommodation by 21 days of age.

Specific provisions for ducklings

SPD 2.1 Buildings must be fully prepared and ready to receive ducklings in sufficient time to allow the environment to meet their thermal requirements.

SPD 2.2 * For the brooding of ducklings:

- a) the number of feeders and drinkers placed, air quality parameters and ventilation rates must be at least to the levels specified within the breeding company's published management guidelines
- b) the stocking rate/density must not exceed that specified within the breed company's published management guidelines.

SPD 2.2.1* The parameters listed in standard SPD 2.2 must be implemented according to the levels specified within this document at no later than 21 days of age.

SPD 2.3 Where used, spot brooders must be suspended above the centre of the surround.

SPD 2.4 The height of the brooder must be adjustable to ensure that the temperature at the level of the litter is maintained at the optimum level.

SPD 2.5 During unloading and placement, ducklings must be handled carefully.

SPD 2.6 Care must be taken to avoid heat and cold stress in ducklings.

SPD 2.7 Brooder surrounds and feeding and watering equipment within the surround must be designed and constructed so that ducklings can move freely towards or away from the brooder.

SPD 2.8 Particular care must be taken in the placement and maintenance of brooder heaters to ensure against risk of fire and emission of noxious gases, for example carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide.

SPD 2.9 Care must be taken to ensure that feeders do not become hot, especially when metal feeders are used.

- SPD 2.10** Supplementary feed trays and drinkers must be provided to the ducklings, in addition to the permanent feeders and drinkers, for the first few days at the start of brooding.



Supplementary drinkers should be phased out by the end of 7 days.

- SPD 2.11** Feeders and drinkers must be kept clean and free from litter.
- SPD 2.12** The environment for brooding ducklings must be lit at a minimum of 25 lux for the first few days.
- SPD 2.13** Supplementary lighting must be hung next to the brooder for the first few days after placement to attract ducklings to the heat source and provide extra illumination of feeders and drinkers.
- SPD 2.14** Drinker facilities must be of a design that prevents young ducklings from getting very wet or drowning before they have had sufficient time to develop waterproofing on their feathers.
- SPD 2.15** Young ducklings must be given appropriate experience of management practices (particularly feeding and watering systems) and environmental conditions (e.g. natural light, sufficient water to fulfil biological requirements, litter) to enable them to adapt to the husbandry systems they will encounter later in life.
- SPD 2.16** On arrival at the farm, day-old ducklings must be thoroughly inspected for signs of injury or deformities.
- SPD 2.17** All ducklings showing obvious signs of injury or deformity (including wrynecks) must be removed and humanely culled.

Food and water


Livestock must have ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and promote a positive state of well-being.

Food

- FW 1.1** All units must have a written feeding programme to ensure that ducks are fed a wholesome diet which is:
- a) appropriate to their species and age
 - b) fed to them in sufficient quantity to maintain them in good health
 - c) satisfies their nutritional needs.
- FW 1.2** Ducks must have access to nutritious food *ad libitum* each day, except when required by the attending veterinary surgeon, and prior to slaughter (see T 2.1).
- FW 1.3** Producers must have a written record of the nutrient content of the feed, as declared by the feed compounder.
- FW 1.4** No feedstuffs containing mammalian or avian derived protein are permitted.
- FW 1.5** All foodstuffs must be safely and hygienically transported, stored and delivered to stock to prevent spoiling e.g. infestation, contamination and wetting.
- FW 1.6** Food must not be allowed to remain in a contaminated or stale condition.
- FW 1.7** There must be a minimum feed space allowance of 50cm per 100 birds.
- FW 1.8 *** Feeders must be designed to enable birds to scoop up the feed effectively.
- FW 1.9** The siting of feeders must be such that all birds have ready access to food without undue competition.
- FW 1.10 *** All feeding equipment must be hygienically managed.

Water

- FW 2.0** Ducks must have access to drinking water at all times, except when required by the attending veterinary surgeon.
- FW 2.1 *** Non-mains water must be:
- a) tested every 12 months to assess its drinking quality (this must be recorded)
 - b) safe to drink.

*  **The results of the non-mains water test should conform to the following:**
Coliforms: less than 100 colony forming units (cfus) per ml
Total viable counts: less than 1,000 cfus per ml.

- FW 2.2** All water supplied must be clean and fresh.

- FW 2.3** Provision must be made to ensure an emergency supply of water in case normal supplies fail.
- FW 2.4** Provision must be made for supplying water in freezing conditions.
- FW 2.5** Water must not be allowed to become harmfully contaminated.
- FW 2.6 *** All drinking facilities must be in good working order.
- FW 2.7 *** All drinking equipment must be hygienically managed.
- FW 2.8** All open water facilities must be cleaned out daily.
- FW 2.9** There must be a minimum open water facility space of 50cm per 100 birds.
- FW 2.10** The open water facilities must be at least 20cm wide.
- FW 2.11** The water in the open water facilities must be a minimum of 10cm deep.

i Ducks are waterfowl and use water to preen and to re-condition their feathers. Ducks that are not able to dip their heads in water may become affected by eye and/or nostril problems.


- FW 2.12** Where ball cocks are used within the open water facility, measures must be taken to prevent birds becoming stuck under them.

i The ball cock should be enclosed or covered. However, a brick could be placed under the ball cock, but should not impede the flow of water.

- FW 2.13 *** The water facility must be designed to allow birds to easily access the water and alight from the facility.
- FW 2.13.1** The height of the open water facility must be no more than 25cm for ducks from 4 weeks of age to enable the birds to enter the open water facility and sit in the water should they so desire.
- FW 2.14** For birds younger than 4 weeks old that have developed waterproofing on their feathers, the open water facility height must be adjusted according to their size to enable the birds to enter the open water facility.
- FW 2.15 *** Open water facilities must be:
- a) designed, and
 - b) managed
- to minimise water spillage.

***** **i** For example, an angled lip along the top of the facility can help prevent water overflowing and wide feet on the base can help ensure it sits firmly on the floor and does not easily move if knocked by the birds.


FW 2.15.1 Consideration must be given to the placement of water facilities in order to prevent consequent problems with litter.

- *  **Open water facilities should be placed in designated areas within the house, preferably away from the litter area, on fully slatted floors that are suspended above a drainage system. This prevents the litter becoming wet when the birds are using the facilities and when the facilities are being cleaned out.**
- However, if it is necessary to place open water facilities on the litter, it is preferable to space them at equal distance all the way down either side of the shed. This helps reduce an excessive build-up of water in one area and keep the majority of the litter in the centre of the shed and between the water facilities in good condition.**

FW 2.16 * Where an open water facility is placed on the litter within the building it must be:


- a) placed on slatted flooring, e.g. a perforated grid/plastic mat, to prevent ducks coming into contact with any wet litter. This flooring must extend outwards from all around the facility by at least one metre, and/or
- b) positioned directly above a drainage point to ensure that any excess water is removed from the building to a designated water collection point.

FW 2.16.1 * The drainage system must be efficient in removing water from the building to maintain the litter in good condition.

- *  **A 10cm wide drain positioned under the open water facility leading out to a discharge area has been shown to work well in removing excess water from the building and maintaining the litter immediately surrounding the water facility in good condition.**

FW 2.17 Any litter immediately surrounding the open water facilities must:

- a) be managed to ensure it remains in good condition
- b) not be allowed to become excessively wet.

-  **FW 2.17b will be determined by firmly compressing the litter surrounding the water facility with the foot. If water appears then the litter will be regarded as being excessively wet.**

FW 2.18 The siting of drinkers must be such that all birds have ready access to water without undue competition.

FW 2.19 Ducks must not have to travel more than 20m anywhere in the house to reach food and water.


FW 2.20 * For each house, water meters must be connected to all the birds' drinking systems so daily water usage for the birds can be monitored (see M1.3 e)).

Environment

The environment in which livestock are kept must take into account their welfare needs, be designed to protect them from physical and thermal discomfort, fear and distress, and allow them to perform their natural behaviour.

E 1.1 Where management systems, designs or layout of facilities not covered in the RSPCA welfare standards are being employed or considered, these must be referred to, and discussed with, the RSPCA Farm Animals Department before they can be considered for certification by Freedom Food.

E 1.1.1 * Where changes are being made to existing buildings or new equipment installed that has not previously been assessed, managers must inform Freedom Food at the time the change is being made.


*  **If producers are at all unsure about whether planned changes to buildings or equipment will meet the RSPCA welfare standards they should contact the RSPCA Farm Animals Department (see page iv).**

E 1.2 Bird welfare must not be compromised/be likely to be compromised by outside environmental factors, such as noise, atmospheric pollution, adverse weather conditions, predators and, in the case of free range systems, soil conditions.

Buildings

E 2.0 All ducks must be provided with accommodation.

E 2.1 * Buildings must be fit for purpose to ensure a good level of welfare is achieved and maintained at all times throughout a duck's life.

*  **Buildings that offer very limited or no control over the birds' thermal environment, such as in fully or near-fully open sided buildings, will not be permitted. Sufficient control is essential to maintain good litter and air quality, especially during colder weather, and to protect birds from thermal stress and discomfort.**

E 2.2 Buildings must be designed and erected so as to be suitable for expected local weather conditions.

E 2.3 For all accommodation, a notice containing a checklist of the key points relating to welfare (see E 2.4) must be prominently displayed at, or near, the entrance to each building.

E 2.4 The checklist to satisfy E 2.3 must include:

- a) total floor area available to the birds
- b) total number of birds placed
- c) maximum predicted stocking density at depletion
- d) total number of drinkers and feeders/minimum feed and water space in the house
- e) target air quality parameters
- f) lighting levels and regimes
- g) emergency procedures i.e. actions in the case of fire, flood, failure of automatic equipment, and when temperatures move outside acceptable limits.

- E 2.5** There must be nothing in the ducks' environment that is likely to cause injury or distress to the birds that can be avoided.
- E 2.6** Except where preservatives with an insecticidal role are used, ducks must not come into contact with toxic fumes or surfaces, for example from paints, wood preservatives or disinfectants.
- E 2.7** All electrical installations at mains voltage must be:
- a) inaccessible to the ducks
 - b) well insulated
 - c) safeguarded from rodents
 - d) properly earthed
 - e) tested at least annually by a qualified or competent person
 - f) in good working order.

i By law electrical installations have to be tested every 3 years as part of the Periodic Inspection Report. However, at least once a year, the 'trip switch' can be tested to ensure it is in correct working order.

- E 2.8** Housing and equipment must be designed so that all ducks can be clearly seen.
- E 2.9** Where new accommodation is being built or new equipment installed that has not previously been assessed, managers must inform Freedom Food.
- E 2.10** New housing or housing undergoing major structural change must be designed to allow easy removal and minimal carrying and handling of birds during catching.
- E 2.11** Managers must:
- a) have access to a copy of the 'Code of practice for using plant protection products' (Defra, 2006, PB 11090) [this code replaces the 'Code of Practice for the Safe Use of Pesticides on Farms and Holdings']
 - b) be familiar with its content
 - c) implement the recommendations as appropriate.

Floor and litter

- E 3.1** Duck house flooring must allow effective cleansing and disinfection, preventing significant build up of parasites and other pathogens.

i Where possible flooring should be concrete.

- E 3.2** Buildings and equipment must be thoroughly cleansed and disinfected after each flock and/or before the placement of new birds.
- E 3.3** The floor of all houses must be completely covered in litter (except in the case of areas around water facilities).

E 3.4

The litter must:

- a) be of a suitable material and particle size
- b) be managed to maintain it in a dry condition
- c) be of a sufficient depth for dilution of faeces
- d) be topped up to maintain dry conditions - this must be on a daily basis if necessary
- e) be managed hygienically.

*

i The requirement to keep litter in a well maintained state is detailed in law (Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended)). A poultry flock kept on well maintained litter is healthier and more profitable than one kept on poor quality litter. Poor quality litter can cause unnecessary suffering to the birds and can also result in downgrading of the end product at the slaughterhouse. For example, poor litter can cause degeneration of the outer scales on the feet (i.e. on the pressure points), which can lead to a condition known as pododermatitis (foot pad burn). Poor litter can be avoided.

Litter moisture is a key cause of litter related problems and is affected by drinker design and management; air change rate; litter material and depth; stocking density and rate; diet (i.e. raw material quality and formulation) and flock health.

In poultry houses, three environmental factors have to be considered together, because their control is interdependent. They are environmental temperature, ventilation rate and humidity.

The humidity of the poultry house environment is affected by the number and size of the birds and therefore by their respiratory output and also, of course, by the relative humidity of the air entering the house. When the relative humidity in the house exceeds 70%, the moisture content of the litter tends to increase, leading to poorer conditions. The aim should be to maintain a relative humidity level in the house of between 50 and 70% by supplying sufficient air and added heat when necessary.

A lot of the water, and all of the fat and nitrogen found in the litter, which all have a detrimental impact on litter quality, is excreted from the birds as faeces. Therefore the higher the stocking rate the more of these factors the litter has to absorb. Also, the rate of evaporation of moisture from the litter falls as stocking rate increases.

Any disease or skeletal abnormality that reduces the birds' mobility is likely to affect their welfare adversely, as they will have increased contact with the litter.

Finally, not all foot pad burn is simply a result of poor litter quality. If birds spend excessive amounts of time squatting down due to leg problems or other diseases they will be more likely to suffer from these lesions regardless of litter condition.

Primary source: Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra). 2004. Poultry Litter Management. Defra, London.

E 3.5

Litter which is wet, infested with mites, or otherwise harmfully contaminated must:

- a) not be introduced into duck housing
- b) be replaced immediately if within the house.

i Depending on the severity of the issue, wet litter may be covered with fresh, dry litter if this is sufficient to prevent the birds becoming wet from water seeping up through the litter.

- E 3.6** Ducks must have access to the litter area at all times.
- E 3.7** Where a suitable slatted floor area is provided under water facilities, this must occupy no more than 25% of the total floor area of the house.
- E 3.8** Stock-keepers must:
- a) understand the factors that affect litter condition
 - b) be aware of the welfare problems associated with poor litter management (e.g. foot burn).
- E 3.9** Where straw is used as bedding material, stock-keepers must:
- a) be aware of problems associated with respiratory problems, i.e. aspergillosis
 - b) only use good quality straw.

i Where possible, straw for the purpose of bedding should be stored under cover.

Lighting

- * **i** The structure of the domesticated duck's eye has retained the properties and characteristics of its progenitor species and light and vision have been shown to be important in many aspects of these birds' lives. Ducks evolved in areas where they were exposed to a range of illuminances – from direct sunlight to patches of shaded areas. They have well-developed eyes with good colour vision, and, as such, sight is a primary sense that requires a good level of light to operate efficiently. However, as ducks tend to feed at night, they have also developed good vision to see in the dark - being able to see at very low light intensities (around 0.15 lux).

In a preference test, Pekin ducks were given a choice of 4 compartments lit at either less than 1 lux or at 6, 20 or 200 lux and observed at 2 and 6 weeks of age. Over a 24 hour period, the birds spent approximately equal amounts of time (approximately 6.6 hours) in each of the 6, 20 and 200 lux compartments and spent the least amount of time (about 4 hours) in the less than 1 lux compartment. This preference did not change with age. The results imply that some variation in ambient illuminance to provide a range of light environments over a 24 hour period may benefit duck welfare. The lighting standards have therefore been developed as best as practically possible to reflect this. The results also indicated that ducks fare well in brightly lit environments and are not averse to such conditions. Further research is required to fully establish the lighting requirements for domesticated ducks.

Primary source: Barber et al. 2004. Preferences of growing ducklings and turkey poults for illuminance. *Animals Welfare*, 13: 211-224.

E 4.1 *

In each 24 hour period:

- a) no area must be lit at less than 20 lux for at least a 9 hour continuous period
- b) outside the 9 hour light period, but not during the dark period, no area must be lit at less than 6 lux
- c) during the natural dark period, there must be a minimum period of 6 hours continuous darkness, except for birds up to 5 days of age where the minimum period of continuous darkness must be at least 1 hour from day 1 and increased by at least 1 hour per day.

* **i** The minimum light level of 20 lux does not apply to shadowed areas caused by housing furniture. A maximum of 3% of the floor area is permitted to be less than 20 lux for this reason.

Natural daylight is to be used to achieve the minimum light level of 20 lux. During the shorter winter months, artificial lighting may be used to supplement the natural daylight in order to maintain the minimum light level either side of the 9 hour period and to achieve the 9 hour photoperiod.

The minimum 20 lux light level is to be achieved on a day when the light levels are neither excessively bright (i.e. through direct sunlight entering the shed) or dark (i.e. an overcast/stormy day). On dark days it is acceptable to use artificial lighting to achieve the 20 lux level.

The installation of light sensors that automatically turn artificial lights on/off, to ensure the minimum light level of 20 lux is achieved at all times during the light period, should be considered. This may also help save electricity on days when natural light only is sufficient to achieve the 20 lux level.

Measures of illuminance are to be taken at bird head height.

It is acknowledged that it may not be possible to achieve 6 hours of continuous darkness when the natural period of darkness is shorter than 6 hours.

i The introduction of natural daylight into the house is likely to be beneficial to bird welfare by, for example, increasing activity and enriching the bird's environment. Natural daylight can provide a range of illuminance levels in different areas within the house, which changes throughout the day, and is spectrally different to artificial sources.

E 4.2

Where supplementary lighting is provided at night, this must not exceed 2 lux.

i In order to avoid panic, it is accepted that ducks may not be kept in total darkness during the night.

E 4.3

The use of intermittent lighting patterns to meet the minimum number of hours of darkness is not permitted, with the exception of the first 36 hours after placement.

E 4.4 Birds must be exposed to natural daylight as soon as possible, and no later than 7 days of age.

i Experience has shown that exposing birds to events occurring outside the house at an early stage allows them time to develop recognition and familiarity and therefore reduce their fearfulness towards them.

* Some producers expose ducklings to daylight from day old, whilst others have waited until the ducklings are five to seven days of age.

E 4.5 * Natural daylight must be provided

- a) at all times during the natural daylight period
- b) through all the required openings (see E 4.8).

E 4.6 * The entry of natural light into the house must not be obstructed.

i For example, standard E 4.6 applies to the positioning of items within the building. It does not apply to methods used for controlling the amount of light entering through the light opening, as stated in standard E 4.9, which are being used in accordance with the standards.

E 4.7 Natural daylight must penetrate all areas of the house.

i It is important to install a sufficient number and size of light inlets to ensure the lighting requirements can be achieved at all times.

Installing light openings down both sides of a house can allow greater control over the light entering the building. For example, if the shutters on one side of the house have to be closed then daylight can still enter the building through the inlets on the opposite side. Similarly, more than the suggested amount of total window space for a building should be provided.

E 4.8 * The light openings in the house must correspond to at least 3% of the total floor area of the house.

i The greater the proportion of window area to floor area achieved, the more natural daylight will enter the shed and consequently the less likely artificial lights will have to be turned on to achieve the minimum lighting level of 20 lux on darker days. This measure could also help save energy.

- E 4.9** Light openings must be of a sufficient size to ensure that streams of light entering the house causing patches of bright light are avoided.

i As a guide, each light opening should be no smaller than 0.56m².

i Where there are patches of bright light, e.g. when windows are not evenly distributed around the house or when windows are not of a similar size, bird activity may be greater in the more illuminated areas, which could adversely affect litter quality.

- E 4.10** Where there could be a risk of birds becoming heat stressed due to the penetration of direct sunlight into the house, it must be possible to readily control the amount of natural daylight entering the building to the extent that darkness can be achieved.

i For example, installing shutters can control the amount of light entering through the light opening. The shutters can also be used to completely block any light entering the house at night where events outside the house could cause birds to panic. To have the greatest amount of control over the light entering the house it should be possible to open/close the shutters by varying degrees. Shutters, especially if insulated, can also help keep the building warm during cold weather, which is important during the brooding phase.

i The provision of daylight, particularly via windows, can increase environmental temperature within the house. Therefore it is important to consider the capacity of the ventilation system and the positioning of the ventilation inlets so that good ventilation and correct house temperature can be achieved.

- E 4.11** Birds must be exposed to dawn and dusk periods.

- E 4.12** If used outside the natural daylight period e.g. to extend the light period, artificial lights must be switched on and off:

- a) in a stepped or gradual manner,
- b) over a period of at least 20 minutes.

i Turning artificial lights on/off gradually allows time for the ducks to prepare for daytime and darkness. Before the dark period, it is also likely to promote natural settling behaviour and stimulate birds to have a last meal, which may help increase feed conversion efficiency.

- E 4.13** Lighting patterns in all houses must be recorded.

i Where possible, lighting patterns should be recorded automatically.

E 4.14 Where glass is used, this must be safety/toughened glass.

i The use of transparent glass windows is encouraged, as this will allow birds to see out of the building, further enriching their environment. Transparent glass windows also provide good light, with minimal filtering and distortion, and do not discolour with time.

i Window material that helps prevent condensation forming should be selected, e.g. double-glazed windows.

E 4.15 * Where used, windows must be properly sealed to maintain correct airflow within the house and avoid draughts.

Space requirements

E 5.1 Stocking density must take account of the ventilation capacity of the building in order to maintain:

- a) good air quality
- b) an adequate temperature to avoid heat stress
- c) good litter quality.

i Stocking density should be set at a level that is appropriate to the design of the building and its locality.

E 5.2 Stocking density, which is to be calculated using the floor space available to the birds, must never:

- a) exceed 17kg/m²
- b) be likely to exceed 17kg/m².

***** **i** For Freedom Food members, E 5.2 a) not only applies to the current flock but also the previous Freedom Food approved flocks, where applicable.

The stocking density for the current flock will be based on predicted outcomes using data from the records listed in M 1.3 e).

- E 5.3 *** The number of birds placed in a building must be no more than the number required to rear all the birds to the maximum stocking density once, which is to be at depopulation, hence thinning is not permitted.

* **i** Thinning is characterised by placing additional birds into a building so that the maximum stocking density can be reached on one or more occasions prior to depopulation (the removal of all birds from a building). During the rearing period, a proportion of the birds is removed from the building at planned times to ensure the maximum stocking density is not exceeded. Therefore, thinning is defined as *the planned removal of a proportion of birds, on one or more occasions, from a building so as not to exceed the required maximum stocking density.*

As an example, as the maximum stocking density is 17kg/m², if you intend to rear the birds to a maximum weight of 4kg at depopulation, then no more than 4.25 birds/m² can be placed in the building (i.e. 17 ÷ 4 = 4.25).

Air quality and thermal environment

- E 6.1 *** Ventilation systems must be designed to maintain good air and litter quality.
- E 6.2** Provision must be made to ensure that aerial contaminants do not reach a level at which they are noticeably unpleasant to a human observer.
- E 6.3** Averaged over an 8 hour period:
- a) dust must not exceed 10mg/m³
 - b) carbon monoxide must not exceed 50ppm.

i Air quality parameters should be maintained under all foreseeable climatic conditions, below the following levels at bird head height:

Ammonia	15ppm
Carbon dioxide	5000ppm
Relative humidity	50 to 70%

Air quality parameters, i.e. ammonia, carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide etc., should be measured and recorded on a daily basis. Where possible, these levels should be automatically recorded.

- E 6.4** Where automatic recording of air quality parameters is not possible, producers must monitor and record air quality on a daily basis.
- E 6.5** Ducks must have access to a thermally comfortable environment at all times so that heat/cold stress does not occur.

i The number, size and capacity of the fans are an important consideration when determining ventilation rate. A minimum ventilation rate of 1.6 x 10⁻⁴ m³/s per kg^{0.75} liveweight is recommended. The maximum ventilation capacity should be sufficient to limit a maximum temperature lift to 3°C.

- E 6.6** Daily measurements of the maximum and minimum temperatures must be recorded:
- a) from the centre of the shed and at either end,
 - b) at bird height.

- E 6.7** Stock-keepers must:
- have access to a copy of the Defra booklet 'Heat Stress in Poultry - Solving the Problem' (PB 10543, 2005)
 - be familiar with its content
 - adopt its recommendations.

Environmental enrichment

- E 7.1** Ducks are particularly water-orientated and must be given the opportunity to preen and recondition their feathers effectively.
- E 7.2** Provisions must be made to keep indoor ducks active by enriching their environment. Stock-keepers must be able to demonstrate to the Freedom Food Assessor and RSPCA Farm Livestock Officer, effective methods of environmental enrichment which stimulate activity in the birds, e.g. by providing straw bales, and additional water facilities for preening and bathing.


i Current commercial duck rearing imposes restricted access to water for most water-related behaviours other than drinking. The RSPCA believes that, as ducks are waterfowl, they should be given access to open water sources that enable them to fulfil many of their complex water-related preening behaviours. Producers are therefore encouraged to seek designs of water facilities that can fulfil these needs and be managed hygienically to overcome the potential health-related issues that may be associated with providing water for this purpose.

* Climate change and animal welfare


- * i** The issues relating to climate change have the potential to significantly affect the welfare of farm animals. The RSPCA believes that it is now appropriate to react, think ahead, and consider what can reasonably be done to mitigate, any negative effects that adverse weather conditions may have/be having on the welfare of farm animals now, and in the future.
- Examples of important considerations include:
- The need to ensure that the farm buildings can withstand more severe weather conditions will become more necessary.
 - Ensuring that ventilation systems are working efficiently will be even more important, particularly as poultry are vulnerable to adverse temperature changes.
 - There may be reduced water availability for drinking, so ensuring that drinking water systems are working efficiently will be even more important.

The range

The RSPCA believes that free-range conditions can offer benefits to bird welfare, provided the range area is well managed and the birds are offered suitable protection against inclement weather and predators. Where range is provided, the following standards are to be met in addition to all other relevant standards in other sections of this document.

- *  Buildings should be positioned to ensure the most efficient utilisation of the range area by the birds. A building that is positioned near to the range boundary would require birds to travel a greater distance to make full use of the range area than a building that is positioned within the centre of the range.

R 1.1 Birds must be introduced onto the range as soon as they are mature enough.

-  For birds being sold as free-range it is a legal requirement for them to have had, during at least half their lifetime, continuous daytime access to the range. The minimum legal slaughter age for free-range Pekin ducks is 49 days.

R 1.2 Consideration must be given to the weather conditions before young birds are introduced to the range and, if necessary, this must be delayed to avoid cold stress.

R 1.3 Ducks kept in free-range systems must have continuous daytime access to the range.

R 1.4 * Popholes must:

- a) be approximately evenly distributed along the entire length of the building
- b) ensure birds have ready access to the range
- c) ensure birds can access the range unhindered.

R 1.5 * Each pophole must be:

- a) a minimum of 45cm high, but in any case the height of the pophole must ensure that the tallest birds have sufficient clearance between their head and the top of the pophole to adopt a normal standing position under the pophole
- b) a minimum of 50cm wide to allow the passage of more than one duck at any one time.

R 1.6 * There must be a minimum of two popholes per building.

* **i** It is strongly recommended that more than the minimum number of popholes are installed to allow for adjustment during unfavourable weather conditions. For example, to remain compliant on a windy day some popholes could be closed, if there are a sufficient number installed, to help maintain good conditions within the building.

Similarly, it is strongly advised that birds are able to access the range from both sides of the building. Installing popholes on both sides of a house can also allow greater control over environmental conditions within the house. For example, if driving wind/rain is affecting one side of the building then the popholes on this side can be closed whilst the popholes on the opposite side remain open. In addition, installing popholes on both sides of the building can help reduce the impact on the range area immediately surrounding the house.

R 1.7 * Where there is a step at the base of a pophole, such as a concrete plinth, which is higher than 5cm (measured from the floor), a ramp must be provided that runs along the entire length of the pophole.

* **i** Ducks can find it difficult to negotiate steps. Research has shown that a step height of 7.5cm can pose some difficulty to ducks.

* **i** As the litter on the floor of the house is built-up over time, this may reduce the amount of pophole space available to the birds. Therefore, this must be taken into consideration to ensure that the height of the pophole, which will be measured according to the usable space available to the birds, meets the 45cm requirement at the end of the crop.

R 1.8 * Ducks must be able to have a clear view of the range from within the building when adopting a normal standing position.

R 1.9 The outdoor area in free-range systems must:

- a) be designed and managed in ways that ensure that the land around the house and shelter does not become poached
- b) consist of pasture mainly covered by living vegetation.

R 1.10 * If birds have access to any commercial arable crop then:

- a) the crop may only be planted outside the perimeter of the range, to allow birds uninterrupted access to all parts of the range,
- b) the crop must not be detrimental to bird welfare, and
- c) birds must not be exposed to any crop management practice that may cause them harm, e.g. spraying, pesticide use, sowing, cropping etc.

* **i** Commercial arable crops are not regarded as acceptable vegetation and will be excluded from calculations for range stocking density.

R 1.11 In paddocks, where pasture management practices such as rotation ensure a good grass sward is maintained throughout the grass period, there must be a minimum of 2.5m² of range per bird.

R 1.12 Where grass cover is poor, there must be a minimum of 4m² of range per bird.

i It is a legal requirement that free-range ducks have access to a range that is mainly covered by vegetation, and that each bird be provided with a minimum range area of 2m².

R 1.13 Ducks must be provided with shelter as a form of protection against adverse weather conditions, such as prevailing wind, rain and strong sunlight.

i Free range ducks should have access to areas of shelter to not only offer cover from adverse weather conditions but also offer regions of variation and enrichment. Both natural and artificial shelter is recommended. Natural shelter should include the planting of trees and shrubs or semi-permanent vegetation that can be easily established and removed, such as artichoke and kale. Artificial shelter could include the erection of military netting and sun parasols, and the provision of straw bale 'huts' and trailers.

Items should form 'corridors' leading out from the building to encourage birds onto the range.

R 1.14 In summer conditions, free-range ducks must have access to adequate areas of shelter to minimise crowding (thereby risking further heat stress).

R 1.15 A minimum area of overhead shade and shelter (natural, artificial or a combination of both) of 8m² per 1,000 ducks must be provided.

i Calculations of the overhead shade/shelter area will be based on the amount of shade provided by the object/facility.

i Vegetation that does not provide overhead shade/shelter, and therefore cannot be included in the calculation of 8m² per 1,000 ducks, includes:

- a) immature trees that have yet to produce foliage
- b) deciduous trees when they have lost their foliage, e.g. during winter
- c) commercial arable crops

In such cases, artificial shelters will need to be provided.

Hedgerows may be included in calculations of overhead shade/shelter, provided that there is enough room underneath for the ducks to access. However, at certain times of the day, the position of the sun may mean that the hedgerow is not offering any protection in terms of shade. As shade/shelter must be appropriately distributed, hedgerows alone will not satisfy R 1.15 and R 1.16.

Tractor trailers and simple shelters constructed of four downward posts and a solid roof, for example, are acceptable forms of shade/shelter provision. Fences, on the other hand, which do not provide overhead protection, are not suitable for this purpose.

R 1.16 Shade and shelter facilities must be appropriately distributed to encourage full use of the range.

- R 1.17** The range must be managed in order to provide the most suitable conditions and to encourage the birds to roam.

- i** Ways of satisfying standard R 1.17 include:
- a) positioning shade and shelter facilities at varying distances from the house
 - b) the rotation of artificial shelters in order to prevent poaching of the land around them
 - c) the trimming of hedgerows so that access is provided underneath
 - d) restricting access to certain areas of the range as and when necessary in order to prevent poaching of the land
 - e) managing poached areas to aid recovery and prevent poaching reoccurring in the same area
 - f) an appreciation of the need to take individual flock behaviour into account: some flocks may be reluctant to range and therefore need encouraging by, for example, providing a sheltered route onto the range
 - g) the rotation and 'resting' of pasture areas.

- R 1.18** Strict management procedures must be implemented to reduce the risk of disease outbreak, particularly where a large number of birds are kept within a certain area.

- R 1.19** Where provided, ponds must be well maintained to prevent a build up of stagnant water with decaying vegetation.

- i** Filtering out plant debris and providing good aeration will help to avoid problems such as botulism in ponds.

- R 1.20** Young ducklings, when first introduced to the range, must be guided towards food and water and shelter areas to facilitate adaptation to their new environment.

- R 1.21** Measures must be taken to prevent the area immediately surrounding any outdoor feeding and water facilities from becoming poached and muddy.

- i** For example, water and feed facilities can be placed on a non-slip, solid concrete surface, or a surface that has good drainage, e.g. slats or perforations, or on a deep gravel bed. This drainage area should extend outwards from the water/feed facility by at least 1 metre.

Management

A high degree of caring and responsible management and stockmanship is vital to ensure good animal welfare. Managers and stock-keepers must be thoroughly trained, skilled and competent in animal husbandry and welfare, and have a good working knowledge of their system and the livestock under their care.

- M 1.0** All records and other documentation that the '*RSPCA welfare standards for domestic/common ducks*' require to be kept and maintained, must be made available to the Freedom Food Assessor and RSPCA Farm Livestock Officer.

Managers

- M 1.1** Managers must ensure that all stock-keepers:
- a) have access to a current version of the '*RSPCA welfare standards for domestic/common ducks*'
 - b) are familiar with its content
 - * c) understand and apply its content in their specific area of responsibility.
- M 1.2** All staff employed who are responsible for the welfare of livestock must be identified, and records must be kept of all relevant training (including in-house) and experience received or gained.

M 1.3

Managers must:

- a) ensure all stock-keepers have completed relevant and adequate training and can satisfy the Freedom Food Assessor and RSPCA Farm Livestock Officer of their competence in practical circumstances
- b) develop and implement plans and precautions to prevent and cope with emergencies such as fire, flood, breakdown of environmental control systems or interruption of supplies e.g. food, water, electricity
- c) provide an Emergency Action Board sited in a prominent position, which must include:
 - the telephone number of the premises
 - directions to the farm with a map reference and postcode
 - the procedures to be followed by those discovering an emergency, e.g. fire, flood, power failure, notifiable disease
 - the location of water sources for use by the fire brigade
- d) develop and implement a biosecurity plan to minimise the risk of introducing disease onto a site
- e) maintain records of production data for each house, which include documentation on:
 - * • the breed/s of duck being reared
 - incoming and outgoing stock
 - causes of illness and injury
 - feed consumption
 - * • daily water usage
 - ventilation (including settings and any necessary changes)
 - the maximum number of birds permitted within the house, and actual number of birds placed
 - the daily mortality (the cause of death must be stated if this can be identified)
 - the number culled (including reasons for culling)
 - * • the number of birds removed for slaughter
 - the average weight of birds removed for slaughter
 - maximum and minimum temperatures
 - relative humidity
- f) develop and implement a transport plan to Freedom Food approved abattoirs which minimises waiting time for the birds
- g) develop and implement a waste management plan.

M 1.4

Managers must take into account the abilities of the stock-keepers when deciding on stocking densities for present systems, when considering expanding the unit, or when installing more complex equipment.

Stock-keepers

M 2.1

Prior to being given responsibility for the welfare of livestock, stock-keepers must be properly trained and be competent to:

- a) recognise signs of common diseases
- b) know the appropriate actions for treatment
- c) recognise signs of normal behaviour, abnormal behaviour and fear
- d) understand the signs which indicate good health and welfare
- e) understand the environmental requirements for ducks
- f) handle ducks in a positive and compassionate manner
- g) euthanase ducks when necessary to prevent further suffering.

M 2.2

Stock-keepers must be able to recognise impending welfare problems at their earliest stages, to enable prompt identification of the cause and prevent the condition worsening.

- M 2.3** When an outbreak of abnormal behaviour occurs, it must be tackled immediately by appropriate changes in the system of management.
- M 2.4** Stock-keepers must be able to demonstrate their proficiency in procedures that have the potential to cause suffering, e.g. culling.


Inspection


- M 3.1** All ducks must be inspected at least twice a day using an inspection procedure that will identify all birds that are sick, injured or behaving abnormally.
- M 3.2** In order that inspections are thorough, the stock-keeper must, at least once a day, walk within approximately 3 metres of each bird and encourage them to move.
- M 3.2.1** During inspection of the birds, special attention must be paid to:
- a) body condition
 - b) movements and other behaviour patterns
 - c) respiration
 - d) condition of plumage, eyes, skin, bill, legs and feet
 - e) the presence of external parasites
 - f) the condition of droppings
 - g) feed and water intake
 - h) growth.
- M 3.3** Where health problems have been identified, the stock-keeper must increase the number of inspections carried out each day to ensure all sick birds are treated or humanely culled without delay.
- M 3.4** All movement throughout the flock must be slow and deliberate, both to alleviate fear and reduce possible injury to birds.
- M 3.5** On completion of inspection, records must be kept of ill, injured and dead birds.
- M 3.6** Inspection records must be dated, signed and the time of inspection noted.
- M 3.7** Any welfare problems seen during an inspection must be dealt with appropriately and without delay.




Welfare problems of sufficient severity that they should have been noticed on previous inspections and dealt with, shall be taken as evidence of negligence of duties by the stock-keeper.

* Independent welfare audits

*  Independent welfare audits are a good way of helping ensure that on-farm standards, particularly those that have a direct impact on bird welfare and can change during the lifetime of a flock, are being implemented and maintained throughout the year and between any formalised farm assurance scheme assessment visits.

*  For clarity, these independent welfare audits, termed 'welfare audits,' do not include those conducted by either Freedom Food or the RSPCA as part of the Freedom Food certification process.

*  The welfare audit does not have to include an assessment of all the *RSPCA welfare standards for domestic/common ducks*, such as those relating to the presence and upkeep of paperwork. However, the audit is to focus specifically on those standards that have a direct impact on bird welfare and can change during the lifetime of a flock, including an assessment of stock-keeper ability, performance and competence. See Appendix 1 for a full list of standards to be included within the welfare audit.

M 4.1 * Producers must ensure that a welfare audit is carried out:


- a) to include an assessment of all the standards listed in Appendix 1
- b) by a welfare auditor (see M 4.4)
- c) on all houses where *RSPCA welfare standards for domestic/common ducks* are being implemented
- d) on a regular basis and in any case at least twice per year.

M 4.2 * The welfare audits must be approximately evenly distributed throughout the year.


M 4.3 * At least one of the welfare audits must take place in the last 10 days prior to slaughter of the flock.

M 4.4 * The welfare auditor, who conducts the welfare audits, must be:

- a) independent from the direct management of the farm
- b) suitably qualified and/or experienced to conduct the audit.

*  A suitable person to conduct the welfare audit would be the company Fieldsman (or, if the company does not have a Fieldsman, someone with an equivalent role within the company); a qualified vet; or an independent consultant with a good knowledge of duck production.

M 4.5 * Welfare audits must be unannounced.

*  For welfare audits to be most effective, the producer should not be given any advance warning of the visit. However, it is accepted that in some circumstances the producer may need to be contacted up to 24 hours before the audit to arrange a suitable time for the visit.

- M 4.6 *** For each house, a record of the welfare audit must be kept, which shows:
- a) the date of the audit
 - b) the name of the person who undertook the audit
 - c) the age of the flock at the time of the visit
 - d) the outcome of the audit including a list of all the standards not being fully met
 - e) the action to be taken to rectify each standard not being fully met (if relevant)
 - f) verification that the audit was unannounced (if the producer was given any advance warning of the visit this must be stated)
 - g) the signature and position/role of the person undertaking the audit
 - h) the signature of the stockkeeper/farm manager.

*  **Appendix 1 provides a template for the audit process.**

- M 4.7 *** Any welfare problems identified during a welfare audit must be dealt with appropriately and without delay to rectify the problem.

- M 4.8 *** There must be a process in place to:
- a) ensure that all problems regarding full implementation of the standards raised during the welfare audit are rectified
 - b) prevent the same problems with standards implementation being found at future welfare audits.

Equipment

- M 5.1** Stock keepers must inspect the equipment, including the automatic equipment, upon which ducks depend, at least once daily, to check that there is no defect in it.

- M 5.2** Where the birds' welfare is dependent on automated equipment, there must be:
- a) an alarm which will give adequate warning of the failure of that system to function properly (the alarm must operate even if the principal electricity supply to it has failed)
 - b) additional equipment or alternative means (whether automatic or not) of maintaining a satisfactory environment to prevent the birds from suffering unnecessary distress as a result of a failure.

*  **See Freedom Food information sheet 'Requirement for Alarmed Ventilation Systems' (Issue 4, February 2010).**

- M 5.3** Where a defect in the equipment is found (whether on inspection or at any other time):
- a) the defect must be rectified immediately
 - b) if this is impracticable, measures to safeguard the ducks from suffering unnecessary pain or distress as a result of the defect must immediately be taken and be maintained until the defect is rectified.
- M 5.4** For existing or new equipment which is used in management, e.g. heaters and lighting, stock-keepers must be able to:
- a) demonstrate an ability to operate the equipment competently
 - b) demonstrate the ability to carry out routine maintenance
 - c) recognise common signs of malfunction
 - d) demonstrate knowledge of action to be carried out in event of failures.

Protection from other animals

- M 6.1 *** Humane precautions must be taken to protect ducks from other animals that could cause them harm, including bringing in disease.
- M 6.2** Farm dogs and cats must not be permitted in the duck house.
- M 6.3** The intrusion of wild birds into non-free-range houses must be prevented with netting or similar material over roof ventilation ducts, windows, etc.
- M 6.4 *** A written Wild Animal Control plan (that includes the range area in the case of free range units), which details how the ducks will be protected from wild animals, must be in place.



The RSPCA is opposed to the use of poisons that cause animal suffering.

The RSPCA is concerned about the welfare of all animals that have the capacity to suffer, and therefore the consideration and use of alternatives to baiting as a method of control is strongly encouraged.

- M 6.5** The Wild Animal Control plan must include provisions that specifically exclude the snaring or gassing of animals.
- M 6.6** When developing and implementing the Wild Animal Control plan (see M 6.4), physical exclusion methods, and the removal of elements in the vicinity of livestock that might encourage the presence of wild animals, must be included.



Methods of physical exclusion and discouragement of wild animals include:

- **construction/maintenance of fencing appropriate for excluding the animals in question**
- **removal of shelter/cover (e.g. weeds) in the area surrounding livestock buildings**
- **removal/protection of obvious food sources**
- **maintenance/proofing of buildings.**

- M 6.7** Where a predator problem has been identified, either in the house or range, producers must demonstrate that action has been taken to safeguard the welfare of the birds.

The environment in which livestock are housed must be conducive to good health.

- H 1.1** A written Veterinary Health and Welfare Plan (VHWP) must be drawn up, reviewed and updated at least annually with the attending veterinary surgeon.

i The Veterinary Health and Welfare Plan (VHWP) forms a vitally important part of the RSPCA welfare standards with regard to maintaining health and welfare of livestock on farm. The VHWP should take into account specific health and welfare issues that are known to affect ducks, for example pododermatitis, and also health concerns that have been identified on farm on an individual basis.

The VHWP should include details of any medication and records of stock management e.g. water consumption, feed consumption, body weight, maximum and minimum house temperatures, relative humidity and flock mortality.

- H 1.2** The VHWP must include targets set for health aspects and records kept to identify whether targets have been met every year and at each assessment made by the veterinary surgeon.

- H 1.3** Managers must:

- have access to a copy of the Defra 'Code of Practice for the Control of Salmonella during Storage, Handling, and Transport of Raw Materials Intended for Incorporation into, or direct use as, Animal Feeding Stuff' (PB 2202, revised Feb 2003).
- be familiar with its content
- adopt its recommendations.

- H 1.4** There must be no recurring injuries of a similar nature seen on a number of birds attributable to physical features of their environment or handling procedures.

- H 1.5** If injuries are found, a programme of preventative action must be specified in the VHWP (see H 1.1).

- H 1.6** Proper attention must be paid to foot lesions.

- H 1.7** Flock performance data must be continuously monitored for signs of disease and production disorders.

- H 1.8** For each condition listed in S 3.1 ('health monitoring' in slaughter/killing section), a plan must be developed which is designed to prevent any increase in and/or reduce the average level of that condition existing on the farm.

- H 1.9** The plans referred to in H 1.8 must be incorporated into the VHWP (see H 1.1).

- H 1.10** If any flock performance parameters fall below the tolerance limits identified in the VHWP (see H 1.1):

- the veterinary surgeon must be informed
- the VHWP must be revised to include a programme of action that will remedy the problem.

i The use of multi-vitamins is recommended as good practice during the early stages of rearing, in the event of suspected disease challenge and also prior to and following periods of possible stress.

- H 1.11** Ailing ducks and any ducks suffering from injury, such as open wounds or fractures, must without delay be:
- a) segregated, but within sight and sound of other ducks,
 - b) treated, or
 - c) if necessary, humanely killed (see H 3.3).

i The RSPCA is aware that a number of different factors such as genetics, nutrition and management can all have an effect on the health, especially the leg health, of ducks. The Society is currently investigating the genetic selection process to help address some of these issues. When considering the choice of stock, selection of the strain of bird should be made with the aim of reducing welfare problems associated with rapid weight gain, such as leg problems.

- H 1.12** Management plans must aim to prevent ducks from suffering chronic joint disease or leg deformation.

- H 1.13** There must not be any lame birds.

- H 1.14** Any bird that is:
- a) in uncontrollable pain,
 - b) found not to be recovering from illness or injury, or
 - c) is lame
- must be humanely killed without delay.

i Lame is defined as a bird that has an obvious gait defect that affects its ability to move. The bird may have a limp, jerky or unsteady strut, or may splay one leg as it moves. The bird is likely to prefer to sit when not coerced to move, and is likely to be unable to run.

- H 1.15** Where used, facilities to segregate sick or injured birds must:
- a) be within the main house
 - b) provide birds with food and water, which is accessible without undue effort or discomfort, as specified in the Food and water section
 - c) be stocked at a density lower than the rest of the house to allow birds to rest quietly
 - d) be well littered, as specified in the Environment section
 - e) be inspected at least 3 times daily and an assessment made of each bird – this must be recorded.

- H 1.16** Stock-keepers must:
- a) take care when placing a duck into the segregation pen
 - b) not, under any circumstances, drop it over the surround.

- H 1.17** If the mortality level within a house is in excess of 0.5% in any 24-hour period, a veterinary investigation must be made and the outcome recorded.

i Investigation of lower mortality levels is at the discretion of the attending veterinary surgeon.

- H 1.18** Following depopulation, all houses must be thoroughly cleansed, disinfected and tested free from infectious agents as specified in the VHWP.

- H 1.19** Written procedures must be in place, and must be followed at all times, for the safe disposal of pharmaceutical waste, needles and other sharps.
- H 1.20** Procedures relating to H 1.19 must be in strict accordance with the relevant waste disposal regulations.
- H 1.21** Medicines must be clearly labelled and stored in accordance with the label instructions.
- H 1.22** Medicines must be kept in a secure, lockable store, which is safe from children and animals, including pets and wild birds.
- H 1.23** The medicine store must be separate from food producing areas.
- H 1.24** Any medicine used must be licensed for use in the UK, and applied in accordance with UK and EU legislation.

i It is recommended that producers obtain, read and where appropriate, apply the advice contained within the latest version of:

- a) *'Guidelines on Responsible Use of Antimicrobials in Poultry Production'*, issued by the Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture (RUMA) Alliance (RUMA, Acorn House, 25 Mardley Hill, Welwyn, Hertfordshire, AL6 0TT; www.ruma.org.uk)
- b) *'Code of practice on the responsible use of animal medicines on the farm'*, issued by the Veterinary Medicine Directorate
- c) *'Veterinary Medicines: safe use by farmers and other handlers'*, issued by the Health and Safety Executive.

- H 1.25** All personnel involved in the administration of animal medicines must be competent to do so.

Mutilations

- H 2.1** Bill trimming, claw trimming, wing clipping and any other forms of mutilation are not permitted.

On-farm casualty slaughter/killing (culling)

H 3.1 Each farm must have provisions for the humane killing/slaughter of casualty birds without delay.

H 3.2 Casualty killing/slaughter must be carried out by either:

- a) a named, trained, competent member of staff, or
- b) a licensed slaughterman, or
- c) a veterinary surgeon.

i It is not illegal to slaughter a bird to prevent further severe suffering if a method of humane slaughter is available on the premises and there is someone competent to undertake the procedure.

i The Humane Slaughter Association (HSA) has produced a booklet '*Practical Slaughter of Poultry: A Guide for the Small Producer*'. Producers should obtain a copy of this booklet, from HSA, The Old School, Brewhouse Hill, Wheathampstead, Herts AL4 8AN.

H 3.3 * Birds must only be slaughtered/killed on-farm using the following methods:

- a) captive bolt (e.g. Cash Poultry Killer)
- b) hand held electrical stunning, immediately followed by neck cutting
- c) neck dislocation for birds weighing less than 4kg only.

i Although the captive bolt device has been designed to effectively kill poultry, under current legislation it must be followed by neck dislocation or bleeding; except when used for emergency culling or during disease control operations. The RSPCA would strongly recommend the use of a captive bolt device for the culling of birds.

N.B. The term 'emergency' can be used to refer to the culling of casualty birds.

H 3.4 Equipment that crushes the neck (e.g. killing pliers) must not be used.

i Equipment that crushes the neck is neither quick nor humane.

H 3.5 Neck dislocation must involve stretching the neck to sever the spinal cord and cause extensive damage to the major blood vessels.

H 3.6 *

Where a captive bolt device is used:

- a) it must be maintained according to the manufacturer's published guidelines
- b) it must be used according to the manufacturers published guidelines
- c) it must be tested at least once per week
- d) it must be tested on each day of use, prior to being used
- e) birds must be restrained appropriately to enable accurate positioning of the device
- f) the muzzle of the device must be placed on the highest point of the head between the eye and the ear, on the midline, with the bolt aimed straight down
- g) the convex head, which is suitable for ducks, must be used
- h) Cash Powerload 'E'.22 cartridges must be used, for cartridge powered devices
- i) for compressed air devices, the air pressure must be at least 135 psi
- j) the operator must check that the birds show signs indicating they have been properly stunned/killed
- k) if there are any signs that a bird has not been properly stunned/killed, it must be immediately re-stunned and killed using a back-up method.

* **i** The bolt velocity should be tested using testing equipment supplied by the manufacturer. If this is not available, the condition of the components of the stunner should be thoroughly checked, with particular attention given to the state of the recuperator sleeves and the breech area.

* **i** With regards to the positioning of the captive bolt device, it is crucial that the muzzle is positioned between the eye and the ear of the duck. This is because the brain is situated just behind the eye (in the direction of the body).

* **i** In relation to H 3.6 j), unconsciousness can be checked by the absence of a blink reflex when the cornea (the surface of the eyeball) is lightly touched. Presence of a blink reflex must be acted upon immediately: it does not necessarily indicate full consciousness but the return of this reflex after stunning is a sign of some brain function returning and indicates the possibility that the bird is regaining consciousness.

H 3.7

Those responsible for using the captive bolt must:

- a) have received appropriate training
- b) be competent when using this equipment.

H 3.8

If there is any doubt as to how to proceed, the veterinary surgeon must be called at an early stage to advise whether treatment is possible or whether humane slaughter is required to prevent suffering.

H 3.9

All carcasses must be disposed of strictly according to current legislation.

H 3.10

A record must be kept of how and where carcasses are disposed of.

Transport

Animal transport systems must be designed and managed to ensure livestock are not caused unnecessary distress or discomfort. The transport and handling of livestock must be kept to an absolute minimum.

* Management

i Managers should consider the construction of buildings and bear in mind the access to and from the area where birds are placed and removed. Particular attention should be paid to the width of doors.

T 1.1 All personnel involved in the catching and transportation of birds must be properly trained and competent.

i Where possible, training relating to T 1.1 should be validated.

T 1.2 Catching team leaders must:

- a) be familiar with the content of the Humane Slaughter Association DVD 'Poultry Welfare – Taking Responsibility'
- b) convey the relevant content to other members of the catching team
- c) ensure that the recommendations are applied where appropriate.

i Where possible all members of the catching team should be familiar with the content of the Humane Slaughter Association DVD 'Poultry Welfare - Taking Responsibility'.

T 1.3 Managers must prepare full and detailed written catching instructions for the catching staff.

T 1.4 All catching staff must:

- a) have a copy of the written catching instructions
- b) be aware of their duties.

T 1.5 The farm manager/assistant must be made responsible for supervising and maintaining high welfare standards throughout the depopulation of the house and loading of birds onto the transport vehicle.


T 1.6 The farm manager/assistant must be present at all times during the catching operation.


T 1.7 Procedures must be in place to ensure that any concerns regarding the catching techniques used by the catching staff are recorded and raised with the area manager.

Catching

- T 2.0** Sufficient time must be made available to ensure birds are handled with care.
- T 2.1** Ducks must not suffer prolonged hunger, thirst, deprivation of rest, or thermal distress – specifically:
- a) birds must have access to water up to the time of catching
 - b) no bird must be deprived of food for more than 10 hours prior to slaughter
 - c) during hot weather (in excess of 20°C) sufficient ventilation must be provided for uncaught birds until the time they are loaded and, if necessary, additional mobile fans must be provided during the catching operation
 - d) during cold weather adequate draught-free ventilation at bird height must be provided for uncaught birds up to the time of loading.
- T 2.2** Birds which are visibly unfit before loading must:
- a) not be transported
 - b) be humanely slaughtered immediately.
- T 2.3** Catching must take place in low or blue lighting to minimise fear reactions of the birds.
- T 2.4 *** When only a proportion of birds are to be removed from a building, those birds not being caught must have access to food and water during the catching operation.
- T 2.4.1 *** In relation to T 2.4, where it is not practicable to provide food during the catching operation, i.e. because of a continuous feeder line, then food must be provided within 30 minutes of the catch finishing.
- T 2.5 *** When only a proportion of birds are to be removed from a building, a partition must be erected to separate those birds being caught from those remaining in the shed.

- T 2.5.1 *** The partition must:
- a) be mobile
 - b) not cause physical injury to the birds
 - c) be erected at a suitable time prior to catching to allow birds time to settle
 - d) minimise any disruption caused by the catching team to those birds remaining in the shed
 - e) not reduce the floor area available to those birds not being caught to such an extent that the maximum stocking density of 17kg/m² is exceeded.

*  **Partitions often comprise of 244 x 61cm (8 x 2ft) plywood sheets on framing.**

- *  **Where a proportion of birds are removed from a house for slaughter this can compromise the wellbeing of those birds not being caught. For example, those birds remaining in the house can be affected by:**
- setting up the house for catching
 - temporary withdrawal of feed and water
 - noise and disruption from the catching process
 - forklift operation in the house
 - the condition of the house after catching
 - the disturbance caused by returning the house to its condition after catching
 - compromises in biosecurity, e.g. the introduction of modules and a forklift, which may not have been cleaned properly thus introducing infectious agents.

Where a proportion of birds are removed from a house for slaughter the catching process should be managed sympathetically to minimise such problems.

- T 2.6** The catching of birds must be carried out quietly and confidently, exercising care to avoid unnecessary struggling and stress.
- T 2.6.1** Care must be taken to ensure that birds do not come into contact with moving vehicles whilst being caught.
- T 2.7** During catching, actions must be taken to prevent ducks from crowding together.
- T 2.8** Where crowding occurs, the house lights must be raised, the birds spread out calmly and quietly, then allowed to settle before catching is resumed.
- T 2.9** If ducks are caught by their necks, there must be no more than two birds in each hand.
- T 2.10** Ducks must not be carried:
- a) hanging head downwards
 - * b) by the legs
 - c) by the wing
 - * d) by the neck.
- T 2.10.1 *** Where birds are lifted by their necks to be placed into transport containers, this must be completed as a single, gentle, smooth and fluid movement and not involve a sudden change in direction.

*  **It is accepted that catchers will often start with their backs to the module; turning smoothly and carefully is essential.**

- T 2.10.2 *** When carrying birds, the weight of the bird must be supported either by:
- a) taking the weight of the bird by a hand or arm placed under its body, or
 - b) by holding the bird with a hand on either side of its body with the wings in the closed position.
- T 2.11** Birds weighing more than 4kg must:
- a) be carried individually
 - b) have their body weight supported
 - c) be put into containers one at a time.
- T 2.12** Ducks must be put in transport modules in the house.
- T 2.13** The top drawer of the module must be loaded first.
- T 2.14** Birds must be placed carefully into the module drawer.
- T 2.15** Birds must not be dropped or thrown into the drawer.
- T 2.16** Care must be taken to avoid injury to the birds when loading them into the drawer.
- T 2.17** Drawers must be closed carefully to ensure that the birds' heads, wings and legs are not trapped in any way.
- T 2.18** Managers must ensure that when birds are placed in transport crates, the handling of birds, design of crates, and method of transportation, minimise the soiling of feathers.
- T 2.19** The stocking density in each tray must not exceed 62kg/m² of tray floor area.




Based on the standard Anglia Autoflow crate (0.8m²) the stocking density in T 2.19 equates to:

Weight	Birds per crate
Up to 3kg	16
3.1 to 3.5kg	14
3.6 to 4.0kg	12

- T 2.20** Stocking density must be reduced by 10% when birds are being transported during temperatures in excess of 20°C.
- T 2.21** Modules must be taken from the shed slowly and care must be taken to ensure no damage is caused to the birds.

Transport

- T 3.1** All birds must be slaughtered within 6 hours of loading the first bird into a module.
- T 3.2** The time from when the birds leave the farm to arriving at the processing plant must be no longer than 4 hours.
- T 3.3** All hauliers must have a written 'Standard Operating and Emergency Procedure' to implement during transportation (see Appendix 2).
- T 3.4** Fixed crate transport systems are prohibited.
- T 3.5** Modular transport vehicles must be parked as near as practically possible to the house being depopulated.
- T 3.6** The distance birds are carried/have to walk must be minimised, for example, by bringing transport containers as close to the birds as possible.
- T 3.7** Modular transport systems must:
- a) have completely open tops with a depth of not less than 210mm
 - b) permit adequate ventilation and protect birds from adverse climatic conditions
 - c) be well maintained
 - d) be thoroughly cleansed after carrying each consignment of birds.
- T 3.8** There must be no sharp edges or protrusions on the crates or vehicle that could cause injury to the birds.
- T 3.9** The cleanliness of the vehicle must be checked by the appointed supervisor before any birds are loaded on to it.
- T 3.10** Personnel in charge of duck transporters must:
- a) have completed an approved training course
 - b) be able to demonstrate their competence in handling ducks when loading and unloading them and while in transit.
- T 3.11** All transporters must have a livestock capacity document on board at all times.
-  **The livestock capacity document will give data on the size of the transporter and the calculated carrying capacity for different livestock species under different climatic conditions.**
- T 3.12** An on-farm record must be maintained of all incidents causing death or injury to the birds during transport.
- T 3.13** Where causes of mortality have been identified, prompt action must be taken to prevent further deaths, injury or suffering occurring.
- T 3.14 *** If on any day mortality exceeds 0.25% for a single flock of ducks during transport:
- a) the level of mortality must be recorded
 - b) there must be an investigation, that is recorded, to establish the cause/s of death
 - c) effective preventative measures must be put in place without delay to remedy the problem.
- T 3.15** On arrival at the destination, all birds must be unloaded immediately.
- T 3.16** Noise levels, from all sources, must be minimised during loading, unloading and transport.

- T 3.17** Every effort must be made to ensure:
- a) journeys are completed without unnecessary delays
 - b) that drivers are aware of any potential traffic problems and plan their journey accordingly.
- T 3.18** The person supervising the catching and loading of birds must liaise closely with the abattoir to minimise the time birds spend waiting on the vehicle.
- T 3.19** If it is necessary to keep birds on board a stationary vehicle, the driver must take action to avoid heat/cold stress to the birds.

i In hot weather (in excess of 20°C) one of the most effective ways of providing a cooling draught is to keep the vehicle moving.

- T 3.20** Plans must be made in advance, and appropriate action taken, to reduce the risk of heat stress, including the routine monitoring of weather forecasts of predicted temperatures.
- T 3.21** Ducks must have shelter from extremes of weather during transport.

i The technology is now becoming available to monitor temperature and humidity on-board transport vehicles. This allows drivers to take appropriate action to maintain ideal conditions for birds. The use of such equipment is encouraged by the RSPCA. The RSPCA will monitor the development of such technology and review its use for inclusion in future development of these standards.

i At times of high ambient temperature or when high humidity poses a threat to the birds, catching, loading and transportation create particular risks of heat stress.

- T 3.22** Drivers must carry some form of communication, e.g. mobile telephone, in case of an emergency when he/she may need to contact relevant personnel.

Slaughter/killing

All slaughter systems must be designed and managed to ensure livestock are not caused unnecessary distress or discomfort. The pre-slaughter handling of livestock must be kept to an absolute minimum.

S 1.0 For those seeking Freedom Food approval, the standards relating to the slaughter/killing of ducks (standards with the 'S' prefix) must be assessed by the RSPCA's Farm Animals Department, prior to approval.

S 1.1 Ducks must be slaughtered as close as possible to the point of production.

Training

S 2.1 Managers must develop and implement an animal welfare policy.

S 2.2 The animal welfare policy must:

- a) include written procedures with regard to maintaining animal welfare in the abattoir, including the responsibilities and duties of staff for emergency procedures, such as escaped, trapped or injured ducks
- b) be reviewed and updated at least annually, or when there are changes to the design or operation of the handling, stunning or slaughter system.

S 2.3 Managers must appoint at least one trained Poultry Welfare Officer (PWO), who is responsible for the implementation of the animal welfare policy.

i Where possible, the PWO should have attended a recognised, validated training course e.g. Bristol University Animal Welfare Officer Training programme. Where possible, this training should be validated.

S 2.4 Managers, in conjunction with the PWO, must:

- a) develop and implement a training programme for all staff handling and slaughtering birds
- b) ensure that staff are properly trained and competent to carry out their duties.

S 2.5 PWO's must:

- a) be familiar with the content of the Humane Slaughter Association DVD '*Poultry Welfare – Taking Responsibility*'
- b) convey the relevant content to other members of the slaughter team
- c) ensure that the recommendations are applied where appropriate.

i Where possible all members of the slaughter team should be familiar with the content of the Humane Slaughter Association DVD '*Poultry Welfare - Taking Responsibility*'.

S 2.6 The PWO must make frequent checks throughout the day to ensure that birds are being effectively stunned and are insensible throughout the slaughter operation.

S 2.7 Records relating to standard S 2.6 must be kept.

- S 2.8** Where the birds are not being effectively stunned the PWO must take remedial action without delay.
- S 2.9** The manager and PWO must:
- * a) have access to a copy of the Defra booklet 'The Welfare of Poultry at Slaughter or Killing' (PB 13539, 2007)
 - b) be familiar with its content
 - c) ensure that the recommendations are applied where appropriate.

Closed Circuit Television (CCTV)

i The use of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) in areas where live animals are present can assist those responsible for monitoring and enforcing animal welfare within the abattoir in ensuring that standards are maintained. It is strongly recommended that CCTV footage is also used for in-house training programmes and to provide an additional level of security at the abattoir.

- S(TV) 1.1** By 1st November 2011, a functional CCTV system must be installed and operational to monitor animals undergoing the following processes at the abattoir:
- a) unloading from vehicles into the lairage
 - b) shackling
 - c) stunning, including exiting the electrical waterbath
 - d) neck cutting.
- S(TV) 1.2** CCTV cameras must be positioned to ensure a clear view of the processes being monitored is achieved at all times.
- S(TV) 1.3** It must be possible to observe clearly the view from each camera at all times via one or more monitors.
- S(TV) 1.4** CCTV footage must be recorded at all times where animals are undergoing any of the processes listed under standard S(TV) 1.1.
- S(TV) 1.5** The recorded CCTV footage must be:
- a) retained by the abattoir for a period of at least three months, and
 - b) available for viewing on site by Freedom Food field staff and RSPCA Farm Animals Department staff on request.

i Where possible it may be useful for managers to retain CCTV footage for longer than the three months specified in standard S(TV) 1.5, for their own monitoring and security purposes.

Health monitoring

S 3.1 The level of the following must be recorded for each flock:

- a) pododermatitis (classified as score 1 or above in the information box below S 3.2)
- b) dirty feathers (classified as score 1 or above in the information box below S 3.2).

i Lesions to the foot pad (pododermatitis) are caused by contact with litter which is both wet and contains a high level of ammonia from faeces. Such lesions can cause pain and can act as a gateway for bacterial infection.

i The term 'flock' refers to a group of ducks that are placed in a house of holding and present in this house at the same time.

S 3.2 The method used to score each condition outlined in S 3.1 must be objective and:

- a) differentiate between minor, mild and severe conditions
- b) provide consistent results within and between observers
- c) provide reliable and accurate data for the level of a condition within a flock.

i The following scoring system should be used to classify pododermatitis:

0 (None): No lesion/s present

1 (Minor): Very small and superficial lesion/s, slight discolouration on a limited area, mild hyperkeratosis.

2 (Mild): Substantial discolouration, superficial lesion/s, dark papillae

3 (Severe): Ulcers or scabs of significant size, signs of haemorrhages or swollen foot pad/hock

If there is an absence of severe foot pad burns, but a lot of class 1 lesions are observed in a flock, then this should be seen as not necessarily a major welfare problem in itself, but as an indication that things can rapidly get worse and that remedial action should be taken.

* **i** A minimum of 200 feet per flock should be assessed to estimate the average level of pododermatitis for that flock. The number of feet in each category should be recorded. The feet should be clean prior to assessment and should be individually examined under good light.

i The following scoring system should be used to classify dirty feathers:

0 (None): clean – not significantly dirty

1 (Minor): lightly soiled

2 (Mild): medium soiling

3 (Severe): heavily soiled

i Assessing birds for dirty feathers should take place on the farm during catching. This will avoid scoring birds that may have become dirty during transport and therefore provide a better picture of on-farm conditions. The stock-keeper and/or catching foreman should assess the birds.

S 3.3 Data relating to S 3.1 must be reported back to the producing farm.

Lairage

S 4.1 All birds must be slaughtered as soon as possible on arrival at the processing plant and in any case within 2 hours.

S 4.2 The lairage must be designed to minimise any distress caused to the birds.

i The design of the lairage includes aspects such as the flooring. Uneven flooring can cause physical discomfort to birds when moving them through the lairage in modules.

S 4.3 On arrival at the slaughter plant all birds must be:

- a) unloaded immediately
- b) placed in an environmentally controlled lairage.

S 4.4 If birds are injured, heat or cold stressed then:

- a) immediate action must be taken to alleviate suffering
- b) effective measures must be put in place to ensure similar occurrences are prevented.

S 4.5 Any bird identified as suffering from injury, heat or cold stress, must be slaughtered immediately and humanely.

S 4.6 Ducks that are held in slaughter facilities must be:

- a) protected from direct rays of sun and from adverse weather, i.e. wind, rain, hail, snow, etc.
- b) provided with adequate ventilation to avoid heat and cold stress
- c) humanely killed immediately if found to be suffering.

S 4.7 Contingency plans must be in place to deal with occasions when unavoidable delays may occur.

S 4.8 When a breakdown occurs which results in a delay in the slaughter process, birds may be held in lairage for up to 3 hours from the time of arrival, after which time they must be slaughtered using a permitted back-up method.

S 4.9 The lairage temperature and humidity must be regularly monitored and controlled.

S 4.10 The lairage must have reduced or blue lighting.


S 4.11 Once ducks have arrived at the premises at which they are intended to be slaughtered, they must not be moved on to other premises for slaughter.

S 4.12 Standby equipment e.g. a generator, must be available for emergency breakdowns.


S 4.13 Care must be taken when removing birds from the crates.

- S 4.14** Where live birds are removed from crates prior to shackling, unloading must take place as close to the shackle line as possible to minimise carrying distance and to avoid any stress caused to the birds.
- S 4.15** All deaths and injuries must be recorded and reported to the:
- a) driver
 - b) haulier
 - c) PWO
 - d) farm manager
- before the next consignment from the same source is collected.
- S 4.16** Records of all deaths and injuries must be kept.

Shackling

*  **The RSPCA will phase out the inverted shackling of conscious ducks as soon as a commercially viable and more humane alternative method of slaughter/killing is available.**

- S 5.1** Shackling teams must be:
- a) thoroughly trained and competent to handle the birds in such a way as to avoid injury
 - b) made fully aware of the risk of breakages that the hanging-on procedure can cause to ducks
 - c) supervised by a trained and competent person during the shackling process.
- S 5.2** Slaughterhouse managers must ensure that sufficient personnel are employed on shackling lines at all times to ensure due care and diligence.
- S 5.3** Shackles must be of a size and type, and the slaughter line run at a speed, which permits ducks to be hung on without causing unnecessary pain or distress.
- S 5.4** There must be no unevenness in the line causing the shackles to jolt.
- S 5.5** Birds must be hung on by both legs.
- S 5.6** The shackler must use a handling technique that calms the bird as it is being shackled.

*  **Holding the bird's legs for 0.5 seconds after shackling, and/or running the hands gently down the legs and body of the bird, may help calm the bird and reduce the incidence of wing flapping.**

- S 5.7** From the point of shackling to entry into the stun bath there must be:
- a breast comforter to prevent wing flapping and birds raising their heads
 - no noises that cause unnecessary disturbance to the birds
 - a maximum light level of 5 lux.

i The area of the shackle line that transports live birds may be lit with blue light.

i The provision of a breast comforter and a reduction in noise and light levels all help to calm the bird and prevent it raising its head, vocalising and wing flapping. Breast comforters should be constructed from firm rubber or plastic curtain and extend below the eye level of the bird.

- * **i** The shackle line, from the point of shackling to entry into the stun bath, should follow as straight a line as possible, i.e. bends in the line should be avoided.

- S 5.8** Care must be taken to ensure that birds cannot escape from the holding area or fall from the shackle line.

- S 5.9** Where loose birds are found they must be taken immediately to the hanging on area or, if injured, immediately humanely killed.

- S 5.10 *** Prior to 1st December 2012, ducks must not be suspended for more than 1 minute before they are stunned.

- * **i** Shackling a bird causes discomfort and pain, so it is important to reduce the shackling period to as short a period as possible. However, for an effective stun, it is necessary for the bird to be shackled for a short period to allow it time to relax and stop wing flapping. Therefore, live ducks should not be suspended for more time than is necessary for wing flapping to cease.

- S 5.10.1 *** By 1st December 2012, ducks must not be suspended for more than 50 seconds before they are stunned.

- S 5.11** All crates must be checked to ensure no ducks are left inside them.

Stunning

- S 6.1** The following types of stunning equipment are permitted:

- electrically live stunning bath
- dry stunner incorporating an electrically-live metal grid or bar
- hand operated stunner
- pneumatically powered poultry killer - however, this must not be used for routine killing purposes, i.e. only used in the event of a breakdown of one of the normal methods employed (above).

- S 6.2** It must be possible to visually observe birds at all stages of the stunning procedure, i.e. on entry, during, and immediately on exit from the stunning bath.

- S 6.3** Unstunned birds must be screened from dead birds.

S 6.4

Where electrical water stunning baths are used:

- a) the stunning bath must be set at a height appropriate for the size and number of birds
- b) the height must be set to ensure the heads of the birds are fully immersed in the water
- c) there must be a voltage sufficient to produce a minimum current of 130mA (0.130A) per bird
- d) a sinusoidal (AC) waveform must be used (stunning using a DC waveform is prohibited)
- e) they must operate at a frequency of 50Hz
- f) each bird must be in contact with the electrical current for a minimum of 4 seconds
- g) the water bath used for stunning or killing ducks must be of sufficient size and depth and the water must not overflow at the entrance
- h) the electrode, which is immersed in the water, must extend the length of the water bath
- i) birds must not receive pre-stun shocks
- j) the water bath must be fitted with an ammeter to accurately monitor current flow through the bath when loaded with birds.

i 50Hz sine wave (AC) is the optimum frequency and waveform for inducing cardiac arrest. The heart muscle is particularly sensitive to this frequency and when sufficient current is applied to the heart it ceases to beat normally and pump blood around the body. Therefore, an effective stun-to-kill can be achieved when using this frequency, which is the most preferred outcome to achieve good welfare during slaughter.

i A steeply inclined flat ramp bolted on to the entrance of the waterbath can be effective in avoiding pre-stun shocks. The ramp should extend over the water so the birds get drawn up the ramp by the shackle line and then swing down into the water in one smooth movement. This results in the bird's head entering the water first and the bird is stunned immediately.

Care must be taken to ensure birds do not receive pre-stun shocks from the ramp itself. This may occur if the ramp is electrically live because of water flowing from the bath onto the ramp or if it is not isolated from the rest of the stunner.

Source: Humane Slaughter Association (HSA). 2006. HSA Technical Note 16: '*Prevention of Pre-Stun Shocks in Electrical Waterbaths*'. HSA, Wheathampstead, Herts., UK (www.hsa.org.uk).

S 6.5 *

The shackle - at the point where it meets the duck's foot - must be wet prior to the bird entering the stun bath.


*** i** Ideally, the wetting of the shackle should be before the bird is hung.

S 6.6

Where electrical hand-held stunners are used:

- a) ducks must be restrained in a cone or on a shackle
- b) birds must be stunned without delay after being restrained
- c) care must be taken to ensure that the stunning electrodes are applied in the optimum position, i.e. applied firmly to either side of the head between the eye and ear
- d) hand-held stunners must deliver 400mA for at least 10 seconds and until initial wing flapping ceases (or if held in a cone, until legs become rigid and extended)
- e) neck cutting must be carried out immediately (see S 7.1).

- S 6.7** All stunning and bleeding equipment must be properly and regularly maintained, cleaned and checked daily to ensure that it is in full and proper working order.
- S 6.8** An independent, qualified person must inspect the stunning equipment to test its efficacy.
- S 6.9** Any problems must be reported to the PWO and rectified immediately.
- S 6.10** Contingency plans must be made to deal with occasions when unavoidable delays may occur and it is not possible to process birds.
- S 6.11** If the slaughter line is stopped for longer than 1 minute, birds between the point of shackling and the killer must be humanely killed immediately.
- S 6.12** There must be sufficient time after stunning and prior to neck cutting to assess the effectiveness of the kill.
- S 6.13** All birds must be checked to ensure they have been effectively stunned or killed.
- S 6.14** Birds which fail to be properly stunned must be immediately stunned using a permitted method as in accordance with S 6.1, and humanely slaughtered before entering the scalding tank.
- S 6.15** Staff must be trained to recognise the signs of an effective stun, and use these signs to recognise that birds have been effectively stunned or are dead.

*  **The most reliable indicator that a bird is properly stunned by the low voltage method is the electroplectic fit. The characteristics of this condition are:**

- 1. no rhythmic breathing**
- 2. neck arched with head directed vertically**
- 3. open eyes**
- 4. absence of a third eyelid (nictitating membrane) reflex^a**
- 5. wings held close to the body**
- 6. rigidly extended legs and constant rapid body tremors.**

The physical conditions of the electroplectic fit are shorter lasting and less pronounced when cardiac arrest is induced at stunning. They are followed by:

- completely limp carcass**
- no breathing**
- loss of nictitating membrane reflex^a**
- dilated pupil.**

^a**Unconsciousness can be checked by the absence of a blink reflex when the cornea (the surface of the eyeball) is lightly touched. Presence of a blink reflex must be acted upon immediately: it does not necessarily indicate full consciousness but the return of this reflex after stunning is a sign of some brain function returning and indicates the possibility that the bird is regaining consciousness.**

Bleeding

- S 7.1** Post-stunning, carotid arteries and jugular veins must be effectively severed using a ventral cut.
- S 7.2** The neck cut must be checked by an appointed member of staff who must be given sufficient time to sever the blood vessels manually, if necessary.
- S 7.3** No more than 10 seconds must elapse between stunning and neck cutting.
- S 7.4** All birds must be checked to ensure that they are dead before entering the scalding tank.
- S 7.5** No further processing must take place until at least 90 seconds have elapsed since the major blood vessels in the bird's neck have been severed.

* Appendix 1

Welfare audit form example (relating to standards M 4.1 – 4.8)

Standards to be included as part of the welfare audit (see standards M 4.1 to M 4.8) and an example of a suitable Welfare Audit form.

Date		Unannounced	Yes / No
Auditor			
Producer			
Flock age			
Comments			

Standard reference	Summarised standard	Check	Comments
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Food & water			
FW 1.1 & FW 1.2	Feed provided: a) is appropriate to species & age b) maintains birds in good health c) satisfies nutritional needs d) is available at all times.		
FW 1.6	Food not contaminated/stale.		
FW 2.0 & FW 2.2	Water is available at all times & is clean & fresh.		
FW 2.5	Water not harmfully contaminated.		
FW 2.6, FW 2.13, FW 2.13.1 & FW 2.14	Open water sources are: a) in good working order b) at correct height to allow birds to enter water.		
FW 2.17	Litter around water source is in good condition & not excessively wet.		
FW 1.10 & FW 2.7	Feeding/drinking equipment are being hygienically managed.		

Environment			
E 1.2	Outside environmental factors, e.g noise, atmospheric pollution, adverse weather conditions, & other animals, are not compromising, or likely to compromise, bird welfare.		
E 2.5	There's nothing in the environment that could cause unavoidable injury/distress.		

Litter			
E 3.4	<p>The litter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) is of a suitable material & particle size b) is in a dry condition (being replaced where necessary) c) is of a sufficient depth for dilution of faeces d) is managed hygienically. 		

Lighting			
E 4.1 & E 4.2	<p>In each 24h:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) no area less than 20 lux (for minimum 9h/day) b) no area less than 6 lux (outside 9h period) c) minimum 6h continuous dark period d) any supplementary light provided at night is less than 2 lux. 		
E 4.4	Birds exposed to natural daylight no later than 7d of age.		
E 4.5	Natural daylight provided at all times during natural daylight period, through all required openings.		
E 4.7	Natural daylight to penetrate all areas of the house.		
E 4.11	Birds exposed to dawn & dusk periods.		
E 4.12	If used outside natural daylight period, e.g. to extend the light period, artificial lights switched on/off in stepped/gradual manner over a period of at least 20 mins.		

Space requirements & environment

E 5.2 & E 5.3	Stocking density & rate are within required limits.		
E 6.2	Aerial contaminants not noticeably unpleasant.		
E 6.5	The birds have thermally comfortable environment.		
E 7.2	Effective enrichment items are present.		

Free-range

R 1.1	Birds given access to range as soon as they are mature enough.		
R 1.3	Birds have continuous daytime access to the range.		
R 1.9	The range: a) consist of pasture mainly covered with living vegetation b) surrounding the house is not poached.		
R 1.15	There is a minimum 8m ² of overhead shade & shelter per 1,000 birds.		
R 1.16	Shade & shelter facilities are appropriately distributed to encourage full use of range.		
R 1.17	The range is being managed to provide the most suitable conditions to encourage the birds to roam.		

Stock-keepers & management

M 2.4	Stock-keepers can demonstrate their proficiency in procedures that have the potential to cause suffering, e.g. culling.		
M 3.1	Birds are inspected at least twice per day with one inspection sufficient to identify sick/injured birds.		
M 3.7	Welfare problems are dealt with appropriately & without delay.		
M 5.1	Equipment, upon which birds depend, is inspected min 1x/d.		

Health			
H 1.13	There are no lame birds.		
H 1.14	Good culling practice being adopted - no birds that require culling are present in the flock.		

Action			
Standard number	Action required & comments	Date to be actioned	Date actioned and signature

Signature auditor: _____

Auditor position/role: _____

Signature producer: _____

Appendix 2

Transport – standard operating and emergency procedure

(relating to standard T 3.3)

Items to be included

1. Out of hours telephone numbers and 'emergency procedure'.
2. Accident procedure.
3. Certificate of motor insurance and MOT.
4. Tyres – punctures Code of Practice.
5. Mobile phones or other communication equipment (and procedures for use).
6. Guidelines on correct environmental conditions during the journey, depending on length of journey and ambient temperature.
7. RSPCA welfare standards relating to transport of ducks.
8. Procedure for loading/unloading of poultry transporters.
9. Procedure for delivery of poultry to customer sites.
10. FTA – *'The Driver's Handbook'*, including Tachograph Regulations.
11. Fire extinguisher.
12. Operating procedures for roadside checks.

Index

Subject	Page	Subject	Page
Air quality		Cleaning/disinfection	
SPD 2.2	1	SPD 2.11	2
E 2.4	7	FW 2.8	4
E 5.1	14	E 3.1, E 3.2	8
E 6.1 to E 6.4	15	H 1.18	28
		T 3.7, T 3.9	37
		S 6.7	46
Behaviour			
E 4.12	13	Cold stress	
E 7.1, E 7.2	16	See 'Thermal environment'	
R 1.17	20		
M 2.1	22	Crates	
M 2.3, M 3.1, M 3.2.1	23	T 2.18, T 2.19	36
		T 3.4, T 3.8	37
Bill trimming		S 4.13	42
H 2.1	29	S 5.11	44
Biosecurity plan		Culling	
M 1.3	22	See 'Casualty slaughter/killing (culling)'	
Bleeding		Depopulation	
See 'Casualty slaughter/killing (culling)'		See 'Catching'	
See 'Slaughter/killing'			
Buildings		Disease	
SPD 2.1	1	R 1.18	20
FW 2.16, FW 2.16.1	5	M 1.3, M 2.1	22
E 1.1.1, E 2.0 to E 2.4	7	M 6.1	26
E 2.5 to E 2.11, E 3.2	8	H 1.7, H 1.10	27
E 4.7	12	H 1.12	28
E 4.10	13	H 3.3	30
E 5.1	14		
R 1.4	17	Drinkers	
R 1.6	18	SPD 2.2	1
M 6.6	26	SPD 2.10, SPD 2.11, SPD 2.13,	
		SPD 2.14	2
Carbon dioxide/monoxide		FW 2.6, FW 2.7	4
SPD 2.8	1	FW 2.18	5
E 6.3	15	E 2.4	7
Casualty slaughter/killing (culling)		Ducklings	
H 3.1 to H 3.5	30	SPD 1.1 to SPD 2.9	1
H 3.6 to H 3.10	31	SPD 2.10 to SPD 2.17	2
		FW 2.13.1	4
Catching		E 4.4	12
T 1.1 to T 1.7	33	R 1.20	20
T 2.0 to T 2.5	34		
T 2.5.1 to T 2.10.1	35	Electrical installations	
T 2.10.2 to T 2.21	36	E 2.7	8
T 3.18	38		
S 3.2	41		
Claw trimming			
H 2.1	29		

Subject	Page	Subject	Page
Emergency procedures/contingency plans		Heat stress	
FW 2.3	4	See 'Thermal environment'	
E 2.4	7	Humidity	
M 1.3	22	E 3.4	9
H 3.3	30	E 6.3	15
T 3.3	37	M 1.3	22
T 3.22	38	H 1.1	27
S 2.2	39	T 3.21	38
S 4.7, S 4.12	42	S 4.9	42
S 6.10	46		
Environmental enrichment		Injury	
E 4.1	11	SPD 2.16, SPD 2.17	2
E 4.14	14	E 2.5	8
E 7.1, E 7.2	16	M 1.3	22
R 1.13	19	M 3.1, M 3.4, M 3.5	23
Feeders		H 1.4, H 1.5	27
SPD 2.2, SPD 2.9	1	H 1.11 to H 1.15	28
SPD 2.10, SPD 2.11, SPD 2.13	2	T 2.5.1	35
FW 1.8 to FW 1.10	3	T 2.16	36
E 2.4	7	T 3.8, T 3.12, T 3.13	37
Flooring		S 2.2	39
FW 2.16	5	S 4.4, S 4.5	42
E 3.1	8	S 4.15, S 4.16, S 5.1	43
E 3.7	10	S 5.9	44
S 4.2	42	Inspection	
Food		SPD 2.16	2
FW 1.1 to FW 1.10	3	E 2.7	8
FW 2.19	5	M 3.1 to M 3.7	23
R 1.20	20	M 5.1, M 5.3	25
M 1.3	22	H 1.15	28
M 6.6	26	S 2.6	39
H 1.15	28	S 5.11	44
T 2.1, T 2.4, T 2.4.1	34	S 6.7, S 6.8, S 6.13	46
Foot lesions		S 7.2, S 7.4	47
See 'Leg health'		Killing pliers	
Handling		H 3.4	30
SPD 2.5	1	Lairage	
E 2.10	8	S(TV) 1.1	40
M 2.1	22	S 4.1 to S 4.13	42
H 1.4	27	S 4.14 to S 4.16	43
H 1.16	28	Leg health	
T 2.0	34	E 3.4	9
T 2.18	36	M 3.2.1	23
T 3.10	37	H 1.1	27
S 2.2, S 2.4	39	H 1.11 to H 1.14	28
S 5.1, S 5.2, S 5.6	43	S 3.1, S 3.2	41
		S 3.3	42

Subject	Page	Subject	Page
Lighting		Noise	
SPD 2.12, SPD 2.13, SPD 2.15	2	E 1.2	7
E 2.4	7	T 2.5.1	35
E 4.1 to E 4.3	11	T 3.16	37
E 4.4 to E 4.8	12	S 5.7	44
E 4.9 to E 4.13	13		
E 4.14, E 4.15	14	Open water facilities	
R 1.13	19	FW 2.8 to FW 2.15	4
M 5.4	25	FW 2.15.1 to FW 2.17	5
T 2.3	34	E 7.2	16
T 2.8	35		
S 4.10	42	Other animals	
S 5.7	44	E 1.2	7
		M 6.1 to M 6.7	26
Litter			
SPD 2.15	2	Paints and preservatives	
FW 2.15.1 to FW 2.17	5	E 2.6	8
E 3.3	8		
E 3.4, E 3.5	9	Pests and predators	
E 3.6 to E 3.9	10	See 'Other animals'	
E 4.9	13		
E 5.1	14	Pododermatitis	
E 6.1	15	See 'Leg health'	
H 1.15	28		
Managers		Poultry Welfare Officer	
E 1.1.1	7	S 2.3 to S 2.7	39
E 2.9, E 2.11	8	S 2.8, S 2.9	40
M 1.0 to M 1.2	21	S 4.15	43
M 1.3 to M 1.4	22	S 6.9	46
M 4.6	25		
H 1.3	27	Range	
T 1.3, T 1.5 to T 1.7	33	E 1.2	7
T 2.18	36	R 1.1 to R 1.5	17
S 2.1, S 2.3, S 2.4	39	R 1.6 to R 1.11	18
S 2.9, S(TV) 1.5	40	R 1.12 to R 1.16	19
S 4.15, S 5.2	43	R 1.17 to R 1.21	20
		M 6.4, M 6.7	26
Medicines			
H 1.21 to H 1.25	29	Records	
		FW 1.3, FW 2.1	3
Modules		E 4.13	13
T 2.10.1	35	E 6.3, E 6.4, E 6.6	15
T 2.12 to T 2.18, T 2.21	36	M 1.0, M 1.2	21
T 3.1, T 3.5	37	M 1.3	22
		M 3.5, M 3.6	23
Mortality		M 4.6	25
M 1.3	22	H 1.1, H 1.2	27
H 1.1	27	H 1.15, H 1.17	28
H 1.17	28	H 3.10	31
T 3.12 to T 3.14	37	T 1.7	33
S 4.15, S 4.16	43	T 3.12, T 3.14	37
		S 2.7	39
Mutilations		S(TV) 1.4, S(TV) 1.5	40
H 2.1	29	S 3.1	41
		S 4.15, S 4.16	43
Neck cutting			
See 'Slaughter/killing'			

Subject	Page	Subject	Page
Segregation when sick/injured		Transport	
H 1.11, H 1.15, H 1.16	28	T 1.1 to T 1.7	33
Shackling		T 2.0 to T 2.5	34
S(TV) 1.1	40	T 2.5.1 to T 2.10.1	35
S 4.14, S 5.1 to S 5.6	43	T 2.10.2 to T 2.21	36
S 5.7 to S 5.11	44	T 3.1 to T 3.16	37
S 6.5, S 6.6	45	T 3.17 to T 3.22	38
Shelter		Thermal environment	
R 1.9	18	SPD 2.1, SPD 2.4, SPD 2.6	1
R 1.13 to R 1.16	19	E 2.1, E 2.4	7
R 1.17, R 1.20	20	E 4.10	13
T 3.21	38	E 5.1	14
Slaughter/killing		E 6.5, E 6.6	15
FW 1.2	3	E 6.7	16
H 1.11, H 1.14	28	R 1.2	17
H 3.1 to H 3.5	30	R 1.14	19
H 3.6 to H 3.10	31	M 1.3	22
T 2.2	34	T 2.1	34
T 3.1	37	T 2.20	36
S 1.0 to S 2.7	39	T 3.19 to T 3.21	38
S 2.8 to S(TV) 1.5	40	S 4.4 to S 4.6, S 4.9	42
S 3.1 to S 3.2	41	Training	
S 3.3 to S 4.13	42	M 1.2	21
S 4.14 to S 5.6	43	M 1.3, M 2.1	22
S 5.7 to S 6.3	44	H 3.2	30
S 6.4 to S 6.6	45	H 3.7	31
S 6.7 to S 6.15	46	T 1.1	33
S 7.1 to S 7.5	47	T 3.10	37
Stocking density		S 2.1 to S 2.7	39
SPD 2.2	1	S 2.8, S 2.9	40
E 2.4	7	S 5.1	43
E 5.1, E 5.2	14	S 6.15	46
E 5.3	15	Ventilation	
R 1.10	18	SPD 2.2	1
M 1.4	22	E 4.10	13
T 2.5.1	35	E 5.1	14
T 2.19, T 2.20	36	E 6.1, E 6.5	15
Straw		M 1.3	22
E 3.9	10	M 5.2	25
E 7.2	16	M 6.3	26
R 1.13	19	T 2.1	34
Stunning		T 3.7	37
H 3.3	30	S 4.6	42
H 3.6	31	Veterinary Health and Welfare Plan	
S 2.2, S 2.6,	39	H 1.1, H 1.2, H 1.5, H 1.9,	
S 2.8, S(TV) 1.1	40	H 1.10	27
S 6.1 to S 6.3	44	H 1.18	28
S 6.4 to S 6.6	45		
S 6.7 to S 6.15	46		
S 7.3	47		

Subject	Page	Subject	Page
Veterinary surgeon		Wing clipping	
FW 1.2, FW 2.0	3	H 2.1	29
H 1.1, H 1.2, H 1.10	27		
H 1.17	28	Wrynecks	
H 3.2	30	SPD 2.17	2
H 3.8	31		
Water provision			
SPD 2.7	1		
SPD 2.14, SPD 2.15	2		
FW 2.0 to FW 2.2	3		
FW 2.3 to FW 2.15	4		
FW 2.15.1 to FW 2.20	5		
E 2.4	7		
E 7.1, E 7.2	16		
R 1.19 to R 1.21	20		
M 1.3	22		
M 3.2.1	23		
H 1.15	28		
T 2.1, T 2.4	34		

