



RSPCA STATEMENT: LIKE A DUCK TO WATER CAMPAIGN

The RSPCA believes that as water birds, ducks should be provided with full body access to water, to be able to fully carry out their water related behaviors. The RSPCA is calling on the government, producers and food businesses to improve the welfare of farmed ducks by insisting that bathing water is provided.

To bathe is to immerse one's body into water, therefore the term 'bathing' relates to ducks being provided with open water facilities that allow full body access. RSPCA Freedom Food standards are the only farm assurance scheme standards that insist ducks are provided with bathing water.

Addressing the British Poultry Councils key points

The British Poultry Council (BPC) released a statement on 17 September 2012. Below is the RSPCA's response to their key points.

BPC: The Duck Assurance Scheme (DAS) requirements for the provision of water for ducks reared indoors and the RSPCA Freedom Foods scheme both require the ducks to have access to open water to be able to dip their heads under, to preen and to allow the ducks to toss water onto their feathers for conditioning. This bathing is necessary for the ducks' general health and particularly for good eye and nostril condition.

RSPCA: The RSPCA believes that ducks should have full body access to water and this is possible for ducks reared on Freedom Food approved farms. The RSPCA standards go further than DAS standards which only insist that ducks can dip their heads in water and therefore deny them from carrying out their full range of water-related preening behaviors.



BPC: The Duck Assurance Scheme standards further specifies that where drinking water is provided by nipple drinkers that additional bathing water must be provided and that troughs, wide-channel type bell drinkers, baths or showers are permissible to provide this.

RSPCA: To join the Duck Assurance Scheme the only requirement concerning the provision of open water is to provide bell drinkers (pictured above). These clearly only allow ducks to dip their heads. Ducks are water birds and it is unacceptable that access to bathing water is not a mandatory requirement of the Duck Assurance Scheme.

BPC: Ducks have a greater range of water facilities with 20% more availability in the Duck Assurance Scheme compared with the RSPCA standards.

RSPCA: The Duck Assurance Scheme requires each duck to be provided with only 0.1cm more drinking water space than that required within the RSPCA standards.

All of the water space required under the RSPCA standards must be provided as open water that allows ducks full body access. However, only 50% of the water space required under the Duck Assurance Scheme standards must be open water and this only has to allow ducks to dip their heads.

BPC: The RSPCA standards do not mention bathing or any requirement for full body access to water. The RSPCA scheme gives minimum measurements of 20cm width and 10cm depth for troughs containing open water but requires these to be used to provide both drinking and bathing water.

RSPCA: The RSPCA standards do not explicitly state these terms, but the standards specifically detail what open water facilities are acceptable for use within the scheme and, as such, require producers to have open water facilities that provide ducks with full body access. Of course, the RSPCA would not be campaigning for something that it did not require of producers under its own welfare scheme. The RSPCA standards are the only farm assurance standards that insist that the open water provided allows full body access to water.

BPC: It is disingenuous of the RSPCA to imply that ducks in the UK are raised without access to bedding or bathing water simply because there are no specific legal rules for duck production. In fact the ducks reared in the UK are all provided with fresh litter as bedding and this is topped up on a daily basis. Nipple drinkers can be used for provision of clean drinking water but sufficient open water sources must also be provided for the bathing requirements. These are specified requirements in the Duck Assurance Scheme and the RSPCA knows this.

RSPCA: The RSPCA highlighted the inadequacy of the law to safeguard duck welfare by failing to provide things like bedding and open water. We produced a table to clearly show the differences between what the law requires and what is required under both the Duck Assurance scheme standards and the RSPCA Welfare Standards for Ducks.

The table which is publicly available*, clearly shows that the Duck Assurance Scheme requires bedding. The Duck Assurance Scheme does NOT require ducks to have full body access to water. However, although the scheme does require ducks to be provided with what it terms 'bathing water', this needs only be a channel of water that allows ducks to dip their heads.

The RSPCA thinks the term bathing water is misleading in this context. To bathe is defined as to immerse one's body into water. The term bathing water should only be used where ducks have full body access. RSPCA standards are the only farm assurance standards that insist that the open water provided allows full body access.

BPC: Separate nipple drinkers have the advantage that the drinking water does not become dirty from the bathing activities and is not spilled or leaked on to the bedding so can be deployed throughout the house and the water remains clean and drinkable.

RSPCA: Within RSPCA Welfare Standards for Ducks there is requirement to provide water that is clean and fresh. In addition all water equipment must be hygienically managed, which includes the daily cleaning out of all open water facilities.

BPC: Shoppers can be assured that the high standards required by the Duck Assurance Scheme properly provide for the health and welfare needs of ducks reared in the UK.

RSPCA: Buying duck meat that is labelled Duck Assurance Scheme does not guarantee that the duck was provided with full body access to open water, i.e. bathing water. Freedom Food labelled duck is the only assurance scheme that insists on ducks being provided with bathing water.

The best way for consumers to make up their own mind on whether they think the Duck Assurance Scheme's standards go far enough in providing ducks with a suitable form of bathing water is for the duck industry to allow their farms that are representative of those conforming to the standards to be filmed and for this to be shown publicly.

*** A full comparison of standards for indoor-reared meat ducks is available at:**
<http://www.rspca.org.uk/getinvolved/campaigns/farm/ducks/standards>