

**RSPCA Pullet Standards Technical Advisory Group meeting  
on Thursday 19th October 2017**

**Meeting Summary Notes**

**Multi-tier Rearing Aviaries**

In the current version of the RSPCA welfare standards for pullets, multi-tier rearing aviaries, whereby birds are held within the system for a period from placement, are considered as a novel system as there are no RSPCA welfare standards specific to their management. In light of the industry's move towards more multi-tier housing of adult layers and the reported benefits of aviary rearing, the RSPCA is currently reviewing available evidence regarding the potential welfare benefits of such systems. The group discussed the possible benefits and limitations of multi-tier rearing systems, and reviewed the available scientific evidence.

**Multi-tier section**

The group discussed the current multi-tier standards, with particular reference to the number of raised tiers and the age at which birds first have access to raised tiers. Members also considered the perceived benefits of matching provisions in rear to those provided in lay.

**Perches**

From August 2018, all newly housed adult laying hens on the RSPCA Assured scheme will be provided with a minimum of 8 cm raised perch space per bird. To help improve utilisation and maximise the benefits of providing perches in lay, it is considered important that birds have developed the cognitive and physical abilities to navigate them successfully during rear. Members discussed how the standards relating to perch provision in rear can be developed further to aid this. In particular, the appropriate perch provision per bird and the age at which perches are utilised during the rearing period were discussed.

**Feedback on new environmental enrichment standards**

Members advised that destructible enrichment items were preferable, both for the bird and producer. The group discussed the importance of synergy between enrichment items provided in rear and lay.