

**RSPCA Chicken Standards Technical Advisory Group meeting  
on Wednesday 8th November 2017**

**Meeting Summary Notes**

**Avian influenza**

The group discussed their experience of the winter housing order during 2016/2017. Discussion included the requirement for increased provision of environmental enrichment items during the housing order to counteract any negative impact on the birds, difficulties relating to audits during an AI outbreak, the role that backyard flocks played in the 2016/2017 outbreak and the future of free range production in the UK in light of AI.

**Underfloor heating**

There was a lack of scientific evidence and data relating to the provision of underfloor heating in broiler sheds. The RSPCA had concerns relating to litter depth, providing birds with thermal choice and the effect of underfloor heating on bird behaviour and welfare. The RSPCA would be willing to look at the provision of underfloor heating to inform future editions of the standards if data and evidence was made available.

**Breeds update**

Breeds currently available for use under the RSPCA welfare standards for meat chicken include the JA757, 787, 987, Ranger Classic, Rambler Ranger and the Ranger Gold. Members advised that the most commonly used breed was the JA757.

**Proposed changes to the standards**

The group discussed proposed amendments to cross-species standards relating to water testing, biosecurity and recording the use of the antibiotics on-farm for inclusion in the next revision of the standards, due to be published in 2019. These would be taken forward for further consideration.

**European Broiler Welfare Ask**

The RSPCA were signatories to the European Broiler Welfare Ask. The Ask requires all suppliers to meet the requirements laid down by 2026. The requirements relate to the implementation of EU legislation, maximum stocking density, the adoption of breeds that demonstrate higher welfare outcomes, improved environmental standards and slaughter which prohibits live shackling. The Ask is not a collaborative project, but signatories include a number of animal protection organisations who have all agreed to the requirements of the Ask.