

**RSPCA Pullet Standards Technical Advisory Group
on Tuesday 24 January 2023**

Meeting Summary Notes

Natural daylight

The RSPCA is progressing towards the provision of natural daylight within pullet rearing houses. The group discussed the controlled lighting regimes needed to manage when pullets come into lay and the potential challenges of achieving appropriate exposure to natural daylight through windows if these were installed. There was interest in gathering more flock performance data from buildings where windows are already installed. Further information is also needed on the feasibility of retrofitting suitable windows into existing buildings.

Beak trimming

The RSPCA is progressing with phasing out the need for infrared beak trimming. There is a need to gather information on the transition to intact beaks from producers that are trialling this. The group noted the need to work across the supply chain on this issue.

Alternative handling methods

The group discussed upright handling as an alternative method of handling pullets at transfer to the laying house. There were concerns over the viability of this method considering the need to vaccinate birds at this time, and the potential to increase transport time.

Overstocking

The issue of non-compliance with maximum stocking density due to lower-than-expected mortality was raised. Examining stocking densities across previous flocks was discussed as a method of evidencing that any non-compliance is an exceptional circumstance. RSPCA Assured will consider this further.

Other areas discussed

The group considered other proposed changes to the RSPCA welfare standards for pullets (laying hens) for inclusion within the next revision of the standards. The proposals discussed included raised perch space and requirements within multi-tier systems.

For future consideration, the group also discussed the potential to develop specific aviary standards, and views on the current standards relating to the provision of grit in rear.