

**RSPCA Chicken Standards Technical Advisory Group Meeting**  
**on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2015**

**Meeting summary notes**

**Proposed amendments to the standards**

The group considered some proposed amendments to the standards for possible inclusion in the next revision to the standards, scheduled for late 2016. These would be taken forwards for further consideration.

**Free-range stocking rate for brood & move operations**

The RSPCA had been informed that the EU Commission was considering the maximum legal stocking rate for free-range meat chickens. The group discussed the legislation and stocking rate within the existing RSPCA welfare standards for chickens.

**CO<sub>2</sub> gas killing**

CO<sub>2</sub> only gas killing systems are not permitted in the current version of the RSPCA welfare standards for chickens, dated November 2013. Anyone considering installing a CO<sub>2</sub> system should contact the RSPCA Farm Animals Department first to discuss this. A full review of the use of CO<sub>2</sub>, and CO<sub>2</sub> gas systems, for the killing of meat chickens is currently being undertaken by the RSPCA.

**Broiler Breed Welfare Assessment**

For a broiler breed to be accepted under the standards its welfare must be assessed according to the RSPCA Broiler Welfare Assessment Protocol (BWAP). The group discussed how often breeds should be assessed. There were also discussions on the development of an RSPCA welfare assessment protocol for assessing the suitability of birds for rearing in free-range systems.

**Welfare Outcomes Assessment for Broilers: AssureWel update**

AssureWel is a collaborative project between the RSPCA, Soil Association and the University of Bristol funded by the Tubney Charitable Trust in order to develop welfare outcome assessments (WOA) with a key aim to implement these within the Soil Association and Freedom Food (FF) schemes, as well as other farm assurance schemes. In 2015, the project started developing protocols for broilers and an update on this aspect of the project was provided. Details of the AssureWel project can be found on the project website: [www.assurewel.org](http://www.assurewel.org).

**Standards: areas for review & barriers to uptake**

The discussions focused on any concerns and difficulties with implementation of the standards. The group discussed RSPCA welfare standards relating to natural cover and straw bales in houses. The positive impact on bird welfare of natural cover and straw bales was highlighted.