

Laying Hen Standards Technical Advisory Group Online meeting
11am Tuesday 26th April 2022
Meeting Summary

Proposed changes to standards and information boxes

The group considered proposed changes to the RSPCA welfare standards for laying hens for possible inclusion in the next revision of the standards. The proposals related to many areas of the standards including verandas, natural light provision, range access, range cover, feather cover and beak trimming. The proposals will be considered further.

Verandas

The group discussed the benefits of verandas such as reducing stocking density during Avian Influenza housing orders, encouraging range use and improving litter quality in the main house. Concerns were raised on the cost of installing well built verandas onto existing sheds and the challenges of obtaining planning permission. Verandas are an aspiration for the RSPCA welfare standards and the group discussed strategies for including them in future standards whilst considering the challenges associated with this.

Natural light

The benefit of introducing natural light into laying sheds were discussed. The group discussed the lack of literature and experience in UK commercial systems and the challenges producers may face. This would be explored further.

Range cover

The group discussed the proposal of increasing the requirements for natural range cover. Many ranges already consist of up to 20% natural cover and the environmental benefits should also be considered when enriching the range.

Feather cover action plan and beak trimming

The inclusion of a Feather cover action plan in the VHWP was discussed and the merit of having a VHWP for each flock. Experience with intact beak flocks was discussed and further work will be continued in this area.

Meeting close

Following the discussion, the proposed standards will be further considered and are expected to be published towards the end of 2022.