



**NATIONAL CHICKEN COUNCIL  
ANIMAL WELFARE GUIDELINES  
AND AUDIT CHECKLIST  
FOR BROILER BREEDERS**

**Approved by NCC Board of Directors 28 January 2010**

NATIONAL CHICKEN COUNCIL  
1015 15<sup>TH</sup> Street NW  
Suite 930  
Washington DC 20005  
phone (202) 296-2622  
fax (202) 293-4005

# Contents

- NCC Animal Welfare Guidelines
- NCC Animal Welfare Audit Checklist
- Guidance for Conducting Audits Under NCC Animal Welfare Guidelines
- Standard Contract for Audits Under NCC Animal Welfare Guidelines
- Appendix

# NATIONAL CHICKEN COUNCIL ANIMAL WELFARE GUIDELINES

The National Chicken Council (NCC) is the association representing vertically integrated broiler producer-processors. NCC recommends the following guidelines to its members to assure the humane treatment of animals and to promote the production of quality products.

## **Preface**

Welfare is a general term with numerous definitions. Generally, it means providing animals with their physical and mental needs throughout their life. The physical needs are relatively easily discussed, described, and studied. Mental (behavioral) needs are more debated and often anthropomorphized. We recognize that this is an ongoing discussion and evolving science. With that in mind, a new version of the National Chicken Council Animal Welfare Guidelines has been written.

Numerous sets of guidelines for poultry have been generated before and since the NCC Guidelines were first published, and many are specifically aimed at much different types of birds and housing. The NCC Animal Welfare Guidelines are guidelines aimed at commercial broiler production housing and strains of chicken developed over the years for this industry. It is important to note that such standards may not be appropriate for other types of housing and other strains of chickens.

The following principles (which apply to all types of housing and strains of chickens) were considered in the development of this document:

1. Poultry raised for food should be cared for in ways that prevent or minimize fear, pain, stress, and suffering.
2. Guidelines for welfare should balance scientific knowledge and professional judgment with consideration of ethical and societal values.
3. It is the welfare of the chickens themselves that is foremost, not how humans might perceive a practice or an environment.

4. Poultry should be treated with respect throughout their lives and provided a humane death when processed for food or when they are euthanized for any other reason.
5. The NCC Animal Welfare Guidelines and Audit Checklist will be formally reviewed every two years, beginning with review by a committee of scientific advisors in the year 2011 followed by a review by a special committee appointed by the NCC Chairman beginning in 2012, which will recommend changes deemed necessary and appropriate to the NCC Board of Directors. This two-year cycle will continue indefinitely.

## **Introduction**

Domestic animals are adaptable to a variety of conditions. Today's chicken has been purposefully selected to thrive under modern management. We believe current good management practices that avoid destructive behavior, prevent disease, and promote good health and production, are consistent with the generally accepted criteria of humane treatment. The specific applications of these criteria are spelled out in the NCC Animal Welfare Audit Checklist, which is used to assess compliance with these Guidelines.

Auditors are reminded of the importance of maintaining biosecurity. Before the auditor enters a growout house, he/she must assess health reports and weekly mortality records for that flock. Flocks that may be experiencing a disease as indicated by increases in mortality or administration of medications should not be audited for biosecurity reasons.

Those integrated chicken producer-processors endorsing these Guidelines should designate a management person or group within the company responsible for promoting adherence to the Guidelines.

Practices that promote good health and welfare of broilers are categorized as follows:

Corporate Commitment

Hatchery operations

Growout:

- Proper nutrition and feeding
- Appropriate comfort and shelter
- Health care and monitoring
- Ability to move about and display most normal patterns of behavior
- Best practices on the farm

Catching and transportation

Processing

Breeder operations (if the subject operation includes breeders)

The guidelines below are stated as the ideal conditions. On the accompanying Audit Checklist, points are deducted for deviations from the guidelines.

## **GUIDELINES FOR BROILER BREEDERS**

### **A. Designated Management, Training, and Emergency Plan**

- 1). The Breeder operation has a person in charge of promoting adherence to the Guidelines.
- 2). The Breeder operation has a documented training program for all employees involved in handling live animals; employees are trained before handling live animals.
- 3). Employees who manage or handle live chickens receive annual training in the company's program.
- 4). The Breeder operation has a written plan for disaster response and recovery, including, but not limited to, structural damage and electrical and other utility outages.

### **B. Housing**

- 1). Housing is adequate to protect the birds from anticipated environmental conditions, including normally expected levels of heat, cold, and precipitation, as well as from predatory animals.
- 2). Good quality, absorbent bedding material free of sharp objects and fungal growth is maintained to allow for normal behaviors such as foraging and dust bathing and for insulation from cold floors. Where used, slats should not exceed 24 inches in height and are maintained to avoid sharp edges and protrusions or areas where birds can get under the slats. Birds that do get under the slats are removed immediately.
- 3). Moisture in litter should not exceed 35% (loosely compacted when squeezed in the hand). Litter, ventilation, drinking systems and feed formulation are managed to maintain appropriate foot integrity.

- 4). Premises and equipment are maintained in a clean and orderly fashion to eliminate any refuge for rodents, wild birds and other animals that could introduce diseases to the flocks.
- 5). A comprehensive biosecurity program with defined procedures is in place at all times to minimize the potential threat of exposure to disease agents. Any visits by non-farm personnel are documented and dated. Vermin are controlled through the use of appropriate and effective measures.

## **A. Ventilation**

- 1). Ventilation systems are of adequate design and are maintained and operated in such a manner as to provide quality air at all times, including the provision of oxygen, removal of carbon dioxide and noxious gases, and reasonable control of humidity. A written protocol for minimum ventilation requirements is in place.
- 2). Ammonia in the atmosphere does not exceed 25 parts per million at bird height.
- 3). Reliable systems or safety devices are in place to alert caretakers to power failures or ventilation system failures. Emergency procedures are in place to provide adequate ventilation and temperature control in the event of a power failure. Records of generator run times are maintained at each facility.

## **B. Feed and Water**

- 1). Diets are formulated, produced and fed to avoid nutritional deficiencies while promoting optimal health and reproductive performance. Appropriate feed composition is ensured by quality control analysis of ingredients comprising the diets to meet nutritional needs of the animals. A professional poultry nutritionist approves the diets to ensure that the appropriate level of nutrient density is fed.
- 2). Feeding systems provide enough feeder space so that all birds can eat simultaneously at scheduled feeding times. Signs of inadequate access must be corrected immediately.
- 3). In general, replacement pullets and breeders should not lose weight. Body weight profiles are determined for each particular strain and followed closely to ensure adequate and gradual body weight gains. Decisions to modify the rate of weight gain (for production or health related reasons) are acceptable. Moderation of feed

intake to maintain frame size and body weight gains consistent with optimal health and production are acceptable management practices promoting welfare.

- 4). Clean, fresh water is provided in sufficient quantities for normal hydration, health, and productivity. Moderated feeding programs may result in over-consumption of water, which can adversely impact welfare. Restrictions on excessive water intake, usually by limiting water availability to certain times of the day and with due consideration to environmental conditions, promotes overall welfare and is an acceptable practice.

### **C. Management**

- 1). Birds are allowed to roam freely throughout the growing area.
- 2). Bird welfare at different stocking densities will depend on access to feeders and drinkers, lighting program, type of housing, ventilation system, feeder/drinker equipment, litter management, and husbandry. Allow a minimum of:
  - a). 0.3ft<sup>2</sup>/chick in the brooding area
  - b). 1.3 ft<sup>2</sup>/bird in the rearing house
  - c). 1.5 ft<sup>2</sup>/bird in the laying house
- 3). Lighting programs are utilized to help manage growth and weight gain in replacement pullets and cockerels. Lighting programs of increasing or decreasing intensities and periods are utilized to slow early growth.
- 4). The light level is adequate for inspection, and the caretaker passes close enough to the birds to observe them.
- 5). A minimum of 0.5 foot candle will be provided to allow normal behavior and daily inspection.
- 6). Less than 0.5 foot candle may be approved to correct abnormal behavior.
- 7). Any company that practices gradual introduction (replacement) of males into the breeder house will have a plan to do so in a manner that promotes overall flock well-being.
- 8). Adequate nest space must be provided for hens. Depending on the style and design of the nest system, the number of hens per nest must follow the manufacturers' recommendation.

- 9). All feeding, drinking, and ventilation systems are checked for proper operation on a daily basis.
- 10). Flocks are thoroughly inspected at least twice daily.
- 11). Birds that exhibit stunted growth or obvious gait defects that limit an individual bird's ability to move about or access feed and water for normal growth (2 on U.S. Gait Scoring – see Appendix) are humanely euthanized. Dead birds are removed at least daily.
- 12). The following are acceptable methods of on-farm euthanasia:
  - a). Rapid cervical disarticulation
  - b). Rapid decapitation
  - c). Displacement of oxygen with nitrogen, carbon dioxide, or other approved gas
  - d). Any other American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) approved method.
- 13). In the event that an emergency depopulation of a flock is necessary, AVMA or USDA guidelines are followed to accomplish this process.
- 14). Personnel who perform euthanasia are appropriately trained.

## **D. Handling**

- 1). Whenever birds are handled for any reason (at placement, during vaccinations, weighing, treatments, and catching and transport to new facilities or to processing) handling is performed in such a manner as to avoid injuries.
- 2). Breeder birds may be carried by the wings or legs. Catchers may not catch or carry birds by the neck.
- 3). The number of birds in the catcher's hand depends on the size of the bird and should not cause injury to the birds. (The maximum number of adult birds per hand is three)

## **E. Transportation**

- 1). Juveniles moving from growing to laying facilities and adults after the completion of their laying cycle are transported in specialty cages and vehicles used exclusively for this purpose. Bird moves are carried out by trained personnel under the supervision of crew managers.
- 2). Transport coops for juveniles or spent hens are appropriately sized and well maintained so that birds are not injured and cannot escape during transit.
- 3). Density in the coops permits the birds to sit in a single layer during transport. During transport and holding, birds are protected from extremes of heat and cold and are provided with adequate ventilation.
- 4). Field-caused injuries are monitored and documented. If the number of animals dead on arrival (DOA) and injuries during move exceeds 0.50%, corrective action must be initiated.

## **F. Hatchery / Chick Services**

Certain procedures are necessary for the long-term welfare of the flock. These are closely monitored and consistently reviewed. These procedures are performed to reduce injuries among birds and promote health. They are performed using specialized equipment by trained personnel.

The following are acceptable procedures:

- **Precision beak conditioning:** The objective of this procedure is to reduce injuries associated with the normal social behavior of pecking. Conditioning of the beak of day-old breeders is conducted at the hatchery using either a hot blade method removing the tip of the beak (may be used up to 10 days of age) or an infrared beam that does not cut the beak. The tip of the beak is worn off by normal pecking behavior and does not re-grow.
- **Male back toe conditioning:** The removal of the back toe's claw in broiler breeder male chicks is a fast and safe procedure. The objective of this procedure is to prevent injury to females during mating.
- **Comb dubbing:** The objective of this procedure is to prevent self-inflicted injuries and secondary bacterial infections in adults. Also this procedure reduces the

chance of trauma to the comb associated with the normal social behavior of pecking.

## **G. Health and Veterinary Care**

- 1). Qualified veterinary care is available at all times.
- 2). Each company must have a written health plan developed in consultation with a veterinarian. This health care plan includes at a minimum: vaccinations; daily checks on bird condition; mortality/morbidity monitoring; and when, how, and under what circumstances a producer reports a disease situation.
- 3). Feed and water consumption, mortality, and bird health are routinely monitored.
- 4). A minimum layout period of 28 days between flocks is recommended but may be modified based on health status of the flock, weather emergencies, litter replacement, total cleanout, and/or utilization of practices and technologies that lower the health risk to the birds.

### **HISTORY:**

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AMENDMENTS APPROVED BY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE APRIL 5, 2005

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# National Chicken Council

## Animal Welfare Audit Checklist

### Broiler Breeders

The following checklist is provided to assist chicken companies in complying with the Animal Welfare Guidelines recommended by the National Chicken Council and voluntarily adopted by this company. This audit checklist is used in conjunction with the Guidelines.

This audit applies to the following company, complex or facility:

Auditor: \_\_\_\_\_

Company and Plant: \_\_\_\_\_ Est. No.: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Accompanied by: \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

**Summary:**

Area	Maximum Score	Facility Score
<b>Corporate Commitment</b>	<b>20</b>	
<b>Housing</b>	<b>50</b>	
<b>Ventilation</b>	<b>35</b>	
<b>Feed &amp; Water</b>	<b>15</b>	
<b>Management</b>	<b>95</b>	
<b>Handling</b>	<b>15</b>	
<b>Transportation</b>	<b>40</b>	
<b>Hatchery Services</b>	<b>25</b>	
<b>Health &amp; Veterinary Care</b>	<b>55</b>	
<b>Total, Broiler Breeders</b>	<b>350</b>	

<b>AUDIT FORM -- Broiler Breeders</b>			
Confirm that each point is done by facility and award full score for each point done and zero for each point not done, except for those items for which a sliding scale is provided.			
<b><i>Requirement</i></b>	<b>Points available</b>	<b>Check if done</b>	<b>Points awarded</b>
<b>MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT</b>			
The Breeder operation has a person in charge of promoting adherence to the Guidelines.	<b>5</b>		
Employees who manage or handle live chickens receive annual training in the company's program.	<b>5</b>		
The Breeder operation has a documented training program for all employees involved in handling live animals.	<b>5</b>		
The Breeder operation has a written plan for disaster response and recovery, including, but not limited to, structural damage and electrical and other utility outages.	<b>5</b>		
<b>HOUSING</b>			
Housing is adequate to protect the birds from anticipated environmental conditions, including normally expected levels of heat, cold, and precipitation, as well as from predatory animals.	<b>10</b>		
Good quality, absorbent bedding material free of sharp objects and fungal growth is maintained to allow for normal behaviors such as foraging and dust bathing and for insulation from cold floors.	<b>5</b>		

***NCC Animal Welfare Audit Checklist --- Broiler Breeders***

***Page 2***

Where used, slats should not exceed 24 inches in height and are maintained to avoid sharp edges and protrusions or areas where birds can get under the slats. Birds that do get under the slats are removed immediately.			
Moisture in litter should not exceed 35% (loosely compacted when squeezed in the hand). Litter, ventilation, drinking systems and feed formulation are managed to maintain appropriate foot integrity.	<b>25</b>		
A comprehensive biosecurity program with defined procedures is in place at all times to minimize the potential threat of exposure to disease agents. Any visits by non-farm personnel are documented and dated. Vermin are controlled through the use of appropriate and effective measures.	<b>10</b>		
<b>VENTILATION</b>			
Ventilation systems are of adequate design and are maintained and operated in such a manner as to provide quality air at all times, including the provision of oxygen, removal of carbon dioxide and noxious gases, and reasonable control of humidity. A written protocol for minimum ventilation requirements is in place.	<b>5</b>		
Ammonia in the atmosphere does not exceed 25 parts per million at bird height.	<b>25</b>		
Reliable systems or safety devices are in place to alert caretakers to power failures or ventilation system failures. Emergency procedures are in place to provide adequate ventilation and temperature control in the event of a power failure. Records of generator run times are maintained at each facility.	<b>5</b>		
<b>FEED &amp; WATER</b>			

***NCC Animal Welfare Audit Checklist --- Broiler Breeders***

***Page 3***

<p>Diets are formulated, produced and fed to avoid nutritional deficiencies while promoting optimal health and reproductive performance. Appropriate feed composition is ensured by quality control analysis of ingredients comprising the diets to meet nutritional needs of the animals. A professional poultry nutritionist approves the diets to ensure that the appropriate level of nutrient density is fed.</p>	<b>5</b>		
<p>Feeding systems provide enough feeder space so that all birds can eat simultaneously at scheduled feeding times. Signs of inadequate access must be corrected immediately.</p>	<b>5</b>		
<p>Clean, fresh water is provided in sufficient quantities for normal hydration, health, and productivity.</p>	<b>5</b>		
<p><b>MANAGEMENT</b></p>			
<p>Birds are allowed to roam freely throughout the growing area.</p>	<b>5</b>		
<p>Stocking density: Allow a minimum of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. 0.3ft<sup>2</sup>/chick in the brooding area</li> <li>b. 1.3 ft<sup>2</sup>/bird in the rearing house</li> <li>c. 1.5 ft<sup>2</sup>/bird in the laying house</li> </ul>	<b>25</b>		
<p>Lighting programs are utilized to help manage growth and weight gain in replacement pullets and cockerels. Lighting programs of increasing or decreasing intensities and periods are utilized to slow early growth.</p>	<b>5</b>		
<p>The light level is adequate for inspection, and the caretaker passes close enough to the birds to</p>	<b>5</b>		

***NCC Animal Welfare Audit Checklist --- Broiler Breeders***

***Page 4***

observe them.			
A minimum of 0.5 foot candle will be provided to allow normal behavior and daily inspection. (Less than 0.5 foot candle may be approved to correct abnormal behavior.)	<b>5</b>		
Any company that practices gradual introduction (replacement) of males into the breeder house will have a plan to do so in a manner that promotes overall flock well-being.	<b>5</b>		
Adequate nest space must be provided for hens. Depending on the style and design of the nest system, the number of hens per nest must follow the manufacturers' recommendation.	<b>5</b>		
All feeding, drinking, and ventilation systems are checked for proper operation on a daily basis.	<b>5</b>		
Flocks are thoroughly inspected at least twice daily.	<b>5</b>		
Birds that exhibit stunted growth or obvious gait defects that limit an individual bird's ability to move about or access feed and water for normal growth (2 on U.S. Gait Scoring – see Appendix) are humanely euthanized. Dead birds are removed at least daily.	<b>25</b>		
The following are acceptable methods of on-farm euthanasia: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a). Rapid cervical disarticulation (including tool-assisted)</li> <li>b). Rapid decapitation</li> <li>c). Displacement of oxygen with nitrogen, carbon dioxide, or other approved gas</li> <li>d). Any other American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) approved method.</li> </ul> Personnel who perform euthanasia are appropriately trained.	<b>5</b>		
<b>HANDLING</b>			
Whenever birds are handled for any reason (at placement, during vaccinations, weighing,	<b>5</b>		

***NCC Animal Welfare Audit Checklist --- Broiler Breeders***

***Page 5***

treatments, and catching and transport to new facilities or to processing) handling is performed in such a manner as to avoid injuries.			
Breeder birds may be carried by the wings or legs. Catchers may not catch or carry birds by the neck.	<b>5</b>		
The number of birds in the catcher's hand depends on the size of the bird and should not cause injury to the birds. (The maximum number of adult birds per hand is three.)	<b>5</b>		
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>			
Juveniles moving from growing to laying facilities and adults after the completion of their laying cycle are transported in specialty cages and vehicles used exclusively for this purpose. Bird moves are carried out by trained personnel under the supervision of crew managers.	<b>5</b>		
Transport coops for juveniles or spent hens are appropriately sized and well maintained so that birds are not injured and cannot escape during transit.	<b>5</b>		
Density in the coops permits the birds to sit during transport without being on top of one another. During transport and holding, birds are protected from extremes of heat and cold and are provided with adequate ventilation.	<b>5</b>		
Field-caused injuries are monitored and documented. If the number of animals dead on arrival (DOA) and injuries during move exceeds 0.50%, corrective action must be initiated	<b>25</b>		
<b>HATCHERY SERVICES</b>			
Precision beak conditioning, male back toe conditioning, and comb dubbing , as described in the guidelines, are performed by trained personnel using specialized equipment.	<b>25</b>		

*NCC Animal Welfare Audit Checklist --- Broiler Breeders*

*Page 6*

<b>HEALTH AND VETERINARY CARE</b>			
Qualified veterinary care is available at all times.	<b>15</b>		
Each company must have a written health plan developed in consultation with a veterinarian. This health care plan includes at a minimum: vaccinations; daily checks on bird condition; mortality/morbidity monitoring; and when, how, and under what circumstances a producer reports a disease situation.	<b>25</b>		
Feed and water consumption, mortality, and bird health are routinely monitored.	<b>15</b>		
<b>TOTAL, BROILER BREEDERS</b>	<b>350</b>		

# Guidance for Conducting Audits Under National Chicken Council Animal Welfare Guidelines

- 1). **Facilities to be Audited.** The Company may choose to audit all of its operations or only a subset of its operations, depending on its needs with respect to its customers. The audit applies only to facilities or complexes named on the checklist.
- 2). **Audit of a Complex.** If asked to verify compliance for an entire complex, the Auditor should expect to visit a hatchery, a processing plant, and a sample of the farms associated with that plant. At least three growout houses on different farms are audited in connection with each complex. These farms are chosen by the Auditor from a list presented by the Company. At least 10 farms are on the list presented by the Company.
- 3). **Audit of a Company.** If a company-wide audit is desired, the Company may elect to contract with more than one auditor in the interest of getting the audits done in a timely manner. The company may also choose to audit only those facilities that serve a particular customer.
- 4). **Written Report.** The Animal Welfare Checklist prepared by the National Chicken Council as adopted or amended by the Company is the only authorized basis for an audit of the NCC Guidelines. If, however, the company desires additional information from the auditor, it may elect to ask you to prepare a report on your observations and recommendations in addition to the checklist; but in all cases the checklist must be completed.
- 5). **“Free To Roam.”** The Animal Welfare Guidelines state: “Birds are allowed to roam freely throughout the growing area.” The growing area is defined as either the entire house or a subdivision thereof if dividers are used during brooding or other stage of growout.
- 6). **Initial Evaluation of a flock in a growout house:** Enter the house quietly and do not startle the birds. Stand quietly at the door for several minutes to monitor the birds for displays of normal behaviors such as dust bathing, posturing, eating, drinking, etc. Most of the birds should be sitting and relatively quiet, with background chirping or clucking.

# Standard Contract for Audits Under National Chicken Council Animal Welfare Guidelines

This AGREEMENT was made on [date]\_\_\_\_\_ between [Company]  
\_\_\_\_\_ and [Contractor] \_\_\_\_\_

- 1). **Services To Be Performed.** Contractor agrees to perform Animal Welfare audit(s) of Company facilities for purposes of verifying the facilities' compliance with the Animal Welfare Guidelines of the National Chicken Council, as adopted or amended by the Company.
- 2). **Time For Performance.** Contractor agrees to complete the performance of these services on or before [date] \_\_\_\_\_.
- 3). **Estimated Time Required.** The Company estimates that Contractor will require \_\_\_\_ day(s) on site to complete the proposed audit. Any days, or portions thereof, in excess of this estimate are subject to prior approval by the Company.
- 4). **Payment.** In consideration of Contractor's performance in full of these services, Client agrees to pay Contractor as follows: \$\_\_\_\_\_ per day on site or in travel to and from site.
- 5). **Out of Pocket Expenses.** Actual, reasonable expenses related to the contractor's work, including meals, long distance telephone charges, travel, hotel, fax transmission, copying, postage and shipping will be reimbursed by the Company.
- 6). **Invoices.** Contractor will submit invoices for all services performed and attach receipts for all actual expenses.
- 7). **Basis of Audit.** Contractor agrees that the Animal Welfare Audit Checklist, as prepared by the National Chicken Council and adopted or amended by the Company, shall be the basis for the Contractor's audit of the Company's facilities. Company shall provide Contractor with sufficient copies of the checklist for the facilities to be audited.
- 8). **Work Product.** The desired work product consists of complete checklists for each facility audited. No other report will be provided by Contractor, unless specifically requested by the Company. It is agreed and understood that the completed checklists are the property of Company, and that Company regards such checklists as confidential

proprietary business information. Contractor agrees not to release the checklists, or copies thereof, to third parties without the express written permission of Company.

- 9). **Other Clients.** Contractor retains the right to perform services for other clients.
- 10). **Independent Contractor.** For purposes of this agreement, Contractor is an independent contractor, and, under no circumstances, shall be considered or treated as an employee of Company. This agreement creates no partnership or any kind of joint undertaking or venture between Contractor and Company.
- 11). **Entire Agreement.** This agreement represents the entire agreement and understanding between the parties, and supersedes all prior written and oral negotiations. This agreement may not be amended or modified, except in writing signed by both parties.

**CONTRACTOR**

**CLIENT**

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# APPENDIX

- 1). For most audits, the auditor will only watch the birds and their movement. However if a “gait score” is required, the US Gait Scoring technique<sup>1</sup> is recommended. (Note: the birds may need to be gently encouraged to walk. If birds become stressed, especially in hot weather, discontinue scoring immediately.)
  - a. Score 0 – Walk at least 5 feet and while the bird may appear ungainly, there are no visible signs of lameness.
  - b. Score 1 – Walk at least 5 feet, but appears awkward, uneven in steps.
  - c. Score 2 – Will not walk 5 feet without sitting down or there is obvious lameness.

- 2). Evaluating Lighting Programs:

Birds have much better visual acuity than humans and the way a bird “sees” may be different from humans.<sup>2</sup> First, the bird’s eye and optic nerve is much larger in size when compared to the size of the bird’s brain. Unlike the human eye which only has rods and cones, birds have additional photoreceptors known as double cones. There is also more than one fovea (area of sharp vision) in the avian eye. These and many other adaptations give a bird exceptional visual acuity and ability to detect movements.

Birds appear to be much more sensitive to light levels, displaying behavioral and physiologic responses, such as migration and reproduction. Poultry flock managers have learned to use lighting programs to manage a breeder flock’s reproductive activity. Overtime, lighting programs have been developed to help manage broiler flocks as well. Lighting programs may be used to help reduce aggressive behavior, control growth and improve musculoskeletal development. Lighting programs may need to be adjusted to account for breed differences, disease conditions, or environmental changes.

Lighting programs will vary depending on the size of the broiler when it is taken to market. The lighting program will also depend on whether natural light (open sided house) or artificial light (solid or dark-curtain walled house), or some combination of the two are used. If a continuous or near-continuous lighting is used, lighting is usually subdued for most of the period in which the lights are on. While there numerous lighting programs available, NCC does not currently recommend any specific program, only that the overall welfare of the flock is addressed.

- 3). AAAP Paw Scoring System  
Visual aid attached.

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<sup>1</sup> Gait Scoring in the Commercial Broiler. Office of Agricultural Communications, Box 9625, Mississippi State, MS 39762. (662) 325-2262.

<sup>2</sup> Meyer, DB. The Avian Eye. In Avian Physiology, Ed. P.D. Sturkie, 1986, pp.38-48.

## Broiler Paws After Keratin Removal

Not Severe (0)



Severe (1)



Pictures by T. M. Johnson, compiled by P. A. Stayer, March 2008