



**NATIONAL CHICKEN COUNCIL
ANIMAL WELFARE GUIDELINES
AND AUDIT CHECKLIST
FOR BROILERS**

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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

A. Corporate Commitment

- 1). The company has a written program for animal welfare with a clear understanding of how the program is operated throughout the company.
- 2). Current senior management has signed off on the animal welfare program.
- 3). The company has a person or management group responsible for animal welfare throughout the company.

B. Hatchery Operations

- 1). The Hatchery has a person in charge of promoting adherence to the Guidelines.
- 2). The Hatchery has a documented training program in animal welfare. Employees are trained before handling live animals. A training program is conducted annually for all employees involved in handling live animals (multilingual if necessary).
- 3). The Hatchery has a written plan for disaster response and recovery, including, but not limited to, structural damage and electrical outages. The facility has an alarm system or regular monitoring system in use to alert hatchery personnel to failure of critical systems (heat, electricity).
- 4). Chick delivery vehicle emergency SOP must be written and available for review.
- 5). Conditions that optimize hatchability and minimize early mortality are also favorable to good welfare of hatching birds. Specifically:
 - a). The company has a temperature range goal for the holding room in the hatchery.
 - b). The holding room is equipped with a working thermostat.
 - c). The thermostat is checked and documented hourly during chick processing

- 6). Both manual and automated processing systems are designed, maintained, and operated in a manner that prevents injuries to the chicks.
- 7). Each hatchery has employees who are charged with recording and reporting chick injuries to the management so that corrective action can be taken to avoid preventable injuries. Corrective action is recorded.
- 8). Prior to shipping, a check of 10 boxes (total of 1,000 chicks) finds no more than 10 chicks with severe equipment injuries (torn legs, broken legs or wings).
- 9). Live chicks should not enter hatchery waste (the material collected post-macerator). **A live chick in the hatchery waste is a major non-conformance.**
- 10). The hatchery has a program in place to retrieve loose chicks from the floor after each flock change at a minimum.
- 11). A method approved by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) is in place to accomplish euthanasia of pips and culls. The method is verified for proper operation. Pips and culls are euthanized after each flock change at a minimum.
- 12). Beak trimming is not allowed in broilers.

C. Growout Department

C1. Designated Management, Training, and Emergency Plan

- 1). The Growout department has a person in charge of promoting adherence to the Guidelines.
- 2). The Growout has a documented training program in animal welfare. Employees are trained before handling live animals. A training program is conducted annually for all employees involved in handling live animals (multilingual if necessary).
- 3). The Growout department has a written plan for disaster response and recovery, including, but not limited to, structural damage, electrical outages, and (if appropriate) water and feed outages.

C2. Proper Nutrition and Feeding

- 1). Diets are formulated, produced, and fed to prevent all signs of nutritional deficiency and to promote good health and normal maintenance and production (weight gain, egg production).
- 2). Recommended Practices: Feed composition must be research-based to meet nutritional needs of the animals. Companies should consider the recommendations of the National

Research Council and utilize current research to ensure that the diet is adequate to the needs of the broilers. Formulations are approved by a professional poultry nutritionist.

- 3). Feed and water availability is monitored daily. Feed intake is monitored with every change of feed type.
- 4). Feed and watering systems should provide adequate access for all birds. Signs of unequal access should result in a change in feed or water presentation or special provisions for birds denied access.
- 5). Generally speaking, commercial breeders and broilers should not lose weight. Decisions to modify the rate of weight gain (for production or health related reasons) are acceptable.
- 6). The feed mill meets good manufacturing practices for feed production and is a Food and Drug Administration licensed feed mill if medicated feeds are produced.

C3. Appropriate Comfort and Shelter

- 1). Housing and house equipment are adequate to protect the birds from anticipated environmental conditions, including normally expected levels of heat, cold, and precipitation, as well as from predatory animals such as hawks and foxes.
- 2). Premises are maintained in a clean and orderly fashion.
- 3). Vermin are controlled through the use of bait stations, traps and other appropriate and effective measures.
- 4). Biosecurity procedures are in place.
- 5). 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. The facility has a written protocol for minimum ventilation requirements, including temperature and dust control; heating program; and static pressure (when applicable).
- 6). Ammonia in the atmosphere does not exceed 25 parts per million at bird height.
- 7). Moisture in litter does not exceed 35 percent (loosely compacted when squeezed in the hand). Litter, ventilation, drinking systems and feed formulation are managed to maintain appropriate paw integrity.

C4. Health Care and Monitoring

- 1). Qualified veterinary care must be available.

- 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). A layout period of 10 to 14 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. Consultation with the veterinarian is recommended before the layout period is shortened.
- 4). The company has a routine bird health monitoring program that includes an active surveillance of eye and leg health.

C5. Ability to Display Most Normal Behaviors

(Note: See appendix for discussion of scientific background)

- 1). Stocking Density: 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. Prior to entering the house, the stocking density is determined and should not exceed the following limits:

<i>Maximum Bird Weight Range</i>	<i>Maximum Stocking Density</i>
Below 4.5 lbs liveweight	6.5 pounds per square foot
4.5 to 5.5 lbs liveweight	7.5 pounds per square foot
More than 5.5 pounds liveweight	8.5 pounds per square foot

- 2). 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 and development (2 on U.S. Gait Scoring – see Appendix) are humanely euthanized.
- 3). Except for the first week and last week of growout, birds are provided with a minimum of four hours of darkness in every 24 hour period. During the period of darkness, the illumination at bird level does not exceed 50 percent of the light level in the remaining hours. The four hours of darkness may be provided in increments of one, two or four hours.

C6 Growout Department and On-Farm Best Practices

- 1). Producers have current contact information for local emergency services, and each company provides each producer with a “telephone tree” of emergency contacts at the company.
- 2). Flocks are inspected at least twice a day.
- 3). The light level is adequate for inspection, and the caretaker passes close enough to the birds to observe them.
- 4). Any dead birds are removed daily; and all feeding, drinking, and ventilation systems checked for proper operation on a daily basis.
- 5). The following are acceptable methods of on-farm euthanasia:
 - a). Rapid decapitation.
 - b). Rapid cervical disarticulation (including tool-assisted).
 - c). Displacement of oxygen with nitrogen, carbon dioxide, or other approved gas.
 - d). Any other American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) or American Humane Association (AHA) approved method.

D. Catching and Transportation

- 1). The Livehaul department has a person in charge of promoting animal welfare and adherence to the Guidelines.
- 2). The Livehaul department has a documented training program in animal welfare. Employees are trained before handling live animals. A training program is conducted annually for all employees involved in handling live animals (multilingual if necessary).
- 3). The Livehaul department has a written plan for emergency response and recovery, including, but not limited to, truck accidents.
- 4). Whenever birds are handled for any reason, including vaccinations, treatments, and movement to new facilities or to processing, handling is accomplished in such a manner as to avoid injuries. Abuse of the animals is not tolerated under any circumstances. **Any abuse of birds during catching or transportation is a major non-conformance.** Non-conformances must be recorded and corrective actions made.
- 5). Supervisors of catching crews have the responsibility for training crew members in handling of birds so as to minimize injury to the birds. The company has a system in place to ensure that this responsibility is being met.

- 6). The company also has an incentive or recognition program in place to encourage humane handling of birds by crew members and discourage inappropriate handling.
- 7). The number of birds in the catcher's hand depends on the size of the bird and should not cause injury to the birds. For birds weighing more than four pounds, the maximum number of birds per hand is five.
- 8). Catchers may not catch or carry birds by the wings or necks.
- 9). The company monitors birds for wing and leg damage.
- 10). Transport coops are appropriately sized and are in good repair so that birds cannot escape during transit. The company has a program in place to monitor and repair transport coops.
- 11). Density in the coops permits the birds to sit during transport without being on top of one another (in a single layer).
- 12). The company has a program to protect birds from extremes of heat and cold during transportation and holding and provide birds with adequate ventilation.

E. Processing

- 1). The processing plant has a person in charge of promoting adherence to the Guidelines.
- 2). The processing plant has a documented training program in animal welfare. Employees are trained before handling live animals. A training program is conducted annually for all employees involved in handling live animals (multilingual if necessary).
- 3). The processing plant has a written plan for disaster response and recovery, including, but not limited to, structural damage and electrical and other utility outages.
- 4). In the event of a utility outage, mechanical breakdown, or some other event that dictates that not all the birds moved to the processing plant can be processed, measures are taken to make the birds comfortable and reduce DOAs. Rehousing birds is stressful and is considered only in extreme situations.
- 5). Withdrawal of feed and water before processing is necessary for sanitary procedures and food safety. Feed and water withdrawal is kept to the minimum level consistent with good processing practices. Water withdrawal should not exceed two hours prior to catch. Feed withdrawal should not exceed twenty-four hours prior to slaughter.
- 6). The company has a program and equipment for keeping birds comfortable in covered holding sheds.

- a). Holding areas are covered and equipped with an adequate number of fans to ensure proper ventilation for birds.
 - b). Procedures for fan operation have designated temperatures at which fans and misters (if present) are to be operated.
 - c). Procedures are in place to retrieve loose birds in a timely manner.
- 7). Holding times are kept to the minimum consistent with good processing practices, not to exceed 15 hours.
- 8). Any company that employs mechanical catching systems should develop protocols to ensure humane handling of birds. Goal is to ensure that mechanical catching is at least equal to hand-catching in terms of bruises, injuries, and DOA's.
- 9). The number of animals dead on arrival (DOA) at the plant is minimized. DOA's are documented with anything over 0.5% having a corrective action.
- 10). No live bird should enter the DOA bin. **A live bird in the DOA bin is a major non-conformance.**
- 11). Unloading:
- a). Cages are lifted and moved from trailers in a manner not to injure birds.
 - b). The unloading and conveyor system is designed to avoid injury to birds. Birds should not be unloaded on top of other birds.
 - c). Conveyors should have sufficient space and no obstructions.
 - d). Birds remaining in cages are carefully removed. Birds are not handled by the wings.
- 12). Abuse of the animals is not tolerated under any circumstances. **Any abuse of birds during processing is a major non-conformance.**
- 13). Best management technology, such as adjustment of light levels, is in use to help keep birds calm. Personnel are carefully trained in proper delivery and hanging techniques. No inappropriate handling or employee misbehavior is observed. Management practices are in place to minimize worker fatigue (rotation or similar practices).
- 14). Stunning and processing
- a). Stunning and processing equipment is monitored to insure proper functioning for humane processing.
 - b). Birds are insensible to pain when euthanized. A post-stun posture that includes arched neck and wings tucked in is visual evidence of an effective stun. At least 98% of birds are properly stunned.

- c). The automatic knife is effective to cut blood vessels to induce bleed-out and is at least 98% effective.
 - d). Backup personnel are present after the automatic knife to euthanize any birds not properly killed by the equipment. Back up personnel should have sufficient room and lighting to perform job.
- 15). All birds are dead before entering the scald. Evidence that a live bird entered the scald consists only in a finding after the picker that a bird's carotid arteries were not cut. **A bird with uncut carotid arteries after the picker is a major non-conformance.**
- 16). Personnel and equipment handle birds in a manner that minimizes broken legs and wings. A program must be in place to monitor wing and leg damage.
- a). Broken wings and legs are monitored, preferably before the stunner; however, immediately after the stunner is also acceptable.
 - b). The goal is to have less than 3% broken or dislocated wings. Corrective action is initiated if the level exceeds 5%.
 - c). Broken legs: A sample of 500 birds will be evaluated for leg breakage. The goal for broken legs is zero. Corrective action is initiated if the level exceeds two broken legs per 500 birds.
- 17). Any live birds culled at the plant must be euthanized by:
- a). Rapid decapitation.
 - b). Rapid cervical disarticulation.
 - c). Displacement of oxygen with nitrogen, carbon dioxide, or other approved gas.
 - d). Any other American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) or American Humane Association (AHA) approved method.

HISTORY:

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National Chicken Council

Animal Welfare Audit Checklist

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
Corporate Commitment	55	
Hatchery	135	
Growout:	255	
Management, Training and Emergency Plan	20	
Nutrition and Feeding	15	
Comfort & Shelter	95	
Health Care and Monitoring	20	
Normal Behavior	75	
On-Farm Best Practices	30	
Catching and Transportation	80	
Processing	260	
Total, Broilers	785	

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<p>AUDIT FORM 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. Any designated “major non-conformance” (indicated in the Audit Form in boldface type) is an audit failure for that particular area (Hatchery, Growout, Catching & Transportation, etc.) and must be corrected before the audit of that area can be completed; if the non-conformance is not corrected, zero points are awarded for that area. A major non-conformance occurs only if the auditor personally observes it in the course of an audit.</p>			
<i>Requirement</i>	Points available	Check if done	Points awarded
Area: Corporate Commitment			
The company has a written program for animal welfare with a clear understanding of how the program is operated throughout the company.	25		
Current senior management has signed off on the animal welfare program.	15		
The company has a person or management group responsible for animal welfare throughout the company	15		
Area: Hatchery			
The Hatchery has a person in charge of promoting adherence to the Guidelines.	5		
Employees are trained before handling live animals. The Hatchery has a documented training program, conducted annually for all employees involved in handling live animals (multilingual if necessary; verbal translation of materials at time of training is acceptable).	5		

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The Hatchery has a written plan for disaster response and recovery, including, but not limited to, structural damage and electrical outages.	5		
The facility has an alarm system or regular monitoring system in use to alert hatchery personnel to failure of critical systems (heat, electricity). A generator check program is in place and available for review.	25		
The company has a temperature range goal for the holding room in the hatchery.	5		
The holding room is equipped with a working thermostat.	5		
The thermostat is checked and documented hourly during chick processing	10		
Each hatchery has employees who are charged with recording and reporting chick injuries to the management so that corrective action can be taken to avoid preventable injuries. Corrective action is recorded.	10		
Prior to shipping, a check of 10 boxes (total of 1,000 chicks) should find no more than 10 chicks with severe equipment injuries (torn legs, broken legs or wings).	25		
A macerator is working properly between the separator and the hatchery waste collection area; or, the hatchery waste collection is inspected and no live chicks are present.	25		
A live chick in the hatchery waste collection is a major non-conformance.			
The hatchery has a program in place to retrieve loose chicks from the floor after each flock change at a minimum.	10		
A method approved by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) is in place to accomplish euthanasia of pips and culls and verified for proper operation.	25		
Survival of any chicks after euthanasia is a major non-conformance. All instances of non-conformance must be recorded.			

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Subtotal, Hatchery	155		
Area: Growout			
Designated Management, Training and Emergency Plan:			
The Growout department has a person in charge of promoting adherence to the Guidelines.	5		
The Growout department has a documented training program for all employees involved in handling live animals. Employees are trained before handling live animals.	5		
Employees involved in handling live animals are trained at least annually.	5		
The Growout department has a written plan for disaster response and recovery, including, but not limited to, structural damage, electrical outages, and (if appropriate) water and feed outages. The facility has an alarm system or regular monitoring system in use to alert the grower to failure of critical systems (heat, electricity).	5		
Nutrition and Feeding:			
Feed formulations are approved by a professional poultry nutritionist	5		
Feed and water availability is monitored. Feed intake is monitored with every change of feed type; water availability is monitored daily.	5		
Feed mill meets good manufacturing practices for feed production and is a Food and Drug Administration licensed feed mill if medicated feeds are produced.	5		
Comfort & Shelter:			
House and equipment are adequate to protect the birds from normally expected levels of heat, cold and precipitation; premises are maintained in a clean and orderly fashion; vermin are controlled; and biosecurity measures are in place.	10		

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The facility (i.e., growout house) has a written protocol for minimum ventilation requirements, including temperature and dust control; heating program; and static pressure (when applicable)	10		
Ammonia in the atmosphere should not exceed 25 parts per million.	25		
Moisture in litter does not exceed 35 percent (loosely compacted when squeezed in the hand).	25		
Litter, ventilation, drinking systems and feed formulation are managed to maintain appropriate paw integrity. In 2 separate flocks in a given day; check a random sample of 100 birds (200 paws) from each flock. Using the “Poultry Paw Scoring System” recommended by the AAAP Welfare Committee, score paws as either 0 or 1. Paws scoring 0 are at least 90% of the 400 paw total. (Paw scores are taken at the processing plant to avoid undue live animal stress.)	25		
Health Care and Monitoring:			
Qualified veterinary care must be available	5		
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.	5		
The company has a routine bird health monitoring program that includes an active surveillance of eye and leg health	10		
Ability to Display Most Normal Behaviors:			
Stocking density in growout house does not exceed limits set in guidelines	25		
Birds that exhibit stunted growth and obvious gait defects that limit an individual bird’s ability to move about or access feed and water for normal growth and development are humanely euthanized.	25		

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Birds are provided with a minimum of four hours of darkness in every 24 hour period. During the period of darkness, the illumination at bird level does not exceed 50 percent of the light level in the remaining hours.	25		
On-Farm Best Practices:			
Producers have current contact information for local emergency services, and each company must provide each producer with a “telephone tree” of emergency contacts at the company.	10		
Flocks are inspected at least twice a day.	10		
Producer uses only methods of euthanasia listed in the Guidelines	10		
Subtotal, Growout	255		
Catching and Transportation			
The Livehaul department has a person in charge of promoting animal welfare and adherence to the Guidelines.	5		
The Livehaul department has a documented training program for all employees involved in handling live animals. Employees are trained before handling live animals.	5		
The Livehaul department has a written plan for emergency response and recovery, including, but not limited to, truck accidents.	5		
Whenever birds are handled for any reason, including vaccinations, treatments, and movement to new facilities or to processing, handling is accomplished in such a manner as to avoid injuries. Abuse of the animals is not be tolerated under any circumstances. Any abuse of birds is a major non-conformance. Non-conformances must be recorded.			
Catchers may not catch or carry birds by the wings or necks.	10		

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Supervisors of catching crews have the responsibility for training crew members in handling of birds so as to minimize injury to the birds. The company should have a system in place to ensure that this responsibility is being met	10		
The company should also have an incentive or recognition program in place to encourage humane handling of birds by crew members and discourage inappropriate handling	10		
The number of birds in the catcher's hand depends on the size of the bird and should not cause injury to the birds. For birds weighing more than four pounds, the maximum number of birds per hand is five.	10		
Transport coops are appropriately sized and are in good repair so that birds cannot escape during transit. The company has a program in place to monitor and repair transport coops	5		
Density in the coops should permit the birds to sit during transport without being on top of one another (in a single layer).	5		
The company has a program to protect birds from extremes of heat and cold during transportation and holding and provide birds with adequate ventilation	15		
Subtotal, Catching and Transportation	80		
Processing			
The processing plant has a person in charge of promoting adherence to the Guidelines.	5		
The processing plant has a documented training program for all employees involved in handling live animals. Employees are trained before handling live animals.	5		
Employees who manage or handle live chickens receive annual training in the company's program.	5		
The processing plant has a written plan for disaster response and recovery, including, but not limited to, structural damage and electrical and other utility outages.	5		

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Feed and water withdrawal is kept to the minimum level consistent with good processing practices. Water withdrawal should not exceed two hours prior to catch. Feed withdrawal should not exceed twenty four hours prior to slaughter.	15		
The company has a program and equipment for keeping birds comfortable in holding sheds: Holding areas are covered and equipped with an adequate number of fans to ensure proper ventilation for birds; procedures for fan operation have designated temperatures at which fans and misters are to be operated; procedures are in place to retrieve loose birds in a timely manner.	15		
Holding times are kept to the minimum consistent with good processing practices. Average yard holding time does not exceed six hours (check records for previous week)	15		
A holding time greater than 15 hours is a major non-conformance for catching and transportation. Non-conformances must be recorded			
Any company that employs mechanical catching systems should develop protocols to ensure humane handling of birds. Goal is to ensure that mechanical catching is at least equal to hand-catching in terms of bruises, injuries, and DOA's.	10		
The number of animals dead on arrival (DOA) at the plant is minimized. DOA's are documented with anything over 0.5% average per week having a corrective action.	25		
No live bird should enter the DOA bin. A live bird in the DOA bin is a major non-conformance.			
Unloading: Cages are lifted and moved from trailers in a manner not to injure birds. Birds should not be unloaded on top of other birds. Birds remaining in cages are carefully removed. Birds are not handled by the wings.	25		
Best management technology, such as adjustment of light levels, is in use to help keep birds calm. Personnel are carefully trained in proper delivery and hanging techniques. No inappropriate handling or employee misbehavior is to be observed. Management practices are in place to minimize worker fatigue (rotation or similar practices).	15		

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Stunning and processing:			
Stunning and processing equipment is monitored to insure proper functioning for humane processing.	5		
Birds are insensible to pain when euthanized. A post-stun posture that includes arched neck and wings tucked in is visual evidence of an effective stun. At least 98% of birds are properly stunned. (No more than 10 birds in 500-bird sample are apparently not stunned.)	25		
The automatic knife is effective to cut blood vessels to induce bleed-out and is at least 98% effective. (No more than 10 birds in 500-bird sample need to be killed by backup person.)	25		
All birds are dead before entering the scald. Evidence that a live bird entered the scald consists only in a finding after the picker that a bird's carotid arteries were not cut. A bird with uncut carotid arteries after the picker is a major non-conformance.			
Broken legs and wings:			
Personnel and equipment handle birds in a manner that minimizes broken legs and wings. Broken legs and wings are monitored immediately before or immediately after the stunner. (Do NOT observe after the picker.) The goal is to have 3% or less broken or dislocated wings. Corrective action is initiated if the level exceeds 5%. (Protruding bones or wing hanging straight down is visual evidence of broken or dislocated wing.) No more than 15 broken or dislocated wings should be observed in a 500 bird sample (3 percent of birds) for maximum score. Award points on sliding scale: 0.0 -3% (0-15 wings) = 25 3.01-4% (16-20 wings) = 15 4.01-5% (21-25 wings) = 5 >5 % (>25 wings) = 0	25		

NCC Animal Welfare Audit Checklist

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In a 500-bird sample (same as the wing sample or a new sample if necessary), broken legs should not exceed zero for full credit. Award points as follows: 0 broken legs = 25 1-2 broken legs = 10 >2 = 0	25		
Authorized euthanasia only: Rapid decapitation; rapid cervical disarticulation; displacement of oxygen with nitrogen, carbon dioxide, or other approved gas; any other American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) or American Humane Association (AHA) approved method.	15		
Subtotal, Processing	260		
Subtotal, Broilers	785		

SEE NOTES ON FOLLOWING PAGE

NCC Animal Welfare Audit Checklist

Note 1

STOCKING DENSITY LIMITS

Maximum Bird Weight Range

Maximum Stocking Density

Below 4.5 lbs live weight

6.5 pounds per square foot

4.5 to 5.5 lbs live weight

7.5 pounds per square foot

More than 5.5 pounds live weight

8.5 pounds per square foot

Note 2

EUTHANASIA AND IN-PLANT CULLING:

The following are acceptable methods of on-farm euthanasia and in-plant culling:

- Rapid decapitation.
- Rapid cervical disarticulation.
- Displacement of oxygen with nitrogen, carbon dioxide, or other approved gas.
- Any other American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) or American Humane Association (AHA) approved method.

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

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 technique¹ 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.² 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.

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

² 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