TURKEYS

RSPCA APPROVED FARMING SCHEME
STANDARDS

MAY 2013

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Overview **5**
Introduction 5
Principles underpinning the RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme Standards 5
Eligibility 6
Application 6
Requirements of the RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme 7
The Standards **9**
1 Sourcing and management of poults **9**
Sourcing of poults 9
Transport from the hatchery 9
Poult placement 9
Brooding and rearing of poults 10
2 Food and water **11**
Feed 11
Water 11
3 Environment and housing **12**
Shed facilities 12
Temperature 13
Ventilation 13
Litter 13
Lighting 13
Environmental enrichment 14
Outdoor systems 14
4 Stocking density **16**
5 Management **17**
6 Health **18**
Lameness 19
Management of injurious pecking 19
Other husbandry procedures 19
7 On-farm euthanasia **20**
8 Catching **21**
9 Transport **23**
10 Slaughter **24**
Shackling — Electrical stunning systems 25
Stunning 25
Stunning — Electrical stunning systems 25
Stunning — Controlled atmosphere systems 25
Bleeding out 26
Bird injury and damage records 26
Traceability 26

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OVERVIEW

Introduction

RSPCA Australia seeks to improve animal welfare on farm, during transport and at slaughter through the RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme and the application of production practices that meet the animal's behavioural and physiological needs.

The *RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme Standards — Turkeys* (from here on referred to as "the Standards") outlines animal welfare requirements that are designed to assist the industry to continually improve and demonstrate good animal welfare outcomes.

These Standards are based upon RSPCA policy, available scientific research, current legislation applied in Australia, codes of practice, standards and guidelines for animal welfare, veterinary and technical advice, and current industry good practice.

Principles underpinning the RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme Standards

The Standards are based on the 'Five Freedoms':

- freedom from hunger and thirst: by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour
- freedom from discomfort: by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area
- freedom from pain, injury or disease: by prevention, rapid diagnosis and treatment
- freedom to express normal behaviour: by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind
- freedom from fear and distress: by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.

These 'freedoms' provide a comprehensive framework for the assessment of animal welfare on farm, during transport and at slaughter, which for the Standards in this Scheme, is presented as follows:

- sourcing and management of poults
- food and water
- environment and housing
- stocking density
- management
- health
- on-farm euthanasia
- catching
- transport
- slaughter.

RSPCA Australia considers that these 'freedoms' will be better provided for if those responsible for the care of turkeys provide:

- caring and responsible planning and management
- skilled, knowledgeable and conscientious husbandry staff
- appropriate environmental design
- considerate handling and transport
- humane slaughter.

Eligibility

These Standards apply to turkeys kept in eligible systems in Australia.

Definitions of eligible housing systems under the scheme include:

- indoor systems where turkeys are housed within a shed which meets the specifications of these Standards
- outdoor systems where turkeys are housed in sheds, but have, by choice, access to an outdoor area. Both the shed and outdoor area must meet the specifications of these Standards.

Products that are eligible for Approval under the RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme must be derived from turkeys housed in systems which meet the provisions of these Standards.

Licensees are responsible for ensuring that the housing system, in addition to meeting the Standards, meets the labelling (production descriptor) requirements of the industry and/or retailer (whichever is appropriate).

RSPCA Australia has discretion to determine the suitability or eligibility of the housing system as applicable within the context of the Scheme.

Application

The documentation that supports the RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme consists of:

- *Operations Manual* — details the operation of the Scheme for both Approved Producers and Licensees, including the application process and the assessment procedures
- *Standards* (specific to each species) — provide the requirements for the rearing, handling, transport and/or slaughter of the species
- *Templates* — for assessment and reporting.

Additional information is provided in boxed sections at the start of each chapter within the Standards. This may include the reasoning behind a standard, the RSPCA's specific concern with an aspect of production and/or an area where a standard may be reviewed in the future.

Requirements of the RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme

It is a requirement of the Scheme that:

1. The *RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme Standards — Turkeys* are complied with.
2. The requirements in the relevant state or territory legislation and Model Codes of Practice or standards for animal welfare are complied with, including:
    - *Australian Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals — Domestic Poultry* (or equivalent Australian standard or state code where one exists)
    - *Australian Standards and Guidelines for the Welfare of Animals — Land Transport of Livestock* (or equivalent code of practice where one exists)
    - *Australian Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals — Livestock at Slaughtering Establishments* (or equivalent Australian standard or state code where one exists)
    - all other requirements in the state or territory legislation relevant to the farming enterprise, including land use, transportation, processing, environmental sustainability, food safety and product labelling.

    RSPCA Australia has discretion to request proof of compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements through the provision of documentation from the relevant local council, state/territory government, quality assurance program or other appropriate body.
3. The following are completed and subsequently updated on an annual basis:
    - Animal Care Statement — specifying management and standard operating procedures
    - Veterinary Health Plan — specifying health management protocols and procedures.

    Existing QA manuals for other programs or accreditation schemes and/or existing standard operating procedures, HACCP tables or records to support production activities may be utilised to meet the requirements of these Standards, provided the specific provisions and targets in these Standards are demonstrated. Equivalence, on this basis, is determined by RSPCA Australia.
4. Each enterprise nominate a dedicated person who has:
    - responsibility and accountability for the operation of the farming enterprise
    - responsibility for overseeing the management and application of the requirements of the Scheme.

    The owner of the birds raised under the RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme Standards has, at all times, the final responsibility for ensuring on-going compliance with these Standards and the welfare of the birds.

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THE STANDARDS

1 Sourcing and management of poults

Growth rate and injurious pecking: The fast growth rate of commercial turkeys can lead to leg disorders. Turkeys are also prone to injurious pecking. Breeding companies should actively address the welfare issues associated with fast growth rate and injurious pecking and poults should be sourced from breeding farms/hatcheries that aim to produce healthy and robust birds.

Sourcing of poults

1.1 A record specifying the name of the hatchery from which poults are sourced must be kept for each batch placed.

1.2 A record specifying the bird type/strain must be kept for each batch placed.

1.3 A schedule of the proposed bird growing program specifying poult placement number and 'thin out' dates must be available for each batch.

1.4 A record specifying the final bird slaughter program must be kept for each batch.

Transport from the hatchery

1.5 The date and time poults depart the hatchery and arrive at the grower farm must be recorded.

Poult placement

1.6 All poults must be placed within their new housing facilities as soon as possible after arrival.

1.7 The number of poults delivered by the hatchery must be recorded and must not exceed the number specified as part of the proposed bird growing program.

1.8 Poult transport mortalities must be recorded.

1.9 The shed must be appropriately prepared prior to the arrival of the poults. Pre-placement preparation activities include:

a. flushing of water lines

b. checking water and feed availability and quality

c. cleaning and sanitation

d. litter provision

e. demarcation of the brooder area

f. temperature and ventilation settings to breed standard recommendation.

1.10 A record specifying completion of pre-placement shed preparation must be kept.

1.11 Poults must be observed at least four times per day in the first three days following placement to ensure that their appearance, vocalisations and behaviour are normal. Times of checks must be entered on shed records together with notes of any problems identified and action taken.

Brooding and rearing of chicks

1.12 Poult mortality must be recorded daily and separated into 'deaths' and 'culls' noting reason for culling, such as legs, runt or injury.

1.13 Feed and watering facilities must be evenly spaced within the brooding area.

1.14 Poults up to 7 days old must be provided with a minimum light intensity of 50 lux (measured at bird head height) across the full floor area of the brooding space to stimulate activity.

1.15 Where poults are caught for transfer from brooding to growing farms, catching technique must ensure:

a. poults are caught by both legs

b. no more than eight poults are carried at once.

2 Food and water

The provision of whole grain or coarse cereal fragments as part of grower and finisher feeds is recommended to aid with development of the digestive tract.

2.1 Feeding and watering equipment design, position and height must allow all birds to access feed and water with minimal effort and using normal posture.

2.2 All feeding and watering systems and equipment must be operating effectively to ensure the birds' daily requirements for feed and water are met.

2.3 Feed and water distribution must ensure that a uniform supply is available within the shed and is accessible to birds.

2.4 Unthrifty birds that are not able to reach feed or water must be euthanased immediately.

Feed

2.5 Feed must be available in sufficient quantity and quality to meet the birds' requirements.

2.6 Birds must have unrestricted access to feed, with the exception of birds being treated under veterinary advice or birds being prepared for catching.

Water

2.7 Water that is clean, safe and suitable for birds must be available in sufficient quantity to meet the birds' requirements.

2.8 Birds must be observed to be drinking and action taken if drinking is insufficient or excessive.

3 Environment and housing

Bird welfare is influenced by facility and shed conditions, including temperature, humidity, ventilation, lighting and litter. Housing design should allow sufficient space for exercise, exploration and social behaviour.

Litter: RSPCA Australia places a strong emphasis on the need to maintain litter in a dry and friable condition. Litter must be of an appropriate material and of sufficient depth to allow birds to maintain body temperature, scratch, forage and dust bathe. Managing shed conditions, especially ventilation, and ongoing maintenance of facilities (including drinker lines) combined with nutrition management and appropriate space allowance will affect litter quality. If litter quality is managed well, conditions including leg health and footpad burn can be minimised. Every effort should be made to ensure shed managers are aware of and practice the principles of maintaining low moisture levels in litter under varying ambient conditions.

Lighting: Provision of daylight is strongly recommended as it prevents eye abnormalities and can reduce the incidence of injurious pecking by encouraging foraging, exploration, and a range of social behaviours. A gradual transition between light and dark periods will stimulate birds to feed and, particularly during a natural or simulated dusk period, allow them to find a suitable perch or resting place for the night.

Environmental enrichment: Bird welfare is enhanced through the provision of perches, pecking objects and other manipulable materials indoors and the provision of shade, shelter and palatable vegetation where birds have access to an outdoor area. RSPCA Australia strongly encourages the use of all forms of environmental enrichment that stimulate activity, promote leg health and help redirect pecking behaviour. Introducing novel items throughout the growing phase, in addition to the required enrichment, will assist in maintaining interest in pecking objects. Such items may include plastic bottles filled with coloured water, chains, cabbages, and hanging CDs. RSPCA Australia will monitor bird use of these with an aim to increasing the minimum requirements in a future revision of the Standards.

Shed facilities

3.1 Floors, surfaces, fittings and equipment in sheds must be designed, constructed and maintained to minimise the risk of injury or disease in birds and to facilitate cleaning.

3.2 Floors must be maintained to provide a level and compacted surface that ensures all feeders and drinkers are accessible to birds.

3.3 The shed must be free of any items or objects that could injure birds.

3.4 Alarms and other controls for ventilation, heating and cooling must be fully operational and maintained as required. The date and time of all checks must be recorded.

3.5 Personnel must be available to respond to alarms at all times.

3.6 A maintenance program must be in place to ensure that facility defects are identified and prompt action is taken to ensure their return to full operation. A record of maintenance/ repairs must be maintained.

3.7 There must be contingencies in place to ensure that shed conditions can be managed and feed and water can be provided to birds at all times.

3.8 Facilities (including feed and litter storage areas) must be constructed and maintained to restrict the entry of wild birds, rodents, predators and other pests or animals that could cause distress or transmit diseases to birds.

3.9 Pest control programs must use the most humane effective techniques available.

Temperature

3.10 Indoor maximum and minimum temperatures must be recorded daily.

Ventilation

3.11 Natural or mechanical ventilation systems[1] must be operational and effective to provide adequate air exchange and assist with litter condition management for the age, weight and number of birds.

3.12 Ammonia levels must not exceed 15ppm at bird head height.

3.13 Dust levels at bird head height must be managed to avoid negative impacts on bird welfare.

Litter

3.14 Litter material must be of good quality, water-absorbing material and provide for the bird's behavioural need to dust bathe, scratch and forage.

3.15 Litter supplies must be accompanied by documentation specifying source, type and volume.

3.16 The floor of the shed must be completely and evenly covered in litter to a minimum average depth of 100mm at brooding and 75mm during the grower phase.

3.17 Litter must be actively maintained in a dry and friable condition.

3.18 Litter condition must be monitored daily and prompt action taken where crusts and/or wet areas are identified.

3.19 Litter management equipment must be available on-farm.

3.20 Irreparably wet or fouled litter must be removed and replaced with dry, friable litter.

3.21 Where litter is re-used at the end of a batch, it must be treated to address pathogen loads and ammonia concentrations and be dry and friable at bird placement.

3.22 Where used litter is placed in the brooding area, it must have 100mm of fresh litter placed on top.

Lighting

3.23 The lighting system in the shed must provide a minimum period of 8 hours continuous artificial lighting per day (unless birds have access to natural daylight which provides at least the minimum required intensity) and a minimum period of 8 hours continuous darkness (with all lights off) to be provided at night, in every 24-hour period.

3.24 From 1 January 2015, the light intensity between lighting periods must be adjusted in a gradual manner (using dimmers or switching individual lights on/off) over at least 15 minutes.

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[1] Natural ventilation systems rely on natural airflow to manage air exchange. Mechanical ventilation systems rely on extraction fans to manage air exchange. Stirring fans may be used in each of these systems to assist with air movement within the shed.

3.25 After 7 days of age, the light levels in the shed (measured at bird head height) must ensure that, during the light period:

a. no area of the shed floor is lit at less than 10 lux

b. the average light intensity across the entire shed floor is equal to or greater than 20 lux (except during catching).

Environmental enrichment

3.26 Environmental enrichment must be provided inside the shed for all birds in the form of both perching and manipulable material from at least the end of brooding.

3.27 Perching must be provided at 7.2 metres per 1000 birds, be designed to support the whole of the bird's foot and be positioned and be of a height to allow birds to access perching with minimal effort.

3.28 Manipulable material (or pecking objects) must be provided either in loose form or suspended in nets.

3.29 Environmental enrichment must be evenly distributed throughout the shed for ease of access for all birds.

3.30 Environmental enrichment must be maintained or replaced as necessary to ensure birds have continuous access from at least the end of brooding.

3.31 Inside the shed, birds must be provided with visual barriers behind which they can seek refuge and rest from other birds. Visual barriers may include straw bales, free-standing boards, etc.

3.32 Where used, organic manipulable material and straw bales must be stored in a manner that avoids pathogens and/or pests being introduced into the shed.

Outdoor systems

RSPCA Standards do not require that birds have access to an outdoor area. However, where they do, the following additional Standards must be met.

3.33 Young birds must be introduced to outdoor areas as soon as they are reasonably feathered and at the latest at 6 weeks of age. Care must be taken to closely observe the birds, particularly their body condition, during introduction to outdoor areas.

3.34 All birds must have access to the outdoor area during daylight hours for a minimum of 8 hours per day once they are reasonably feathered. The only exception to this is during extreme weather conditions or under direct veterinary advice.

3.35 A daily record specifying the date and times of access to the outdoor area must be kept.

3.36 Maintenance and management of the outdoor area must ensure that birds are encouraged to access all areas.

3.37 The total available outdoor area is calculated on the basis of the total floor area in the shed in which the flock is housed and must be:

a. at least 1.5 times the size of the total shed floor area for new sheds and for existing sheds where the available outdoor area is not limited by the overall farm footprint; or

b. at least 1 times the size of the total shed floor area for existing sheds where the available outdoor area is limited by the overall farm footprint.

3.38 Access to the outdoor area must meet the following requirements:

a. openings must be of a minimum height and width to allow birds to pass through using a normal posture

b. number and position of openings must ensure that all birds have the opportunity to access the outdoor area

c. design and position of openings must avoid birds being able to obstruct the movement of other birds, avoid injury to birds and take into account prevailing weather conditions.

3.39 Outdoor areas must provide birds with palatable vegetation cover.

3.40 Any ramps for birds to access outdoor areas must allow for minimal effort and ease of bird movement to and from the shed.

3.41 At least $20m^2$ of overhead shade per 1000 birds must be provided and distributed evenly across the outdoor area.

3.42 Outdoor areas must be managed to control disease, land degradation and accumulation of water.

3.43 Where fences are used, they must be constructed and maintained to restrict the entry of predators, pest animals or other farm animals. Regular inspection of fences must occur to ensure they remain effective.

3.44 Regular inspection of the outdoor area must occur to ensure that any foreign bodies that could cause injury to birds are removed and to check that there are no poisonous plants or chemicals accessible to birds.

3.45 Areas surrounding the shed must be well drained and be kept clean and tidy.

3.46 The outdoor and adjoining area must be maintained in order to minimise the risk of fire. Contingencies must be in place to minimise the risk to bird welfare in the event of fire or other natural disasters.

4 Stocking density

Optimum stocking density indoors will depend on good management of shed conditions (temperature, humidity, ventilation) and litter quality. More space may be required in areas subject to high temperatures and humidity unless appropriate temperature, humidity and ventilation controls are in place and fully operational.

4.1 Stocking density is calculated on the basis of bird liveweight and the floor space available to the birds in the shed.

Stocking density must not exceed:

a. 28kg per m^2 of available floor area for natural ventilation systems[2]

b. 30kg per m^2 of available floor area for mechanical ventilation systems, where bird liveweight at catching is 5kg or less

c. 35kg per m^2 of available floor area for mechanical ventilation systems, where bird liveweight at catching is greater than 5kg.

4.2 Upon occurrence of poor shed or flock conditions, stocking density must be reviewed and, if necessary, reduced when a new flock is placed.

[2] Natural ventilation systems rely on natural airflow to manage air exchange. Mechanical ventilation systems rely on extraction fans to manage air exchange. Stirring fans may be used in each of these systems to assist with air movement within the shed.

5 Management

5.1 Persons responsible for the management and/or handling of birds must be appropriately trained and competent in their required tasks, including:

a. handling of birds

b. inspection of birds and shed environment

c. identification of normal and abnormal bird behaviour

d. maintaining shed environment

e. deviations in production targets

f. bird care and treatment of injury or distress

g. euthanasia of birds.

5.2 Birds (except poults) must be observed at least three times in a 24-hour period to ensure that their appearance, vocalisations and behaviour are normal and inspections must be increased during hot weather or disease outbreak.

5.3 Any weak, ill or injured birds must be identified and promptly treated or euthanased without delay.

5.4 Dead birds must be removed from the shed and disposed of hygienically in a secure storage area.

5.5 Where birds are found to be entrapped or have escaped they must be freed or caught immediately and action taken to prevent this situation recurring.

5.6 Bird mortality must be recorded daily and separated into 'deaths' and 'culls' noting the main reason for culling, such as legs, runt or injury.

5.7 Mortality rates per shed per week over the life of the flock must be recorded.

5.8 Where the cause of ill health or disease and the appropriate treatment is unable to be identified, veterinary advice must be sought and followed accordingly.

5.9 RSPCA Australia must be notified of any major event which impacts flock health and welfare adversely.

5.10 Company owned and/or contractor farms must have internal assessment systems in place to ensure on-going compliance with the RSPCA Standards.

5.11 Animals, other than placed birds, must be prevented from entering the shed.

6 Health

Antibiotics: The preferred strategy for preventing disease is a combination of good shed hygiene and farm biosecurity, vaccination (where available), appropriate diet and the use of effective antibiotic alternatives (such as prebiotics, probiotics, organic acids, and essential oils). RSPCA Australia is concerned about the reliance on antibiotics to maintain bird gut health and reduce overall flock mortality. The potential for alternative strategies to replace antibiotic use should be examined.

Lameness: Lameness is a serious welfare problem in turkeys, causing pain and discomfort to affected birds. The incidence of lameness can be reduced by selecting for robustness and leg health (such as slower-growing strains or breeds), by providing appropriate nutrition to manage growth rate, by stimulating activity as well as providing time for proper and sufficient rest, and by properly managing the litter. RSPCA has adopted the Dawkins gait-scoring system to assess lameness:

0 = normal (bird walks at least 10 steps with ease and is well balanced)

1 = abnormal (bird walks abnormally for at least 10 steps with an uneven stride and is unbalanced)

2 = unacceptable (bird is reluctant to walk or not able to walk)

Injurious pecking: Feather pecking, head pecking, cannibalism and aggression are serious welfare problems in turkeys, causing pain, discomfort and often death to affected birds. The incidence of injurious pecking can be reduced by selecting for less aggressive strains, providing birds with sufficient rest, optimising diet and ensuring adequate nutrient intake, offering a diet in mash rather than pelleted form, providing sufficient feeding space, stimulating activity e.g. through environmental enrichment, properly managing lighting and litter, providing visual barriers, and reducing stocking density. The preferred options for the management of injurious pecking are the selection of less aggressive bird strains or breeds and use of alternative flock management practices that will eliminate the need for beak trimming.

6.1 A Veterinary Health Plan must be in place to maintain the health and welfare of the birds.

6.2 The Veterinary Health Plan must contain details of the following:

a. procedures for the identification and treatment of weak, ill or injured birds, including separation/treatment and euthanasia

b. procedures to prevent lameness and leg disorders that may lead to hock burn, foot pad burn, breast blisters and/or dirty feathers

c. procedures to prevent injurious pecking

d. a vaccination schedule

e. any prophylactic or corrective medicines administered, their withholding periods, dose rates and when birds should be treated

f. any other medicines or additives administered, such as probiotics

g. quarantine and biosecurity procedures

h. pest control procedures to restrict access of wild birds, predators and rodents to the flock

i. cleaning and sanitation procedures.

6.3 Health records must be kept for each batch.

6.4 The health records must contain details of the following:

a. vaccinations

b. diseases

c. mortalities, separated into 'deaths' and 'culls' noting the main reason for culling

d. injuries

e. other treatments administered to birds.

6.5 Antibiotics must only be administered under veterinary advice. Where it is considered necessary to use antibiotics for prophylactic purposes, RSPCA Australia must be notified. The use of coccidiostats is permitted.

6.6 The Veterinary Health Plan must be updated on an annual basis in consultation with the attending veterinarian and a copy of the current Plan must be held on each farm.

Lameness

6.7 Birds must be monitored for signs of lameness, the cause of lameness investigated, and action taken to prevent lameness from worsening and from occurring in future flocks.

6.8 Birds with a gait score of 2 that are not able to walk must be euthanased immediately.

Management of injurious pecking

6.9 Daily monitoring of birds must occur to identify signs of aggressive pecking or cannibalism and to identify the likely causes.

6.10 If there are a large number of birds that are pecking or cannibalising other birds, action must be taken to adjust management practices and to seek further technical or veterinary advice.

6.11 All injurious pecking incidents must be recorded.

6.12 Feather condition (as a result of pecking) must be monitored at the end of the growing period to enable management decisions to be made accordingly.

6.13 A bird that is injured as a result of pecking or cannibalism must be promptly removed for treatment or euthanased.

6.14 Where beak trimming is considered necessary to prevent feather pecking or cannibalism:

a. it must be performed on day-old birds at the hatchery by a competent operator using an infrared technique and appropriately calibrated equipment

b. it must be limited to tipping of the beak only

c. it must be even, rounded and consistent across the flock.

6.15 Where it is identified that birds have been incorrectly trimmed, the supplier and RSPCA Australia must be notified.

6.16 Artificial means of preventing cannibalism (such as blinkers or lenses) are not permitted.

Other husbandry procedures

6.17 Husbandry procedures not specified elsewhere in these Standards must not be performed. These include desnooding, dewinging, and toe trimming.

7 On-farm euthanasia

7.1 All persons involved in the on-farm euthanasia of individual birds must be appropriately trained.

7.2 Birds must be handled and euthanased in a manner that ensures that distress or discomfort is minimised.

7.3 The approved methods for euthanasia of individual birds on-farm are:

a. birds 8kg or under must be killed by cervical dislocation using a quick stretching motion that dislocates the neck vertebrae from the cranium and severs the spinal cord and carotid arteries. While carrying out the procedure, the bird must be held with both legs in one hand, the head in the other;

b. birds over 8kg must be appropriately restrained and killed by captive bolt to the head or by CO_2;

c. for birds less than 7 days old, a sharp, fixed object may be used to assist in severing the spinal cord. While carrying out the procedure, the bird must be held with both legs in one hand, the head in the other.

Following cervical dislocation, captive bolt use, or CO_2, the bird must be checked to ensure it is dead.

7.4 Killing pliers or other equipment that crushes the neck or methods of cervical dislocation that require spinning or flicking of the bird by the head must not be used.

7.5 On-farm euthanasia methods not specified in these Standards must not be performed without prior approval from RSPCA Australia.

8 Catching

Thinning out: RSPCA Australia believes that the practice of "thinning out", i.e. partially depopulating a shed, can compromise the welfare of birds not being collected at the time but has the advantage of providing more space for the remaining birds. Preparation and catching should aim to minimise the effects on bird welfare of feed and water deprivation; noise; dust; disruption of rest; and thermal discomfort.

8.1 All persons involved in the handling and catching of birds must be appropriately trained and competent.

8.2 All persons involved in the handling and catching of birds must meet on-farm biosecurity procedures.

8.3 A person responsible for the birds must be present at catching.

8.4 The timing of catching and transport must be co-ordinated between the grower, catching crew, transporter and processor in order to ensure that birds are not off feed and water for more than 18 hours prior to slaughter and to minimise time birds spend waiting on the vehicle.

8.5 Access roads and pick-up pads must be well maintained to provide a level and compacted surface and kept clear to ensure access at catching.

8.6 An assessment of birds must be made before catching commences to confirm that they are fit for the intended journey.

8.7 Any birds rejected from transport must be promptly treated or immediately euthanased.

8.8 Removal of water facilities must not take place until immediately before the catch of the birds commences.

8.9 Where required, removal of environmental enrichment in preparation for catching, must coincide with removal of feed to minimise disturbance to the birds.

8.10 Lighting must be dimmed during catching to ensure that birds are calm.

8.11 Transport modules must be inspected to ensure that they are clean, intact and cannot cause injury to birds during loading and transport.

8.12 Transport modules must be of a depth and have openings of sufficient size to avoid injury to the bird.

8.13 Transport modules or crates must provide sufficient floor space to allow all birds to sit comfortably at the same time without being on top of each other.

8.14 Loading into transport modules must take place inside the shed to minimise the time that birds are handled.

8.15 The catching process must be designed and managed to ensure that bird crowding, distress or discomfort is minimised and injuries and mortalities are prevented.

8.16 Flock preparation involving separation of the birds into groups must proceed calmly and birds are not to be kicked or picked up and thrown aside.

8.17 If catching into crates, the approved methods for catching individual birds are:

a. birds weighing 5kg or less must be caught and carried by both legs with no more than 1 bird in each hand

b. birds over 5kg must be caught by grasping the shoulder wing furthest away from the catcher and using the other hand to hold both legs.

8.18 If catching into modules, birds must be caught by grasping the shoulder of the wing furthest from the catcher, and using the other hand to hold both legs before lifting the bird up and into the drawer.

8.19 Birds must be placed onto the floor of the crate or module one at a time.

8.20 Birds must not be caught and dragged by the head or neck, or be thrown, swung or dropped into a crate or module.

8.21 Inappropriate catching techniques used by the catching crew must be addressed immediately by the person responsible for the birds.

8.22 The crate or module handling operator must load units onto the transport trailer at a speed and angle that minimises tilting of the crates or drawers.

8.23 Birds remaining in the shed following partial depopulation must be given access to feed and water promptly following completion of catching.

8.24 If birds remain in the shed, all environmental enrichment removed before the catch must be re-distributed within the shed by the morning following the catch.

8.25 A record of catching must be maintained for each batch caught, including:

a. the name of the person responsible for the birds at catching

b. the names of persons involved in the catching of birds

c. time feed and water is withdrawn

d. time catching commenced and concluded

e. number of birds caught.

9 Transport

9.1 The transporter must have a written emergency protocol in place that includes out of hours contacts and standard procedures for protecting bird welfare in the case of an accident or other emergency.

9.2 All persons involved in the handling and transport of birds must be appropriately trained and competent.

9.3 All persons involved in the handling and transport of birds must meet on-farm biosecurity procedures.

9.4 Action must be taken to minimise the risk of heat or cold stress to birds during transport or while the vehicle is stationary.

9.5 A record of bird transport must be maintained, including:

a. time of departure from farm

b. time of arrival at processing

c. transport mortalities.

10 Slaughter

Closed Circuit Television (CCTV): RSPCA Australia is requiring that CCTV be used in those areas of the processing plant where the risk to animal welfare is greatest. CCTV should not replace the need to employ people with the right attitude towards animals, comprehensive staff training and good stockmanship. CCTV, however, is an excellent means by which facility management and auditors can monitor compliance with standards and regulations relating to animal welfare. CCTV allows problem areas to be identified and promptly addressed.

Controlled atmosphere systems: RSPCA Australia strongly encourages the use of controlled atmosphere systems (CAS) where birds are rendered unconscious using a mixture of gases prior to being shackled. CAS has the benefit of reducing the stress associated with manual handling and avoiding the pain associated with shackling conscious birds. Alternative (less aversive) gas mixtures to those being used currently may offer additional welfare benefits.

Shackling: To reduce the pain and discomfort associated with the shackling of live birds, bird handling technique should be calm and gentle. Wing flapping on the shackles can be reduced by gently running the hands down the legs and body of the bird or keeping hold of the legs for half a second after shackling. Breast comforters prevent wing flapping and birds raising their head prior to entering the stunning bath. The shackle line, from point of shackling to the stunning bath, should be designed to minimise bends and be free of sharp corners.

10.1 All persons involved in the handling and slaughter of birds must be appropriately trained and competent.

10.2 Birds must be slaughtered at the closest available processing plant unless prior approval has been obtained from RSPCA Australia.

10.3 Only processing plants that have been assessed by RSPCA Australia to meet these slaughter Standards may be used to slaughter RSPCA Approved birds.

10.4 From 1 January 2015, a Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) system must be installed and operational:

a. to allow a clear view of live bird handling processes, and

b. be monitored to ensure that these Standards are maintained.

10.5 Procedures must be in place to manage equipment failure and other breakdowns that may impact on bird welfare.

10.6 The lairage at the processing plant must be covered to provide shelter and shade and be fitted with fans and misting equipment to allow cooling of birds as required.

10.7 A record of lairage must be maintained, including:

a. segregation of RSPCA Approved birds

b. hourly checks of the birds

c. lairage temperature and humidity

d. schedule of processing.

Shackling — Electrical stunning systems

10.8 Shackling of birds must occur in a purpose built area with a maximum light level of 5 lux.

10.9 Handling and shackling technique must reduce the incidence of wing flapping.

10.10 Shackling crews must place birds' legs in the shackles firmly but gently.

10.11 From 1 January 2015, a breast comforter must be installed from the end of the shackling point to the stunner and be operating in a manner that does not cause injury to birds.

10.12 Transport modules must be checked at the end of the batch to ensure that no birds have been left behind.

10.13 The shackling area must be checked at the end of the batch to ensure that no birds have been left behind.

10.14 Dead or culled birds must be collected in a bin placed in the unloading and shackling areas and then disposed of hygienically.

10.15 Damaged crates or module drawers and frames must be removed for disposal or repair.

Stunning

10.16 Birds must be stunned prior to slaughter.

Stunning — Electrical stunning systems

10.17 Birds must not be suspended from the shackling line for more than 90 seconds before they are stunned.

10.18 Equipment and procedures for stunning must ensure that birds are immediately rendered unconscious without receiving pre-stun shocks.

10.19 Where the stun has not been effective:

a. affected birds must be cut and bled out to ensure they are dead prior to entering the scalder

b. equipment must be checked and adjusted to correct the fault in the system.

Stunning — Controlled atmosphere systems

10.20 The module unloader must be checked at the end of each batch of birds to ensure no birds have fallen to the floor or are trapped in the loader unit. Fallen or trapped birds must be either placed into the gas stunning unit's entry point or, if injured, immediately euthanased.

10.21 Birds must not be subjected to the gas mixture until the correct concentration has been reached.

10.22 Gas stunning units must have windows or other surveillance to allow observation of the birds to verify that the gas mixture is rendering birds insensible with minimal distress.

10.23 When exiting the gas stunning unit, birds must be checked to ensure they are unconscious. Conscious birds must be promptly placed back into the gas stunning unit entry point and the gas concentration verified to ensure adequate levels to induce unconsciousness are maintained.

10.24 The shackling console outside the gas stunning unit must be constructed or provided with sufficient shacklers to prevent the birds spilling to the floor.

10.25 Should the controlled atmosphere system fail, birds present in the gas stunning unit must be removed and safely contained until the fault in the system has been corrected.

Bleeding out

10.26 Bleeding out must commence prior to birds regaining consciousness.

10.27 Birds must be checked to ensure that they have been cut effectively to bleed out and are dead prior to entering the scalder.

10.28 Manual cutting systems using one knife-hand must at all times have at least one back-up knife-hand checking all birds.

10.29 Automated cutting systems must at all times have at least one back-up knife-hand checking all birds.

10.30 Where bleeding out has not been effective:

a. affected birds must be euthanased prior to entering the scalder

b. the knife-hand(s) and/or automated equipment must be checked to ensure correct operation.

Bird injury and damage records

10.31 Recording of the following must be made at processing of RSPCA birds:

For all birds:

a. total number of red birds.

For a sample of 100 birds from each batch processed:

b. percentage of birds that have not been effectively stunned

c. percentage of birds requiring a back-up cut

d. percentage of birds with foot pad lesions

e. percentage of birds with hock burns

f. percentage of birds with broken and dislocated wings

g. percentage of birds with breast lesions (blisters or buttons).

Traceability

10.32 Supporting documentation and evidence of physical separation of RSPCA Approved bird carcases from other birds must be demonstrated.

END OF STANDARDS

RSPCA

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