


RSPCA welfare standards for turkeys – new shackling standards

The below standards must be read in conjunction with the RSPCA welfare standards for turkeys (dated March 2010). These are new standards regarding the live shackling of turkeys.

Slaughter/killing


Shackling


S 5.0 * With the exception of the specific circumstances outlined in standard S 5.0.1, the shackling of conscious birds must be prohibited at the earliest opportunity and, in any case, by 1st January 2016 at the very latest.

*  **Processors are strongly encouraged to adopt systems that do not involve the shackling of conscious birds as soon as possible.**

S 5.0.1 * From 1st January 2016, the shackling of conscious birds will only be permitted:

- a) Where:
- i) birds are slaughtered/killed on the farm where they were reared for finishing, and
 - ii) birds are not subjected to any transport by vehicle to the place of slaughter/killing, and
 - iii) the only commercially/practically viable option available is to slaughter/kill the birds using a system that requires shackling, and
 - iv) written permission has been sought from and granted by the RSPCA Farm Animals Department
- b) In the event of an emergency and when the most humane and only available alternative is to slaughter/kill the birds using a system that requires shackling.

*  **With respect to S 5.0.1 a), the RSPCA will phase out inverted shackling of conscious birds as soon as a commercially viable and more humane alternative method of slaughter/killing is available and suitable for use on-farm.**

*  **For the purposes of S 5.0.1 b), emergency situations include: culling in the event of notifiable disease outbreaks; and, as a 'back-up' in the event of failure of the usual, permitted killing/slaughter system.**

New RSPCA welfare standards requiring the installation of CCTV in abattoirs processing poultry

These standards and information boxes apply to all abattoirs on the Freedom Food scheme processing poultry. They must be read in conjunction with the RSPCA welfare standards for:


Laying hens and pullets (dated March 2008)

Ducks (dated April 2009)

Turkeys (dated March 2010)

A new version of the RSPCA welfare standards for chickens (dated April 2011) has been published, including these new standards and information boxes (page 52, S 3.1 to S 3.5).

* Closed Circuit Television (CCTV)

*  **The use of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) in areas where live animals are present can assist those responsible for monitoring and enforcing animal welfare within the abattoir in ensuring that standards are maintained. It is strongly recommended that CCTV footage is also used for in-house training programmes and to provide an additional level of security at the abattoir.**

S(TV) 1.1* By 1st November 2011, a functional CCTV system must be installed and operational to monitor animals undergoing the following processes at the abattoir (as applicable):

- a) unloading from vehicles into the lairage
- b) shackling, including the shackling of birds following gas killing
- c) stunning, including exiting the electrical waterbath
- d) neck cutting
- e) entering a Controlled Atmosphere System (CAS).


S(TV) 1.2* CCTV cameras must be positioned to ensure a clear view of the processes being monitored is achieved at all times.

S(TV) 1.3* It must be possible to observe clearly the view from each camera at all times via one or more monitors.

S(TV) 1.4* CCTV footage must be recorded at all times where animals are undergoing any of the processes listed under standard S(TV) 1.1.

S(TV) 1.5* The recorded CCTV footage must be:

- a) retained by the abattoir for a period of at least three months, and
- b) available for viewing on site by Freedom Food field staff and RSPCA Farm Animals Department staff on request.

*  **Where possible it may be useful for managers to retain CCTV footage for longer than the three months specified in standard S(TV) 1.5, for their own monitoring and security purposes.**



**RSPCA welfare
standards for**

turkeys

March 2010



Certification Mark

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Introduction

The '*RSPCA welfare standards for turkeys*' are used to provide the only RSPCA-approved scheme for the rearing, handling, transport and slaughter of turkeys. They take account of legislation, government welfare codes, scientific research, veterinary advice, recommendations of the Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC) and the practical experience of the farming industry.

The standards are based upon the 'Five Freedoms' as defined by FAWC (hence the name 'Freedom Food' - see page iv). Although these 'freedoms' define ideal states, they provide a comprehensive framework for the assessment of animal welfare on farm, in transit and at the place of slaughter, as well as representing an important element of farm assurance requirements.

- ▶ 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 or 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 care which avoid mental suffering.

These freedoms will be better provided for if those who have care of livestock practise:

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

Guide to the use of the RSPCA welfare standards

- (i) At the head of each section the broad objectives of the welfare standards are described.
- (ii) The numbered requirements are the standards, all of which must be complied with.
- (iii) Boxed sections (indicated by ⓘ) give additional advice or may highlight areas where the standards will be reviewed in the future.
- (iv) It is assumed that all relevant legislation regarding farm animal husbandry and welfare on-farm, during transport, and at the abattoir, will be fully implemented in addition to the RSPCA welfare standards.
- (v) **Farmers are required by law to have a thorough knowledge of the '*Defra Code of Recommendations for the Welfare of Livestock: Turkeys*'.**

Freedom Food Ltd

Freedom Food is a wholly owned subsidiary of the RSPCA, formed to implement these standards. Upon satisfactory inspection farmers, hauliers, slaughterers, processors and retailers may subscribe to the scheme and use the Freedom Food trademark. All participants are regularly assessed by Freedom Food Ltd. A charge is levied to cover inspection, administration and marketing costs. Participants are also randomly monitored by members of the RSPCA Farm Animals Department, free of charge.

It is the intention of Freedom Food Ltd to establish sister, franchise organisations in other countries working to the RSPCA welfare standards and therefore, in time, establish a common and consistent message for consumers around the world.


Freedom Food Ltd is non-profit making. Any surplus income will be used to fund research into farm animal welfare.

Poult sourcing

- P 1.1 * Poults must:
- a) be hatched according to the '*RSPCA welfare standards for hatcheries*'
 - b) be sourced from a Freedom Food-approved hatchery

Specific provisions for turkey poults

- P 2.1 * For producers implementing brood and move operations, birds must be moved to their finishing/rearing accommodation by 8 weeks of age.
- P 2.2 Buildings must be fully prepared, ready to receive poults, in sufficient time to allow the environment to meet their thermal requirements.
- P 2.3 * Up to the first 10 days of life, the number of feeders and drinkers placed, stocking density, air quality parameters and ventilation rates must be at least to the levels specified within the breeding company's published management guidelines.

*  **After the first 10 days of life, the above parameters must be implemented according to the levels specified by the '*RSPCA welfare standards for turkeys*'.**

- P 2.4 During unloading and placement, poults must be handled carefully.
- P 2.5 Care must be taken to avoid heat and cold stress in poults.
- P 2.6 Particular care must be taken in the placement and maintenance of brooder heaters to ensure against risk of fire and emission of noxious gasses, for example carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide.
- P 2.7 The brooder must be suspended above the centre of the surround.
- P 2.8 The height of the brooder must be adjustable to ensure that the temperature at the level of the litter is maintained at the optimum level.
- P 2.9 Brooder surrounds and feeding and watering equipment within the surround must be designed and constructed such that poults can move freely towards or away from the brooder.
- P 2.10 Throughout the brooding period the behaviour of the poults must be closely monitored and the brooders adjusted accordingly.
- P 2.11 The environment for brooding poults must be lit at a minimum of 25 lux for the first few days.
- P 2.12 Supplementary lighting must be hung next to the brooder for the first few days after placement to attract poults to the heat source and provide extra illumination of feeders and drinkers.
- P 2.13 Care must be taken to ensure that feeders do not become hot, especially when metal feeders are used.

Poults

- P 2.14 Supplementary feed trays and small water containers must be provided, in addition to the permanent feeders and drinkers, at the start of brooding.
- P 2.15 Feeders and drinkers must be kept clean and free from litter.

Food and water

Livestock must have freedom from hunger, thirst and malnutrition by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and promote a positive state of well-being. Feed and water must be distributed in such a way that livestock can eat and drink without undue competition.

Food

- FW 1.1 All units must have a written feeding programme to ensure that turkeys are fed a wholesome diet which:
- a) is appropriate to their species
 - b) is appropriate to their age
 - c) is fed to them in sufficient quantity to maintain them in good health
 - d) satisfies their nutritional needs.
- FW 1.2 Turkeys must have access to nutritious food *ad libitum* each day, except when required by the attending veterinary surgeon.
- FW 1.3 Producers must have a written record of the nutrient content of the feed, as declared by the feed compounder.
- FW 1.4 No feedstuffs containing mammalian or avian derived protein are permitted.
- FW 1.5 The use of in-feed growth promoters is prohibited.
- FW 1.6 In-feed antibiotics may only be given for therapeutic reasons under the direction of the attending veterinary surgeon.
- FW 1.7 All foodstuffs must be safely and hygienically stored, transported, and delivered to prevent infestation, contamination, or wetting.
- FW 1.7.1* Managers must be familiar with the contents of the Defra '*Code of Practice for the Control of Salmonella during Production, Storage and Transport of Compound Feeds, Premixtures, Feed Materials and Feed Additives*' (PB 13303, 2009 Defra).
- FW 1.8 Food must not be allowed to remain in a contaminated or stale condition.
- FW 1.9 Where troughs are used, there must be a minimum of 30mm feeding space per bird, which may need to be increased depending on lighting programmes.
- FW 1.10 Where circular pan feeders are used, these must be:
- a) designed and manufactured for use with turkeys
 - b) provided in accordance with the manufacturer's recommended feeding space specifications.
- FW 1.11 Track feeders/feeder chains are prohibited.
- FW 1.12 The siting of feeders must be such that:
- a) all birds have ready access to food without undue competition
 - b) increased activity is encouraged in the birds.

Food and water

FW 1.13 Where used, wire over feeders must not be electrified.



Where used, wire over feeders should be covered with plastic tubing to help discourage birds from attempting to perch on it.

Water

FW 2.1 Turkeys must have continuous access to an adequate supply of clean, fresh drinking water at all times, except when required by the attending veterinary surgeon.

FW 2.2 Water must not be allowed to remain in a contaminated or stale condition.

FW 2.3 Provision must be made for supplying water in freezing conditions.

FW 2.4 The minimum number of drinkers which must be provided are as follows:

Bell 1 per 100 turkeys

Nipple 1 per 10 turkeys

Cup 1 per 28 turkeys

FW 2.5 There must be a minimum of 2 drinkers available to a flock.

FW 2.6 All drinkers must be in working order, providing access at all times to clean, fresh water.

FW 2.7 Header tanks must be covered at all times.

FW 2.8 Drinkers must be of a design that reduces water wastage.

FW 2.9 In order to reduce water spillage and prevent consequent problems with litter management, drinkers must:

a) be placed at an optimum height for the size and age of the birds

b) be of an appropriate design.

FW 2.10 A water storage tank (with fitted lid) must be installed on-site which is capable of providing water to the flock of all ages for a period of at least 24 hours when mains water supply is cut off.

FW 2.11 The siting of drinkers must be such that all birds have ready access to water without undue competition.

FW 2.12 The siting of drinkers must be such that increased activity is encouraged in the birds.

FW 2.13 Where used, wire over drinkers must not be electrified.



Where used, wire over drinkers should be covered with plastic tubing to help discourage birds from attempting to perch on it.

FW 2.14 * Water meters must be connected to all the birds' drinking systems to monitor water consumption for each house.


Environment

The environment in which livestock are kept must take into account their welfare needs and be designed to protect them from physical and thermal discomfort, fear and distress, and allow them to perform their natural behaviour.

- E 1.1 Where management systems, designs or layout of facilities not covered in the RSPCA welfare standards are being employed or considered, these must be referred to, and discussed with, the RSPCA Farm Animals Department before they can be considered for certification.


Buildings

- E 2.0 * All turkeys must be provided with accommodation.
- E 2.0.1 * Buildings must be designed, erected and maintained so as to be suitable for local weather conditions and withstand expected seasonal extremes of weather.
- E 2.1 New housing, or housing undergoing major structural change, must be designed to allow easy removal and minimal carrying and handling of birds during depopulation.
- E 2.2 For all accommodation, a notice containing a checklist of the key points relating to welfare (see E 2.3) must be prominently displayed at, or near, the entrance to each building and be amended accordingly.
- E 2.3 The checklist to satisfy E 2.2 must include:
- a) total floor area available to the birds
 - b) total number of birds
 - c) maximum number of birds permitted within the house
 - d) stocking density
 - e) total number of drinkers and feeders
 - f) target air quality parameters
 - g) lighting levels and regimes
 - h) emergency procedures, i.e. actions in the case of fire, flood, failure of automatic equipment, and when temperatures move outside acceptable limits.
- E 2.4 There must be nothing in the turkeys' environment that is likely to cause unnecessary injury or distress to the birds.

*  **Environmental factors which should be considered in relation to E 2.4 include noise, atmospheric pollution, adverse weather conditions, predators and, in the case of free range systems, soil conditions.**

- E 2.5 Except where preservatives with an insecticidal role are used, turkeys must not come into contact with toxic fumes or surfaces, for example from paints, wood preservatives or disinfectants.

- E 2.6 All electrical installations at mains voltage must be:
- a) inaccessible to the turkeys
 - b) well insulated
 - c) safeguarded from rodents
 - d) properly earthed
 - * e) tested at least annually by a qualified or competent person

*  **Electrical installations have to be tested every 3 years as part of the Periodic Inspection Report, in order to meet legal requirements relating to electrical safety. However, at least once a year, the 'trip switch' should be tested to ensure it is in correct working order.**

- E 2.7 Housing and equipment must be designed so that all turkeys can be clearly seen.
- E 2.8 Where new accommodation is being built, or new equipment installed, that has not previously been assessed, managers must inform the Freedom Food Assessor or RSPCA Farm Livestock Officer.
- E 2.9 Managers must:
- a) be familiar with the contents of the '*Code of practice for using plant protection products*' (Defra, 2006, PB 11090)
 - b) implement the recommendations as appropriate.

Floor and litter

- E 3.1 Turkey house flooring must allow for effective cleansing and disinfection, preventing significant build up of parasites and other pathogens.

 **Where possible, the house floor should be concrete that is well maintained.**

- E 3.2 Buildings and equipment must be thoroughly cleansed and disinfected after each flock and/or before the placement of new birds.
- E 3.3 The floor of all houses must be completely covered in litter.
- E 3.3.1 The litter must:
- a) be of a suitable material and particle size
 - b) be managed to maintain it in a dry, friable condition
 - c) be of a sufficient depth for dilution of faeces
 - d) allow birds to dust bathe
 - e) be topped up daily, if necessary, with fresh litter
 - f) be managed hygienically.
- E 3.4 Litter must be maintained at a minimum depth of 5cm.
- E 3.5 Turkeys must have access to litter at all times.
- E 3.6 Litter that is wet or otherwise contaminated must not be introduced into turkey housing.

Environment

E 3.7 Litter must not be allowed to become wet, infested with mites or otherwise harmfully contaminated.

E 3.8 Wet litter must be replaced immediately.

i It is a legal requirement to keep the litter in a well-maintained state.

E 3.9 Stock-keepers must:

- a) be aware of the welfare problems associated with poor litter management e.g. burnt hocks, foot pad lesions and breast blemishes
- b) understand the factors which affect litter condition i.e. moisture, nitrogen content and greasy capped litter.

i Breast blisters and lesions to the foot pad (i.e. foot pad dermatitis or foot pad burn) can be caused by contact with litter which is both wet and contains a high level of ammonia from faeces. Severe foot pad lesions can result in lameness, act as a gateway for bacterial infection and cause pain. No bird should have such lesions.

i Where possible, stock-keepers should have access to a copy of the Defra/MAFF booklet, 'Poultry Litter Management' (PB 1739, 1994), be familiar with its content and adopt its recommendations.

Lighting

E 4.1 The lighting system in the turkey house must provide in each period of 24 hours:

- a) a minimum period of 8 hours continuous light, by the provision of either artificial light, which must take place during the natural light period, or access to natural daylight
- b) a minimum period of 8 hours continuous darkness up to the time of catching, which must take place during the natural dark period, except:
 1. where the birds are kept under natural lighting conditions and the natural period of darkness is shorter
 2. during the first 3 days of rearing.

E 4.2 The use of intermittent lighting patterns to meet the minimum number of hours of darkness is not permitted, with the exception of the first 36 hours after placement.

E 4.3 Lighting patterns in all houses must be recorded.

i Where possible, the lighting pattern should be recorded automatically.

E 4.4 Daytime lighting levels must allow birds to see without difficulty and to be properly inspected.

- E 4.5 The lighting system in the building must give an average illumination of at least 20 lux over at least half the floor area, which includes the feeders and drinkers.

i Practical experience has shown that there are benefits to providing turkeys with a variable lighting level throughout the house. Darker areas provide the opportunity to rest whilst brighter lit areas allow birds to perform more active behaviours. Spatially variable lighting has also been reported to help reduce the incidence of feather pecking.

- E 4.6 No area must be lit at less than 6 lux.

i Scientific studies have demonstrated that turkeys actively avoid very low lighting levels, around 2 lux, and prefer more brightly lit conditions, especially during the first few weeks of life.

Research on turkey vision has identified that damage to the eyes occurs when birds are kept under either very dimly lit conditions and/or when they are exposed to prolonged lighting. This can lead to a condition known as 'buphthalmia', which can result in temporary or even permanent blindness.

There is evidence that such problems can arise when birds are kept at lighting levels as low as 2 to 5 lux, and even at 10 lux changes to the eye have been recorded. For this reason, the RSPCA does not permit the use of very low lighting levels for the turkey's environment, although the provision of shaded areas is permitted for resting. However, light levels should be adopted which are as bright as practicable.

- E 4.7 The lighting level (illuminance) must be measured at bird head height.

- E 4.8 To allow the turkeys to prepare for daytime and darkness, artificial lights must be switched on and off:
- a) in a stepped or gradual manner
 - b) over a period of at least 30 minutes.

- E 4.9 Where turkeys are housed indoors, adequate lighting, whether fixed or portable, must be available to enable them to be thoroughly inspected at any time.

i The inclusion of ultra violet (UV) light can have beneficial effects on turkey health, for example, by improving bone strength (also see E 8.8). The RSPCA recommends that this is provided where turkeys do not have access to natural daylight. Where this is provided, a uniform distribution should be achieved, as patches of light could become a focus for pecking behaviour. It should also be noted that glass windows can filter out UV light and, therefore, remove its beneficial effects.

* Provision of natural daylight

* **i** From 1st January 2012 it will be a requirement for natural daylight to be provided in all systems. The following standards are specific to any system where natural daylight is provided, before and after this date.

E 5.1 * If birds will be occupying the house on or after 1st January 2012 then provisions must have been made to provide natural daylight prior to the placement of the flock.

* **i** Commercially employed illuminance and colour balance (from artificial light sources) may impose a degree of visual sensory deprivation in turkeys – inhibiting foraging, exploration and social behaviours. Not allowing birds to use their full range of visual abilities is likely to have negative consequences on their behaviour and welfare.

The introduction of natural light into turkey houses is likely to be beneficial to bird welfare by, for example, increasing activity and enriching the birds environment and providing a range of illuminance levels in different areas within the house, which changes throughout the day. The light entering the house is also spectrally different to artificial sources, providing further variation.

Research has shown that turkeys demonstrate a greater preference to spend longer periods of time in brighter lit environments (20 and 200 lux versus 1 and 6 lux).

E 5.2 * Birds must be exposed to natural daylight by 35 days of age at the latest.

* **i** Birds should be exposed to natural daylight as early as possible. Natural daylight could be introduced gradually over the first 35 days of life so that birds are exposed to the full natural daylight provisions by day 35.

E 5.3 * Natural light must penetrate all areas of the house.

E 5.4 * Birds must be exposed to the natural dawn and dusk periods.

E 5.5 * The light openings in the house must correspond to at least 3% of the total floor area of the house.

E 5.6 * At least 90% of all the light openings required to achieve E 5.5 must be no smaller than 0.56m² (e.g. 0.75 x 0.75m or 1.0 x 0.56m).

* **i** It is acknowledged that it may not be possible to install light openings of a minimum of 0.56m² in all areas of the house to achieve E 5.5. Therefore, where this is the case, up to 10% of the light openings required to achieve E 5.5 are permitted to be smaller than 0.56m².

E 5.7 * Natural daylight must be provided at all times during the natural daylight period through all the required openings to achieve E 5.5.

- E 5.8 * It must be possible to readily control the amount of natural daylight entering the building to the extent that darkness can be achieved.

* **i** Installing, for example, shutters can help control the amount of light entering through the light opening. Shutters are especially important to control the ingress of direct sunlight, which can increase the risk of heat stress. The shutters can be used to block daylight entering the house, which is useful during catching and also at night where events outside the house could cause birds to panic. To have the greatest amount of control over the light entering the house it should be possible to open/close the shutters by varying degrees.

- E 5.9 * The entry of natural light into the building must not be obstructed.

* **i** For example, E 5.9 applies to the positioning of items within the building. It does not apply to methods used for controlling the amount of light entering through the light opening, as stated in E 5.8, which are being used in accordance with the RSPCA welfare standards.

- E 5.10 * In each 24 hour period:

- a) no area must be lit at less than 20 lux for at least a 12 hour continuous period
- b) outside the 12 hour light period, but not during the dark period, no area must be lit at less than 6 lux
- c) during the natural dark period, there must be a minimum period of 8 hours continuous darkness, except for birds up to 3 days of age.

* **i** On dark days, it is acceptable to use artificial lighting to ensure the 20 lux level is achieved.

- E 5.11 * When used outside the natural daylight period, for example, to extend the natural daylight period, artificial lights must be switched on and off:

- a) in a stepped or gradual manner
- b) over a period of at least 30 minutes.

- E 5.12 * Where there are areas of different light intensity within the house, there must be a gradual change in light intensity between each area.

- E 5.13 * There must be no patches of bright light on the floor of the house.

* **i** Bird activity may be greater in more illuminated areas, which can adversely affect litter quality. Streams of bright light could also encourage injurious pecking, especially during the first few weeks of the bird's life.

* **i** Where it is possible that direct sunlight could enter through a light opening, it may be beneficial to use polycarbonate (rather than glass) windows, as they are better at diffusing light and can help avoid patches/streams of direct sunlight entering the building. Alternatively, horizontally mounted shutters, positioned above the windows, which can be adjusted up and down, can be used to block direct sunlight whilst still allowing natural daylight to enter the shed.

- E 5.14 * Where used, windows must be properly sealed to maintain correct airflow within the house and avoid draughts.

* **i** The use of transparent windows that allow birds to see out of the building may be beneficial by providing an additional level of enrichment to their environment. Experience has also shown that exposing birds to events occurring outside the house at an early stage of their lives allows them to develop recognition and familiarity and therefore reduce their fearfulness towards them.

- E 5.15 * Measures must be taken to:
- a) prevent windows from breaking
 - b) prevent birds coming into contact with broken glass.

* **i** E 5.15 could be achieved by, for example:

- i) erecting barriers, such as wire mesh
- ii) covering the window with a transparent self adhesive vinyl film
- iii) selecting a window material that is more resistant to breaking, such as Perspex.

Options i) and ii) will also fulfil E 5.15 b). However, where option i) is selected, installing plastic guttering under the window or the use of fine netting over the window that will capture broken glass is acceptable.

- E 5.16 * Where glass is used, this must be safety/toughened glass.

* **i** When installing windows, the additional information and advice below should be taken into account:

Window material

Those windows that help prevent condensation should be selected, e.g. double-glazed windows. Transparent windows will allow birds to see out of the building, further enriching their environment.

Positioning of windows

Where possible, windows should be installed down both sides of a house. This allows greater control over the light entering the house. For example, if the shutters on one side of the house have to be closed to block out direct sunlight then daylight can still enter the house through the windows on the opposite side.

Thermal environment

The provision of natural daylight – particularly via windows - can affect environmental temperature within the house. Therefore it is important to consider the capacity of the ventilation system and the positioning of the ventilation inlets so that good ventilation and correct house temperature can be achieved. In the event of excessive heat, shutters can be used to block out sunlight. The shutters, especially if insulated, can also help keep the building warm during cold weather, which is especially important during the brooding phase. It is also important to ensure that windows are properly sealed, so correct air flow within the house can be maintained and draughts avoided.

Stocking density

- E 6.1 The maximum stocking density must:
- be calculated on the weight of birds/m² of available floor space
 - never exceed 25kg/m².

i Stocking density should be set at a level which is appropriate to the design of the building, its locality, and must take account of the ventilation capacity of the building in order to maintain adequate temperatures to avoid heat stress (also see M 1.4).

- E 6.2 * The number of birds placed in a building must be no more than the number required to rear all the birds to the maximum stocking density once, which is to be at depopulation, hence thinning is not permitted.

* **i** Thinning is characterised by placing additional birds into a building so that the maximum stocking density can be reached on one or more occasions prior to final depopulation (the removal of all birds from the building). During the rearing period, a proportion of the birds are removed from the building at planned times to ensure the maximum stocking density is not exceeded. Therefore, thinning is defined as the planned removal of a proportion of birds, on one or more occasions, from a building so as not to exceed the required maximum stocking density.

As an example, as the maximum stocking density is 25kg/m², if you intend to rear the birds to a maximum weight of 5kg at depopulation, then no more than 5 birds/m² can be placed in the building (i.e. 25 / 5 = 5).

- E 6.3 Records of the following must be kept:
- number of birds placed in each house
 - daily mortality
 - number culled (including reason for culling)
 - average weight of birds removed for slaughter.

Air quality and thermal environment

- E 7.1 Ventilation systems, natural or forced, must be designed to maintain air quality.
- E 7.2 Provision must be made to ensure that aerial contaminants do not reach a level at which they are noticeably unpleasant to a human observer.

i Air quality parameters should be maintained, under all foreseeable climatic conditions, below the following levels at bird head height:

Ammonia	5ppm
Carbon dioxide	5000ppm
Relative humidity	50 to 70%
Inhalable dust	10mg/m³
Carbon monoxide	50ppm

Where practically feasible, air quality parameters, i.e. ammonia, carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, etc. should be measured and recorded on a weekly basis. Where a level higher than that specified within the RSPCA welfare standards is recorded, daily recordings should be made until an acceptable level is achieved and maintained.

Where possible, these levels should be automatically recorded. Where automatic recording is not possible, producers should monitor and record air quality on a daily basis.

- E 7.3 Provision must be made to ensure that turkeys have access to a thermally comfortable environment at all times so that heat/cold stress does not occur.

i The number, size and capacity of the fans are an important consideration when determining ventilation rate.

A minimum ventilation rate of $1.6 \times 10^{-4} \text{ m}^3/\text{s}$ per $\text{kg}^{0.75}$ liveweight is recommended. The maximum ventilation capacity should be sufficient to limit a maximum temperature lift of 3°C .

- E 7.4 Daily measurements of the maximum and minimum temperatures must be recorded from the centre of the shed and at either end, at bird height.
- E 7.5 Stock-keepers must:
- have access to a copy of the Defra booklet, '*Heat Stress in Poultry - Solving the problem*' (PB 10543, 2005)
 - be familiar with its content
 - adopt its recommendations.

Environmental enrichment

i Turkeys are naturally inquisitive and explore their environment by pecking to investigate objects. The provision of effective and suitable forms of environmental enrichment can encourage increased activity levels and has been shown to reduce pecking directed towards other birds and promote good health.

E 8.1 * For every 500 birds the following provisions must be provided as a minimum:

- a) 1 round (i.e. large) or 2 rectangular (i.e. small) straw bale/s
- b) 2 metres of perch space (in addition to straw bales)
- c) 2 lengths of rope.

i Stock-keepers are encouraged to use additional enrichment items to encourage greater bird activity and reduce/avoid injurious pecking. For example, the RSPCA recommends the inclusion of brassicas (e.g. cabbage, cauliflower, sprouts and broccoli) and the hanging of CDs, empty plastic drinking bottles and other similar items. There should be sufficient opportunity for all birds to explore these forms of enrichment.

* **i** It may be beneficial to the birds to provide perches of varying widths to cater for birds of different sizes and allow the bird to vary where its body weight is positioned on its foot.

* **i** Allowing birds to perch on top of drinker or feeder lines will not satisfy standard E 8.1. Birds perching on drinker lines could:

- a) contaminate drinking water with faecal material and/or dirt from their feet
- b) restrict other birds from accessing the drinkers
- c) defecate on birds that are drinking

Crates and straw bales will not count towards the perching space requirement

E 8.2 Perches must be appropriate to the size and weight of the birds.

* **i** As a guide, practical experience has shown that:

- a) a suitable perch height can range from approximately 20 to 150cm, but should be adjusted according to the size and breed of the turkeys being reared
- b) turkeys prefer a 5 x 7.5cm (height x width) timber perch with rounded edges
- c) turkeys should be provided with approximately 40cm of perch space per bird.
- d) approximately 40% of birds can choose to perch at any one time, which is important for calculating the total amount of perching space to provide to a flock.

Where applicable, sufficient space should be provided to allow birds to perch adjacent to each other.

i It is recommended that the lengths of rope provided are approximately 30cm long and knotted near each end to prevent the entire rope from fraying. Rope could also be suspended at turkey head height and knotted at the end.

E 8.3 * Perches must:

- a) be designed to avoid damage to any region of the bird
- b) support the whole of the bird's foot
- c) allow the bird to curl its toes around it to allow the bird to express its normal perching behaviour
- d) be deep enough so that the turkey cannot puncture its own footpad by curling its toenails around the bottom
- e) be elevated.

E 8.4 * Where perches are aligned adjacent to each other, there must be a sufficient gap between perches to allow the turkey to grip the perch without risk of trapping its feet.

E 8.5 Perches must be accessible and easily seen by the birds.

i It is advised that perches be made visible by, for example, painting them white or using brightly coloured adhesive strips, to help birds negotiate them during the dark period. To encourage use, the perches could be placed in the darker areas of the shed.

E 8.6 All environmental enrichment provisions must be:

- a) made available by 14 days of age at the latest
- b) maintained/replaced throughout the rearing period as necessary.

i E 8.6 applies especially to straw bales, which can be dismantled by the birds very quickly.

E 8.7 * Turkeys must be provided with visual barriers.

* **i** Visual barriers are items, such as straw bales and free-standing feeders, which can be used by the birds to seek a degree of refuge and rest from other birds. Research has shown that, in addition to other enrichment items, injuries caused by feather pecking can be reduced by providing four free-standing plywood boards (measuring 120 x 30cm (length x height)) for each 20m² of floor space, with a 25cm length of metal chain attached 5cm from the top in the middle of the board as a pecking attraction.

- E 8.8 * If injurious pecking is known to be a problem on the farm, e.g. from experience with the previous or current flock/s, then:
- a) the entire building must be lit with UV light, and
 - b) the number of enrichment items required under E 8.1 must be increased by at least 25% until the problem is under control.

* **i** **Natural daylight provides a source of UV light (e.g. as in a poll barn system). However, windows can filter out much of the UV light in natural daylight. Therefore, where birds are not exposed to UV light within the building from a natural source, UV light can be provided using artificial sources, i.e. blacklight blue fluorescent tubes.**

* **i** **Research has shown that the provision of UV lighting from an artificial source (Phillips TL D, 36W/08 blacklight blue lamps), in addition to other enrichment items, can help reduce the incidence of injuries caused by feather pecking.**

It has also been shown that turkeys prefer UV enriched environments, as UV light is thought to allow turkeys to pick up on visual cues, which may be important for the performance of a range of visually mediated behaviours and for recognition of other flock members.

Climate change and animal welfare

* **i** **The issues relating to climate change have the potential to significantly affect the welfare of farm animals. The RSPCA believes that it is now appropriate to react to, think ahead, and consider what can reasonably be done to mitigate, any negative effects that adverse weather conditions may have/be having on the welfare of farm animals now, and in the future.**


Examples of important considerations include:

- **The need to ensure that the farm buildings can withstand more severe weather conditions will become more necessary.**
- **Ensuring that ventilation systems are working efficiently will be even more important, particularly as poultry are vulnerable to adverse temperature changes.**
- **There may be reduced water availability for drinking, so ensuring that drinking water systems are working efficiently will be even more important.**


The range

The RSPCA believes that free-range conditions can offer considerable benefits to bird welfare, provided the range area is well-managed and the birds are offered suitable protection against inclement weather and predators. Where range is provided, the following standards must be met in addition to all other relevant standards in other sections of this document.


- R 1.1 For free-range systems, managers must be compliant with the EU Poultrymeat Marketing Standards Commission Regulation (EC) No 543/2008 with regard to stocking densities, access to range and minimum age at slaughter.
- R 1.2 Free-range turkeys must have continuous daytime access to the range for a minimum of 8 hours each day except when the natural daylight period is less.
- R 1.3 All popholes must be kept open to satisfy R 1.2, except when this is precluded by adverse weather conditions or veterinary advice.
- R 1.4 The outdoor area in free-range systems must:
- be designed and managed in ways which ensure that the area around the house does not become poached
 - consist of pasture mainly covered by living vegetation.

*  **Commercial arable crops are not regarded as acceptable vegetation and will be excluded from calculations for range stocking density.**

- R 1.5 * If birds have access to any commercial arable crop then:
- the crop must only be planted outside the perimeter of the range, to allow birds uninterrupted access to all parts of the range,
 - the crop must not be detrimental to bird welfare
 - birds must not be exposed to any crop management practice that may cause them harm, e.g. spraying, pesticide use, sowing, cropping etc.
- R 1.6 * Popholes must:
- be evenly distributed along the entire length of the building
 - ensure birds have ready, unhindered access to the range.

*  **It is strongly recommended that where there is a step at the base of the pophole, such as a concrete plinth, it should be no higher than 10cm. If it is higher than 10cm, ramps should be provided which run along the entire length of the pophole.**

- R 1.7 * Each pophole must be a minimum of 1m high and 1.5m wide to allow the passage of more than one turkey at any one time.

*  **As a build-up of the litter may reduce the pophole space available to the birds over time, the pophole height will only be measured according to the usable space available to the birds.**

R 1.8 * There must be a minimum of 2 popholes per building.

i There is insufficient information on the optimum size and number of popholes that should be provided to ensure birds are able to access the range freely and, at the same time, maintain a satisfactory environment within the house. These standards will be reviewed as information becomes available and the RSPCA would welcome the views of turkey producers on this issue.

i It is strongly recommended that more than the minimum number of popholes are installed to allow for adjustment during unfavourable weather conditions. For example, to remain compliant with the requirements on a windy day, only popholes on the leeward side may need to be opened if there are a sufficient number installed.

R 1.9 * Turkeys must have a clear view of the range from within the building when adopting a normal standing position at the pophole.

R 1.10 Free-range turkeys must have access to a well-drained area for resting whilst outside the building.

R 1.11 Mobile houses must be moved with sufficient regularity to avoid fowl sick and continuous muddy conditions.

R 1.12 In summer conditions, free-range turkeys must have access to shaded areas, of sufficient size such that they do not have to crowd together (thereby risking further heat stress).

R 1.13 * A minimum area of overhead shade and shelter (natural, artificial or a combination of both) of 10m² per 1,000 turkeys must be provided at all times.

* **i** Free-range turkeys should have access to areas of shelter not only to offer cover from adverse weather conditions but also offer regions of variation and enrichment. The provision of natural shade and shelter has been shown to significantly reduce the incidence of feather pecking in commercial free-range laying hens. Similar benefits may be expected for turkeys. Natural shelter may include the planting of trees and shrubs or semi-permanent vegetation that can easily be established and removed, such as artichoke and kale. Artificial shelter could include the use of sun parasols, straw bales and trailers.

* **i** Some turkeys may need more shade and shelter in the summer months to minimise the risk of heat stress and crowding in shaded areas, as well as to further encourage ranging behaviour. Shelter provision can be calculated on the basis of the formula: $m^2 = ((N \times 0.3)W)/D$ where N is the number of birds in the flock, W is the expected average bird live weight at depopulation and D is the maximum stocking density recommended by Defra. For example, 500 birds reared to 7kg would be stocked at 41.7kg/m² according to Defra and therefore require a minimum total shelter area of 25m² (i.e. $m^2 = ((500 \times 0.3)7)/41.7$). This could take the form of 2 x 12.5m² areas, for example.

- * **i** Calculations of the overhead shade/shelter area will be based on the amount of shade provided by the object/facility.

Vegetation that does not provide overhead shade/shelter, and therefore cannot be included in the calculation of 10m² per 1,000 turkeys, includes:

- a) immature trees that have yet to produce foliage, and
- b) deciduous trees when they have lost their foliage, e.g. during winter.

In such cases, artificial shelters will need to be provided until trees are mature.

Hedgerows may be included in calculations of overhead shade/shelter provided that there is enough room underneath for turkeys to access. However, at certain times of the day, the position of the sun may mean that the hedgerow is not offering any protection in terms of shade. As shades/shelter must be appropriately distributed, hedgerows alone will not meet R 1.13.

R 1.14 * Shade and shelter facilities must be appropriately distributed to encourage full use of the range.

R 1.15 * The range must be managed in order to provide the most suitable conditions to encourage the birds to roam.

- * **i** R 1.15 can be achieved by, for example:
- a) positioning shade and shelter facilities at varying distances from the house
 - b) the rotation of artificial shelters in order to prevent poaching of the land around them
 - c) the trimming of hedgerows so that access is provided underneath
 - d) restricting access to certain areas of the range as and when necessary in order to prevent poaching of the land
 - e) managing poached areas to aid recovery and prevent poaching reoccurring in the same area
 - f) an appreciation of the need to take individual flock behaviour into account: some flocks may be reluctant to range and therefore need encouraging by, for example, providing a sheltered route, or 'corridor', onto the range.

Management

A high degree of caring and responsible management and stockmanship is vital to ensure good animal welfare. Managers and stock-keepers must be thoroughly trained, skilled and competent in animal husbandry and welfare, and have a good working knowledge of their system and the livestock under their care.

- M 1.0 * All records and other documentation that the '*RSPCA welfare standards for turkeys*' require the producer to keep and maintain, must be made available to the Freedom Food Assessor and RSPCA Farm Livestock Officer.

Managers

- M 1.1 Managers must ensure that all stock-keepers:
- have access to a copy of the current version of the '*RSPCA welfare standards for turkeys*'
 - are familiar with its content
 - understand and apply its content.
- M 1.2 All staff employed who are responsible for the welfare of livestock must be identified, and records must be kept of all relevant training (including in-house) and experience received or gained.
- M 1.3 Managers must:
- ensure all stock-keepers have completed relevant and adequate training and can satisfy the Freedom Food assessor and RSPCA Farm Livestock Officer of their competence in practical circumstances
 - develop and implement plans and precautions to prevent and cope with emergencies such as fire, flood, breakdown of environmental control systems or interruption of supplies, e.g. food, water, electricity
 - provide an emergency action board sited in a prominent position, which must include:
 - the procedures to be followed by those discovering such an emergency
 - the location of water sources for use by the fire brigade
 - a map grid reference and postcode for the location of the unit
 - develop and implement a biosecurity plan to minimise the risk of introducing disease onto a site
 - maintain records of production data, including:
 - incoming and outgoing stock
 - mortality (reasons should be stated)
 - culling (reasons must be stated)
 - causes of illness and injury must be recorded
 - feed consumption
 - water consumption
 - maximum and minimum temperatures
 - relative humidity
 - ventilation (including settings and any necessary changes)
 - develop and implement a transport plan to Freedom Food approved abattoirs which minimises waiting time for the birds.
- M 1.3.1 Records relating to M 1.3e ii, iii and iv must be dated, signed and noted with the time of inspection.

Management

- M 1.4 Managers must take into account the abilities of the stock-keepers when:
- deciding on stocking densities
 - deciding on the size
 - considering expanding the unit
 - considering installing more complex equipment.
- M 1.5 Prior to being given responsibility for the welfare of livestock, stock-keepers must be properly trained.

Stock-keepers

- M 2.1 Prior to being given responsibility for the welfare of livestock, stock-keepers must be properly trained and competent to:
- recognise early signs of disease
 - know the appropriate actions for treatment
 - recognise signs of normal behaviour, abnormal behaviour and fear
 - understand the environmental requirements for turkeys
 - handle turkeys in a positive and compassionate manner
 - cull turkeys when necessary to prevent further suffering.



Where possible, the stock-keeper should have attended an independently recognised validated training course.

- M 2.2 When an outbreak of abnormal behaviour occurs, it must be tackled immediately by appropriate changes in the system of management.
- M 2.3 Stock-keepers must be able to demonstrate their proficiency in procedures which have the potential to cause suffering, e.g. injections, tipping of the beak.

Inspection

- M 3.1 All turkeys must be inspected:
- at least 3 times daily
 - using a procedure that will identify all birds that are sick, injured or behaving abnormally.
- M 3.2 In order that the turkey inspection is thorough, the stock-keeper must walk within approximately 3m of each bird and encourage them to move.
- M 3.3 All movement throughout the unit must be slow and deliberate, both to alleviate fear and reduce possible injury to birds.
- M 3.4 Any welfare problems seen during an inspection must be dealt with appropriately and without delay.



Welfare problems of sufficient severity that they should have been noticed on previous inspections and dealt with, shall be taken by the Freedom Food Assessor or RSPCA Farm Livestock Officer as evidence of negligence of duties by the stock-keeper.

Equipment


- M 4.1 Stock-keepers must inspect the equipment, including the automatic equipment, upon which turkeys depend at least once daily to check that there is no defect in it.
- M 4.2 Where a defect relating to M 4.1 is found it must be rectified immediately. However, if this is impracticable, such measures as are required to safeguard the turkeys from suffering unnecessary pain or distress as a result of the defect must be taken immediately and maintained until the defect is rectified.
- M 4.3 Where the birds' welfare is dependent on automated equipment, the system must contain:
- an alarm which will give adequate warning of the failure of that system to function properly (the alarm must operate even if the principal electricity supply to it has failed)
 - additional equipment or an alternative means (whether automatic or not) of maintaining a satisfactory environment so as to prevent the birds from suffering unnecessary distress as a result of the failure.

 See Freedom Food information sheet '*Requirement for Alarmed Ventilation Systems*' (Issue 3, August 2003).

- M 4.4 For existing or new equipment which is used in management, e.g. heaters, lighting, ventilation (flaps/fans), stock-keepers must be able to:
- demonstrate an ability to operate the equipment competently
 - demonstrate the ability to carry out routine maintenance
 - recognise common signs of malfunction
 - demonstrate knowledge of action to be carried out in event of failures.

Pests and predators

- M 5.0 * A written pest control policy must be in place.
- M 5.1 Humane precautions must be taken to protect turkeys from predators and rodents.
- M 5.2 When developing and implementing farm pest and predator control plans, physical exclusion methods, and the removal of elements in the vicinity of livestock that might encourage the presence of pests and predators (see information box below), must be included.

 **Methods of physical exclusion and discouragement of pests and predators include:**

- **construction/maintenance of fencing appropriate for excluding pests/predators in question**
- **removal of shelter/cover (e.g. weeds) in the area surrounding livestock buildings**
- **removal/protection of obvious food sources**
- **maintenance/proofing of buildings against pests and predators.**

- M 5.2.1 The farm pest control plan must specifically prohibit the snaring or gassing of animals.
- M 5.3 The intrusion of wild birds into non-free-range houses must be prevented with netting or similar material over roof ventilation ducts, windows, etc.
- M 5.4 Farm dogs and cats must not be permitted into the turkey house.
- M 5.5 Where a predator problem has been identified either in the house or range, producers must demonstrate that action has been taken to ensure the welfare of the birds.

Health

Livestock must be protected from pain, injury and disease. The environment in which livestock are housed must be conducive to good health. All producers must develop a health plan in consultation with their veterinary surgeon.

- H 1.1 A written Veterinary Health Plan (VHP) must be drawn up, reviewed and updated at least annually by the attending veterinary surgeon.

i **The Veterinary Health Plan (VHP) forms a vitally important part of the RSPCA welfare standards with regard to maintaining health and welfare of livestock on farm. The VHP should take into account specific health and welfare issues that are known to affect turkeys, for example pododermatitis, and also health concerns that have been identified at farm on an individual basis.**

The VHP should also include details of any medication and recordings of stock management e.g. water consumption, feed consumption, body weight, maximum and minimum house temperatures, relative humidity and flock mortality.

- H 1.2 The VHP must include targets set for health aspects and records kept to identify whether targets have been met every year and at each assessment made by the veterinary surgeon.
- H 1.3 If any flock performance parameters fall below the tolerance limits identified in the VHP (H 1.1)
- the veterinary surgeon must be informed
 - the VHP must be revised to include a programme of action which will remedy the problem.
- H 1.4 Flock performance data must be continuously monitored for signs of disease or production disorders.
- H 1.5 Where birds with a severe level of foot pad burn, or those with breast blistering or back scratching have been identified (see 'health monitoring' section) the farm must take appropriate action, to be reflected within the Veterinary Health Plan, to prevent these conditions in subsequent flocks.
- H 1.6 Ailing and lame turkeys and any turkeys suffering from injury, such as open wounds or fractures, must be:
- segregated, but within sight and sound of other turkeys
 - treated without delay
 - or, if necessary, humanely killed immediately.
- H 1.7 There must be no recurring injuries of a similar nature seen on a number of birds attributable to physical features of their environment or handling procedures.
- H 1.8 If injuries are found, a programme of preventative action must be specified in the VHP (H 1.1).
- H 1.9 Facilities must be available to segregate sick or injured birds.

Health

- H 1.9.1 Segregation pens relating to H 1.9 must:
- a) be within the main house
 - b) provide birds with food and water, which is accessible without undue effort or discomfort, as specified in Food and water section
 - c) be stocked at a density lower than the rest of the house to allow birds to rest quietly
 - d) be well littered, as specified in the 'Environment' section
 - e) be inspected at least 3 times daily and an assessment made of each bird. This must be recorded.
- H 1.10 Stock-keepers must:
- a) take care when placing a turkey into the segregation pen
 - b) not, under any circumstances, drop the turkey over the surround.
- H 1.11 Any turkey that has difficulty standing and/or reaching food and water must be:
- a) promptly removed from the flock
 - b) if necessary, humanely killed.
- H 1.11.1 * There must not be any overtly lame (Bristol gait score 3 or above) birds.

*



Lameness can be a serious welfare problem in growing turkeys, whether caused by infectious agents or growth abnormalities. Research has concluded that bird welfare is unduly compromised in birds with gait scores of 3 or more, as birds with such gait scores are likely to experience pain and discomfort. In fact, anatomical research on chickens has shown that such joint pathologies are likely to be as painful to chickens as they are to humans.

H 1.11.2 * Any bird with a gait score of 3 or above, as defined in the information box below, must be humanely killed immediately.

* **i** **A bird's level of lameness can be determined by assessing its walking ability. The following scoring system is based on the University of Bristol's Gait Scoring Guide:**

Score 0 - The bird displays smooth, fluid locomotion
Typically the foot is picked up and put down smoothly and each foot is brought under the bird's centre of gravity as it walks (rather than the bird swaying). Often, the toes are partially curled while the foot is in the air.

Score 1 - The bird has a slight defect in its gait that is difficult to define precisely
The bird may take unduly large strides, be unsteady or wobble when it walks, which produces an uneven gait, but the problem leg is unclear/cannot be easily identified.

Score 2 - The bird has a definite and identifiable gait abnormality, but this does not affect its ability to move
The bird may make short, quick, unsteady steps with one leg, but is not sufficiently lame to seriously compromise its ability to move, i.e. manoeuvre, accelerate and run.

Score 3 - The bird has an obvious gait defect that affects its ability to move (bird welfare is compromised)
The bird may have a limp, jerky or unsteady strut, or splay one leg as it moves. The bird often prefers to squat when not coerced to move, and will not run.

Score 4 - The bird has a severe gait defect
The bird is capable of walking, but only with difficulty and when driven or strongly motivated. Otherwise it squats down at the first available opportunity.

Score 5 - The bird is incapable of sustained walking on its feet
Although it may be able to stand, the bird cannot walk except with the assistance of the wings or by crawling on the shanks.

N.B. Not all the attributes of a score are necessarily identified in a bird.

H 1.12 Management plans must prevent turkeys suffering chronic joint disease or leg deformation.

* **i** **Leg disorders can be particularly prevalent in birds close to killing weight, especially in heavier finishing stags. Management techniques, such as the provision of enrichment items that encourage activity, and good litter and biosecurity management, can help prevent the occurrence of leg disorders. However, an underlying problem is that birds have been genetically selected, and are usually fed, so as to maximise muscle weight at the time of slaughter.**

The RSPCA believes that selection for weight has been taken beyond the limit of acceptability and that it is not appropriate to continue to select for increased weight without first improving leg health. Therefore, breeding companies should improve selection for leg health and should not seek to produce commercial lines that have extreme conformation. Likewise, turkey producers should select strains that have good health and welfare characteristics and should not exploit the limits of the birds' growth potential if this is likely to result in poorer welfare.

It is also a legal requirement (under schedule 1, paragraph 29, of the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2007) that: "animals may only be kept for farming purposes if it can reasonably be expected, on the basis of their genotype or phenotype, that they can be kept without any detrimental effect on their health or welfare".

The RSPCA is considering this issue further and may impose a limit on the maximum weight achieved by turkeys and/or prohibit the use of certain strains.

Health

- H 1.13 If the mortality level within a house is in excess of 0.5% in any 24 hour period, a veterinary investigation must be made.

i Investigation of lower mortality levels is at the discretion of the attending veterinary surgeon.

- H 1.14 Following depopulation, all houses must be thoroughly cleansed, disinfected and tested free from infectious agents as specified in the VHP (see H 1.1).
- H 1.15 Written procedures must be in place, and must be followed at all times, for the safe disposal of pharmaceutical waste, needles and other sharps.
- H 1.16 Procedures relating to H 1.15 must be in strict accordance with the relevant waste disposal regulations.
- H 1.17 Medicines must be clearly labelled and stored in accordance with the label instructions.
- H 1.18 Medicines must be kept in a secure, lockable store, which is safe from children and animals, including pets and wild birds.
- H 1.19 The medicine store must be separate from food producing areas.
- H 1.20 Any medicine used must be licensed for use in the UK, and applied in accordance with UK and EU legislation.

- * **i** It is recommended that producers obtain, read and where appropriate, apply the advice contained within the latest version of:
- a) *'Guidelines on Responsible Use of Antimicrobials in Poultry Production'*, issued by the Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture (RUMA) Alliance (RUMA, Acorn House, 25 Mardley Hill, Welwyn, Hertfordshire, AL6 0TT; www.ruma.org.uk)
 - b) *'Code of practice on the responsible use of animal medicines on the farm'*, issued by the Veterinary Medicine Directorate
 - c) *'Veterinary Medicines: safe use by farmers and other handlers'*, issued by the Health and Safety Executive.

- H 1.21 All personnel involved in the administration of animal medicines must be competent to do so.

Beak trimming

i The practice of beak trimming is contrary to the principles of the RSPCA welfare standards. However, at the present time, it is accepted that in some cases, such as in naturally lit systems, it may be necessary to beak trim to deter potentially injurious pecking.

- H 2.1 Beak trimming is not permitted for turkeys reared in controlled environment housing except on written veterinary advice during an outbreak of injurious pecking, when the procedure is essential to prevent worse welfare problems occurring.
- H 2.2 Beaks of turkeys may be trimmed in naturally lit systems where pecking behaviour towards other birds is a potential problem.

- H 2.3 Where practiced, beak trimming must:
- a) take place only once
 - b) take place at less than 21 days of age
 - c) not remove more than one third of the beak
 - d) be conducted by properly trained and competent operators
 - e) be carried out on the direction of the attending veterinary surgeon
 - f) be carried out using appropriate cold cutting equipment
- H 2.4 No other forms of mutilation, e.g. desnooding and dewinging, are permitted.
- H 2.5 All artificial appliances (such as blinkers and contact lenses) which are designed to stop cannibalism must not be used.

Casualty killing/slaughter

- H 3.1 Each farm must have provisions for the humane killing/slaughter – without delay – of casualty turkeys.
- H 3.1.1 Casualty killing/slaughter must be carried out by either:
- a) a named, trained, competent member of staff, or
 - b) a licensed slaughterman, or
 - c) a veterinary surgeon.
- H 3.2 If there is any doubt as to how to proceed, the veterinary surgeon must be called at an early stage to advise whether treatment is possible or whether humane slaughter is required to prevent suffering.
- H 3.3 If a bird is in severe pain that is uncontrollable, then the bird must be promptly and humanely killed/slaughtered.



It is not illegal to kill/slaughter a bird to prevent further severe suffering if a method of humane killing/slaughter is available on the premises and there is someone competent to undertake the procedure.

The Humane Slaughter Association (HSA) has produced a booklet entitled '*Practical Slaughter of Poultry: A Guide for the Small Producer*'. Producers should obtain a copy of this booklet, from HSA, The Old School, Brewhouse Hill, Wheathampstead, Herts AL4 8AN.

- H 3.4 For birds weighing less than 8kg, the only permitted methods for casualty killing/slaughter are:
- a) captive bolt
 - b) hand held electrical stunning, immediately followed by neck cutting
 - c) neck dislocation; to be used in an emergency or for the one-off killing of a very small number of birds.
- H 3.4.1 Where permitted, neck dislocation must involve stretching the neck to separate the spinal cord and cause extensive damage to the major blood vessels.

Health

- H 3.5 For birds weighing 8kg and over, the only permitted methods for casualty killing/slaughter are:
- a) captive bolt
 - b) hand held electrical stunning, then followed by manual neck dislocation or neck cutting.

*  **The use of captive bolt equipment on birds weighing 4kg and over is encouraged.**

- H 3.6 Those responsible for using the captive bolt must:
- a) have received appropriate training
 - b) be competent when using this equipment.

H 3.6.1 * Captive bolt devices must be used and maintained according to the manufacturer's guidelines.

H 3.7 Equipment that crushes the neck, including killing pliers, must not be used.

 **Equipment that crushes the neck is neither quick nor humane.**

H 3.8 All carcasses must be disposed of strictly according to current legislation.

H 3.9 A record must be kept of how and where all such carcasses are disposed of.

Transport

Animal transport systems must be designed and managed to ensure livestock are not caused unnecessary distress or discomfort. The transport and handling of livestock must be kept to an absolute minimum. Personnel involved in transport must be thoroughly trained and competent to carry out the tasks required of them.

Catching

T 1.1 All personnel involved in the catching and transportation of birds must be properly trained and competent.

i Where possible this training should be validated.

i Managers should consider the construction of buildings and bear in mind the access to and from the area where birds are placed and removed. Particular attention should be paid to the width of doors.

T 1.2 Managers must prepare full and detailed written instructions for the catching staff.

T 1.3 All catching staff must:

- a) have a copy of the instructions relating to T 1.2
- b) be aware of their duties
- c) be trained and competent to perform their duties.

T 1.3.1 * The catching team leader/PWO must be familiar with the content of the Humane Slaughter Association DVD '*Poultry Slaughter – Taking Responsibility*' and:

- a) convey the relevant content to other members of the catching/slaughter team
- b) ensure that the recommendations are applied where appropriate.

* **i** Where possible all members of the catching/slaughter team should be familiar with the content of the Humane Slaughter Association DVD '*Poultry Slaughter - Taking Responsibility*'

T 1.4 The farm manager/assistant must be made responsible for supervising and maintaining high welfare standards throughout the depopulation process, which includes the loading of birds onto the transport vehicle.

T 1.5 The farm manager/assistant must be present at all times during the catching operation.

T 1.6 Procedures must be in place to ensure that any concerns regarding the catching techniques used by the catching staff are:

- a) recorded
- b) raised with the area manager.

T 1.7 Catching teams must never put speed of operation before bird welfare.

- T 1.8 Handling of birds must be carried out quietly and confidently, exercising care to avoid unnecessary struggling, stress and injury.
- T 1.9 Sufficient time must be made available to ensure birds are handled with care.
- T 1.10 Turkeys must not suffer prolonged thirst, hunger, or thermal distress. Specifically:
- a) birds must have access to water up to the time of catching
 - b) no bird must be deprived of food for more than 10 hours prior to slaughter
 - c) when catching during hot weather (in excess of 25°C), sufficient ventilation must be provided for birds until the time they are loaded (e.g. the provision of additional mobile fans)
 - d) when catching during cold weather, adequate draught free ventilation at bird height must be provided for birds up to the time of loading.

i **The removal of a proportion of birds from a house for slaughter can compromise the wellbeing of those birds not being caught. For example, those birds to remain in the house after catching can be affected by:**

- **setting up the house for catching**
- **temporary withdrawal of feed and water**
- **noise and disruption from the catching process**
- **forklift operation in the house**
- **the condition of the house after catching**
- **the disturbance caused by returning the house to its condition after catching**
- **thermal discomfort from rapid temperature changes**
- **compromises in biosecurity, e.g. the introduction of modules and a forklift, which may not have been cleaned properly thus introducing infectious agents, such as Avian Rhinotracheitis.**

The catching process should be managed sympathetically to minimise such problems.

- T 1.10.1 * During catching:
- a) partitions must be used to segregate the flock into groups of 50 to 100 birds (depending on bird size) for catching
 - b) the partitions must be continually relocated as depletion progresses to maintain a).

* **i** **Segregating the flock into smaller groups for catching makes the catching process more manageable. The birds are easier to catch as they are contained in a smaller area, the birds can be retained closer to the modules, which limits the distance they have to be carried, and the likelihood of trampling and smothering is reduced.**

* **i** **Partitions often comprise of 244 x 122cm (8 x 4ft) plywood sheets on framing, which extend out from the side of a shed toward the centre. Modules are placed between the two partitions to form a 'catching area.'**

T 1.11 When only a proportion of birds are to be removed from a building, a partition (made from hurdles or hardboard, for example) must be erected prior to catching to separate those birds being caught from those remaining in the shed.

The partition must:

- a) be mobile
- b) not cause physical injury to the birds
- c) minimise any disruption caused by the catching team to those birds remaining in the shed
- d) not reduce the floor area available to those birds not being caught to such an extent that the maximum stocking density of 25kg/m² is exceeded.

T 1.11.1 When only a proportion of birds are to be removed from a building, those birds not being caught must have access to food and water during the catching operation.

T 1.11.2 * Birds must be approached calmly and quietly to avoid stress.

*  **Resting of the bird's breast against the catcher's leg during carrying can help keep the bird calm.**

T 1.12 Catching must take place in low or blue lighting to minimise fear reactions of the birds.

T 1.13 The method of catching must take into account the weight and size of the birds, and be adjusted accordingly. Specifically:

- a) i) birds weighing less than 5kg must be caught and carried by both legs with no more than 1 bird in each hand
- ii) birds must be placed in the crate one at a time
- b) i) birds weighing 5kg and over must be caught and carried individually by grasping the shoulder of the wing furthest away from the catcher, whilst using the other hand to hold both legs
- ii) birds must be lifted and held close to the body and placed into the crate with care.

T 1.14 Turkeys must not be caught or carried by a single leg.


T 1.15 During catching, action must be taken to prevent turkeys from crowding together.

T 1.16 Where crowding occurs, the house lights must be raised, the birds spread out calmly and quietly, then allowed to settle before catching is resumed.

T 1.17 Managers must ensure that when birds are placed in transport crates, handling of birds, design of crates, and method of transportation, minimise the soiling of feathers.

T 1.18 Care must be taken to ensure that birds do not come into contact with moving vehicles whilst being caught.

T 1.19 Birds that are visibly unfit before loading must not be transported but humanely slaughtered immediately.

 **The mechanical harvesting of birds and the use of colony belt systems can offer some welfare advantages compared with manual catching. Producers considering using such a system should liaise with the RSPCA Farm Animals Department.**

Modular transport systems

- T 2.1 Modular transport vehicles must be parked as near as possible to the house being de-populated.
- T 2.2 The distance birds are carried must be minimised, for example, by bringing the transport containers as close to the birds as possible.
- T 2.3 Modular crate transport trays must:
- a) have completely open tops with a depth of not less than 350mm
 - b) permit adequate ventilation and protect birds from adverse climatic conditions
 - c) be thoroughly cleansed after carrying each consignment of birds. The cleanliness of the vehicle must be checked by the appointed supervisor before any birds are loaded onto the vehicle
 - d) be well maintained
 - e) have no sharp edges or protrusions on the crates or vehicle that could cause injury to the birds.
- T 2.3.1 When loading birds into module drawers:
- a) this must take place in the house
 - b) the top drawer must be loaded first
 - c) one hand must hold the legs, and the other hand must support the breast
 - d) they must not be held by the wing or neck
 - e) they must be placed carefully into the drawer
 - f) they must not be dropped or thrown into the drawer.
- T 2.3.2 The stocking density in each tray must not exceed those specified in the table below:

Live weight	Birds per m ²
Up to 5kg	15
5 to 7kg	14
7 to 8kg	11
8 to 9kg	10
9 to 11kg	8
12 to 17kg	6
18 to 24kg	5



There is enormous variation in weight/size of different strains, sexes and ages of turkey. There is, therefore, a need to develop optimum transport stocking densities for different ages and sexes of bird. The RSPCA will be addressing this issue.

- T 2.4 Stocking density must be reduced by 10% when birds are being transported during hot weather (i.e. in excess of 25°C).
- T 2.5 As each drawer is filled, it must be closed carefully to ensure that the birds' heads, wings or legs are not trapped in any way.
- T 2.6 Modules must be taken from the shed slowly and care must be taken to ensure no damage is caused to the birds.

Fixed crate transport systems

i **The RSPCA advocates the use of modular-type transport systems for turkeys as they can offer improved bird welfare compared to fixed crate type systems. Where fixed crate systems are used, producers should consider investing in the installation of a modular transportation system.**

- T 3.1 For those seeking Freedom Food approval, the fixed crate transport system must be authorised by the RSPCA Farm Animals Department.
- T 3.2 Fixed crate transport vehicles must be parked as near as possible to the house being depopulated.
- T 3.3 Birds must be walked calmly towards the entrance of the building where the vehicle is parked.
- T 3.4 Fixed crate vehicles must:
- a) have flaps which permit adequate ventilation and protect birds from adverse climatic conditions
 - b) have flaps which close securely
 - c) be thoroughly cleaned after carrying each consignment of birds
 - e) be well maintained
 - f) not cause injury to the birds.
- T 3.4.1 Fixed crates must:
- a) have no sharp protrusions which could cause injury to the birds
 - b) have floors that prevent faeces falling on birds beneath but do not hinder ventilation inside the crate.
- T 3.5 The cleanliness of the vehicle must be checked by the appointed supervisor before any birds are loaded.
- T 3.6 When loading birds into fixed crates:
- a) facilities must be provided for catchers to ensure they are able to load birds onto the vehicle from a position which gives them easy access to all the crates, i.e. a loading platform with steps
 - b) catchers must not lift birds above their head height
 - c) they must be loaded into the fixed crate carefully
 - d) they must not be thrown into the crate.
- T 3.7 The stocking density in each fixed crate must not exceed that specified in T 2.3.2.
- T 3.8 Stocking density must be reduced by 10% when birds are being transported during hot weather (in excess of 25°C).
- T 3.9 The person responsible for supervising the depopulation and loading must ensure that the flap on each crate is securely fastened and the wings, head or legs of any bird are not trapped in the flap or any part of the fixed crate.
- T 3.10 On unloading, if any birds are trapped or injured, a report must be made to the person in charge of supervising the catching and loading in order to identify and rectify any further problems.

Transport

- T 4.1 Personnel in charge of turkey transporters must:
- have completed an approved training course
 - be able to demonstrate their competence in handling turkeys when loading and unloading them and while in transit.

T 4.2 All transporters must have a livestock capacity document on board at all times.



The livestock capacity document will give data on the size of the transporter and the calculated carrying capacity for different livestock species under different climatic conditions.

T 4.3 All hauliers must have a written standard operating and emergency procedure to implement during transportation (see Appendix 1).

T 4.4 An on-farm record must be maintained of any incidents relating to T 4.3.

T 4.5 Where identified, prompt action must be taken to prevent further deaths, injury or suffering occurring.

T 4.6 * If on any day mortality exceeds 2 birds, or 0.1% for loads over 2,000 birds, for a single consignment of turkeys during transport:

- the level of mortality must be recorded
- there must be an investigation to establish the cause/s of death, the outcome of which is recorded
- effective preventative measures must be put in place without delay to remedy the problem.

T 4.7 The time between the start of loading (first bird loaded) and the completion of unloading (last bird unloaded) must be less than 6 hours.

T 4.8 * The time from when the birds leave the farm to arriving at the processing plant must be no longer than 4 hours.

T 4.9 Noise levels, from all sources, must be minimised during loading, unloading and transport.

T 4.10 Every effort must be made to ensure:

- journeys are completed without unnecessary delays
- that drivers are aware of any potential traffic problems and plan their journey accordingly.

T 4.11 The person supervising the catching and loading of birds must liaise closely with the abattoir to minimise the time birds spend waiting on the vehicle.

T 4.12 If it is necessary to keep birds on board a stationary vehicle, the driver must take action to avoid heat/cold stress to the birds.



In hot weather (in excess of 25°C) one of the most effective ways of providing a cooling draught is to keep the vehicle moving.

T 4.13 The transport vehicle must be equipped with suitable curtains that can be opened and closed by a single operator.

Transport

- T 4.13.1 In periods of hot weather (in excess of 25°C) a central passageway must be left free of birds/ trays to allow increased ventilation
- T 4.13.2 New vehicles must be equipped with fan-operated ventilation.

i The technology is now becoming available to monitor temperature and humidity on board transport vehicles. This allows drivers to take appropriate action to maintain ideal conditions for birds. The use of such equipment is encouraged by the RSPCA. The RSPCA will monitor the development of such technology and review its use for inclusion in future development of these standards.

- T 4.14 Plans must be made in advance and appropriate action taken to reduce the risk of heat stress occurring.
- T 4.14.1 Plans relating to T 4.14 must include the routine monitoring of weather forecasts of predicted temperatures.

i At times of high ambient temperature or when high humidity poses a threat to the birds, catching, loading and transportation create particular risks of heat stress.

- T 4.15 In periods of hot weather (in excess of 25°C) turkeys must be transported at night or in the coolest parts of the day.
- T 4.16 Turkeys must be sheltered from extremes of weather during transport.


Slaughter

All slaughter/killing systems must be designed and managed to ensure livestock are not caused unnecessary distress or discomfort. The pre-slaughter handling of livestock must be kept to an absolute minimum. Personnel involved in the slaughter must be thoroughly trained and competent to carry out the tasks required of them.

- S 1.0 * For those seeking Freedom Food approval, the standards relating to the slaughter/killing of turkeys (standards with the 'S' prefix) must be assessed by the RSPCA Farm Animals Department, prior to approval.
- S 1.0.1 * Abattoir managers/PWOs must:
- obtain a copy of the Humane Slaughter Association's '*Best Practice Guidelines for the Welfare of Turkeys in Processing Plants*' (2005)
 - be familiar with its content
 - ensure that the recommendations are applied where appropriate.
- S 1.1 Turkeys must be slaughtered as close as possible to the point of production.

Management

- S 2.1 Managers must develop and implement an animal welfare policy, which must include written procedures with regard to maintaining animal welfare in the abattoir, including the responsibilities and duties of staff and emergency procedures.
- S 2.2 The animal welfare policy must be reviewed and updated at least annually, and when there are changes to the design or operation of the handling, stunning or slaughter system.
- S 2.3 Managers must appoint at least 1 trained Poultry Welfare Officer (PWO), who is responsible for the implementation of the animal welfare policy.

 **Where possible, the PWO should have attended a recognised, validated training course, e.g. Bristol University Animal Welfare Officer training programme.**

- S 2.4 Managers, in conjunction with the PWO, must develop and implement a training programme for all staff handling and slaughtering birds.
- S 2.4.1 Managers and the PWO must ensure that staff are properly trained to carry out their duties and be competent to perform them.

 **Where possible, training related to S 2.4 and S 2.4.1 should be validated.**

- S 2.5 The PWO must make frequent checks throughout the day to ensure that birds are being effectively stunned.
- S 2.6 Where the birds are not being effectively stunned the PWO must take immediate remedial action.

Slaughter

- S 2.7 * The manager and PWO must:
- have access to a copy of the Defra Code of Practice '*The Welfare of Poultry at Slaughter or Killing*' (2007)
 - be familiar with its content.

Lairage

i A number of abattoirs have installed closed circuit television (CCTV) monitors within the pre-slaughter handling and slaughter areas. This allows those responsible for animal welfare within the abattoir to ensure that welfare standards are maintained. The installation of CCTV systems is recommended by the RSPCA.

- S 3.0 * On arrival at the slaughter plant all birds must be:
- unloaded immediately
 - placed in an environmentally controlled lairage.
- S 3.1 All transport trays or fixed crates must be examined on arrival at the abattoir to identify any birds suffering from injury, heat or cold stress.
- S 3.1.1 Where problems relating to S 3.1 have been identified, immediate action must be taken to prevent suffering and ensure that similar occurrences are prevented.
- S 3.2 There must be a contingency plan in place to state what action will be taken to safeguard the birds' welfare in the event of heat stress occurring.
- S 3.3 Where turkeys are being unloaded from fixed crate vehicles:
- staff must be provided with facilities that allow them to unload birds from a position which gives them access to all the crates in each tier
 - care must be taken when removing birds from the crates.
- S 3.3.1 * The lairage must be designed in order to minimise any distress caused to the birds.

* **i** The design of the lairage should include aspects such as flooring. Uneven flooring can cause physical discomfort to birds when moving them through the lairage in modules.

- S 3.4 Turkeys that are held in slaughter facilities must be:
- protected from direct rays of sun and from adverse weather, i.e. wind, rain, hail, snow etc.
 - provided with adequate ventilation
 - humanely killed immediately if found to be suffering.
- S 3.4.1 Temperature and humidity in the lairage must be regularly monitored and controlled to avoid heat and cold stress.
- S 3.5 All turkeys must be slaughtered as soon as possible after arrival at the abattoir, and in any case within 1 hour.
- S 3.6 Contingency plans must be in place to deal with occasions when unavoidable delays may occur.

Slaughter

- S 3.7 When a breakdown occurs that results in a delay in the slaughter process, birds may be held in lairage for up to 3 hours from the time of arrival, after which time they must be slaughtered using a permitted back-up method.
- S 3.8 The lairage must have reduced or blue lighting.
- S 3.9 Once the turkeys have arrived at the premises at which they are intended to be slaughtered, they must not be moved on to other premises for slaughter.
- S 3.10 Standby equipment, e.g. a generator, must be available for emergency breakdowns.
- S 3.11 Where live birds are removed from crates prior to shackling, unloading must take place as close to the shackle line as possible to minimise carrying distance and to avoid any stress caused to the birds.
- S 3.12 All deaths and injuries must be recorded and reported to the:
- driver
 - haulier
 - PWO
 - farm manager
- before the next consignment from the same source is collected.
- S 3.13 Records related to S 3.12 must be kept.

Health monitoring

- S 4.1 The level of foot pad burn for each flock must be recorded.

i The term 'flock' refers to a group of turkeys which are placed in a house of holding and are present in this house at the same time.

- S 4.2 The method used to score foot pad burn must be objective and:
- differentiate between minor, mild and severe conditions
 - provide consistent results within and between observers
 - provide reliable and accurate data for the level of a condition within a flock.

i The following scoring system should be used to classify foot pad burn:

0 (None): No lesion/s present.

1 (Minor): Very small and superficial lesion/s, slight discolouration on a limited area, mild hyperkeratosis.

2 (Mild): Substantial discolouration, superficial lesion/s, dark papillae.

3 (Severe): Ulcers or scabs of significant size, signs of haemorrhages or swollen foot pad.

If there is an absence of severe foot pad burns, but a lot of class 1 lesions are observed in a flock, then this should be seen as not necessarily a major welfare problem in itself, but as an indication that things can rapidly get worse and that remedial action should be taken.


Slaughter

- S 4.3 For each flock, records must be made of the number of birds with:
- breast blisters
 - back scratches
 - dirty feathers.

- S 4.4 After each flock, data relating to S 4.1 and S 4.3 must be:
- reviewed
 - reported back to the producing farm.


Shackling

- S 5.1 Shackling teams must be:
- thoroughly trained to handle the birds in such a way as to avoid injury
 - aware of the risk of breakages that the hanging-on procedure can cause to turkeys
 - supervised by a trained and competent person during the shackling process.
- S 5.2 Abattoir managers must ensure that sufficient personnel are employed on shackling lines at all times to ensure due care and diligence.
- S 5.3 Shackles must be of a size and type, and the slaughter line run at a speed, which permits turkeys to be hung on without causing unnecessary pain or distress.
- S 5.4 Birds must be hung on by both legs.
- S 5.5 * The shackler must use a handling technique that calms the bird as it is being shackled.

- * ** Running the hands down the legs and body of the bird after shackling can help to reduce the incidence of wing flapping. Keeping hold of the birds legs for 0.5 seconds after shackling may have a similar effect.**

- S 5.6 * From the point of shackling to entry into the stun bath there must be a:
- breast comforter that runs along the entire length of the line
 - reduction in noise level
 - maximum light level of 5 lux, or low level blue lighting.

- * ** Breast comforters should be constructed from firm rubber or plastic curtain and extend below the eye level of the bird.**

- * ** The provision of a breast comforter and a reduction in noise and light levels all help to calm the bird and prevent it raising its head, vocalising and wing flapping, which can all be behavioural indicators of discomfort. Wing flapping can cause the occurrence of red wing tips which, as well as being a welfare issue, can result in downgrading of the carcass, detract from the overall appearance of the carcass and lead to loss of total carcass weight if the wings require trimming.**

Slaughter

- S 5.7 Care must be taken to ensure that birds cannot escape from the holding area or fall from the shackle line.
- S 5.8 Where loose birds are found they must be taken immediately to the hanging on area or, if injured, immediately humanely destroyed out of the sight of other birds.
- S 5.9 * There must be no unevenness in the shackle line causing the shackles to jolt.
- S 5.10 Turkeys must not be suspended for more than 1 minute before they are stunned.

* **i** **Shackling a bird can cause discomfort and pain, so it is important to reduce the shackling period to a minimum. However, for an effective stun, it is necessary for the bird to be shackled for a short period, to allow it time to relax and stop wing flapping. We would strongly encourage that live turkeys are not suspended for more time than is necessary for wing flapping to cease, which information suggests to be around 25 seconds.**

- S 5.11 The design of the shackle line and entry to the water bath must eliminate the risk of birds receiving pre-stun shocks.

i **Due to the size of turkeys, there is a greater risk of birds receiving pre-stun shocks due to the position of their wings, which can hang lower than their heads when shackled.**

* **i** **A steeply inclined flat ramp bolted on to the entrance of the waterbath can be effective in avoiding pre-stun shocks.**

The ramp should extend over the water so the birds get drawn up the ramp by the shackle line and then swing down into the water in one smooth movement. This results in the bird's head and wing entering the water together and the bird is stunned immediately

Care must be taken to ensure birds do not receive pre-stun shocks from the ramp itself. This may occur if the ramp is electrically live because of water flowing from the bath onto the ramp or if it is not isolated from the rest of the stunner.

- S 5.12 All crates must be checked to ensure no turkeys are left inside them.

Stunning

* **i** **The RSPCA recognises the shortcomings of the electrical waterbath stunning process, in terms of its actual and potential negative impacts on bird welfare. For example, it is necessary to handle, invert and hang live birds and use a constant voltage to stun the birds. The Society is considering the phasing-out of such systems and would therefore strongly encourage producers to adopt controlled atmosphere killing systems or seek modifications to their electrical waterbath systems to address the key areas of concern affecting bird welfare.**

In addition to offering improved bird welfare, controlled atmosphere killing systems have been reported to provide a higher quality product and less carcass wastage due to downgrading of the carcass. Due to this, controlled atmosphere killing systems have the potential to pay for themselves over a given period of time.

- S 6.1 The following types of stunning equipment are permitted:
- a) electrically live stunning bath
 - b) dry stunner incorporating an electrically-live metal grid or bar
 - c) hand operated stunner
 - d) pneumatically powered poultry killer; however, this must not be used for routine killing purposes, i.e. only used in the event of a breakdown of one of the methods stated in a) to c).
- S 6.2 It must be possible to visually observe birds at all stages of the stunning procedure, i.e. on entry, during and immediately on exit from the stunning bath.
- S 6.3 Unstunned birds must be screened from dead birds.
- S 6.4 Where an electrical water stunning bath is used:
- a) the stunning bath must be set at a height appropriate for the size and number of birds
 - b) the height must be set such that the heads of all birds are covered by the water
 - c) it must deliver an average minimum current of 150mA per bird,
 - d) the current must never go below 130mA
 - e) it must operate at a frequency of 50Hz with a sinusoidal (AC) waveform
 - f) DC stunning is prohibited
 - g) each bird must be in contact with the current for a minimum of 4 seconds
 - h) the water level must be of sufficient depth to cover the heads of the birds
 - i) the water must not overflow at the entrance to the bath
 - j) the electrode which is immersed in the water must extend the length of the water bath
 - k) it must be designed and set up to prevent birds receiving pre-stun shocks
 - l) it must be fitted with an ammeter to accurately monitor current flow through the bath when loaded with birds.

i **The RSPCA is currently reviewing the use of high frequency stunning as an alternative stunning method for turkeys.**

i When commercially feasible, consideration will be given to making constant current stunning equipment a requirement of the welfare standards.

* **i** There is mixed opinion from researchers as to the effectiveness of using a DC waveform for stunning poultry. In particular, there are concerns over whether a bird is effectively stunned when subjected to a DC waveform. Current literature states that DC stunning raises serious welfare concerns and that the use of DC stunning should be actively discouraged. Therefore, the use of DC stunning is prohibited under the scheme until there is further, unequivocal research in this area to suggest that DC stunning would offer at least a welfare neutral alternative to AC stunning.

* **i** 50Hz sine wave (AC) is the optimum frequency and waveform for inducing cardiac arrest. The heart muscle is particularly sensitive to this frequency and when sufficient current is applied to the heart it ceases to beat normally and pump blood around the body. Therefore, an effective stun-to-kill can be achieved when using this frequency to provide a good standard of welfare.

S 6.5 * The shackle, at the point where it meets the turkey's foot, must be continuously sprayed with water using a mist spray, along the entire length of the stun bath.

* **i** Contact between the bird's foot and the shackle is critical for good stunning, but tight fitting shackles can cause pain and discomfort to the bird. However, it has been reported that a continuous mist spray allows for a looser fitting shackle to be used without compromising the level of stun the bird receives.

- S 6.6 Where electrical hand-held stunners are used:
- turkeys must be restrained in a cone or on a shackle
 - birds must be stunned immediately after being restrained
 - care must be taken to ensure that the stunning electrodes are applied in the optimum position, i.e. applied firmly to either side of the head between the eye and ear
 - hand-held stunners must deliver 400mA
 - the current must be applied for at least 10 seconds and until initial wing flapping ceases (or if held in a cone, until legs become rigid and extended).
 - neck cutting must be carried out immediately using a ventral neck cut to ensure both carotid arteries are severed.
- S 6.7 All stunning and bleeding equipment must be properly and regularly maintained, cleaned and checked daily to ensure that it is in full and proper working order.
- S 6.8 An independent, qualified person must inspect the stunning equipment to test its efficacy.
- S 6.9 Any problems must be reported to the PWO and rectified immediately.
- S 6.10 Contingency plans must be made to deal with occasions when unavoidable delays may occur and it is not possible to process birds.
- S 6.11 If the slaughter line is stopped for longer than 1 minute, birds between the point of shackling and the killer must be humanely killed immediately.

S 6.12 All birds leaving the water bath must be checked to ensure they have been effectively stunned or killed.

i The most reliable indicator that a bird is properly stunned by the low voltage method is the electroplectic fit. The characteristics of this condition are:

- neck arched with head directed vertically
- open eyes
- wings held close to the body
- rigidly extended legs and constant rapid body tremors.

The physical conditions of the electroplectic fit are shorter lasting and less pronounced when cardiac arrest is induced at stunning. They are followed by:

- completely limp carcass
- no breathing
- loss of nictitating membrane reflex
- dilated pupils.

S 6.13 Birds which fail to be properly stunned must be immediately stunned using a permitted method as in accordance with S 6.1, and humanely slaughtered before entering the scalding tank.

S 6.14 Staff must be trained to recognise the signs of an effective stun, and use these signs to recognise that birds have been effectively stunned or are dead.

Controlled Atmosphere System (CAS)

i The RSPCA believes that the use of gas under controlled conditions (controlled atmosphere systems or CAS) as a means of killing birds can provide many welfare benefits, such as reduced manual handling and avoiding the need to shackle live birds. It is a legal requirement that CAS must be designed to kill the birds and must not be used as a stunning method.

S 7.1 In accordance with WASK Regulations 1995, as amended, every person engaged in the gas killing must be properly instructed as to:

- a) the method of operation of the CAS
- b) the procedures for any necessary flushing of the CAS with atmospheric air, and
- c) the procedures for any necessary evacuation of birds from the CAS.

S 7.2 Permitted gas mixtures:

- a) argon, nitrogen or other inert gases, or any mixture of these gases, in atmospheric air with a maximum of 2% oxygen by volume; or
- b) any mixture of argon, nitrogen, or other inert gases with atmospheric air and carbon dioxide, provided that the carbon dioxide concentration does not exceed 30% by volume and the oxygen concentration does not exceed 2% by volume.

i The RSPCA is aware that recent scientific studies have shown that there may be additional welfare benefits to using alternative gas mixtures which are currently not permitted under the UK Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or Killing) Regulations 1995. The RSPCA will review the use of gas mixtures permitted in the RSPCA's welfare standards in light of any further changes to existing UK legislation.

Slaughter

- S 7.3 Where more than one type of gas is used, the gases must be mixed thoroughly prior to supply into the CAS.
- S 7.4 Daily checks must always be undertaken to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of gas to kill all birds to be received, prior to the commencement of the process.
- S 7.5 The gas concentrations must be continuously monitored.
- S 7.6 Birds must be held in that atmosphere until they are dead.
- S 7.7 The delivery of gases must be constantly monitored.
- S 7.8 Sensors monitoring the concentration of gases must be:
- fitted in different locations along the equipment
 - clearly marked and readily identified.
- S 7.9 The gas monitors/sensors installed in the equipment must be linked to an audible and visual alarm system, which is automatically triggered:
- when the gas concentration is incorrect
 - when the maximum residual oxygen level is above 2%.
- S 7.10 Gas monitoring/sensing devices must be calibrated:
- at regular intervals, according to manufacturer's advice
 - using certified calibration gases, to ensure the correct concentrations are maintained at all times.
- S 7.11 A verifiable record of calibration must be kept.
- S 7.12 Turkeys must not enter the equipment until the correct gas concentration has been established. This must be controlled automatically.
- S 7.13 Turkeys must not be subjected to any of the gas mixture prior to entry into the CAS.
- S 7.14 There must be appropriate equipment, such as an extractor fitted at the entrance to the equipment to effectively address S 7.13.
- S 7.15 All birds must be exposed to the maximum concentration of the gas mixture within a maximum of 10 seconds of entry into the system (WASK Regulation, 1995, as amended).



The RSPCA Farm Animals Department is investigating the feasibility of installing CCTV equipment inside the Controlled Atmosphere System to allow visual assessment of the birds as they enter and pass through the system. The welfare standards will be reviewed as soon as further information about the availability of such equipment is known.

- S 7.16 On exiting the CAS, all birds must be checked immediately to ensure that they are dead.
- S 7.17 Any birds found to be conscious on exiting the CAS must be removed and humanely killed immediately.
- S 7.18 Verifiable records of birds recovering consciousness after exposure to gas mixtures must be maintained.
- S 7.19 In case of failure, there must be a back-up slaughter method available and ready for use at all times which is capable of dealing with all birds awaiting slaughter.

Slaughter

- S 7.20 On exiting the CAS, birds must be checked thoroughly to identify any signs of damage or injury which could have been caused whilst in the CAS.
- S 7.21 The causes of injury relating to S 7.20 must be thoroughly investigated to ascertain where and how this may have occurred.
- S 7.22 Where it is found that injury was caused while the birds were still conscious, immediate action must be taken to rectify the problem and to reduce the likelihood of such damage being caused to other birds.
- S 7.23 A contingency plan must be drawn up to include details of what action would be taken if a breakdown occurred while birds were still in the CAS, to avoid prolonged delays.
- S 7.24 Where live birds have remained in the CAS for longer than 2 minutes, the system must be flushed with atmospheric air to remove the remaining gases, and birds must be immediately removed for slaughter using a permitted back-up method.
- S 7.25 There must be a means of flushing the system with atmospheric air.

Bleeding

- S 8.1 No more than 10 seconds must elapse between stunning and neck cutting.
- S 8.2 Post-stunning, both carotid arteries and both jugular veins must be effectively severed using a ventral cut.
- S 8.3 The neck cut must be checked by an appointed member of staff who must be given sufficient time to sever the blood vessels manually, if necessary.
- S 8.4 No more than 10 seconds must elapse between stunning and neck cutting.
- S 8.5 No further processing must take place until at least 120 seconds have elapsed since the major blood vessels in the turkey's neck have been severed.
- S 8.6 All birds must be checked to ensure that they are dead before entering the scalding tank.

Appendix 1

Transport – standard operating and emergency procedure (relating to standard T 4.3)

Items to be included

1. Out of hours telephone numbers and 'emergency procedure'.
2. Accident procedure.
3. Certificate of motor insurance and MOT.
4. Tyres – punctures Code of Practice.
5. Mobile phones or other communication equipment (and procedures for use).
6. Guidelines on correct environmental conditions during the journey, depending on length of journey and ambient temperature.
7. RSPCA Welfare standards relating to transport of turkeys.
8. Procedure for loading/unloading of poultry transporters.
9. Procedure for delivery of poultry to customer sites.
10. FTA – the current version of '*The Driver's Handbook*' including Tachograph Regulations.
11. Fire extinguisher.
12. Operating procedures for roadside checks.
13. MAFF/Defra leaflet '*Guide to Alleviation of Thermal Stress in Poultry in Lairage*' (PB 3724, 1998).

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