

JULY 2021



# CHICKEN TECHNICAL BRIEFING

FROM YOUR RED TRACTOR ASSURANCE TEAM



## CHAIR'S VIEW: IAIN GARDNER : POULTRY BOARD



Red Tractor standards play a vital role in underpinning our industry's strength and credibility, securing our future as world-leaders in bird health and welfare, traceability and food safety.

Earlier this year we held the biggest consultation in Red Tractor's history to ensure the next evolution of these standards – which will be brought in from 1 November 2021 – help safeguard the future of our members' farms.

They have been written, reviewed and approved by our Technical Advisory Committee and Sector Board, which are made up of farmer representatives, leading industry experts and supply chain stakeholders.

We were pleased to reach a consensus in many important areas. This includes the requirement for a named welfare officer on each farm, windows should total 3% equivalence of the floor area

by 2023, and enrichment should be provided earlier for chicks.

Only slower-growing breeds should be used for free range enterprises, and a range of improvements have been added to our hatchery standards.

These new standards will help drive our sector forward and maintain balance between the evolving needs of consumers, farmers, processors and retailers.

This briefing highlights all the key changes we need our members to be aware of. Please read it so that you can prepare for their introduction later this year.

With ever-increasing interest and scrutiny of how food is produced, compliance with these standards not only serves to protect the reputation of your own farm, but the entire sector in which you play a vital part.



## THE INDUSTRY SPOKE - AND WE LISTENED

Red Tractor's CEO Jim Moseley said: "We set out to hear from and to engage as much of the farming community as possible, and I'm delighted by the amount of feedback that was generated by the review.

"Our standards need to achieve two key objectives - first to meet the needs of consumers who expect high standards but shop keenly on price, and second to provide farmers and the supply chain with manageable standards. Getting that balance right then also satisfies the needs of food businesses and government."

## IN BRIEF: WHAT'S CHANGED AND WHY?

The new Red Tractor poultry standards will be audited on farm from 1 November 2021. In the next few weeks, we will send every member a manual detailing the new standards in full and we are producing helpful guides on what has changed and why. For the first time there is now one manual to cover all seven chicken enterprises with the enterprise each standard is relevant to clearly indicated.

Below, we have detailed the key changes which have been agreed following the consultation process. This is not an exhaustive list and you should refer to the standards manuals and guides for all detailed changes.

### DOCUMENTS AND PROCEDURES

In line with the existing standard for free range members requiring that farms must be capable of implementing a compulsory housing order (Bl.14), additional criteria on welfare planning for housing free range flocks has been added to the avian influenza contingency plan.

### STAFF AND LABOUR

All staff must be competent, and we want to help equip them with the skills and knowledge they need. All staff must enrol for the world-leading British Poultry Passport initiative within six months of their recruitment, and those in the process of qualifying must complete at least two modules every 12 months.



All farms with workers must also have a written Health and Safety policy – this is a slight advance on the legal baseline which only applies to businesses with more than five employees.

### HOUSING SHELTER AND HANDLING

Delivering a safe, comfortable, and hygienic environment for birds is essential, and several standards have been revised to improve the outcome for birds.

Your heat stress policy must now be demonstrably implemented, and reviewed if there are any bird losses due to heat or cold stress. Adequate lighting on all units is a legal requirement. Once per crop, the lux level in all breeder replacement and layer housing must be measured and recorded at bird head height across 80% of the building.

As bulk feed bins are not cleaned and/or disinfected at each turn around

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**STUART ROBERTS**  
NFU DEPUTY PRESIDENT

units must now have a written, and implemented, policy detailing how and when they will be cleaned. This will help ensure that feed is uncontaminated and palatable.

To meet customer and consumer expectations, all broiler, poussin, and free range units must meet the minimum standard of windows at 3% of the floor area by October 2023.

### FEED AND WATER

You will now need to demonstrate that you are managing medicated feed in a way that ensures withdrawal periods are met. A written medicated feed use procedure document is required to demonstrate how you do this.





## LOOK OUT FOR OUR MANUALS AND HELPFUL GUIDES ON OUR WEBSITE.

### HEALTH AND WELFARE

You will already proactively manage your bird health and welfare through regular planning and reviewing activities. We have revised some key standards in this area.

Members producing to Red Tractor's free range and enhanced welfare chicken standards can only use slower-growing breeds – the list of acceptable breeds has been updated in line with current research. This means we can give a guarantee to consumers that only slower growing breeds are used in our free-range standards as their growth rates are better suited to this production system.

All grower units must now provide enrichment which is evenly placed in the shed by day three of production, rather than day seven. Unwrapped and untreated straw bales can be used. Perches on free range and enhanced welfare production units can now be up to 80cm, higher than before to accommodate the greater activity of slower growing breeds.

All Red Tractor poultry farms must have a named welfare officer to coordinate welfare at the hatchery and on the farm. Their contact details must be displayed, and they will have specific responsibilities, such as monitoring welfare policies and procedures.

We are strengthening our standards on Mycoplasma testing for breeder layers. In line with the Poultry Health Scheme requirements, testing records for *Mycoplasma gallisepticum* and *Mycoplasma synoviae* must be retained to ensure bird welfare and the prevention of disease.

### HATCHERY EGGS

We are strengthening our hatchery egg standards in some areas and ensuring they are in line with the standards for other poultry species.

This includes aiming to improve health and welfare in hatcheries by avoiding setting eggs from parent flocks who have tested positive from either *Mycoplasma gallisepticum* and/or *Mycoplasmas synoviae*. If it is unavoidable, a documented mycoplasma containment plan must be implemented, which covers a range of parameters to safeguard the welfare of the progeny, parent stock and planned depletion to contain the spread of disease.

All eggs in hatcheries must now be fumigated or sanitised prior to setting.



This kills bacteria on the shell and decreases the incidence of bacterial infections on the embryo.

Eggs must be stored in a temperature and humidity-controlled room and daily records of these checks must be recorded.

Traceability of eggs is being improved, so egg trolleys must now include a flock or house ID and the age of parent stock. Chick transport records must now include the quantity of the consignment, the destination and the driver's name.

All vehicles carrying chicks must be able to control ventilation to improve welfare in transport, and injured or sick chicks must not be transported – they should be humanely culled immediately as required by law.





# IN BRIEF: WHAT'S CHANGED AND WHY? (CONT.)

## BIOSECURITY AND DISEASE CONTROL

Effective biosecurity measures are essential to prevent the spread of disease and protect food safety and bird health. The new standards include extra clarity in this area to strengthen biosecurity.

Essential visitors to the farm must now also record their date of last contact with poultry within the last 7 days (or within 14 days if visited overseas).

Controls on access to all Red Tractor poultry sites must be in place and the risk of disease spread by vehicles must be minimised. Visiting vehicles must have their wheels cleaned and disinfected if entering the general biosecure area, otherwise parking should always be off-site, unless road safety necessitates parking on site.

Hands must be washed or sanitised prior to starting work, after handling deadstock, before and after meals and after visits to the toilet.

Indoor farms must operate a period free of all birds between flock cycles. Where large units (e.g., ex-airfield sites) have multiple ages of birds across the



site at the same time, house(s) within separate general biosecure areas are to be single age and operate as all-in/all-out. Farms must be able to demonstrate that they can operate each single age unit as all-in/all-out.

There must be a period of at least five calendar days between flocks. This will ensure farms have enough time between flocks to clean and disinfect houses between new flocks arriving. Inadequate cleaning between turnarounds is weak disease and contamination management.

## MEDICINES AND HUSBANDRY

Responsible and competent use of medicines and veterinary treatments is the bedrock of good animal welfare across all Red Tractor poultry species.

Records must be kept of all administered veterinary medicines. We have extended this to cover the length of withdrawal period for eggs, as they can sometimes go into the food supply chain.

Red Tractor and the poultry industry remains fully committed to the responsible use of antibiotics.

## FALLEN STOCK

Protecting Red Tractor's reputation is vital. Activists have been known to go to extraordinary lengths to create images that alarm consumers.

Hatchery waste must now always be placed in a locked container, or container only accessible to removal services and not general waste areas, while culled birds on farm must be stored in a locked container or room.

## THE ENVIRONMENT

If you grow your own feed, spread muck or use PPPs around poultry

houses and ranges, you will already storing agrochemicals in a manner that minimises the risk of contamination and pollution to crops, feedstuffs, animals, soils, groundwater and watercourses. A revision of our standard requires that spillages of agrochemicals and potential pollutants can be contained appropriately. Requirements for organic manure now cover temporary field heaps, effluent from manure heaps. With significant consumer interest and pressure to minimise waste – particularly plastic – farms must now consider opportunities to reuse, recycle and reduce waste.

## DEPOPULATION

During depopulation, the health and welfare of birds and site biosecurity is at risk, so there must be a system in place for a designated person to inspect forklifts and other catching equipment, including catchers' transport, for cleanliness prior to entry to the biosecure area.

This now applies to catching frames that are not site specific which are to be cleaned and disinfected before arrival onto the farm.

COMING SOON...

*Don't forget!*

**THE NEW RED TRACTOR POULTRY STANDARDS WILL BE AUDITED ON FARM FROM 1 NOVEMBER 2021.**