

CHICKEN STANDARDS

VET BRIEFING

VERSION 5 - 1 NOVEMBER 2021



OVERVIEW

We've reviewed our farm standards and these changes will apply from 1 November 2021.

These updates have been approved by our Technical Advisory Committee of farmers, vets, and industry experts, and Sector Board, following a public consultation. They will help members meet evolving supply chain demands, consumers expectations, best practice and new legal requirements.

Find out about the main changes and why we made them in the summary below.

The Red Tractor Team

REMINDER

Vets play an important role in upholding the Red Tractor scheme, and the wider industry's reputation. If you encounter any issues around compliance with our standards or the law, the most effective way to raise a concern is with a member of the Red Tractor Team directly using the details below.

If you wish to report a concern anonymously, please use our independent confidential TELL US web reporting service by visiting safecall.co.uk/RT.



REDTRACTORASSURANCE.ORG.UK

MEMBERHELP@REDTRACTOR.ORG.UK

TELEPHONE: 0203 617 3670



FACEBOOK.COM/REDTRACTORFOOD



TWITTER.COM/RTFARMERS



INSTAGRAM.COM/REDTRACTORFOOD

DOCUMENTS AND PROCEDURES

Red Tractor's reputation is built on traceable, safe food production that has been farmed with care. Maintaining our reputation is crucial to everyone.

DP.2

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.

HOUSING SHELTER AND HANDLING

Delivering a safe, comfortable and hygienic environment for birds is essential on all Red Tractor farms. We have revised several standards across our chicken standards to improve the impact that they have on the outcome for birds.

HF.2.2

Heat stress continues to be a significant challenge during hot weather. A heat stress policy must now be demonstrably implemented on the farm. It must be reviewed if there are any bird losses due to heat or cold stress.

HF.4

As bulk feed bins are not necessarily cleaned and/or disinfected at each turnaround, 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.

HF.5

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.

FEED AND WATER

Making sure that birds receive a daily diet sufficient to maintain full health is clearly a key objective of Red Tractor standards.

FW.12

Units need to demonstrate that they are managing medicated feed in a way that ensures withdrawal periods are met. They will now need a written medicated feed use procedure document to demonstrate how they do this.

HEALTH AND WELFARE

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

AH.1.1

For free range and Enhanced Welfare chicken production only slower growing breeds can be used. We have updated the list of slower growing breeds in line with current research and we are now requiring that only slower growing breeds can be used in free-range systems as their growth rates are better suited to this method of production. This means we can give a guarantee to consumers that only slower growing breeds are used in our free-range standards. We will be providing further details on the new breeds added to the list.

AH.4.1

Updating our standards with best practice, on all grower units, enrichment now needs to be provided and evenly placed in the shed by day three at the latest rather than day seven as before. Homegrown or locally produced straw bales can be used unwrapped and untreated. 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. Members are reminded that enrichment must be replaced following the thinning of a flock to keep it at the correct level for the birds up to final depopulation.

AH.7.1

Aligning all Red Tractor poultry standards, there is a new requirement for a named welfare officer to coordinate welfare at the hatchery and on the farm. Their name and contact number must be displayed on farm/in the hatchery. There are specific areas of responsibility for the welfare officer, such as monitoring welfare policies and procedures.

AH.
10.3

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

HATCHERY EGGS

Our standards ensure that hatchery eggs are fit for purpose, and we are strengthening standards in some areas and ensuring they are in line with the standards for other poultry species.

HC.2

We are 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 to set the eggs, then 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.

BIOSECURITY AND DISEASE CONTROL

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

BI.8

Units 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.

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.

AM.6

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.

AM.8.1

Most units will be familiar with our standard that does not allow for the prophylactic administration of antibiotics. The industry is committed to responsible antibiotic use on farm and as such we have extended this to apply to breeder replacement and layer units.

AM.9.1

Use of macrolides and fluroquinolones are only used as a last resort, under veterinary direction, on most Red Tractor poultry units already. We are extending this requirement to be applicable on breeder replacement and layer units.