



World Organisation
for Animal Health



WOAH Standards Facilitating Safe International Trade Commodity: Poultry Meat

Nairobi, Kenya

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MINISTRY OF
AGRICULTURE
AND LIVESTOCK
DEVELOPMENT



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Applicable standards – poultry animal welfare standards, focusing on the broiler value chain. Impact of private standards.

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Agenda



1. Brief introduction to animal welfare in WOAH



2. Welfare considerations for poultry



3. What the WOAH section 7 standards require for poultry production, transport, slaughter and killing (for purposes other than slaughter)



4. Some of the key features of private standards for welfare of poultry





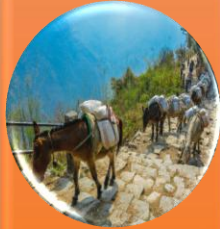
Animal Welfare in WOAH

Strategic priority since 2001, recognising the essential link between animal health and animal welfare



Vision

A world where the welfare of animals is respected, promoted and advanced, in ways that complement the pursuit of animal health, human well-being, socio-economic development and environmental sustainability.



DEVELOPMENT OF
ANIMAL WELFARE
STANDARDS

SECTION 7.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Chapter 7.1.

Introduction to the recommendations for animal welfare (2004/2025)

Chapter 7.2.

Transport of animals by sea (1998/2008)

Chapter 7.3.

Transport of animals by land (1998/2011)

Chapter 7.4.

Transport of animals by air (1982/2024)

Chapter 7.5.

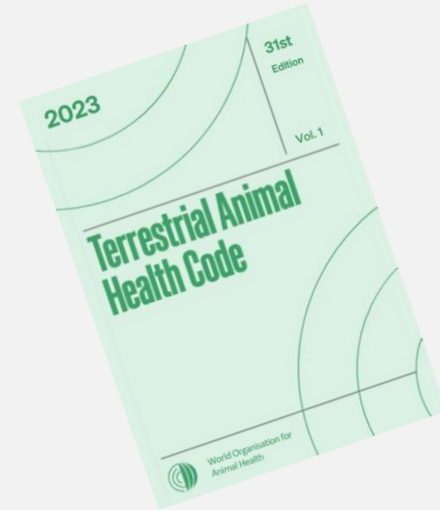
Animal welfare during slaughter (2005/2024)

Chapter 7.6.

Killing of animals for disease control purposes (2005/2016)

Chapter 7.10.

Animal welfare and broiler chicken production systems (2013/2016)





Chicken welfare



To understand welfare standards, first we must understand what chickens need for good welfare and what the issues are with management systems.



Modern chickens show few behavioural differences to their ancestors; for broilers this means:

- **Foraging** – scratching through a substrate and looking for food - highly motivated behaviour from 3-4 weeks old
- **Perching** - seeking higher places to stand, sit, or rest – highly motivated behaviour from 10 days old
- **Dust Bathing** - maintains proper feather condition by absorbing oils from feathers and skin – starts 1-2 weeks of age – important social behaviour





Chicken welfare: Social structure and behaviour



Chickens are highly social. Feral chickens typically form small flocks, with one male and several females.

Chickens form a social hierarchy, often referred to as the "pecking order", from highest to lowest rank.

Initially (first 24-48 hours) the rank is determined by aggression (pecking) but once established it is stable and often reminded through gestures rather than aggression. However, changes to the environment and stress can collapse the order and means rank has to be re-established.



Chicken welfare: genetics

Modern breeds of broilers have been selected to grow very rapidly (slaughtered at 5-6 weeks), causing pain from subsequent leg disorders.

➡ Slower-growing breeds; breeding for stronger legs; reduced stocking densities; appropriate lighting levels; not being kept on faecally contaminated litter; providing enrichment with interesting food and materials that encourage activity (e.g. straw bales).



The breeder hens begin to lay eggs at 24-26 weeks of age, so are feed restricted up to this age to prevent this rapid growth, causing chronic hunger and stress.

➡ Slower-growing breeds; feeding low-density food.



Chapter 7.10 Poultry production

Measures of welfare

- Mortality, culling and morbidity
- Gait (musculoskeletal problems causing lameness)
- Contact dermatitis
- Feather condition
- Incidence of disease, metabolic conditions and parasites
- Behaviour, e.g.: fear, huddling, panting, dust bathing, foraging, feather pecking, cannibalism
- Feed and water consumption
- Performance (growth rate, feed conversion, liveability/mortality)
- Injury rate, e.g.: due to other broilers (pecking), environment (contact dermatitis) or people (broken bones etc at catching)
- Eye conditions (dust, ammonia, low light intensity)
- Vocalisation



Chapter 7.10 Poultry production

Recommendations – topic areas

Biosecurity and animal health	
Biosecurity and disease prevention	Animal health management, preventive medicine and veterinary treatment

Environment		
Thermal comfort	Lighting	Air quality
Noise	Nutrition	Flooring, bedding, resting surfaces and litter quality
Prevention of feather pecking and cannibalism	Stocking density	Outdoor areas
Protection from predators	Choice of broiler strain	Painful interventions
Handling and inspection	Personnel training	Emergency plans
Location, construction and equipment of farms	On farm harvesting	



Chapter 7.3: Transport by land (& 7.4 for day-old chicks by air)

Responsibilities, competency and training

Planning and contingencies

Catching

Ventilation, removal of ammonia, cooling

Ability to sit down

Risks of injuries due to handling

Prompt attention to sick or injured birds





Chapter 7.5 Slaughter

Competencies and training of staff

Design of facilities

Restraint and Stunning

Animals in containers articles

Some welfare concerns:

- Slaughter as soon as possible after arrival
- Provision of cooling in lairage
- Legs and wings may get trapped in cages
- Emptying, tipping and shaking of cages to remove birds
- Shackling upside-down
- Multiple indicators should be used to ensure effective stun (unconsciousness) and slaughter





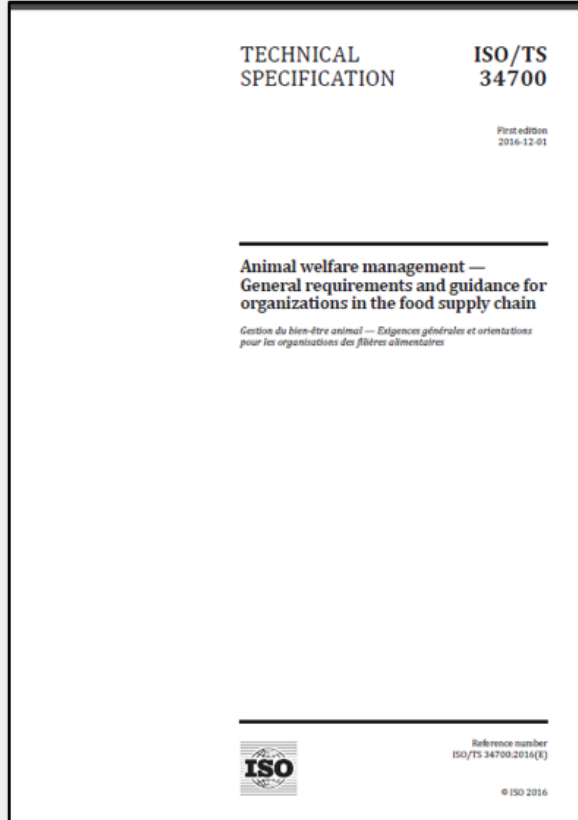
Chapter 7.6 Killing for disease control revision (Killing for purposes other than slaughter)



Commission agreed with ad hoc group to remove article on water-based foam, due to welfare concerns associated with its use, similar to drowning.

Commission also deleted article on ventilation shutdown, due to strong welfare concerns associated with the method.

Addition of anaesthetics to feed or water was also removed due to variables that impact effectiveness that are difficult to control, for example palatability, reluctance to eat/drink especially when ill or stressed, difficulty with monitoring consumption.



ISO/TS 34700:2016

Designed to guide users in conducting a gap analysis and developing an animal welfare plan that is aligned with the WOAHA Code

It can also be used to facilitate the implementation of any public or private sector animal welfare standards that meet at least the WOAHA Code



Private standards

These standards generally aim to address the most urgent welfare issues, such as personnel training, stocking density, growth rate, daylight, perches and enrichment, air quality, catching, slaughter.

There are many examples such as GlobalGAP; the Better Chicken Commitment; Global Animal Partnership (G.A.P); European Chicken Commitment; etc.

Welfare concerns with fast-growing strains have led to animal welfare standards such as the 'Better Chicken Commitment', focusing on slower-growing breeds. However, some prominent food brands have dropped out of the Commitment, due to supply chain and environmental pressures associated with slower growing breeds.



Private standards – example of impact

Illustrating the impact of private standards, here is an example given by the European Chicken Commitment on its website comparing the differences between its requirements to the national requirements in Germany and to a local animal welfare initiative.

	Standard in Germany	»Initiative Tierwohl«	European Chicken Commitment
Stocking density	39kg/m ² (up to 26 animals/m ²)	35kg/m ² (up to 23 animals/m ²)	30kg/m ² (up to 20 animals/m ²)
Access to free-range areas	No	No	No
Thinning	Unrestricted	Unrestricted	Max. 1 per flock
Restriction on overbreeding	No	No	Yes
Daylight	Partial, 20 Lux	Partial, 20 Lux	Yes, 50 Lux
Perches	No	No	2m/1.000 Animals
Pecking substrates	No	One for approx. 3.000 animals	Two for 1.000 animals
Stunning without hanging birds upside down	No	No	Yes
Third-party audits	No	Yes	Yes

Thank You

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