

# CHICKEN COOP STANDARDS AND TREATMENT OF EGG LAYING HENS

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## Summary with Details Following

- o Adequate shelter for all birds means:
  - Allows for the maintenance of good health through air quality, weather protection, limits risk of disease, and excludes predators.
  - Shelter must not be harmful to birds with a minimum of two square feet per one laying hen.
  - Must be enough perches for all birds to perch at once.
  - Air must circulate with dust and temperature levels not harmful to birds.
  - Sufficient daylight and clean, dry, appropriate bedding.
  - All birds must have ready and safe access to the outdoors with available scratch and fresh water.
  - Birds must be fed an appropriate and wholesome diet in sufficient quantities to promote good health and limit undue competition among birds.
  - All birds must have access to outdoors.
  - Indoors a minimum of 2 square feet of space must be allotted per bird.
- o Health and Condition of Birds
  - Toe clipping, dubbing, or other surgical alterations are not permitted.
  - Veterinary advice and care shall be obtained when necessary.

## Environment

**OBJECTIVES:** *The environment in which hens are kept must take into account their welfare needs and be designed to protect them from physical discomfort, distress, and allow them to perform their natural behavior.*

## Coop Requirements

- Adequate shelter for all birds at one time, the shelter must be enclosed on all sides with a roof.
- The design, construction and maintenance of enclosures, buildings and equipment for laying birds should be such that they:
  1. Allow the fulfillment of essential biological needs and the maintenance of good health.
  2. Allow for easy maintenance of good conditions of hygiene and air quality
  3. Provide shelter from adverse weather conditions
  4. Limit the risk of disease, disorders manifested by behavioral changes, traumatic injuries to the birds, and injuries caused by birds to each other
  5. Exclude predators, rodents, and wild animals.
- Materials used for the construction of accommodation and equipment with which the animals may come into contact must not be harmful to them, and must be capable of being thoroughly cleaned
- Accommodation and fittings for securing animals should be constructed and maintained so that there are no sharp edges or protrusions likely to cause injury to the animal
- The freedom of movement of animals, having regard to their species, must be sufficient to allow the natural behavior of the animals.
- The stocking density must be a minimum of one laying hen per two square feet.
- The design and dimensions of coop doors must be such that an adult hen can enter and exit without undergoing unnecessary suffering or sustaining injury.
- Perches are required for hens.
  1. There must be enough perches so that all birds can perch at one time.
  2. Perch space must be provided at no less than six inches per hen. This can include the alighting rail immediately in front of the nest boxes.
  3. Perches must provide sufficient support, particularly for the forward facing claws of each foot.
  4. There should be a sufficient gap on either side of any perch to allow the hens to grip the perches without risk of trapping their claws.

- Air circulation, dust levels, and temperature must be kept within limits which are not harmful to the animals.
- All buildings shall have daylight levels sufficient to allow all hens to see one another and be seen clearly, to investigate their surroundings, and to show normal levels of activity.
- Housing used by birds should ensure that the birds are not subject to distress caused by extremes of temperature.
- Bedding must be clean, dry, and appropriate for chickens.

## Access to Outdoors

- All birds must have ready access to the outdoors, shade, exercise areas, fresh air, and direct sunlight, except in cases of sickness, injury, the early stages of the animals' development, or inclement weather conditions.
- The free range area must be free of environmental hazards such as oil cans, chemicals, and sharp or protruding objects
- Shelter or overhead cover must be accessible
- Birds should be encouraged to use the outdoor area by the provision of adequate, suitable, properly managed vegetation (sand is okay), outdoor scratch, and a fresh supply of water are sufficiently available.

## Feed and Water

**OBJECTIVES:** *Birds must have access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and to promote a positive state of well being. Feed and water must be distributed in such a way that birds can eat and drink without undue competition.*

- Animals must be fed a wholesome diet which is appropriate to their age and species.
- Feed must be available in sufficient quantities to maintain the animals in good health, to satisfy their nutritional needs, and to promote a positive state of well being.
  1. All animals must have access to feed at intervals appropriate to their physiological needs.
  2. All animals must have access to suitable water supply and be provided with an adequate supply of fresh drinking water each day.
  3. Feeding and watering equipment shall be designed, constructed, placed and maintained so that contamination of food and water and the harmful effects of competition between animals are minimized.
  4. Feed and water must be readily accessible to all birds and particular attention should be given to its provision in areas used by subordinate birds.
  5. Drinking water must be clear and clean.
  6. Precautions must be taken to minimize the risk of drinking water freezing.
  7. In the case of birds which have difficulty feeding or drinking appropriate measure should be taken to resolve this issue.
  8. All equipment, including feed bins, and watering equipment should be effectively cleaned on a regular basis.
  9. Hens must have daily access to coarse calcium to aid bone strength and shell quality.
  10. The use of growth promoters is prohibited.
  11. Antibiotics may only be administered for therapeutic reasons such as disease treatment.
  12. No feedstuffs containing mammalian or avian derived protein are permitted with the exception of eggs and egg products.
  13. Feed must be appropriate to hen age, stage of production, and species.
  14. Feed must be provided in sufficient quantities to maintain good health and it must be formulated to satisfy hen nutritional needs.
  15. Food must not be moldy, and it must be dry.
  16. Withdrawal of feed to induce molt is not permitted.

## Health and Condition of Birds

**OBJECTIVES:** *Hens must be protected from undue pain, injury, and disease. The environment in which hens are housed must be conducive to good health.*

- Toe clipping, dubbing, or other surgical alterations are not permitted.
- The hen's health must be maintained with particular attention to their cleanliness and the condition of their feet, feathers, and comb.
- In the case of sick animals
  1. The hen shall be cared for appropriately and without delay
  2. When necessary, sick or injured animals shall be isolated in suitable accommodation with, where appropriate, dry comfortable bedding and easy access to food and water.

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Adapted from:

***HFAC Standards for Production of Egg Laying Hens***

2008 Standards Manual: Egg Laying Hens

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