



Chicken Farmers of Canada
**ANIMAL CARE
PROGRAM**



UPDATE

January 2017

Animal Care Program (2009) Update – New Highly Recommended Items

The new *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Hatching Eggs, Breeders, Chickens and Turkeys* was released in June, 2016. Chicken Farmers of Canada's Animal Care Program (ACP) will be undergoing a full update using the National Farm Animal Care Council's (NFACC) Animal Care Assessment Framework process, to come into compliance with the new Code of Practice requirements. Through that process, all "requirements" in the new Code need to be incorporated in the ACP manual as "mandatory" items, but that process will take time. A new ACP manual is not expected to be available until 2018.

What are the changes and why is CFC making them?

To help prepare for the changes that are coming in the next version of the Animal Care Program, CFC is incorporating the "requirements" from the new Code of Practice as "Highly Recommended" (HR) items in the Animal Care Program. Updated record forms, which reflect the new HR items, will also be made available.

Incorporating the requirements from the Code of Practice now as HR items in the ACP manual will provide an opportunity to become familiar with the requirements in the new Code of Practice, and to begin implementing them on-farm, prior to when they become mandatory when the next version of the Animal Care Program is released.

How will this affect my implementation on-farm, my audit and my ACP certification?

The new HR items will be incorporated into the record forms and farmers are expected to begin implementing them on-farm as of **May 2017**.

The new HR items will also be incorporated into the audit checklists and CFC auditors will be including them as part of their audits as of June 15, 2017. Any HR items not implemented at the time of the audit will be noted on the audit report.

As with other HR items in the ACP manual, the new HR items will have no impact on certification.

Important Note

The wording of the HR items listed below may not be the same wording that is adopted into the next version of the Animal Care Program. That is because the final wording that is incorporated into the next ACP manual will be determined by the committee tasked with updating the ACP through the NFACC Animal Care Assessment Framework process.

New HR practices based on the Code:

The following HR items are based on the *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Hatching Eggs, Breeders, Chickens and Turkeys* (2016). They have been presented according to the relevant section in the Animal Care Program manual.

Section 2 – Environment (Temperature, Air Quality and Lighting)

2b – Air Quality

HR

Ammonia should be monitored, at minimum, once at the beginning of the last week of grow-out and measured on each floor at bird level, using an ammonia monitoring device (e.g. strips or tubes). If ammonia goes out of range (20 to 25 ppm) immediate steps should be taken to improve it.

2c – Lighting

A period of darkness benefits birds by allowing them to sleep and develop 24-hour day/night rhythms, which is important in immune function, growth rate, digestion, lameness, and general health. Providing a dark period controls growth early in life, which gives skeletal and metabolic systems a chance to develop before the birds put on more weight.

Note

The definition of a period of darkness is not complete lights out. Darkness is defined as 20% of the light intensity of the light period. For example, if your daytime lighting levels are set at 10 lux, the light levels during the period of darkness would be no more than 2 lux.

HR

By at least 24 hours from placement, chicks should be provided with a minimum of 1 continuous hour of darkness in each 24-hour period.

The dark period should be gradually increased.

Starting by day 5 from placement through to 7 days prior to catching, birds should have a dark period of at least 4 consecutive hours in each 24-hour period.

The dark period should be no more than 20% of the light intensity of the light period. During the light period, enough illumination should be provided to allow birds to navigate their surroundings and to be visually inspected without difficulty (e.g. 5 to 10 lux). Light intensity should only be reduced temporarily to correct abnormal behaviours.

2c – Back-up systems

HR

A contingency plan for reasonably foreseeable problems that may affect bird welfare should be prepared and reviewed with all personnel.

Section 3 – Stocking Density, Housing System and Litter Management

3a – Stocking Density

HR

For producers stocking between 31 kg/m² and 38 kg/m² only:

A flock health plan should be developed and followed. Refer to Section 5 – *Health Care Practices* for information on flock health plans.

Section 4 – Bird Monitoring and Handling

HR

Chicks should be handled in a way that prevents injury and reduces stress. Chicks, and boxes of chicks, should not be dropped from a height that may cause injury (e.g. 15 cm onto a hard surface or 30 cm onto a soft surface).

Sometimes, you will have to handle some of your birds for closer examination. For example, this could happen when you see the early clinical signs of a disease. Handling can be stressful to the birds if it is not done properly and injury could result. Being in an inverted position (upside down) for any length of time is stressful for birds and can cause discomfort. Birds should not be carried solely by the head, neck, one wing, or tail feathers.

HR

You should check your heating and lighting systems at least twice daily. Any defective systems should be repaired.

Section 5 – Health Care Practices

A flock health plan contributes to bird well-being by providing strategies for disease prevention, rapid diagnosis, and effective treatment. A poultry veterinarian can assist with recommending appropriate vaccinations to prevent infectious diseases as well as internal and external parasites.

A flock health plan may include:

- Vaccination protocols
- Protocols for dealing with internal and external parasites
- Observation of birds for injury or signs of disease
- Protocols for prevention, detection and treatment of disease or injury, including setting targets for measuring incidences of disease and injuries
- Protocols for managing sick and injured birds
- Protocols for culling birds
- Maintaining flock health and mortality records

Tracking the number of culls and the reason for doing so (e.g. sick, not eating, lame) can be helpful in identifying management practices that need to be improved.

HR

Farmers who have access to health and/or injury data from their processors should monitor the incidence of hockburn, breast blisters and footpad lesions. A veterinarian should be consulted and corrective actions taken if recurring problems are identified.

Mortality levels and the number of culls should be recorded separately.

An acceptable method of euthanasia should be used.

All equipment used for euthanasia should be well maintained and used according to the manufacturer's directions.

Birds should be promptly treated or euthanized in a humane manner by skilled personnel when:

- Exhibiting obvious signs of pain
- Experiencing lameness that inhibits or prevents them from walking and/or reaching food and water

Birds should be inspected for signs of consciousness after the euthanasia method has been applied to confirm death. If signs of consciousness are observed, a second application of the euthanasia method or an alternate method should be applied immediately.

Death is confirmed by cessation of breathing and heartbeat.

Methods to assess loss of consciousness and death include:

- Bird does not blink when the surface of the eye is touched (corneal reflex)
- Lack of rhythmic breathing (check for abdominal movement in the vent area)
- Lack of vocalization (other than exhalation that occurs as the lungs deflate)
- Lack of neck muscle tone

Acceptable methods of euthanasia*		
Euthanasia Method	Conditions	Comments
Manual Cervical Dislocation	Crushing of the neck bones is unacceptable prior to loss of consciousness This method is restricted to smaller birds (e.g. ≤ 3kg) although this may vary depending on operator ability	Performed correctly, cervical dislocation results in the luxation (dislocation) – never crushing – of the cervical vertebrae The site of the dislocation should be as close to the head as possible
Mechanical Cervical Dislocation	Crushing of the neck bones is unacceptable prior to loss of consciousness Device must be purpose-designed and appropriate for the size of bird	
Non-Penetrating Captive Bolt/ Penetrating Captive Bolt	Correct placement of the device on the head is critical Humane restraint methods (e.g. 2 people, appropriate restraint device) may be necessary	May be more appropriate for large birds
Manual Blunt Force Trauma	Humane restraint methods (e.g. 2 people, appropriate restraint device) may be necessary The impact must be of sufficient force and accurately placed in order to result in immediate loss of consciousness and death in a single blow	Alternative methods should be considered due to the potential for incorrect application
Decapitation	Instrument must be sharp and of appropriate size Procedure must be carried out in one quick motion and result in a complete severance of the head Requires secure restraint of the bird	Need for environmental sanitation (blood) Risk of disease transmission via blood
Gas Inhalation: Carbon Dioxide (CO ₂)	Requires specialized equipment (pressure-reducing regulator, CO ₂ cylinder or tank) and a closed chamber to contain gas Gas must be supplied in a precisely regulated and purified form without contaminants or adulterants	May cause brief periods of distress before birds become unconscious Birds should be placed in the chamber in a single layer Use in a well-ventilated area for operator safety

* Note: all methods described in this table are acceptable when the conditions noted have been met.

* This table has been adapted from the *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Hatching Eggs, Breeders, Chickens, and Turkeys*. Refer to the *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Hatching Eggs, Breeders, Chickens, and Turkeys* for the full list of acceptable methods of euthanasia.

Section 6 – Catching and Loading

HR

The following features should be included in your barn design when building new barns or renovating existing barns:

- Eavestroughs located over loading doors
- Buildings should have a sufficient number of (and size of) doors or openings for the type of catching that is occurring
- Loading and unloading areas and ramps that allow the shipping crew to handle the birds properly. Your design should minimize the needless transfer of the birds between handlers
- Adequate lighting should be provided to facilitate working at night

Driveways and yards should be maintained to facilitate access by transport vehicles.

Openings through which birds are passed should be large enough to ensure that birds can be transferred in a way that avoids injury.

Pre-transport feed withdrawal should be managed to minimize the time that birds are off feed.

Water should be available until catching commences.

Prior to transport, the flock should be evaluated for fitness and those birds deemed unfit for transport should be euthanized or separated out.

In consultation with processors, wet birds should not be loaded in cold weather if there is a risk that birds will become chilled.

Birds that are not loaded for transport and not euthanized should continue to be cared for as outlined in this program.

In consultation with processors, the flock and environmental conditions, as well as expected journey duration, should be taken into consideration when loading birds for transport.

Section 8 – Workers and Management

HR

A code of conduct covering bird welfare should be signed by all farm personnel.

Personnel should be monitored and receive additional training as necessary.