NATIONAL ANIMAL WELFARE STANDARDS

FOR THE

CHICKEN MEAT INDUSTRY

The Standards

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Prepared by: Barnett, J.L., Edge, M.E., Thomson, L., Mackenzie, M., Sansom, G. Kite, V., 2008.

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1. PREFACE

These 'National Animal Welfare Standards for the Chicken Meat Industry' (the Standards) have been developed to help fulfil both the Chicken Meat Industry's and the community's expectations of the high levels of quality assurance associated with chicken meat production.

These Standards are based upon the previously developed "Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry" originally published in 2001 and they provide support for existing regulatory frameworks and other quality assurance requirements for commercial customers in the chicken meat industry.

These Standards contain provisions based on the Model Codes of Practice for poultry production, transport and processing, the Australian Standards and Guidelines for the Welfare of Animals, international and national guidelines, current practice and the scientific literature.

It is intended that these Standards provide information for all people responsible for the care and management of poultry reared, transported and processed for chicken meat. In addition, specific industry manuals have been prepared in support of this document, which contain the standards and example recording sheets for the purposes of assisting implementation, audit and verification.

Australian meat chicken companies currently address issues associated with food safety, meat quality and biosecurity and in some instances animal welfare, using quality assurance systems. The addition of comprehensive animal welfare provisions to these quality assurance systems enables industry as a whole, to meet increasing regulatory and commercial requirements and community expectations. Thus, these animal welfare Standards are intended for incorporation into existing company or industry quality assurance programs.

The development of these Standards was based on the aforementioned welfare audit documentation that involved a collaborative approach with a range of stakeholders. A steering committee was established to review and revise the welfare audit documentation into these outcome-based Standards for ease of integration with existing company and industry quality assurance systems.

These Standards will be reviewed over time to ensure they remain up to date and present a comprehensive and recommended practice reference for the chicken meat industry.

2. MISSION STATEMENT

The overall goal of the meat chicken industry is to deliver high animal welfare standards that are integrated across the production chain to ensure the welfare of poultry from birth to slaughter. The mission of the meat chicken industry with regard to animal welfare is to ensure the uptake of acceptable and agreed national animal welfare standards, that are implemented and effectively verified.

3. PURPOSE

The purpose of these Standards is to provide a framework to describe the agreed industry animal welfare outcomes for the chicken meat industry.

These Standards aim to:

- Support the existing standards and guidelines in the chicken meat industry including:
  - Barnett, J.L., Glatz, P.C., Almond, A., Hemsworth, P.H., Cransberg, P.H., Parkinson, G.B. and Jongman, E. C. (2001). A Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry. (Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, Canberra, Australia).
  - AS 4696-2002 Australian Standard for the Hygienic Production and Transportation of Meat and Meat Products for Human Consumption. CSIRO publishing web address, under food production: http://www.publish.csiro.au/
  - OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code 2005: Guidelines for the Slaughter of Animals for Human Consumption. OIE World Organisation for Animal Health web address: http://www.oie.int/
  - Provide consistency with published commercial guidelines, for example the American Meat Institute Foundation's Good Management Practices for Animal Handling and Stunning, 2005 Edition.
- Support the Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Poultry, 4th Edition. SCARM Report 83. CSIRO publishing, 2002. http://www. publish.csiro.au/
- Support the Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals. Land Transport of Poultry, 2nd Edition. PISC Report 91. CSIRO publishing, 2006. http://www. publish.csiro.au/ . This Code of Practice is now the Australian Standards for the Land Transport of Animals, Draft, 2007.
- Support the Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals at Livestock Slaughtering Establishments. SCARM Report 79. CSIRO Publishing 2002. http://www. publish.csiro.au/
- Support the National Biosecurity Manual for Contract Meat Chicken Farming. Australian Chicken Meat Federation, Sydney, 2002.
- Clearly define the Standards, with associated indicative targets, for incorporation into quality assurance systems.
- Promote the humane and considerate treatment of poultry, and the use of good husbandry and management practices to improve the welfare of poultry from rearing to transport and processing.
- Provide information for all people responsible for the care and management of poultry on their responsibilities.
- Provide assurance to customers of poultry and poultry products from Australian poultry that these Standards are met.

4. SCOPE

The scope of these Standards directly concerns the rearing and management of poultry for meat production in the chicken meat industry.

These Standards, however, contain general principles that can be applied to other classes of poultry and poultry production systems (for example turkey production).

A large number of service providers are involved in the delivery of services to for meat chicken production. These include pick-up crew and transport contractors, company personnel and customers, feed suppliers, owners[1], managers, other farm operators and employees of the production business.

All have a responsibility to ensure that poultry are handled and managed according to Australian welfare requirements. This is best achieved through a combination of industry quality assurance systems and compliance with legislation.

5. APPLICATION

It is intended that animal welfare be addressed by:

- Incorporating these Standards and the associated Manuals into the enterprise or company quality assurance system.

The Standards are in a series of documents:

1. **The Standards** – the overarching document that contains all of the key outcomes expected for animal welfare from rearing to slaughter (including transport) and the principles to underpin these outcomes.
2. **Manuals for each sector (for industry use only):**
   - Manual for Meat Chicken Farming
   - Manual for Breeder Production
   - Manual for The Hatchery and Chick Transport
   - Manual for the Pick-Up Crew

The manuals are designed for implementation into daily practice and are specifically customised for those enterprises involved in breeder production, meat chicken farming, hatchery management and pick-up. They contain guidelines, with additional notes for information on targets and practices, checklist questions and recording sheets.

Further information and fact sheets are also available at www.poultryhub.com.au

[1] Throughout this document, owner means 'owner of the birds'.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF OWNERS AND CONTRACTORS

- It is the responsibility of owners[2] and contractors involved in the meat chicken industry to ensure high animal welfare outcomes utilising principles outlined in a quality management system. Therefore for the farm, transport and processing sectors, there should be a system in place for the implementation and review of all practices that impact on animal welfare.

- It is the responsibility of owners and contractors involved in the meat chicken industry to ensure that all other personnel managing livestock are aware of their legal and moral responsibility to care for the welfare of animals under their control and that all personnel managing livestock are competent and trained for the purpose(s).

- There is a requirement for feedback between owners, contractors and other personnel (including pick-up crew) on the expectations for animal welfare and the compliance with animal welfare outcomes.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES OF GOVERNMENT

Various levels of Government have roles of ensuring that animal welfare outcomes are met, and industry has a responsibility to comply with the relevant Government animal welfare requirements.

8. EQUIVALENCE

The Standards contain guidelines that describe how the intended outcomes for each Standard can be achieved. These principles are also detailed in the Manuals as a practical tool for people involved in poultry production to integrate and monitor the Standards within their existing company practices and management systems.

It should be noted that there may be a number of practical activities and methods that can be employed to demonstrate that the principles within the Standards are being met.

Therefore, the guidelines outlined in the Standards do not preclude individuals or companies from utilising procedures or actions that differ from those described, provided the animal welfare outcomes described are met.

[2] Throughout this document, owner means 'owner of the birds'.

9. SUMMARY OF THE ANIMAL WELFARE STANDARDS FOR THE CHICKEN MEAT INDUSTRY

A summary of the Standards for the chicken meat industry, followed by the outcome intended for each Standard is below:

Standard 1. Planning and contingencies

Planning is carried out for daily management and care of eggs and birds and contingencies are in place for emergencies to minimise risks to animal welfare.

Standard 2. Maintenance and design of sheds, facilities and equipment

Sheds, facilities and equipment are designed, maintained and operated to ensure minimal interference or stress to birds.

Standard 3. Bird handling competency and training

All personnel responsible for the management and operation of facilities and equipment, care and handling of eggs and birds are competent and trained.

Standard 4. General bird management

Daily care of birds and husbandry activities are conducted to minimise stress or injury to birds.

Standard 5. Humane destruction

Procedures for humane destruction are carried out to minimise risks to bird and chick welfare and in a timely, efficient and effective manner.

Standard 6. Egg management

Eggs are managed to result in quality chicks with minimal risks to their welfare.

Standard 7. Chick management at the hatchery

Effective management and husbandry procedures are in place to minimise risks to the welfare of eggs and chicks from hatching to placement.

Standard 8. Bird Pick-up and Transport

Birds are selected, assembled and loaded for transport and transported in a manner that minimises risks to their welfare.

Standard 9. Transport of Chicks

Chicks are prepared and selected for transport and transported in a manner that minimises risks to their welfare.

Standard 10. Processing

Birds are handled and slaughtered in a manner that minimises risks to their welfare, and delivery and processing are planned to minimise time birds are held in containers before slaughter.

STANDARD 1. PLANNING AND CONTINGENCIES

Outcome

Planning is carried out for daily management and care of eggs and birds and contingencies are in place for emergencies to minimise risks to animal welfare.

Guidelines

1.1 The policy objective for a poultry business must include animal welfare and a demonstrated commitment of the proprietor to this objective.

1.2 The quality assurance program for the enterprise must include animal welfare considerations for daily management of poultry on the premises.

1.3 Standard Operating Procedures include contingencies outlining appropriate actions in the event of delay in delivery of resources, equipment breakdown, or extremes of weather.

1.4 Contingency plans are in place for failure of power, water and feed supply.

1.4.1 Note: This may include a back up system for managing feed, water and temperature and/or arrangements to obtain feed and water as required.

1.4.2 Note: For emergency events that are considered exceptional to normal daily practice, contingency arrangements/considerations and any actions taken to resolve the issue should be recorded. Any decision applied in an emergency situation should be made with consideration of the birds' welfare at all times.

1.5 A system is in place to test alarms for mechanically ventilated sheds and facilities.

1.5.1 Note: Staff are available to promptly respond on a 24 hour basis when alarms activate.

1.6 A system is in place to check water quality.

1.6.1 Note: Surface or bore water should be checked to ensure it is of suitable quality for the birds. 'Suitable quality' means water that is drinkable, does not exceed the acceptable limits for pathogens/disease causing organisms, has desirable taste/odour/colour, is reasonably clear (for effective chlorination), and contains no harmful chemicals. Birds should be observed to be drinking[3].

1.6.2 Note: The system may include actions such as the regular observation of birds drinking, growth records, examining litter quality, testing for microbiological contamination and pH, chlorination treatment and keeping chlorination records. Review at least annually, depending on quality and company policy

1.6.3 Note: Targets for chlorination may be obtained from the owner and/or are provided within the 'National Biosecurity Manual for Contract Meat Chicken Farming'.

[3] For more accurate targets (ie that apply to each particular system at the enterprise), contact the owner of the birds.

1.7 For chicken meat grower and breeder enterprises, a system is in place to ensure that the practices outlined in the industry 'National Biosecurity Manual for Contract Chicken Farming' are followed.

1.7.1 Note: Refer to the National Biosecurity Manual for Contract Meat Chicken Farming, for procedures.

1.8 For the hatchery, a system is in place to manage biosecurity risks that includes procedures for the facility, visitors, staff and equipment.

1.8.1 Note: procedures to include;

– sanitising hatchery equipment and facilities;

– staff hygiene practices and visitors;

– pest control (Note: wild bird and rodent control programs should be in place);

– farm vehicles;

– disposal of egg and chick debris.

1.9 A system is in place for annual internal review of all practices that impact on animal welfare.

1.9.1 Note: This should be done in conjunction with the owner's technical advisors or service personnel and may include reviewing production records, practices, training, or conducting an internal audit to ensure animal welfare is well-managed, within targets and corrective actions are effective.

1.9.2 Note: Standard Operating Procedures for on farm use should include contingencies outlining the appropriate actions in the event of delay in delivery of resources, equipment breakdown, or extremes of weather.

1.9.3 Note: There are a number of factors that may impact on animal welfare that also relate to requirements for biosecurity and bird health. The National Biosecurity Manual for Contract Meat Chicken Farming includes standards on biosecurity procedures for facilities, pest control, staff hygiene, visitors, disease management, and water treatment in relation to the above standards and provides the appropriate recording sheets and references.

1.10 Contractual arrangements with poultry suppliers include provisions on animal welfare and feedback is provided on compliance.

STANDARD 2. MAINTENANCE AND DESIGN OF SHEDS, FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT

Outcome

Sheds, facilities and equipment are designed, maintained and operated to ensure minimal interference or stress to birds.

Guidelines

2.1 Sheds, facilities and equipment are designed, operated and maintained to ensure that injuries to birds are minimised.

2.2 A system is in place for the repair and maintenance of alarms, heating and cooling systems, ventilation systems (natural or mechanical), mechanical feed and water delivery systems and other facility defects that may impact on bird welfare.

2.2.1 Note: Records of major repairs/defects and actions taken should be kept.

2.2.2 Note: Regularly test electrical, safety and other facility systems to ensure their operation. Records of repairs/defects and actions taken should be kept.

2.3 Natural or mechanical ventilation systems are operational and effective in providing adequate air exchange for the age and number of birds.

2.3.1 Note: Minimum ventilation targets should be met as recommended by the owner and according to the relative humidity and temperature at all times.

2.3.2 Note: Records of temperature and humidity should be kept at least at times of high humidity (80% or above) and high temperature (30°C or higher)[4]. Refer to section 4.7.3.

2.4 Litter is provided and is maintained as required.

2.4.1 Note: The extent to which litter is dry, friable (ie not caked) and of good quality across the entire shed depends on temperature (especially if utilising foggers), humidity, stocking density, feed type and quality, changes in diet or disease status, condition of the birds, litter quality and overall shed management. Excessively wet litter can increase the risk of breast bruises, hock burn, foot lesions, etc and predispose birds to poor performance.

When using foggers, because of the recognised compromise between reducing heat load and maintaining dry litter, careful monitoring of ventilation should occur.

2.4.2 Note: Litter should be managed (as far as practicable) to ensure it is dry and friable and that wet areas around the drinkers are minimised. Feathers of birds should appear 'clean and dry'. Litter should be comprised of appropriate materials for the birds being housed.

[4] For more accurate targets (ie that apply to each particular system at the enterprise), contact the owner of the birds.

2.4.3 Note: Dust should also be managed to ensure levels that do not cause harm to birds.

2.5 Facilities for water and feed provision are checked daily to ensure that they are fully operational and deliver as required.

2.5.1 Note: This may include inspecting and raising drinkers and feeders to ensure appropriate height/positioning and bird access as the birds grow. Facilities for water/feed should be appropriately designed and positioned to ensure birds can access with ease.

Water pressure/height gauges should be checked to be set accurately, are fully operational and that water is available to birds at all times. Feeder adjustment devices are checked to be operational at all times.

As a guide, inspect drinker and feeder lines and individual drinkers and feeders at specific sites on a daily basis, in a pattern that covers the whole shed on a weekly basis to ensure water and feed availability as required.

2.6 Shed temperatures are managed to provide conditions according to recommended targets[5] for birds at all stages of production. If extremes of temperature cause deviation from targets, action is taken as far as practicable to minimise impact on birds.

2.6.1 Note: Facilities including fans, sprays, foggers, sprinklers and heaters are regularly checked to ensure they are operational.

2.6.2 Note: A system is in place or action is taken aimed to prevent the ambient temperature at bird level for fully feathered birds exceeding 33°C (as far as practicable).

2.7 For free-range systems, the facilities must provide access to an outdoor range and indoor shelter.

2.7.1 Note: As a guide, birds when either fully or reasonably feathered and depending on the growth rate, must have ready access through openings to the outdoor range during daylight hours for a minimum of 8 h per day, taking into account the climatic conditions. Suggested size and spacing of openings is a minimum 35 cm high x 40 cm wide every 2 m per 1000 birds.

2.7.2 Note: As a guide, stocking density in sheds/range should be approximately 14 birds per sq metre (30kg/sq metre, depending on breed).

2.7.3 Note: Birds must have access to shaded areas and shelter from rain, and windbreaks should be provided in exposed areas

2.7.4 Note: Birds may be restricted from accessing the range during adverse weather or if there is a serious outbreak of disease.

[5] For more accurate targets (ie that apply to each particular system at the enterprise), contact the owner of the birds.

2.8 For free-range systems, the outdoor range should be sited and managed to avoid muddy or unsuitable conditions.

2.8.1 Note: The range should be maintained to provide sufficient grassed area for birds (see 2.7.2). Remedial action, if required, may include reducing stocking densities or implementing a rotational program for the flock.

2.8.2 Note: Birds should not be kept on land that is contaminated with poisonous plant material or chemicals which may cause health problems.

2.9 Lighting is managed according to the lighting program/specifications provided by the owner[6].

2.9.1 Note: Lighting should be as uniform as possible in the shed.

2.10 For hatchery enterprises, all areas are cleaned and sanitised in accordance with protocols.

2.10.1 Note: Appropriate measures are in place to verify the effectiveness of the cleaning/sanitation protocols. For instance, regular microbiological testing should be carried out according to a developed procedure or program.

[6] For more accurate targets (ie that apply to each particular system at the enterprise), contact the owner of the birds

STANDARD 3. BIRD HANDLING COMPETENCY AND TRAINING

Outcome

All personnel responsible for the management and operation of facilities and equipment, care and handling of eggs and birds are competent and trained.

Guidelines

3.1 Persons responsible for the management or handling of birds, or both, are competent in their required tasks, such as (but not restricted to) any of the following:

– handling of birds, chicks or eggs as required;

– inspection of birds, facilities and shed or hatchery environment and equipment;

– the identification of normal and abnormal bird behaviour, injuries and distress;

– the appropriate management actions to be taken for injured, sick or distressed birds;

– identifying deviations from production targets;

– humane destruction;

– responding to alarms.

3.1.1 Note: Competency may be achieved by on-the-job experience, on-the-job training, demonstrated ability to meet the requirements of these standards or formal training. Otherwise supervision by a competent person is required. Supervision should include the presence of the manager for specific tasks that are critical to bird welfare (for example, humane destruction) until staff are competent, however may include regular monitoring of staff for more general daily activities (for example, handling/inspection).

3.1.2 Note: There should be a system in place to ensure staff absences are covered.

3.2 There is an induction/or training procedure for new staff.

3.2.1 Note: There should be an induction program and training register to record when staff are trained and/or supervisory provisions for specific tasks.

STANDARD 4. GENERAL BIRD MANAGEMENT

Outcome

Daily care of birds and husbandry activities are conducted to minimise stress or injury to birds.

Guidelines

4.1 The shed is appropriately prepared for bird arrival.

4.1.1 Note: This may include actions such as: flushing of water lines, checking water and feed availability and quality, cleaning and sanitation, litter provision, appropriate temperature and ventilation settings.

4.2 Birds are regularly inspected to ensure they appear, sound and behave normally.

4.2.1 Note: Birds are observed at least four times on the day of placement and at least twice daily thereafter.

4.2.2 Note: Birds are observed to be drinking.

4.2.3 Note: Chicks should not huddle (cold) or appear slow and listless (hot). If older birds are panting, spreading wings or exhibiting gular flutter (hot), action may be required to reduce the heat load on the birds. Characteristics indicative of feather/vent pecking should be monitored regularly. Appropriate actions should be taken if a problem or abnormal behaviours are identified.

4.3 If there is a concern with bird performance, feed quality, stocking density, litter quality or other management issues, this should be communicated to the owner for advice and action.

4.3.1 Note: Birds should be stocked at densities that enable them to move freely, easily access feed and water and according to the specified targets. Birds should be provided by the owner for placement at stocking densities that enable good bird performance and that will not exceed the targets specified in the Code of Practice for poultry production.

4.3.2 Note: Targets for stocking density include: maximum of 40 kg/m^2 and according to owner specifications for tunnel-ventilated sheds with evaporative cooling and 1 air exchange per minute; maximum of 40 or 36 kg/m^2 from April-September and October-March for mechanically ventilated sheds with fans and water based cooling; maximum of 28 kg/m^2 for non-mechanically ventilated sheds[7].

4.3.3 Note: There should be a system in place to monitor stocking densities (for both the owner and the grower) that includes procedures to notify the owner for prompt bird pick-up as required. Communication should occur between the grower and owner to ensure target densities are not exceeded during the course of the batch. Management actions that might be taken to ensure stocking densities are maintained as required include applying correct weighing procedures, monitoring bird growth and managing pick-up scheduling as necessary.

4.3.4 Note: Records of any communications with the owner regarding the growth of birds, pick-up scheduling and stocking density should be maintained.

[7] For more accurate targets (ie that apply to each particular system at the enterprise), contact the owner of the birds.

4.4 Feed and water is available and accessible to birds as required on a daily basis.

4.5 Dead birds are removed daily and records kept.

4.5.1 Note: Mortalities, culls and reasons for culling should be recorded.

4.5.2 Note: For dead bird disposal, refer to the National Biosecurity Manual for Contract Meat Chicken Farming, for procedures.

4.6. Weak, ill or injured birds are identified and management action is taken, including, if necessary, humane destruction. Flock health programs are managed appropriately, advice sought if needed and records are kept.

4.6.1 Note: There is a flock health program in place that is monitored and followed. As a guide, lame birds should not exceed 1% of the flock[8].

4.7 Overall shed conditions, including temperature, ventilation, facilities and lighting are observed daily and adjusted to ensure bird comfort.

4.7.1 Note: Qualitative monitoring of ammonia (NH_3) levels should be carried out daily (refer to section 2.3.2). NH_3 can be smelled at about 10-15ppm, where irritation occurs to eye and nasal membranes at 25-35ppm. As a guide, NH_3 should not exceed 20ppm.

4.7.2 Note: Shed surrounds should be kept clean and tidy and clear of items or materials that could cause harm to birds.

4.7.3 Note: Records of temperature and humidity should be kept daily. During hot weather, or on days where temperature is rising dramatically, birds should be checked regularly and cooling equipment adjusted accordingly if not automated.

4.7.4 Note: There should be a system in place to manage lighting in accordance with bird age. As a guide, light levels should be checked and recorded weekly.

4.8 Targets for mortalities, including day old chicks dead on arrival, are provided by the owner[9] otherwise advice is sought from the owner on appropriate targets. If targets are exceeded, contact is made with the owner to determine the cause and appropriate management action.

[8] For more accurate targets (ie that apply to each particular system at the enterprise), contact the owner of the birds.
[9] For more accurate targets (ie that apply to each particular system at the enterprise), contact the owner of the birds.

STANDARD 5. HUMANE DESTRUCTION

Outcome

Procedures for humane destruction are carried out to minimise risks to bird and chick welfare and in a timely, efficient and effective manner.

Guidelines

5.1 Humane destruction is carried out using the appropriate equipment and/or method for the class and condition of the chick/bird.

5.1.1 Note: The most practical method for humane destruction on-farm is cervical dislocation.

5.1.2 Note: Birds should be monitored following humane destruction to ensure that they are dead, that is, there should be no vocalisation, corneal reflex, rhythmic breathing or deliberate movement.

5.2 Carbon dioxide or high speed maceration is used to cull hatched chicks.

5.2.1 Note: Procedures and/or appropriate equipment is utilised to ensure that birds were effectively and humanely destroyed by CO_2, and not simply suffocated by smothering.

5.3 Unhatched, live chicks are culled as soon as possible.

5.4 Chicks are observed after culling to ensure they are dead (refer to section section 5.1.2).

STANDARD 6. EGG MANAGEMENT

Outcome

Eggs are managed to result in quality chicks with minimal risks to their welfare.

Guidelines

6.1 The system for egg collection ensures that eggs are collected at least 3 times daily or according to the owner's[10] standard operating procedures.

6.2 Equipment is clean and dry for automatic systems.

6.3 Floor eggs are collected separately and dirty eggs promptly separated.

6.3.1 Note: There is an egg disinfection procedure in place as required. Eggs to be disinfected as required on the breeder farm prior to transport to the hatchery. If there is a problem with egg hygiene, the owner should review the procedures and may need to investigate egg disinfection/sanitation protocols.

6.4 Egg cooling, storage and temperature/humidity controls are in place according to owner's recommendations.

6.5 Transport arrangements are scheduled/managed to maintain temperature and humidity standards according to owner specifications.

6.6 Temperature and humidity targets are regularly checked and maintained within targets as closely as possible in the hatchers and setters. Where deviations occur, actions are taken to rectify the problem.

6.6.1 Note: Company targets for temperature will vary by strain/breed and age of bird and may require variation to ensure appropriate temperatures for various egg ages. Company targets should be monitored and corrective actions taken when deviations occur. As a guide only, temperature for setters may be between 37.1-38.6^{0}C ± 0.2^{0}C, with optimal humidity 60-65%, temperature for hatchers may be between 37-38^{0}C ± 0.2^{0}C, with optimal humidity 70-80% and the cool room temperature may be between 12-20 ^{0}C, with optimal humidity 70-75%.

6.7 There is a procedure in place for routine egg residue diagnosis.

6.7.1 Note: Targets should be established for egg residue diagnosis and corrective actions taken to determine the cause of embryo death if this exceeds company range (range may vary in accordance with breed/strain/environment).

[10] Throughout this document, owner means 'owner of the birds'.

6.8 Eggs are kept in the cool room no longer than the specified company target (varies by genetic stock - see above), egg quality is checked and recorded, egg trays are labelled and dirty eggs are set separately.

6.8.1 Note: Company targets for keeping eggs in cool rooms vary widely for different strains/breeds and associated quality parameters. As a guide only (as variation will occur widely depending on genetic stock) it is advisable to only keep eggs in the cool room for approximately 7 days.

6.9 There is a daily system to inspect egg tilting operation.

6.10 Records for anticipated hatching dates are kept.

STANDARD 7. CHICK MANAGEMENT AT THE HATCHERY

Outcome

Effective management and husbandry procedures are in place to minimise risks to the welfare of eggs and chicks from hatching to placement.

Guidelines

7.1 Hatchability and culling rates are monitored and significant deviations are identified and the appropriate corrective actions taken.

7.1.1 Note: Hatchability varies by breed/strain and environmental conditions, thus company targets will differ. Where deviation occurs to specified company targets, corrective action should be taken to investigate the cause. As a guide, (although there is wide variation by breed, strain, donor flock) hatchability targets may be approximately 77% at 24 weeks (of the age of donor flock) and greater than 90% at 27-50+ weeks and culling rate may be approximately 0.5%.

7.2 Incubation times are managed, with chicks removed in a timely manner according to owner targets.

7.3 Unhatched, unthrifty and surplus chicks are promptly culled in an approved and humane manner.

7.4 Chicks are regularly inspected and appear, behave and sound normal after hatching.

7.5 There is a chick health program and vaccination(s) are conducted at the hatchery according to vaccination protocols and owner requirements.

7.6 Beak trimming, de-clawing and de-spurring if carried out, are conducted at the hatchery and according to company recommendations.

7.6.1 Note: If deemed necessary, must be by a competent person.

7.6.2 Note: Beak trimming should not be routine (ie kept to a minimum number of birds) and the trim be kept as small as possible (ie tip) depending on breed/strain in order to prevent aggression and mortality. Where required, beak trimming should be conducted at the hatchery for breeding stock and females are not trimmed unless the strain of bird is likely to be aggressive.

7.6.3 Note: De-spurring, if necessary, limited to male breeders.

7.6.4 Note: Claw trimming, if deemed necessary to avoid injury to birds, should be limited to the nail of the toe in all classes of bird except breeding males in which the terminal segment of each inward pointing toe may be removed.

STANDARD 8. BIRD PICK UP AND TRANSPORT

Outcome

Birds are selected, assembled and loaded for transport and transported in a manner that minimises risk to their welfare.

Guidelines - Preparation for pick up

8.1 Feeders and drinkers are raised at an appropriate time to enable pick up and lights are adjusted appropriately.

8.2 Access roads and pick-up pads are well maintained and kept clear to ensure access at pick-up.

8.3 Unthrifty/cull birds are removed routinely from the shed during the batch.

8.4 An assessment of birds is made before pick-up to confirm that the routine culling procedure has been adequate so that birds are fit for the intended journey.

8.5 Records of pick up time and feed and water withdrawal are maintained as part of the normal batch/consignment documents.

8.6 Any cull birds rejected from transport are humanely destroyed (refer to section 5.1.1, 5.1.2).

Guidelines – Transport

8.7 There is a cleaning program for containers to minimise biosecurity risks when entering farms.

8.8 There is a program in place to maintain containers that ensures they are operational and secure.

8.9 Scheduling of pick-up is managed to ensure prompt pick-up and commencement of transport.

8.10 Records of pick-up time and feed and water withdrawl are maintained.

8.11 Birds are handled appropriately during pick-up and the leading hand is satisfied that all birds are in a fit state to be transported.

8.12 Containers are handled with care and not tilted, to prevent smothering of birds, and if using a conveyor, it should not have an excessive tilt.

8.13 During pick-up, unfit/cull birds are identified and not transported.

8.14 Vehicles, forklifts, containers and other equipment are clean and disinfected daily.

8.15 Pick-up crew observe biosecurity practices and procedures as required by the owner.

8.16 **Containers utilised are appropriate sizes for birds carried and meet the container height requirements (refer to section 9.2.1).**

8.17 **Records are maintained, time of pick-up and leaving the farm is recorded and batch cards are signed.**

8.18 **Container stocking densities are observed and recommended targets are met.**

8.19 **Containers are stacked to enable effective airflow when on the vehicle.**

8.20 **Prior to departure, all containers are checked to be secure and stacked to ensure birds are comfortable.**

8.21 **Exposure to extreme temperatures is managed during pick-up and transport to minimise predisposing birds to extreme heat and cold stress.**

8.22 **There are procedures in place during pick-up to minimise the risk of smothering and heat/cold stress.**

8.23 **Prior to departure, pick-up crew inspect the load to ensure all containers are secure for transport.**

STANDARD 9. TRANSPORT OF CHICKS

Outcome

Chicks are prepared and selected for transport and transported in a manner that minimises risks to their welfare.

Guidelines - Preparation for transport

9.1 Chicks selected for transport prior to placement in containers should be healthy and vigorous.

9.2 Space allowances in boxes/containers are appropriate.

9.2.1 Note: The recommended floor space is 400-475 chicks per m^2 with a minimum height of containers of 12cm.

9.3 Containers to be clean and dry and comprised of appropriate material.

9.4 Temperature, humidity and ventilation within the chick holding area are according to targets and chicks were regularly inspected.

9.4.1 Note: The holding area is to provide a temperature that will maintain appropriate chick body temperature. Company targets will vary depending on equipment, bird strain and location, however as a guide, temperatures should maintain chicks between 30-32^{0}C and 70% relative humidity, depending on breed specifications[11].

9.5 Vehicles to be clean, sanitised prior to loading and warmed to 24-28^{0}C prior to loading chicks.

9.6 Transport vehicles with mechanical ventilation and/or temperature controls should be regularly checked to ensure their operation.

Guidelines - Transport

9.7 Containers should be suitably ventilated particularly when stacked.

9.7.1 Note: Containers should be positioned and placed with care, positioned on the vehicle in an upright position and secured prior to departure.

9.7.2 Note: Containers and boxes should be stacked in a way that will enable sufficient ventilation/air exchange during transport.

[11] For more accurate targets (ie that apply to each particular system at the enterprise), contact the owner of the birds.

9.8 Transport to be scheduled to reach the farm within 60 hours following take off (all birds hatching), allowing 12 hours for all to have hatched prior to removal from the hatchery.

9.8.1 Note: It is recommended to place birds within 24 hours of take off, but most birds should be placed within 4-8 hours of commencing transport.

9.8.2 Note: water deprivation time should not exceed 60 hours following take off, (72 hours is the maximum, allowing for 12 hours hatching time to ensure all chicks are hatched) and if hydrating material is provided in containers, 72 hours is the recommended maximum time.

9.9 All relevant parties involved in chick transport should have the relevant consignment details, including:

– the numbers of chicks in each container;

– the date and time of dispatch;

– the contact details for the person(s) at the destination.

9.10 Temperature during transport to be monitored/checked and kept within targets and action should be taken to schedule and manage birds during extreme weather that would pre-dispose chicks to heat or cold stress.

9.10.1 Note: Chicks should be maintained at temperatures as close as possible to identified targets (as a guide, temperature for day old chicks during transport should be maintained at 25-35C[12]).

9.10.2 Note: There should be a contingency arrangement in place to safeguard the welfare of chicks should automated equipment breakdown in the vehicle.

9.11 There should be a cleaning program for vehicles and truck wheels should be clean and/or sanitised between farms.

[12] For more accurate targets (ie that apply to each particular system at the enterprise), contact the owner of the birds.

STANDARD 10. PROCESSING

Outcome

Birds are handled and slaughtered in a manner that minimises risks to their welfare, and delivery and processing are planned to minimise time birds are held in containers before slaughter.

Guidelines

10.1 Facilities for protecting birds from extreme weather during holding in containers before slaughter are available and operational.

10.2 Handling and shackling birds is carried out in a manner that minimises stress.

10.3 Records are maintained of birds dead on arrival, any reject birds, and other issues as required for feedback to growers and pick-up crew.

10.4 There are written procedures for maintenance of unloading, stunning and killing equipment, emergencies and staff training.

10.5 Shackle size is appropriate for the liveweight of the batch and stunning equipment is appropriately designed, operated and maintained for the birds being slaughtered.

10.6 Stunning is effective in rendering birds immediately unconscious.

10.7 There is a system in place to correct an ineffective stun, for example, backup equipment and procedure.

10.8 There is a system in place to ensure that birds are dead before scalding.

ACRONYMS

In these Standards, the following acronyms are used:

CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation.
HACCP	Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points.
OIE	Office International des Épizooties: World Organisation for Animal Health.
PISC	Primary Industries Standing Committee.
SCARM	Standing Committee on Agriculture and Resource Management (Primary Industries Ministerial Council).

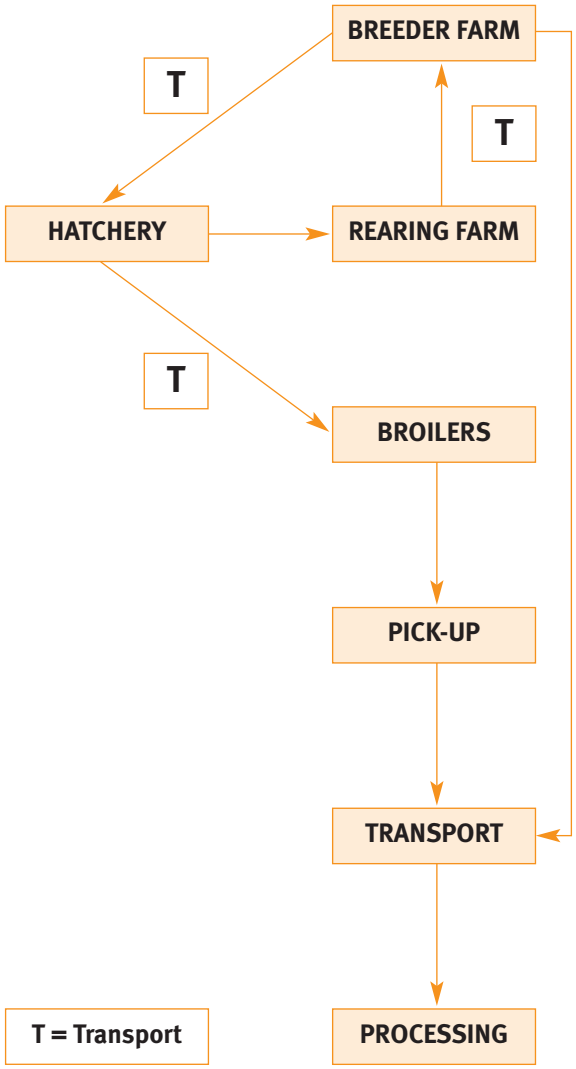
DEFINITIONS

In these Standards, the following terms are referred to:

Chicks	Poultry under 72 hours old, commonly known as day old chicks
Competency	A person is judged competent when they can demonstrate the knowledge, skills and attitude to undertake a given practice to an acceptable industry standard.
	In this document, competency may be demonstrated by any of the following: i) records of on-the-job training; ii) relevant experience; iii) recognised training and staff training registers; iv) induction training; v) supervisor sign-off for specific tasks.
Construction	Nature of facilities or equipment includes the design, layout, installation, assembly of the facilities and vehicles and the materials of which they are made.
Container(s)	Crate, box or cage for transporting poultry.
Humane destruction	A procedure which results in immediate loss of consciousness and then death of a bird.
Journey time	The time that poultry are held in a container or on a vehicle, until they are unloaded.
Processing Plant	Abattoir or premises used for the slaughter of poultry and production of meat or meat products.
Loading	The placement of poultry in containers and onto the vehicle.
Stocking density	The amount of space provided for an animal in a crate or container. The number of animals per area provided in a crate or container.
Nature of the journey	This includes duration, distance, route, road conditions, terrain, traffic and any other factors that could affect a journey for poultry.
Owner	The owner of the birds. Can include the company that supplies the birds or individual(s) depending on the contractual arrangements between the various enterprise(s) (ie growers/breeder farms).
Pick-up	The assembly, collection and loading of poultry.
Pick-up crew	Personnel collecting poultry for transport and/or transporting poultry.

Poultry	Domestic fowls, turkeys, geese, ducks, guinea fowls, quails, pigeons and pheasants and partridges reared or kept in captivity for breeding, the production of meat or eggs for consumption or for restocking supplies of game park enterprises.
Risk to welfare of poultry	The potential for a harmful factor to affect the welfare of poultry in a serious way. This harm could include cold or heat stress, dehydration, exhaustion, injury or metabolic or other disease.
Standards	The animal welfare requirements provided in this document.
Stockperson	A person who is responsible for the management, handling and care of the birds.
Stress	A response by animals that activates their (behavioural, physiological and/or psychological) coping mechanisms.
Vehicle	The moving conveyance in which the animal is transported including the means of propulsion. For example, the prime mover, crate, container, and wagon/locomotives, ancillary trailer, rigid body truck or other road transport.
Ventilation	Natural or mechanically induced air movement sufficient to provide oxygen and remove excessive heat load and noxious gases.
Veterinary advice	Advice from a veterinarian registered in Australia. A veterinarian offering advice or services has a responsibility to ensure that they are competent on the subject in question.
Water	Water of sufficient quality as defined by the Australian and New Zealand Water Quality Guidelines 2000 Chapter 4.3. Issues include temperature, salinity, and method of presentation, previous experience by the birds, taste and smell.
Water deprivation time	The total time birds and chicks are deprived of water; including time before transport, loading, time on the vehicle whether moving or stationary unless water or hydrating material is provided, and time during unloading and holding at the destination until water is provided.
Weak	Lacking physical health and vigour.

APPENDIX 1. INDUSTRY SECTORS AND WELFARE ISSUES ADDRESSED IN THE NATIONAL ANIMAL WELFARE STANDARDS FOR CHICKEN MEAT INDUSTRY



Welfare Considerations

Quality of eggs and day old chicks
Water quality, availability and drinkers
Feeding regime and body weight management
Biosecurity, pest control and effective sanitisation
Litter moisture, odours, dust and gases
Control and alarm systems
Light levels and lighting programs
Bird behaviour and appearance
Beak trimming and feather pecking
Health, vaccinations and parasites
Seeking external advice
Culling birds
Stocking density
Temperature and ventilation requirements
Handling of birds
Inspection frequency
Pick-up
Transport
Processing
Staff training
Record keeping

APPENDIX 2. THE MANAGEMENT GROUP

The Standards were developed by a steering committee with representatives from:

- Australian Chicken Meat Federation
- Australian Poultry CRC
- Department of Primary Industries, Victoria
- Inghams Enterprises Pty. Ltd.
- Queensland Farmers' Federation
- Animal Welfare Science Centre, University of Melbourne

The original documentation from which these Standards were derived was developed by a group comprised of representatives from:

- University of Melbourne
- Animal Welfare Science Centre
- Australian Chicken Meat Federation
- Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation
- Primary Industries South Australian
- Department of Primary Industries Victoria
- Bartters/Steggles Pty. Ltd.
- Marven's Poultry Pty. Ltd.
- Inghams Enterprises Pty. Ltd.
- Eatmores Poultry Pty. Ltd.
- Victorian Farmers Federation
- Queensland Farmers' Federation
- RSPCA, Victoria
- Bureau of Animal Welfare, Department of Primary Industries, Victoria

APPENDIX 3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following guiding principles were utilised by the management group in the development of these Standards:

- The health and welfare of animals is a primary consideration at all stages of poultry production.
- The critical relationship between animal welfare and animal health is recognised.
- The operation of all poultry production systems need to be conducted in a manner in which accountabilities and responsibilities are clearly defined and met.
- The overall goal of the Chicken Meat Industry is to deliver high animal welfare standards that are integrated across the production chain to ensure the welfare of poultry from birth to slaughter.
- The internationally recognised 'five freedoms' provided guidance on animal welfare.

  1. Freedom from hunger and thirst,
  2. Freedom from discomfort,
  3. Freedom from pain, injury and disease,
  4. Freedom to express normal behaviour,
  5. Freedom from fear and distress.
- The scientific assessment of animal welfare involves diverse elements which need to be considered concurrently. Selecting and weighting of these elements often involves value-based assumptions which should be made as explicit as possible.
- All persons managing poultry have a legal and moral responsibility to care for the welfare of birds under their care and control.
- The use of animals carries with it a duty to ensure the welfare of such animals to the greatest extent practicable.
- Animal welfare considerations should be included in quality assurance programs.

APPENDIX 4. REFERENCES

The following references were used:

- A Welfare Audit for the Chicken Meat Industry, RIRDC, 2001.

Other references utilised in the development of these Standards include national and international quality assurance requirements, recommendations and scientific papers and reviews.