

# Explanatory notes on the animal welfare initiative

## Poultry

The implementation of requirements of the initiative animal welfare gets monitored by an unheralded audit at least every year of the duration of the certificate. In line with QS- regular or spot audit the requirements of the initiative animal welfare can be audited.

In the context of audits that are exclusively performed for the animal welfare initiative besides the package animal welfare poultry, existent of 5 or rather 6 compulsory criteria and 2 compulsory elective criteria (both have to be fulfilled), also the 14 basic criteria from the QS-guideline Agriculture Poultry Production have to be audited.

The correct requirements and therefore the basis for auditing are determined in the Catalogue of Criteria-Poultry of the initiative animal welfare and in the QS- guideline Agriculture Poultry Production.

## 1. Basic requirements

### 1.1 Basic criteria for livestock production, hygiene, animal health

#### *What is evaluated?*

It is ensured at all times that the keeping of animals is in compliance with the law, and corresponds to the QS requirements and good professional practice. During a tour of operations, the animals and their housing conditions are observed; Records and documents shall only be checked if there are indications of deviations (see QS spot-audit).

The requirements correspond to the QS requirements, see Agricultural Manual - Poultry Production

Important: All requirements pertain to all animals and housing within a participating operation. The operation is defined as comprising of the "disease control unit (SE)" (registration number in accordance with livestock movement regulations ViehVerkV) and type of production (broiler production, turkey production). Operations that keep turkeys and conduct rearing and fattening under a single registration number (in accordance with VVVO), meet all requirements and animal welfare criteria at all times - in the turkey rearing phase as well. According to the VVVO, each type of production can be registered separately and independently of other production types under its own registration number.

#### *How are the basic criteria evaluated?*

All basic criteria are checked to see whether they are being met ("Yes" or "No").

Minor improvement needs shall be accepted (example: documentation of alarm system function test plausible but improved presentation possible). A requirement can also be valued with "A" (=passed), if the criteria is only almost completely fulfilled and only a minor improvement is necessary (missing marking of bait places or missing label on bate boxes).

For those basic criteria, that are not defined as K.O.-criteria in the QS Guideline, a shortly belated handling of single documents can be accepted, in order to pass the audit finally. Therefore it must be shown to the auditor credibly, that all the documents are existing but not available or findable at the moment of the audit. If the required documents can be handed in late within a time limit of maximum three days to the certification body or rather the auditor and the requirement is fulfilled after examination of the subsequently yielded verification, this does not lead to a negative assessment of the concerning requirement.

As soon as corrective actions need to be implemented in order to meet a requirement, the criterion is not complied with or not complied with sufficiently and the audit is failed (examples: medicines are freely accessible,

working hygiene is not guaranteed, feed storage is insecure or unclear, the hygiene sluice is inadequate or not an appropriate choice from an animal protection point of view, inappropriate emergency killing, sick bays with untreated animals in poor general condition i.e. sleepy, apathetic).

Important: If a QS audit deems corrective measures necessary to meet basic criteria (C- or D- rating), these must be implemented before the audit for the animal welfare initiative shall be carried out.

Important: If injuries (such as feather pecking), lameness or heavy soiling occur in the livestock countermeasures must be agreed with the veterinarian responsible for the stock [farm vet] (including deadlines). These corrective measures must already have been initiated and documented by the time the animal welfare audit is conducted.

### *What criteria does a turkey sick bay need to meet?*

Each turkey farmer must provide a way of separating sick animals from the rest. Therefor sections must be set up, that enable separated animals the visual contact to conspecifics. For the animal welfare initiative it is not necessary to have a sick bay or sick pen for each part of the operation of a location. A sick bay or sick pen can be used jointly for several operational sections; this provision must be plausibly demonstrated in the audit. Distance and transportability of the livestock obviously need to be taken into consideration here. All criteria (e.g. additional activity material) must also be met in sick bays.

## **1.2 Procurement of day-old chicks**

### *What are the key issues?*

Exclusive procurement of day-old chicks from hatcheries or rather rearing turkeys for fattening from companies that are QS authorised suppliers at the time of delivery.

## **1.3 Measures to improve the foot pad health**

### *What has to be considered?*

The health of foot pads is actively improved by keeping the litter fluffy, soft and dry.

To prevent the footpads from injury and disease, it must be ensured that there is fluffy, soft and dry litter provided for the animals until the day of out stalling.

### *What needs to be done if the litter has a low quality?*

It can happen, that the litter has a low degree of quality (e. g. moist, incrustated or caked litter). Reasons can be amongst other things, a leakage of the drinker line, a high air humidity/high degree of enthalpy, a broken air conditioning system or diarrhoea of the animals. In this case, measures must be initiated to minimize the possible negative health effects for the animals.

In case of a low quality of the litter, the livestock owner has to explain the taken measures to improve the quality of litter to the auditor in a plausible way (written overview of the taken measures or verbal explanation).

Measures to improve the quality can be e. g. repair of the drinker line, treatment of animal diseases, refilling and mixing the litter at critical points or short time ventilation to reduce the air humidity.

### *Which measures are helpful to improve the health of footpads?*

With the objective of preserving the health of foot pads, the livestock owner initiates measures, which are adapted to the location or livestock individually. Therefore, appropriate management recommendations for preserving the health of foot pads in broiler and turkey production are available for the livestock owner. These are the following:

### 1. Preparation of the shed before stalling in the new herd

- Timely preheating and control of the soil temperature (ca. 28 °C)
- Functional control of the drinking trough (water pressure and closeness)
- Consideration of the requirements for a high litter quality and amount of litter – depending on the sort of litter
- Control of the air humidity in the shed: a relative air humidity of **at least** 50 % is pursued for broiler production at the beginning of production (during the further procedure an air humidity over 80 % must be avoided)

### 2. Beginning and rearing

- Consideration of an equal animal distribution in the shed (where applicable, turkey in a ring). Therefore an illumination uniformity and the temperature control are important
- Chick paper should be self-corrosive
- Already in the first days after stalling in the chicks, the minimum air change rate in the sheds must be considered
- Adaption of the water supply to the age of the animals. This especially concerns the height adjustment of the drinker lines and the water pressure
- Regular Control of the excrement consistence. If necessary, a farm veterinarian must be consulted

### 3. Measures for control of the litter humidity

- Refilling and mixing at critical points, especially near to drinking troughs and troughs
- short time ventilation to reduce the air humidity

## 1.4 Instructions for preliminary destocking (only for broilers)

### *What are the key issues?*

Doors, gates and windows in the animal housing have to be darkened against the ingress of light using light filters, blackout panels or curtains (e.g. using strip curtains or tunnels). Depending on sunlight and orientation to the sun, other site-related measures may be required. Covers must be installed so that a sufficient supply of fresh air is ensured.

A plausible concept is in place that is up to date and describes the implementation of the handling instructions specific to the operation.

## 1.5 Proof of annual training of livestock farmer

### *What are the key issues?*

In addition to the required verification of competence, livestock producers must participate at least once **every calendar** year in further training, conveying knowledge regarding, for example, livestock management, care regimes or on legal requirements. Further training focus areas are listed in the Agricultural Manual - Poultry Production in the sectors of knowledge and skills pertaining to competence. Certificates of attendance for further training measures attended together with details regarding technical content thereof are documented as proof of training.

**For the initial audit the participation has to be proved for the on-going calendar year.**

### ***Proof of employees' proficiency***

**Livestock owners must ensure, that all persons, that deal with the care or the catching and transporting of poultry, must appropriate to their tasks and responsibilities command animal protection relevant knowledge and skills including animal protection relevant numbness and killing methods.**

## 1.6 Participation in animal welfare control plan

### *What are the key issues?*

Livestock producers are obligated to take part in the animal welfare monitoring programme. The central element of the animal welfare monitoring programme is the systematic recording of indicators both in livestock and in slaughterhouse operations, which are suited to identifying need for action in order to improve animal welfare. Every livestock producer is constantly working on improving the level of animal welfare. The minimum indicators to be recorded are:

- Mortality in the livestock housing
- Fatalities due to transportation (monitoring is carried out at the slaughterhouse)
- Foot pad lesions (monitoring is carried out at the slaughterhouse)

#### → **Turkeys**

**In addition to the listed indicators, the following shall be recorded with regard to turkey cocks**

- **Breast skin lesions (monitoring is carried out at the slaughterhouse).**

With the mandatory participation of broiler and turkey producing operations in the animal welfare monitoring programme, results from the systematic recording of indicators, as well as the measures derived from these (e.g. amendment of parameters) will be documented.

## 2. Compulsory elective criteria

### 2.1 Additional activity options

#### *What are the key issues?*

The changeable manipulable materials provide an incentive for the livestock to engage with. To this end, the chosen material is consumable and by nature can **at least be** either be pecked or moved.

In addition to a loose and dry bedding, **that must be furnished that way, that animals can pick, paw and dust bath in partition**, at least one other changeable, consumable material must be constantly on offer as an additional manipulable material from the second week of life, e.g. straw or hay in hay racks or baskets or other peckable objects.

Bales of straw, hay or wood shavings in compressed form also serve as suitable manipulable material provided these materials do not contact with or reach the given floor level of the bedding.

The quantity of manipulable material on offer shall be sufficient in relation to the usable floor area in the animal housing. The manipulable material on offer shall be evenly distributed throughout the animal housing and be easily accessible for each animal (required quantity of manipulable material is stated in the Catalogue of Criteria).

#### **Additional activity options for behavioural deviations**

Should behavioural deviations occur (such as feather pecking and/or cannibalism) despite the constant use of additional behavioural enrichment opportunities, suitable material must be offered immediately in addition to the already existing material. **This activity option is not allowed to be provided to the flock until the point in time, where behavioural deviations occurred. It must not be consumable or rather peckable or moveable. Though it has to be available at the farm all times for instant usage.**

## 2.2 Bigger space allowances

### *What are the key issues?*

The amount of available space has been chosen so that during the entire rearing process all animals of the livestock have easy access to feed and drinking water and the animals can move and exercise behave according their normal behavioural patterns such as dust bathing and wing beating. Every animal which would like to move from a tightly restricted to a free area always has the opportunity to do so.

It is possible to increase the available space by another level, if litter is also added to this area properly and if both areas (up and down) are fully adequate usable shed areas.

The ventilation capacity must be taken into account when calculating available space.

For planning and calculation of the animal density three successive passes must be considered.

If there are different sales within one complete pass, only passes of pre out stalling and passes of main out stalling must be compared to each other for calculating the animal density. On average of three successive passes, the animal density (kg living weight per m<sup>2</sup> usable shed area) must adhere to the required value at all times until the point of sale (record of slaughtering bill).

**Note:** *If a second pass of pre-out stalling is performed as an exception before main out stalling, it doesn't need to be considered obligatorily because a comparability of three successive passes is not always given.*

*Definition of usable shed area: usable shed area is defined by an area that is prepared with litter and to which animals always have free access. The area underneath the supply lines (troughs and drinking troughs) can also be defined as usable shed area, if the supply lines are height-adjustable and it is ensured that the minimum height of supply lines is always the same as the back height of the animals while a proper feed and water intake.*

*Prepared, isolated areas for sick turkey ~~must not be considered as usable shed area.~~ The available space for sick animals in isolated areas must not exceed an animal density of 45 kg living weight per m<sup>2</sup> usable area.*

In the initial audit it can be plausibly evidenced in writing, that the available space is planned in such a way that the prescribed maximum live weight per m<sup>2</sup> should not be exceeded with the existing livestock within the operation. If at the time of any subsequent audit, fewer than three passes have been marketed, plausible, comprehensible plan calculations shall be available. Provisions which serve to ensure that available space levels are maintained are plausibly transparent and documented.

Livestock owners, who are already obligated to implement a greater amount of available space due regulations contained in animal protection legislation shall not receive animal welfare payments (for example in Germany, pursuant to current legislation, The Order on the Protection of Animals and the Keeping of Production Animals [*Tierschutz-Nutztierhaltungsverordnung*], or the European Organic Regulations). According to current animal protection legislation the following are excluded for example from the receipt of animal welfare payments:

- Broilers of up to 1,600 grams live weight
- Livestock, which is kept in accordance with the European Organic Regulations or an organic farming organisation standard guaranteeing a higher quality standard than prescribed by the European Organic Regulations.

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