Explanatory notes on the Animal Welfare Initiative

Poultry

Programme 2018 – 2020

Structure

The implementation of requirements of the Animal Welfare Initiative gets monitored by an unannounced audit at least every year of the duration of the certificate. In line with QS- regular or spot audit the requirements of the Animal Welfare Initiative 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 five or rather six basic requirements and four mandatory requirements, also the 14 basic criteria from the QS Guideline Agriculture Poultry Production must be audited.

The specific requirements and therefore the basis for auditing are determined in the Catalogue of Criteria-Poultry of the Animal Welfare Initiative 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 sheds within a participating company. The company 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). Companies 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?

The implementation of the basic criteria is evaluated and documented in the audit report with the evaluations "fulfilled" (A), "not fulfilled" (K.O.) and – conceivable for some basic requirements – "inapplicable" (E). The evaluation "not fulfilled" will not inevitably lead to a withdrawal of the Animal Welfare Initiative. At some basic criteria (see below) corrective actions with deadlines can be agreed. The deviations must be solved immediately by the livestock owner, wherefore the deadlines for the implementation of the corrective actions must be appropriately short.

Important to note: From the point of time where the audit was released until the point of time where the certification body has resolved the corrective action, the location is blocked and therefore not eligible to deliver for the Animal Welfare Initiative and not entitled of payment.

For the following basic criteria corrective actions can be agreed:

- Shed Climate, Temperature, Noise Pollution, Ventilation
- Lighting
- Hygiene of feeding facilities
- Storage of Feeds
- Hygiene of drinking facilities
- Buildings and Equipment
- Handling litter, dung and feed leftovers
- Pest monitoring and control
- Cleaning and Disinfection Measures

Important: If injuries (such as feather pecking), lameness or heavy soiling occur in the livestock which indicate a problem in the stock, 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 producer 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, incrusted 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 and their foot pads.

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 (cf. QS Guideline Agriculture Poultry Production), 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 (e.g. by livestock owner, veterinarian) and in slaughterhouse operations. The indicators are:

- Mortality in the livestock housing (transmission of livestock owner to slaughterhouse)
- Foot pad changes (Acquisition is carried out at the slaughterhouse)
- Fatalities due to transportation (Acquisition is carried out at the slaughterhouse)

The details are defined in the QS Guideline "Diagnostic Data in Poultry Slaughtering". The slaughterhouse notifies the indicators to the central database. The livestock owner must document the determined diagnostics (indicators). Therefore the diagnostic database can be used. The livestock owner gets the login data by the coordinator.

2. Mandatory requirements

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 these areas are fully adequate usable shed areas.

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

Chicken

An outdoor area for broiler, which is freely available at the latest with the attainment of the stocking density limit in the shed, can be added to the effective area up to 100 %.

Poultry

If an outdoor area is provided permanently to turkeys if possible by the sixth and at latest by the ninth week of life, the usable space of the outdoor area can be occupied with 50 % of the acceptable stocking density. The chargeable area of the outdoor area is limited to 25 % of shed floor space. If the required stocking densities specified in the QS guideline are not exceeded, the outdoor area can be taken into account to 100 % as usable shed area.

Used outdoor climate areas must be littered completely.

In case of the presence of a veterinary indication or snowcapped environment or rather very cold temperatures in the outdoor area (multiple days below freezing (<0°C)), the access to the outdoor area can be restricted for a determined period or can be concluded for the veterinary prescribed period.

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 m² 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 (as of the 21st day of life) the same as the back height of the animals while a proper feed and water intake. For poultry also perforated levels can be used, if these and also the area underneath the level can be used animal friendly. The minimum height of the elevated level must at least be the same as the back height of the animals. For the calculation of the usable shed area please be aware, that the elevated levels can only count with a maximum of 10% into the surface area. Example: the elevated area is 60 m²; shed surface area 500 m² => Calculation of usable shed area: 500 m² + 50m² (10% of 500) = 550 m²

Prepared, isolated areas for sick turkey: The available space for sick animals in isolated areas must not exceed an animal density of 45 kg living weight per m² 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 m2 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.

2.3 Shed climate check

What is the longest period that may have passed between the last shed climate check and the programme audit?

Shed climate checks that date back a maximum of 1 year (= 365 days) at the time of the audit can be accepted in the programme audit.

Shed climate checks must be carried out in occupied sheds. Especially in the case of new sheds, the implementation date must be chosen in such a way that the shed climate check can be carried out after the first housing, but before the implementation date. If not all sheds or compartments are occupied at the implementation date, the necessary checks must be carried out as soon as the animals are housed. The audit must prove that the sheds had not actually been used before the date of housing and that the checks had been ordered in a timely manner. If results are not yet available, they must be submitted at short notice.

When and how often must shed climate checks be performed?

As of 1st January 2018 a shed climate check must be available before the programme audit (first audit) or before the confirmation audit, which is in 2018, if the programme audit has already been implemented successfully in 2017. At the time of the chosen implementation date the shed climate check must not be older than 365 days.

Afterwards a shed climate check is necessary once per calendar year. If the check was conducted in the year prior the the programme audit (max. 365 days ahead of the programme audit), for the calendar year of the audit a check must be conducted as well. The result must be documented and in case of deviations measures must be determined and initiated.

If a confirmation audit to the termination of the participation in the Animal Welfare Initiative will be performed, the shed climate check must be available for the current calendar year at the time of the confirmation audit.

Who implements the shed climate checks?

External, qualified specialists, which have registered at the operating company of the Animal Welfare Initiative. All for the shed climate check registered experts will be published on a list under www.initiative-tierwohl.de; from this list can be chosen freely.

How many shed climate checks must be implemented?

At least one check per shed is necessary.

Will shed climate checks be accepted, which were implemented by experts before their registration and publication in the list of registered shed climate experts?

In general a check can be accepted from the registration date of the respective expert.

Exception: If the first shed climate check was implemented before the 1st October 2017, the expert must not be registered, when the check corresponds to the necessary requirements.

How does the shed climate check work exactly?

The expert has a detailed description with the corresponding checklist. The focus is the sensory evaluation with the assessment of the shed air and the observation of the animal behavior. Subsequently, a functional test of the ventilation system (actuators, temperature sensors etc.) will be performed on a random basis and risk-orientated (therefore, in every case, where the sensory evaluation yielded to anomalies). Furthermore the alarm systems will be examined.

What happens, if deviations will be determined?

If deviations will be detected, they must be listed and if applicable further measurements and if applicable an inspection of the dimensioning of the ventilation system must be made. In case of deviations a plan of measures (incl. deadlines) must be set up with the expert. Corrective actions must be already initiated and documented before the first programme audit or confirmation audit as of 1st January 2018.

What must be submitted in the audit?

In the audit (as of 1st January 2018) the certificate for the shed climate check (issued by an registered expert, if shed climate check is occurred after 1st October 2017) must be shown; furthermore if applicable the list of deficiencies with plan of measures as well as the evidence, that the corrective actions were started or implemented on time.

Does the original checklist must be used mandatory for the shed climate check?

It is possible to extent the original checklist (e.g. with the self-assessment). However, basic structure and –form must remain unchanged and must be identifiable.

If plan of measures is necessary, deadlines (either definition of the period or of the date of the implementation) must be determined.

Note: for the exact implementation of the shed climate check (e.g. sampling distribution), see "Implementation instructions of the shed climate check".

What type of alarm system must be present in a company?

For electrically operated ventilation systems, a functioning alarm device must be present in every company. For this purpose, for example, either a signal horn or a signal lamp or a phone dialer must be present. Which type of device (or which combination of devices) makes sense for a particular company must be decided on a case-by-case basis. It is fundamental that a power failure or failure of the ventilation system is noticed immediately in any case (e.g. also during the night hours or in remote sheds).

2.4 Drinking water check

What is the longest period that may have passed between the last drinking water check and the programme audit?

Drinking water checks that date back a maximum of 1 year (= 365 days) at the time of the audit can be accepted in the programme audit.

The samples for the microbiological tests of the drinking water check must be taken in occupied sheds. Especially in the case of new stables, the implementation date must be chosen in such a way that the drinking water check can be carried out after the first housing, but before the implementation date. If not all sheds are occupied at the implementation date, the necessary checks must be carried out as soon as the animals are housed. The audit must prove that the sheds had not actually been used before the date of housing and that the checks had been ordered in a timely manner. If results are not yet available, they must be submitted at short notice.

Special situation chicken:

Due to the short production cycle for chicken fattening, it may happen that the company has had the drinking water check carried out at date the animals were brought to the shed (usually = implementation date), but that the analysis results of the drinking water analysis have not yet been sent back from the laboratory to the company at the time of the audit. In this case, the results of the drinking water analysis can be handed in later by the company.

When and how often must the drinking water checks be performed?

As of 1st January 2018 a drinking water check must be available before the programme audit (first audit) or before the confirmation audit, which is in 2018, if the programme audit has already been implemented

successfully in 2017. The drinking water check must not be older than 365 days at the time of the chosen implementation date.

Afterwards a drinking water check is necessary once per calendar year. If the check was conducted in the year prior the the programme audit (max. 365 days ahead of the programme audit), for the calendar year of the audit a check must be conducted as well. The result must be documented and in case of deviations measures has to be determined and initiated.

If a confirmation audit for terminating the participation in the Animal Welfare Initiative will be performed, the drinking water check must be available for the current calendar year at the time of the confirmation audit.

Who implements the sampling?

External, qualified specialists, which have registered at the operating company of the Animal Welfare Initiative. All for sampling registered experts will be published on a list under www.initiative-tierwohl.de; from this list can be chosen freely.

If water from own well is also used as drinking water (use for human and animals), the official drinking water monitoring can be drawn for the physical chemical drinking water check as well, as long as the prescribed parameters have been examined and on the examination result it becomes clear, that it is an official sample. In this case the sampler must not be registered at the Animal Welfare Initiative.

The Catalogue of criteria (Annex 2) describes, on which point and how many water samplings must be drawn. The amount of samples as well as the respective location and the date of the sampling must be documented in a protocol by the sampler.

Will drinking water checks be accepted, which were performed by experts before their registration and publication in the list of registered shed climate experts?

In general a check can be accepted from the registration date of the respective expert.

Exception: If the first drinking water check was implemented before the 1st October 2017, the expert must not be registered when the check correspond to the necessary requirements.

Can an official drinking water check be accepted (chemical physical examination)?

The drinking water check can be accepted with the appropriate evidence of an official sampling, which was drawn to a maximum of 365 days before the chosen implementation date (as of 1st January 2018) or afterwards once in a calendar year.

Note: for the exact implementation of the drinking water check (e.g. sampling distribution), see "Implementation instructions of the drinking water sampling".

How exactly does the drinking water check work?

The drinking water analysis can be commissioned in each qualified laboratory. An admission of the laboratories is currently not necessary.

The Catalogue of Criteria (Annex 2) describes on which parameters the drinking water must be examined.

For the parameter bioburden the analysis at 30 °C is recommended.

What happens, if deviations are determined?

If overruns or shortfalls of the values will be determined in the analysis, a plan of measures for troubleshooting must be established (including deadlines). These corrective actions must be initiated and documented for the first audit. The aim is to provide best suitable drinking water (as most important feed). If the orientation values will not be observed, measures have to be initiated, so that the values will be achieved as quickly as possible. In the meantime negative consequences for the animals have to be minimised as much as possible.

If the limit value for degree of hardness (<20°D) is not meet, the veterinarian has to check the animals. If the veterinarian determines a health impairment or a reduced water intake of the animals, which can be attributed to water quality, measures have to be taken, to meet the limit value for degree of hardness. If the veterinarian does not determine a health impairment or a reduced water intake there is no further action required.

Does each water source and each location number (e.g. after VVVO) need an own examination?

Each location number and production scope must have a physical chemical examination (or also more when having several water sources). If more locations (= several location numbers or several production scopes) receive water from the same water source, a physical chemical analysis is sufficient.

This does not apply for the microbiological examination: here one sample per shed must be drawn and analysed from each location number and production scope by the sampler. When several sheds belong to one location number, one sample must be drawn in every shed.

What has to be submitted in the audit?

The certificate for the shed climate check (issued by a laboratory) must be shown in the audit, as well the sampling protocol of the sampler. The following information must be documented in the sampling protocol: Name, address, location number of the company, sampling point (location of the tap or drinking nipple), name of the sampler, date of sampling. If this information is completely included in the confirmation of the drinking water analysis by the laboratory, it can be used as a protocol. Furthermore if applicable the plan of measurements for the corrective actions as well as the evidence, that the corrective measurements were implemented on time must be present.

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