

# Manual Agriculture

## Catalogue of Criteria Poultry Production



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## Foreword

As part of the Initiative Tierwohl Geflügel, companies and associations from agriculture, the meat industry and grocery retail have jointly set themselves the goal of promoting animal-friendly and sustainable meat production.

In the future, too, they want to offer consumers poultry meat of excellent quality and great variety, but at the same time make animal welfare even more the basis of their actions.

To this end, the initiators- together with participants from the economy, science and interest groups, have developed a comprehensive programme to promote animal welfare at the agricultural production level of livestock owners and have defined scientifically sound, measurable and verifiable requirements for livestock farming for this purpose. Livestock owners who choose to participate in the Initiative Tierwohl Poultry will implement these requirements. Independent, accredited certification bodies regularly check compliance with the requirements.

The Initiative Tierwohl Poultry is continuously developed by its bodies.

# 1. Requirements

## 1.1 Basic criteria livestock farming, hygiene, animal health

The livestock owner must comply with basic criteria on animal welfare, hygiene and animal health. The basic criteria listed below are laid down in the **QS Guideline Agriculture Poultry Production** in the chapters listed. In the animal welfare audit, the focus is on checking production in the shed. A comprehensive document check is only carried out if there are indications of nonconformities.

### Animal welfare, hygiene and animal health:

- 3.2.1 Monitoring and care of livestock
- 3.2.2 General farming requirements
- 3.2.3 Handling sick and injured animals
- 3.2.4 Shed floor
- 3.2.5 Shed climate and noise pollution
- 3.2.6 Lighting
- 3.2.8 Alarm system
- 3.3.1 Feed supply
- 3.3.2 Hygiene of feeding facilities
- 3.3.3 Handling and storage of Feed
- 3.4.1 Water supply
- 3.4.2 Hygiene of drinking facilities
- 3.6.1 Buildings and equipment
- 3.6.2 Hygiene on the farm
- 3.6.3 Handling litter and activity material
- 3.6.4 Carcass storage and pick-up
- 3.6.5 Pest monitoring and control
- 3.6.6 Cleaning and disinfection measures

If abnormalities are detected, in particular with regard to injuries, feather pecking or breast skin lesions, countermeasures (plan of measures including deadlines) must be determined with the involvement of the stock care veterinarian. The livestock owner must implement the corrective actions report in due time and document it.

From July 1, 2025, in addition to combined turkey rearing and fattening farms, turkey rearing farms that do not fatten turkeys must also meet all relevant ITW criteria as well as the QS basic criteria.



If applicable, corrective actions report and its implementation

## 1.2 Origin and marketing: procurement of day-old chicks


For rearing of broilers and turkeys, all day-old chicks or hatching eggs must be obtained from hatcheries with QS eligibility to deliver.

The eligibility of delivery into the QS scheme is to be checked in the QS database.

### Turkeys

When purchasing young turkeys for fattening from rearing companies, these companies must be eligible to deliver into QS. From January 1, 2026 on, all turkeys must come from rearing farms authorized to supply ITW.

From January 01., 2026, the verification of the eligibility of delivery of turkey rearing farms is to be checked in the ITW database.


 Livestock register, livestock record cards/sheets, delivery notes from the hatchery, extract from QS-/ITW-database

### 1.3 Monitoring and care of livestock: measures to improve foot pad health

In order to protect the foot pads and guard against diseases, measures must be taken to ensure that the bedding is permanently loose and dry until the day of destocking.

#### Broiler and fattening turkeys

Livestock owners of broilers or fattening turkeys undertake to participate in the monitoring of diagnostic data. For this purpose, abattoirs forward the results of foot pad-monitoring to their suppliers.

 Measures initiated by the company, if applicable

### 1.4 Handling livestock during loading: Handling instructions for pre-destocking (only for broilers)

Doors, gates and windows in the shed have to be darkened against the ingress of light by light filters, blackout sheets or curtains. Depending on the location, this can be achieved e.g. by using strip curtains or tunnels. Direct sunlight must be effectively prevented.

Depending on the location, time of day and orientation to the sun, site-specific measures result. Covers must be fitted in such a way that a sufficient supply of fresh air remains guaranteed. When opening the loading doors, ventilation short circuits must be avoided as far as possible.

Appropriate means must be used when thinning, e.g. partitioning, to minimise stress both for the animals being removed and those that remain.

The drinking water supply must be guaranteed until immediately before the start of loading.

Immediately after the completion of preliminary destocking and loading, the loading gates must be closed. The shed area where the depopulated animals were located must be littered with suitable bedding. Appropriate bedding material must be provided. Before continuing the rearing of remaining animals, all alarm devices must be activated and checked.

 Records of farm-specific concept to the operation for implementing the handling instructions

### 1.5 Lighting programme for sheds with artificial lighting: *twilight phases (only for broilers and fattening turkeys)*

#### Broiler

Livestock owners using artificial lighting in their sheds must start and end the uninterrupted darkphase of at least six hours with a twilight phase of at least 15 minutes before and after the lighting and must ensure this through an appropriate lighting programme.

### **Fattening turkeys**

Livestock owners who use artificial lighting in closed sheds must begin or end the uninterrupted dark phase of at least six hours with a twilight phase of at least 15 minutes before and after and ensure this by means of an appropriate lighting program.

## **1.6 Proof of proficiency of the livestock owner: Proof of annual training of livestock owner**

In addition to providing proof of their expertise, livestock owners must participate in relevant, specialised training measures at least once per calendar year. Appropriate evidence of this must be provided. The evidence must be available for the first time for the initial audit.



Proof of further training measures, e.g. confirmation of attendance at specialist lectures

## **1.7 Documentation of diagnostic data from slaughtering: Participation in diagnostic data monitoring with measures in the event of abnormal findings**

Livestock owners are obliged to participate in diagnostic data monitoring. The central element of the diagnostic data monitoring is the systematic collection of indicators both in livestock farming company and in the abattoir. The indicators must be suitable for identifying the need for action to improve animal welfare. The indicators are at least:

- Mortality in the livestock farming (transmitted by the livestock owner to the abattoir)
- Foot pad changes (recording takes place at the abattoir)
- Number of rejected poultry and main reasons for rejection (only broiler)
- Transport-related losses (recording takes place at the abattoir)

The details are laid down in the **QS guideline on diagnostic data in poultry slaughtering**. The abattoir registers these indicators in the central database. The livestock owner must document the findings from the systematic collection of indicators (e.g. changes in parameters) and the measures derived from them. The findings database can be used for this purpose. The livestock owner receives the access data from his coordinator.

### **Measures in the event of abnormal evaluation results from diagnostic data monitoring**

Livestock owners for whom the systematic collection of diagnostic data reveals a conspicuous evaluation result indicating a need for action must immediately after notification of the need for action (cf. information letter, e-mail) take advantage of individual farm counselling by external experts (e.g. fattening supervisors, veterinarians, feed advisors, etc.). The farm-specific advice must be aimed at finding and eliminating the causes of the findings. The deficiencies identified as the cause must be documented and remedied by means of suitable measures which must be set out in writing in a plan and the implementation of which must be documented there.



records for participation in the monitoring of diagnostic data, documentation of the abattoir's diagnostic data, results of the recorded indicators, evidence of advice in case of indicated need for action, evidence of identified deficiencies with, e.g. an action plan for animal health advice (cf. QS-Information letter on diagnostic data from the abattoir)

## 1.8 Additional activity options

In addition to loose and dry bedding, that must be furnished that way, that the animals can pick, scratch and in some areas dust-bathe, at least one other changeable, consumable material, such as straw/hay in hay racks/baskets/bales or other litter materials (e.g. straw granulate/wood shavings in bales) or other peckable objects (e.g. pecking stones) must be permanently offered as activity material by the beginning of the second week of life at the latest.

The modifiable materials must provide an incentive for the animals to occupy themselves with them. This is given by the fulfilment of one of the following criteria:

- Pickability
- Mobility

The materials used to keep the animals occupied must be of such a nature and placed in such a way that they do not pose an increased risk of injury to the animals.

An element may not be counted simultaneously as an occupation material and as a changeable structural element (cf. 1.10 Structuring the housing environment/raised levels).

### **Broiler**

For broilers, at least one pecking element or activity material must be provided per 100 m<sup>2</sup> or part thereof of usable floor space (sufficient for approx. 2,000 birds).

### **Turkeys**

For turkeys, at least one pecking element or activity material must be provided per 400 m<sup>2</sup> or part thereof of usable shed space.

### **Broiler and turkey**

When behavioural abnormalities occur (e.g. feather pecking and cannibalism), additional activity materials beyond the usual supplementary activity materials must be offered, which have not yet been made available to the flock at the time of the occurrence of the behavioural abnormalities. These materials may be freely chosen and must be available on the company at all times. However, these materials must not be identical to the materials already in use (bedding and additional pickable or moveable exercise opportunities) (cf. 1.10 Structuring the housing environment/raised levels).

## 1.9 Bigger space allowance

The livestock owner must choose the amount of available space into account the ventilation capacity so that during the entire rearing process all animals can easily reach feed and water, the animals can move and perform normal behavioural patterns (e.g. dust bathing and wing flapping). Any poultry wishing to move from a confined area to an open area has the opportunity to do so.

If, due to legal requirements in Germany and abroad, a higher or identical space allowance must be complied with on a farm-by-farm basis, these requirements also apply within the framework of the Initiative Tierwohl poultry. The individual stocking densities to be observed for the participating company must not be exceeded at any time.

## **Broilers and Turkeys**

The following requirements must be complied with and must be verifiable for three consecutive rounds per barn on the basis of live and slaughter weights. The upper limits specified in the **QS Guideline Agriculture Poultry Fattening** for live weight per square metre of usable barn space must not be exceeded at any time, even in individual runs.

### **Broilers**

Livestock owners must demonstrably plan and comply with stocking densities in such a way that 35 kg live weight per m<sup>2</sup> of usable shed area is not exceeded on average over three consecutive cycles.

Littered raised levels, which allow the animals to cross underneath at any time, can be taken into account as additional usable barn space up to a maximum of 10 % of the usable barn area when calculating the space available.

### **Turkeys**

Livestock owners must demonstrably plan and comply with stocking densities that do not exceed 48 kg live weight per m<sup>2</sup> usable house area for female and 53 kg live weight per m<sup>2</sup> usable shed area for male turkeys on average over three consecutive cycles.

Elevated levels, which are at least at the height of the animals' backs and allow the animals to pass underneath at any time, can be taken into account as additional usable barn space up to a maximum of 10 % of the usable barn area when calculating the space available.



Reports of slaughter result, delivery notes for young fattening turkeys, details concerning usable floor space of each shed, livestock record cards/sheets, plan calculations for stocking density, measures to control the space allowance of existing flocks

## **1.10 Structuring the housing environment/raised levels**

Elevated levels must be offered to broilers and fattening turkeys to structure their housing environment. Unchangeable or changeable structural elements can be used as raised levels. The height of the structural elements must be chosen so that the raised levels are accessible to the animals at all times.

Non-changeable structural elements (e.g. jumping tables, perches) must be available to the animals at all times up to 24 hours before each planned release.

As soon as changeable structural elements such as high-pressure or square bales have been dissolved/used up, new bales or unchangeable structural elements must be offered. Bales may be cut open for processing from 48 hours prior to the planned final stabling.

If, for example, high-pressure or square bales are offered as raised elements for structuring the housing environment, these may not be used at the same time as additional occupation material within the meaning of criterion 1.8 Additional occupation options.

### **Broilers**

Broilers must be offered at least 5 % of the usable housing area available to them as raised levels (e.g. jump tables) from the time they are housed.

Alternatively or additionally, from the second week of life at the latest, unchangeable structural elements must be offered as raised levels in the form of perches (at least 2.0 m per 45 m<sup>2</sup> or part thereof) or changeable structural elements in the form of one high-pressure bale per 90 m<sup>2</sup> or part thereof of usable shed area.

From the 10th day before the planned final stabling, used structural elements no longer need to be replaced.

### **Fattening turkeys**

All animals must be offered one square/round bale per 400 m<sup>2</sup> or part thereof of usable shed area as a changeable structural element from the time they are moved to the fattening barn.

Straw bales are to be replaced as variable structural elements for the last time in the 16th week of life.

As an alternative to square or round bales, unchangeable structural elements such as tables or side elements can be offered as raised levels. In this case, the (contiguous) areas must have a minimum seating area of 1.85 m<sup>2</sup> per 400 m<sup>2</sup> or part thereof of usable shed area.

## **1.11 Shed climate check**

Before the first programme audit and at least once per calendar year thereafter, a standardised shed climate check must be carried out and the result documented.

The shed climate check must be carried out by external experts registered with the Initiative Tierwohl in accordance with the implementation instructions. Shed climate checks must be carried out in occupied stables.

Persons from e.g. advisory organisations or companies for shed climate technology carry out the shed climate check on the basis of a checklist with corresponding instructions for execution after they have registered with the operating company.

The persons approved for the shed climate check are published with their contact details on the website of the Initiative Tierwohl, so that every livestock owner can find an expert near him.

*Procedure and scope of the shed climate check → Appendix 1.*

If deficiencies are found during this inspection, the expert must list the deficiencies specifically. The livestock owner must define corrective actions together with the expert (corrective actions report including deadlines). The livestock owner must implement the corrective actions report in due time and document it.

In the audit, the certificate for the shed climate check (issued by an approved expert) must be shown; in addition, if applicable, the list of deficiencies with corrective actions report as well as proof that the corrective actions were implemented in due time.



Certificate for the shed climate check, if applicable action plan and its implementation



## 1.12 Drinking water check

Before the first programme audit and at least once per calendar year thereafter, a standardised drinking water check must be carried out and the result must be documented. The drinking water check consists of sampling and water analysis.

Sampling must be carried out by an external sampler in accordance with the implementation instructions. Appropriate persons shall carry out the sampling according to the implementation instructions provided by the operating company after they have registered with the operating company. The samples for microbiological examinations must be taken in occupied stalls.

The persons approved for sampling in this way are published with their contact details on the website of the Initiative Tierwohl so that every livestock owner can find an expert in their area.

*Procedure and scope of the drinking water check → Appendix 2.*

If the orientation values are exceeded, the livestock owner must define corrective actions (action plan including deadlines). The livestock owner must implement the corrective actions report in due time and document it.

In the audit, the certificate for the drinking water analysis (issued by a laboratory) must be presented, as well as 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/drinking basin), name of the sampler, date of sampling. If this information is included in the laboratory's drinking water analysis certificate, it can be used as a record. In addition, the corrective actions report and proof that the corrective actions have been implemented in due time must be available.



Proof of the drinking water check incl. sampling protocol, corrective actions report if applicable and its implementation

## 2 Definitions and related documents

### **Definition:**

The location is always considered: unit with an official registration number as location number (e.g. in Germany according to the German Livestock Transport Regulation) in combination with production scope, regardless of the number of stalls.

### **Related documents:**

**QS Guideline Agriculture Poultry Production**, as amended

**QS Guideline Diagnostic Data in Poultry Slaughtering**, as amended

**Programme manual of Initiative Tierwohl**, as amended

## **3 Annexes**

### **3.1 Annex 1 - Shed climate check**

#### Scope and procedure of the shed climate check

##### **The shed climate check contains**

##### **1. Functional test of the technology**

- a. Actuators and fans: damper position, direction of rotation
- b. Airflow: cross-sections and cleanliness
- c. Affixing and comparison of the temperature sensors: Position,  $\Delta\theta$  max.  $\pm 2$  °K
- d. Air cooling device (if applicable)
- e. Ventilation computer
  1. Required temperature (possibly curve)
  2. Minimum and maximum airflow
  3. Control range
  4. Alarm values

##### **2. Test alarm**

- a. Functionality of the emergency systems: Battery status, actuators, etc.
- b. Forwarding the alarm to the telephone

##### **3. Sensory testing of the stable climate**

If necessary (e.g. if nonconformities in pollutant gas concentration or temperature are detected by sensors):

- Inspection of the dimensioning of the ventilation system
- Implementation of further tests (fog sample, corrosive gas measurements, etc.)

##### **4. In case of detection of defects preparation of a list of deficiencies**

### 3.2 Annex 2 - Drinking water check

#### Overview of the target values for the drinking water check

##### Scope and procedure of the drinking water check

The drinking water check comprises a physical-chemical and a microbiological examination. At least the parameters listed in the following two tables must be examined. The values must not exceed or fall below the orientation values.

##### a) Physical-chemical examination

If an own well is used, at least one sample per water source (respective well) must be analysed physical-chemically. If several locations (= several location numbers or several production scopes) are fed from a common water source, a physical-chemical analysis of this well by the registered sampler is sufficient. This analysis can then be used for several locations.

When using water from the public water supply, no physical-chemical analysis is necessary.

**Table 1: Assessment values for drinking water (physical-chemical parameters)**

Parameter	Unit	Suitable for drinking water
pH value		5-9
Hardness level	°dH	< 21
Iron (Fe)	(mg/l)	< 3,0
Nitrite (NO <sub>2</sub> -)	(mg/l)	< 30
Manganese (Mn)	(mg/l)	< 4,0

Source: based on BMEL recommendations

##### b) Microbiological examination

At least one drinking water test is required per stall. Sampling is carried out at the drinking trough.

**Table 2: Assessment values for drinking water (microbiological parameters)**

Parameter	Unit	Suitable for drinking water
Total germ count	CFU/ml	≤ 100.000
Yeast and mould	CFU/ml	≤ 10.000
Escherichia coli	CFU/ml	≤ 100

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