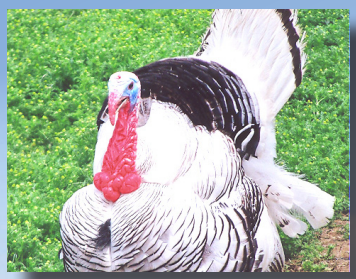
Ohio Livestock Care Standards

Poultry

Layers, Broilers, Turkeys



Ohio | Department of Agriculture

Ohio
Livestock Care Standards

In November 2009, Ohio voters passed State Issue 2 approving the creation of the Ohio Livestock Care Standards Board. This vote demonstrated Ohioans' support for keeping the state's number one industry – food and agriculture – vibrant and strong. The board was charged with creating state standards for the care and well-being of livestock in Ohio.

The enabling language required the board to take the following into consideration when developing the standards: Best management practices for the care and well-being of livestock; Biosecurity; Disease prevention; Animal Morbidity and mortality data; Food safety practices, Protection of local, affordable food supplies for consumers; Generally accepted veterinary medical practices, livestock practice standards and ethical standards established by the American Veterinary Medical Association, and; Any other factors that the board considers necessary for the proper care and well-being of livestock in this state.

The comprehensive livestock care standards developed by the Board are meant to be practical for livestock producers of all sizes, scales and production methods and will not only assure better livestock care, but will also support the state's overarching goals of promoting safe and affordable food, and helping to prevent the outbreak of both animal and human diseases.

Unless otherwise noted in this guide, the responsibility for ensuring these livestock care standards are being kept falls on the person who owns or has responsibility for or custody of the animal.

Poultry
Layers, Broilers, Turkeys

Ohio's livestock care standards regulate poultry raised for human food products or fiber. As used in these rules, poultry means turkeys or chickens, both male and female, including **layers**, **broilers** and **turkeys**.

Layers are female chickens that have reached sexual maturity as demonstrated by egg production. **Broilers** are chickens raised for meat, and **turkeys** are also raised for meat.

Breeders are chickens or turkeys raised to perpetuate progeny and **pullets** are young female chickens prior to sexual maturity. A **poultry flock** is a grouping of more than one chicken or turkey, which may be raised for egg production, meat and/or as breeders.

General Welfare Considerations

Feed and Water

In general, poultry must receive a sufficient quantity and quality of feed and water on a regular basis. However, water may be withheld from poultry based on the specific direction, written or verbal, of a licensed veterinarian and only for the period of time specified by the veterinarian.

Water may be restricted or temporarily withheld by the person who owns or has responsibility for or custody of the birds in certain circumstances such as preparation for administration of vaccines or medication through the water, preparation for transportation, or if the farm's operating procedures specify this management practice.

Housing

As defined in the rules, housing means the physical area or location which is occupied by the poultry. Poultry housing and handling facilities must be designed to **minimize bruising and injury**. In general housing must provide a clean and safe environment that promotes the health, welfare and performance of birds in all stages of their lives. It is important that housing, handling facilities and equipment continue to be monitored and maintained for this same reason.

The rules require that free-range or pastured broilers and turkeys (birds housed outside) have reasonable protection from adverse weather conditions and from predators. Any enclosures, including fencing, must be designed and maintained to minimize bruising and injury.

Indoor housing must seek to minimize exposure to adverse weather, must seek to minimize conditions in which the birds cannot effectively thermo-regulate, and must provide sufficient ventilation necessary to reduce concentrations of carbon monoxide, ammonia and dust. In houses or barns that require mechanized ventilation, ventilation systems must be in working condition and must provide backup systems.

The outdoor housing rules were developed based on three principles:

1. Minimize prolonged exposure to adverse weather conditions
2. Manage environmental moisture
3. Ensure access to feed and water

If bedding is provided, it must be of good quality and absorbent. Whether birds are housed indoors or outdoors, environmental moisture must be managed in order to promote the health and welfare of the flock. Stocking densities must allow all birds to rest at the same

Cage Housing System Provisions for Layers

The rules prohibit the installation of conventional battery cages at any farm that is not an "**existing farm**" as of September 29, 2011. An existing farm means:

1. all land that houses pullets, layers or breeders utilizing any housing system as of September 29, 2011; and
2. any land contiguous to the "existing farm" that it is acquired by the owner or operator of the "existing farm" before or after September 29, 2011; and
3. the sale, transfer and/or partition of an "existing farm" after September 29, 2011 does not void its status as an "existing farm."

For those farms defined as "existing farms," the following provisions regarding **conventional battery cage systems** apply:

1. the slope of the cage floor must not exceed eight degrees
2. in cage systems installed prior to September 29, 2011, house/barn averaging must provide a minimum average of 67 square inches per layer by September 29, 2016,
3. systems installed after September 29, 2011 must provide 67 square inches per layer, and must be designed so that manure from birds in upper cage levels does not drop directly on birds in lower cage levels,
4. any existing farm is not precluded from expansion using current cage housing systems,
5. any housing system on an existing farm may be replaced with the same housing system in the case of a catastrophic event (such as fire, flood, wind, or building collapse) that requires new construction to replace the existing housing system.

Farms not defined as "existing farms," and wishing to utilize a cage system, may only utilize an enriched cage system. **Enriched cage systems** must meet at least the following requirements:

1. the slope of the cage floor must not exceed eight degrees,
2. a minimum of 67 square inches per layer must be provided,
3. manure from birds in upper cage levels does not drop directly on birds in lower cage levels, and
4. features must be provided in addition to feed and water, such as areas for nesting, scratching, perching, and/or dust bathing.

All farms, whether or not they are defined as "existing farms," may utilize a **cage-free housing system**. A cage-free Housing System is defined as any housing system where the layers are not exclusively housed in a cage. This includes, but is not limited to, free-range pasture, aviaries, fixed houses, portable houses, pasture pens, and other integrated systems. Cage-free housing systems must meet the following requirements:

1. Systems installed after September 29, 2011 must provide a minimum of 144 square inches per layer.
2. If perches are provided, they must be positioned to minimize fecal fouling of layers, feeders and drinkers below, and if multi-tiered perches are used, each tier must allow hens to safely access other vertical tiers, including the floor.
3. If nests are provided, they must be cleaned as necessary to ensure that manure does not accumulate.
4. Any farm that is utilizing a cage-free system prior to September 29, 2011 will have until September 29, 2016 to complete any changes necessary to come into compliance with these requirements.

time without being forced to rest on each other at all stages of production, and all birds must have access to feed and water without excessive competition. Environmental management in the flock's housing system must be designed to control rodents, non-beneficial insects, and parasite infestation in the birds.

Broiler and turkey breeder housing must be designed so that the introduction of new birds is done in a manner which seeks to minimize aggression and the risk of injury. If nest space is provided, the space must be cleaned as necessary to ensure that manure does not accumulate. If slats are used in broiler breeder housing, the slats must be designed and maintained so as to minimize bruising and injury and, if birds get under the slats they must be removed immediately.

Proper indoor housing ventilation is necessary to reduce concentrations of carbon monoxide, ammonia and dust.

Adequate lighting must be available for inspection purposes. The light can be provided by electric lighting, or may be as minimal as a flashlight, natural sunlight or a portable light source for indoor or outdoor inspection. If natural light is not available, artificial light must be provided for rearing and production.

Equipment

Poultry handling equipment must also be designed and maintained in order to minimize bruising and injury. Electric prods cannot be used on poultry. Distress can occur when birds are injured, sick or in pain, therefore rules require equipment to be used 'humanely'. **Humane care** is defined as handling of poultry that seeks to minimize distress.

Handling

Ohio's livestock care standards require **anyone** who owns or has responsibility for or custody of poultry to catch, lift and move the birds humanely. Birds can be caught or carried by one or both legs, but are not to be caught, carried or lifted by the head, neck or tail. All practices and procedures pertaining to health or medical treatment of the birds must be done humanely.

General Management Practices

If performed in a humane manner, the following livestock management procedures are permitted in order to minimize injury to the birds: beak conditioning; general toenail conditioning in layers and turkeys; male back toe conditioning in broilers; dewclaw and snood conditioning in turkeys; caponizing in broilers; dubbing; and, induced molting.

Conditioning

When raising layers or **broilers**, conditioning is defined as the trimming of the beak or the partial or complete removal of the comb, toe nail and dewclaw for the purpose of preventing injury during the growth or maturity of the birds.

When raising **turkeys**, conditioning is defined as the trimming of the beak or the partial or complete removal of the snood, toenail, and dewclaw for the purpose of preventing injury during the growth or maturity of the birds.

Induced Molting

When inducing molting, only non-feed withdrawal methods may be used. Layers must be fed a maintenance ration for non-producing layers, broiler and turkey breeders must be fed a maintenance ration for non-producing breeders. The light period must be reduced to no fewer than six hours in closed houses, or to natural day length in open houses, for the duration of the rest period. When the flock is placed back on a layer diet, light intensity and duration should be returned to the normal layer program. During the molting process, flock health, mortality and bird weight must be monitored.

Health

Health

In addition to appropriate labeled medication, prescription and extra-label medications are often necessary to ensure livestock health. The medication label instructions must also be followed:

- how and where to administer the medication
- the proper dosage of the medication
- how to store the medication
- how long the medication must be withdrawn prior to the use of the animal's meat for human consumption.

The livestock care rules require all prescription and extra-label use medication to be obtained and administered to livestock with the advice and consent of a licensed veterinarian.

Extra-label drug use is the use of an approved drug in a manner that is not in accordance with its approved label. Extra-label drug use is only permitted under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian and in the context of a valid veterinary-client-patient relationship.

As with equipment usage, all practices and procedures pertaining to the health and medical treatment of livestock must be performed so as to minimize distress. For this reason, poultry must also be monitored regularly for evidence of disease, injury and parasites. When evidence of any of these ailments is found, corrective measures **must** be taken. If required by the condition of the bird, a means of separating the sick birds from the healthy birds must be available.

If, after receiving treatment and additional feed and care, an animal still looks to be emaciated, then it must be sent to market, transported to a slaughter facility, legally slaughtered on the farm, or euthanized.

Proper and complete documentation of treatments, medication and medication withdrawal times is necessary when bringing any disabled animal to market. It is the responsibility of the person who owns or has responsibility for or custody of the animal (except for third-party transporters) to keep these records.

Transportation

When transporting poultry, the person who owns or has responsibility for or custody of the birds is responsible for determining the load density. Load density in poultry conveyances must allow the birds to rest at the same time without being forced to rest on top of each other.

Handling of animals during the loading, transport and unloading process must be done humanely and poultry must be reasonably protected from adverse weather conditions during transit.

The transport driver is solely responsible for the welfare of the birds and must have an emergency action plan.

Euthanasia

Euthanasia

Except in slaughter facilities already governed by federal or state law, the only acceptable methods of euthanasia for poultry are the use of an inhaled carbon dioxide agent, cervical dislocation, a gunshot, blunt force, decapitation, a non-penetrating captive bolt, maceration, the use of injectable barbiturates, and electrocution. The methods are to be considered as sole methods for euthanasia; however, the rules do not preclude a licensed veterinarian from performing acceptable standards of veterinary practices.

If, in the course of employing one of these methods, humane death does not occur, the same method or another acceptable method must be performed immediately. Death is confirmed by the absence of a heartbeat or breathing for five minutes, and the animal's lack of a blink reflex when the eye is touched. *Exsanguination* (to bleed an animal to death) can only be used to ensure the death of an unconscious animal or following stunning.

These methods must be followed when euthanizing an animal, regardless of whether the animal will be slaughtered on the farm, or its carcass burned, buried, composted or rendered. Ohio's livestock care standards do not alter the current regulations regarding the disposal of animals after they are confirmed dead.

Physical Methods

The physical methods permitted for euthanizing poultry produce a humane death through the rapid loss of consciousness, followed by cardiac and respiratory arrest, ultimately leading to the complete loss of brain function.

Non-penetrating captive bolt

Non-penetrating captive bolt guns are powered by gunpowder or compressed air and do not have a projectile. In order to ensure humane death, the gun must be held firmly against the head to deliver a percussive blow which produces unconsciousness.

Gunshot

The rules require that the shooting take place in an area where legal firearm use is permitted and that the shooter be proficient in the use of firearms. The safety of the shooter, the public, and any nearby animal(s) must be taken into consideration when employing this method and the animal must be reasonably controlled whenever feasible.

Gunshot methods must utilize bullets of suitable caliber[1] depending on the size of the bird, and that expand on impact. The gun must be held as close as reasonably possible, but not less than 2 inches, from the head and the projectile must enter the brain at such an angle as to cause instant loss of consciousness and humane death. This method is permitted for use on free-range poultry only.

Maceration (the use of a mechanical apparatus that has rotating blades or projections that cause immediate fragmentation and death) may be used for one day old chicks and poults, and for pipped and embryonated eggs. If using this method, delivery to the macerator must occur in such a way and at such a rate that prevents any backlog at the point of entry into the macerator. Delivery must also avoid causing injury, suffocation, or avoidable distress.

Blunt force

In order to ensure humane death, a single decisive blow that produces immediate depression of the central nervous system and destruction of brain tissue resulting in rapid unconsciousness must be used. Blunt force can only be used as a method of euthanasia for turkeys weighing at least 15 pounds.

Cervical Dislocation/Decapitation

Cervical dislocation is the manual stretching or instrument assisted separation of the cervical vertebrae from the skull. Decapitation is the rapid separation of the head from the neck.

Chemical Methods

Carbon-Dioxide

The only inhalant agent permitted to be used as a method of euthanasia is compressed carbon dioxide (CO2) gas in cylinders. Furthermore, carbon dioxide is the only chemical allowed to be used for the euthanasia of animals intended for human or animal consumption. When using this method, gas concentration must be maintained for at least one minute after death.

Barbituates

Ohio's livestock care standards require that all injectable agents used for euthanizing animals, including all barbiturate derivatives, must be used by or under the direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian. It should be noted that barbiturates must not be used to euthanize an animal that will be used for human consumption.

[1] Ammunition for most animals must be a minimum caliber .22 hollow point long rifle.

Enforcement

Enforcement

Ohio's livestock care standards will be enforced by the Ohio Department of Agriculture's (ODA) Divisions of Animal Health and Enforcement. Farms that are not currently subject to regular inspection will not be subject to any new regular inspections as a result of these rules. ODA staff will only inspect a farm if a credible complaint regarding violations of these rules is reported. Anonymous complaints will not be considered credible.

ODA staff will investigate credible complaints to determine if a violation has occurred. Violations affecting more than one animal **may** be considered as one offense. If a violation is found, the person who owns or has immediate custody of the animal(s) will be informed in person, or by telephone, fax, or email. If the notification is made in person or by telephone, written notification will also be sent within three days.

If the violation can be corrected, ODA staff will include the corrective measures which must be taken to achieve compliance with the rules, including the amount of time allowed to take any necessary corrective measures, in the written notice. If the responsible party fails to remedy the violation within the time specified in the written notice, they may be assessed a subsequent violation for each day the violation remains uncured.

Minor Violations

The rules define two kinds of violations: minor and major. Minor violations of Ohio's livestock care standards are generally due to neglect or unintentional acts of substandard practices. Minor violations are finable up to $500 for the first minor offense and up to $1,000 for each subsequent minor offense that is committed within 60 months of the previous minor violation.

If you have questions about how to comply with these rules or about the enforcement process, please call the ODA Division of Animal Health at (614) 728-6220 or visit the Department's website at www.agri.ohio.gov.

Major Violations

Major violations of Ohio's livestock care standards are reckless or intentional acts which result in the unjustified infliction of pain. Major violations can be any action which:

- places an animal's life in imminent peril
- causes protracted disfigurement
- causes protracted impairment of health
- causes protracted loss or impairment of the function of a limb or bodily organ

Major violations of Ohio's livestock care standards are finable offenses with penalties ranging between $1,000 and $5,000 for the first major violation and $5,000 to $10,000 for each subsequent major violation that is committed within 60 months of the previous major violation.

If a major violation has occurred, ODA staff may also work with state and local agencies and nongovernmental organizations to provide care to the animal(s). This includes but is not limited to providing feed and water, providing medical care, taking possession of the animal(s), or euthanizing the animal.

Additional Penalties

In addition to any fine assessed for a violation, ODA may also assess an additional fee to recover the cost to the department to investigate a matter. This fee is based on the average salary and the average cost of benefits of all employees who are directly involved in the investigation, copying costs, and any direct or indirect costs to ODA including all necessary laboratory analysis and the caretaking costs.

Anyone who has been issued a fine for violations of these rules will have 30 days to request a hearing to appeal the Department's decision. If requested, the hearing will be overseen by an independent hearing officer who is a licensed attorney and not an employee of ODA.

*This summary is for the convenience of those raising and handling livestock and is **not** intended to cover all laws and regulations. The Ohio Administrative Code contains the details of these regulations and is available for review at **www.ohiolivestockcarestandards.gov***

Questions?

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