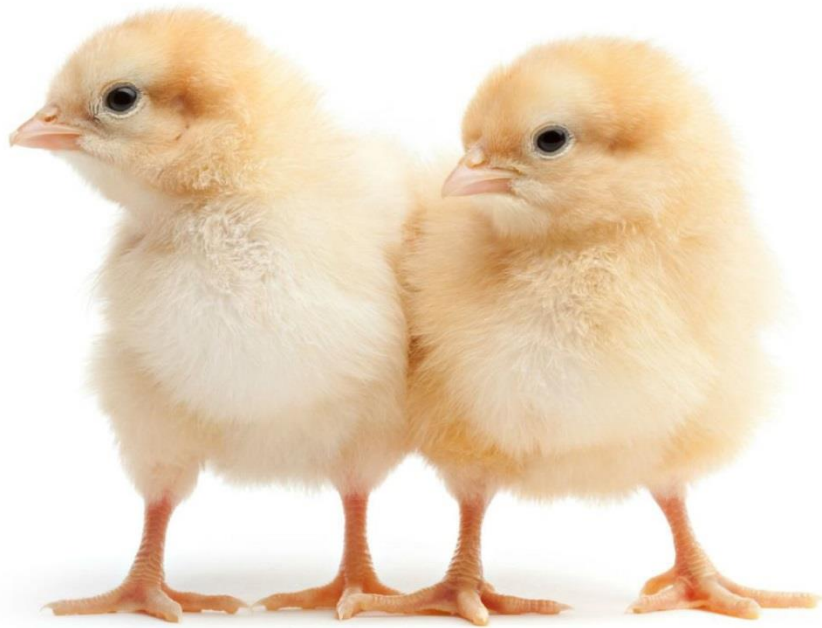


# CARE OF PULLETS

## GUIDEBOOK



Pullet Growers  
of Canada  
—  
Éleveurs de poulettes  
du Canada

# TABLE OF CONTENT

Table of Content .....	1
Preface .....	4
Part 1: Animal Care Policy for Pullets .....	5
1. Animal Care Policy for Pullets – Introduction .....	6
1.1. Purpose .....	6
1.2. Objective .....	6
1.3. Applicability .....	7
1.4. Overall Statement of Policy .....	7
1.5. Principles .....	7
2. Receiving and Brooding Chicks.....	9
3. Housing and Equipment .....	10
3.1. General .....	10
3.2. Space Allowance.....	11
3.3. Special Considerations for Multi-Tier Rearing Systems.....	12
3.4. Flooring .....	12
3.5. Litter Management .....	13
3.6. Perches .....	14
3.7. Lighting.....	15
3.8. Ventilation .....	17
3.9. Temperature .....	19
4. Protection.....	20
5. Food and Water .....	21
5.1. Feed and Water Management .....	21
5.2. Feeders and Waterers .....	22
5.3. Access to Water.....	23



5.4.	Nutrition .....	24
6.	Health Management and Husbandry Practices.....	25
6.1.	Pullet Sourcing and Transition to Lay .....	25
6.2.	Inspection Frequency and Process .....	25
6.3.	Health Management and Prevention .....	26
6.4.	Skills Related to Flock Management .....	27
6.5.	Disease Prevention and Management .....	27
6.6.	Sanitation .....	28
6.7.	Pest Control .....	29
6.8.	Sick and Injured Birds .....	29
6.9.	Feather Pecking and Cannibalism .....	30
6.10.	On-Farm Beak Trimming .....	31
6.11.	Emergency Management and Preparedness .....	32
6.12.	Euthanasia.....	32
6.13.	On-Farm Euthanasia Plans .....	33
6.14.	Skills and Knowledge, Decision-Making Around Euthanasia and Methods .....	33
6.15.	On-Farm Depopulation.....	36
7.	Management Practices .....	38
7.1.	Management Roles .....	38
8.	Transportation .....	39
8.1.	General Consideration.....	39
8.2.	Role of the Pullet Grower .....	40
8.3.	Transportation Guidelines.....	40
8.4.	Pre-Transport Planning.....	41
8.5.	Fitness for Transport .....	41
8.6.	Handling and Catching.....	42
8.7.	Loading and Unloading.....	43



8.8. Facilities Design and Maintenance .....	44
8.9. Haulers .....	45
Part 2: Procedures and Checklists.....	46
1. Biosecurity Procedure .....	47
Pullet Farm Biosecurity Checklist.....	48
2. Employee Code of Conduct for Pullet Care.....	53
Background .....	53
Commitment.....	53
3. Euthanasia Procedure .....	54
Pullet Farm Euthanasia Checklist.....	55
4. Handling, Catching and Loading Procedure .....	59
Bird Handling, Catching and Loading Checklist.....	61
5. Medication and Vaccination Procedure .....	62
Medication Usage Record.....	63
Vaccination Usage Record .....	64
6. Routine Inspection Procedure.....	65
Daily Inspection Checklist .....	66
Weekly Inspection Checklist .....	67
Monthly Inspection Checklist.....	68
7. Visitor Procedure .....	69
8. Visitor On-Farm Code of Conduct .....	70
Pullet Farm Visitor Log Book.....	71
Summary of Code Requirements for Pullet Housing and Rearing .....	72
Contact Information .....	75



## PREFACE

This Care for Pullets Guidebook is meant to provide Canadian pullet growers with the information needed to ensure that the pullets in their care are treated with respect and compassion. The Guidebook is made up of two parts:

1. A general policy for the care of pullets; and
2. Templates and worksheets to support the various parts of the policy.

This updated guidebook is written to reflect the work done on the 2017 version of the Canadian *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Pullets and Laying Hens*, in terms of current legislation, scientific research, veterinary advice, national and provincial guidelines and the practical experience of the pullet growing industry. This guidebook has been prepared by Pullet Growers of Canada to provide direction to growers for providing care to the animals they raise.

Excerpts from the *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Pullets and Laying Hens* (©2017) have been used with permission from the National Farm Animal Care Council ([www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/pullets-and-laying-hens](http://www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/pullets-and-laying-hens)).



# PART 1: ANIMAL CARE POLICY FOR PULLETS



# 1. ANIMAL CARE POLICY FOR PULLETS – INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. PURPOSE

Consideration of animal care is becoming increasingly important for the growing, keeping and farming of animals in Canada and across the world. Practices which may have once been thought acceptable are now being reassessed in light of new and emerging knowledge, practices and attitudes. The standards outlined in this Animal Care Policy are intended to help growers to adopt standards of husbandry appropriate to the physical and behavioural needs of the pullet. They also reflect all elements put forward in the 2017 *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Pullets and Laying Hens* (Code) by the National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC) of Canada.

The Code is a nationally developed guideline of animal care requirements and recommended practices promoting sound management and welfare practices for housing, care, transportation, and other animal husbandry practices. The Code is the result of a rigorous process, taking into account the best science available, compiled through an independent peer-reviewed process, along with stakeholder input. The Code is meant for consistent application across Canada.

**Requirements** – These refer to either a regulatory requirement or an industry imposed expectation outlining acceptable and unacceptable practices and are fundamental obligations relating to the care of animals. Requirements represent a consensus position that these measures, at minimum, are to be implemented by all persons responsible for farm animal care. When included as part of an assessment program, those who fail to implement requirements may be compelled by industry associations to undertake corrective measures or risk a loss of market options. Requirements may also be enforceable under federal and provincial regulation.

**Recommended Practices** – These may complement the Code's requirements, promote producer education, and can encourage adoption of practices for continual improvement in animal welfare outcomes. Recommended practices are those that are generally expected to enhance animal welfare outcomes, but failure to implement them does not imply that acceptable standards of animal care are not met.

## 1.2. OBJECTIVE

The objective of this policy is to provide leadership to the pullet industry in the husbandry of pullets.



### 1.3. APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all pullet growers in Canada, i.e. those farmers who raise egg-type chicks to the age of 19 weeks. This policy is set as a national standard for provincial agencies to apply in their province for the sake of national consistency and to ensure stakeholders of the pullet industry's adherence and commitment to the husbandry of the animals entrusted to them. Procedures in support of this policy were developed through consultation with provincial agencies.

### 1.4. OVERALL STATEMENT OF POLICY

The husbandry of the bird is one of the prime drivers for the pullet grower in Canada. As such, the grower follows the laws and regulations contained in the Animal Health Act and regulations of Canada and of provincial Animal Health Acts and regulations. As the national representative of the pullet industry, the Pullet Growers of Canada has a lead role in ensuring the continuous improvement to the policy and procedures related to the care of pullets.

### 1.5. PRINCIPLES

#### THE BASIC NEEDS OF THE PULLET

The basic needs of pullets consist of the following animal care principles:

- The exemption from hunger and thirst (i.e. readily accessible food and water to sustain and nurture their health); and
- The ability to express normal behaviour (i.e. to move, stand, turn around, stretch, sit and lie down).

#### THE ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE PULLET GROWER

This policy makes clear that, whatever the husbandry practice being engaged in, managers, employees and all others involved in meeting the day-to-day needs of pullets are accountable to provide reasonable care for poultry under their control. Therefore, those accountable for the care of pullets should be trained, experienced and dedicated to the values of good husbandry. Staff should be provided with necessary training in pullet management and husbandry. Knowledge of the normal appearance and behaviour of their birds is essential to effective, efficient and caring treatment. In summary, the basic needs of the pullet will be better provided for if those who have care of them provide:

- caring and responsible planning and management;
- conscientious farm workers who have the necessary skills and knowledge;
- an environment where pullets are raised safely and securely;





- handling and transportation that is humane and in accordance with the *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals: Transportation*; and
- culling and euthanasia that is performed in the most humane fashion, according to Appendix E of the Code.

Pullet growers are in direct interaction with egg farmers and together, as an industry, are committed to prioritizing the health and well-being of all birds entrusted in their care. This commitment forms the basis of the industry's national *Animal Care Program*.

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### CODE REQUIREMENTS

While the Code for egg layers has been relied on in Canada since 2003, this Code establishes firm guidelines to which pullet growers will be held accountable. In addition to advancing welfare requirements in key production areas, the Code mandates the phase out of conventional cages for laying hens. This is the most significant change ever to egg production in Canada and, as a result, new barns will have to be built to produce the same number of eggs. It is expected that 50% of hens in Canada will be transitioned to alternate housing systems (i.e. enriched cages, non-cage housing, etc.) within 8 years.

Alternate housing systems to which hens will be moved to present complex welfare trade-offs and significant changes to pullet rearing environments in order to support hen welfare.

All the requirements of the Code pertaining to pullets have been integrated into the various sections of this Guidebook and a summary of all the requirements for pullet housing and rearing is available in the second part of this document (Procedures and Checklists).

**All the requirements of the Code are identified using orange outlines.**

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### CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

This policy is based on the knowledge and technology available at the time of its publication. It will never replace the need for experience and common sense in the husbandry of pullets. As such, this *Animal Care Policy for Pullets* will be reviewed on a yearly basis by the Pullet Growers of Canada Production Management Committee and/or when advances of technology and science-based information become available to the Pullet Growers of Canada.

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### EFFECTIVE PLANNING

This policy aims for pullet growers to have in-depth understanding that effective animal care practices are fundamental to the health and well-being of the birds and to the continuing viability of the Canadian pullet industry and its clients in the Canadian egg industry. It is very important for pullet growers to adhere to the highest standards of animal care through effective planning in their operations at all times.



## 2. RECEIVING AND BROODING CHICKS

- 2.1. Special care needs to be taken to ensure that newly-arrived chicks settle in well to their new environments. They need to be protected from abrupt changes in temperature and be able to locate feed and water (Code, section 1.2).
- 2.2. Feedback on chick condition, mortality, and performance can help hatcheries evaluate their management and transport protocols (Code, section 1.2).
- 2.3. Evaluation criteria could include:
  - **Alertness:** an alert chick has wide-open bright eyes and appears curious.
  - **Vigour:** a vigorous chick is instantly active when disturbed and shows no signs of weakness or unthriftiness.
  - **Condition:** a chick in good condition will be firm. The fluff will not be matted, there are no signs of dehydration, and the navel is healed. An unhealed navel can become an early access route for bacterial infections. Chicks must be handled in order to be evaluated for condition.
  - **Body temperature:** the normal body temperature for chicks is 40.0 – 40.7°C (104.0 – 105.3°F).
  - **Behaviour:** chicks should not show signs of distress (e.g. huddling, open-mouth breathing, excessive vocalization).
  - **Normalcy:** a normal chick has no apparent deformity or abnormality such as twisted toes or beaks, crippled or straddled legs, etc. (Code, section 1.2).

### REQUIREMENTS FOR RECEIVING AND BROODING CHICKS

(Code, section 1.2)

**Facilities must be prepared (i.e. heat, clean, feed, water, bedding) in advance of receiving chicks so that they can be placed promptly after arrival.**

**Farm personnel must be present at the time of delivery and placement, and must assess the physical condition of the chicks.**

**Steps must be taken to prevent chicks from becoming chilled or overheated during unloading and brooding.**

**All chicks must be kept, treated, and handled in ways that prevent injury and minimize stress.**



## 3. HOUSING AND EQUIPMENT

### 3.1. GENERAL

- 3.1.1. New housing systems or modifications to existing systems should follow all applicable codes, including the most recent Code.
- 3.1.2. It is critical that pullets destined for aviary systems during the laying phase be reared in systems with similar features. This helps to ease the transition to the lay barn, reduces problems associated with fearfulness, and enhances physical development (Code, section 1.1).
- 3.1.3. Birds kept longer in rearing systems with litter need more litter space as they approach start of lay to support behavioural changes that occur at the start of egg production. (Code, section 1.1).
- 3.1.4. Buildings must be designed, constructed, maintained and located to protect pullets from thermal discomfort, be suitable for local weather conditions and able to withstand seasonal extremes of temperature.
- 3.1.5. Housing facilities must be prepared following the Start Clean-Stay Clean™ Pullet Program.
- 3.1.6. Floors, other surfaces, fittings and equipment must be designed, constructed and maintained so as to minimize the risk of injury and disease.
- 3.1.7. The apron surrounding the outside of the barn should be kept clean, not offer shelter and access to wild birds or rodents and well-maintained at all times.
- 3.1.8. Cages should be designed to provide pullets with a safe and suitable environment. New cages should allow standing birds free head movement anywhere in the cage. The cage doors should be designed for the easy insertion and removal of pullets. A cage floor that causes injuries or deformities to pullets during any period of the production cycle is unacceptable. Cages should be well-maintained and in good repair to prevent injury.

### REQUIREMENT FOR DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

(Code, section 1.1.1)

**Materials used in the construction of housing and equipment to which birds have access must not be harmful or toxic to the birds, and must be able to be thoroughly cleaned and maintained.**



### 3.2. SPACE ALLOWANCE

- 3.2.1. Space allowance is typically measured and described as a minimum amount of useable area (cm<sup>2</sup> or sq in) allocated to each bird (Code, section 1.1.4).
- 3.2.2. Space should be provided based on the age and expected size/weight of the birds when they are transferred to the layer barn (Code, section 1.1.4).
- 3.2.3. Space allowance needs to increase as the birds approach their mature weight. Therefore, space allowances for chicks, young pullets, and older pullets need to be adjusted as the birds grow (Code, section 1.1.4).
- 3.2.4. When calculating space allowances in multi-tier rearing systems, the space beneath the first elevated tier is not considered useable space, unless the height allows birds to stand upright and birds have continuous access to the area. Useable space for chicks and pullets includes the main floor, litter area, elevated terraces, plus any elevated tiers with a height of at least 45.0 cm (17.7 in) to which birds have continual access. Space under offset elevated terraces counts as useable floor space (Code, section 1.1.4).

#### REQUIREMENTS FOR SPACE ALLOWANCE

(Code, section 1.1.4)

**Birds must be able to stand fully in an upright position within the enclosure.**

**Effective for all holdings for which new construction or re-tooling, including the phases of design, application, approval, planning, and installation, was initiated after April 1, 2017, each chick or pullet kept in pullet cages must be provided with a minimum space allowance as outlined in Table 1.2:**

- **Column (b): Final Space Allowance.**

**For systems installed prior to April 1, 2017, where chicks and pullets are kept in pullet cages, each bird must be provided with a minimum space allowance as outlined in Table 1.2:**

- **Column (a): Interim Space Allowance by January 1, 2020**
- **Column (b): Final Space Allowance by January 1, 2022.**

**In Single-Tier Rearing Systems, each pullet from 8 weeks of age until transfer to the laying barn must be provided with a minimum of 696.8 cm<sup>2</sup> (108 sq in / 0.75 sq ft) of useable space.**



**In Multi-Tier Rearing Systems, each chick and pullet must be provided with minimum space allowances and litter space as outlined in Table 1.2:**

- **Column (b): Final Space Allowance.**

**Table 1.2: Minimum Required Space Allowance for Chicks and Pullets housed in Pullet Cages and Multi-Tier Rearing Systems.**

Bird Type/Age	Column (a): Interim Space Allowance (Per Bird)		Column (b): Final Space Allowance (Per Bird)	
	cm <sup>2</sup>	sq in	cm <sup>2</sup>	sq in
Chicks: 0 to 2 weeks	64.5	10.0	64.5	10.0
Pullets: 2 to 8 weeks	129.0	20.0	129.0	20.0
Pullets: 8 weeks to layer barn	271.0	42.0	283.9	44.0
Additional litter space for multi-tier rearing systems	-	-	58.1	9.0

### 3.3. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR MULTI-TIER REARING SYSTEMS

- 3.3.1. Birds can be restricted from accessing space beneath the first elevated tier to train them to use the system during both the rearing and laying phases. Chicks and pullets that “hide” under the system may not access feed and water as often as they need to, and as a result may become compromised (Code, section 1.1.5).
- 3.3.2. Additional space is necessary from 17 weeks of age to prevent smothering that can result as the litter area becomes attractive close to the onset of lay (Code, section 1.1.5).

### REQUIREMENTS FOR MULTI-TIER REARING SYSTEM

(Code, section 1.1.5)

**Tiers must be arranged to prevent droppings from falling directly on tiers below, excluding perches, terraces and ramps/ladders.**

**The number of tiers must not exceed 4 where the ground level is considered to be one tier.**

**Feed and water must be provided on more than one elevation of the system, and must not be provided on the ground level.**

### 3.4. FLOORING

- 3.4.1. Pullet barn flooring must allow for effective cleaning and disinfection, preventing significant build-up of parasites and other pathogens.



- 3.4.2. Layer pullets may be reared on wire, slats, or litter. Litter is preferred for rearing chicks (Code, section 1.1.2).
- 3.4.3. Floor coverings provide foot support, offer opportunities for natural behaviours such as scratching, foraging, and dust bathing, and promote optimum intestinal health (Code, section 1.1.2).
- 3.4.4. Where pullets are raised on wire, it is recommended that appropriate floor covering be used until birds reach a size suitable for the flooring.
- 3.4.5. When pullets are placed on a solid floor, they must have access to litter at all times.

### FLOORING REQUIREMENTS

(Code, section 1.1.2)

**Flooring must be designed, constructed, and maintained in a manner that supports the birds' feet and does not contribute to trapping, injuries, or deformities to the birds' legs, feet, and/or toes.**

**Housing system floors must be designed and maintained to prevent manure from birds in upper levels from dropping on birds enclosed directly below.**

**Existing flow-through pullet cage systems must be replaced by January 1, 2020.**

### 3.5. LITTER MANAGEMENT

#### Definitions:

**Bedding:** Loose material such as wood shavings or chopped straw that is added to housing environments.

**Litter:** The combination of bedding and/or bird excreta, feathers, feed, dust, and other materials on floors of bird housing systems.

- 3.5.1. Bedding needs to be fresh for a new flock, of a suitable material and particle size, and maintained in a dry condition.
- 3.5.2. Moisture is a key determinant in litter quality. Litter moisture can be affected by type and management of drinkers, humidity, season, ventilation, consistency and amount of fecal material, and stocking density (Code, section 3.5).
- 3.5.3. Different types of bedding have different absorption qualities. Although low litter moisture increases dust levels, litter wetness is considered to be a primary cause of footpad dermatitis and can increase the risk of coccidiosis and necrotic enteritis (Code, section 3.5).



- 3.5.4. Litter should be deep enough to insulate birds from direct contact with the floor and to mix with the manure (Code, section 3.5).
- 3.5.5. Low temperatures in winter lead to low ventilation rates, and the resulting higher humidity levels may lead to wet litter (Code, section 3.5).

#### **LITTER MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS**

**(Code, section 3.5)**

**Litter must be of a good quality, and friable.**

**Bedding that is added must not be harmful or toxic to birds.**

**Litter condition must be monitored and managed to avoid levels of dustiness or dampness that could cause leg, respiratory, or other health problems such as the build-up of parasites or diseases.**

**Litter that has become excessively wet (e.g. from a water leak, flood) must be removed promptly.**

**Used litter must be removed between flocks.**

#### **3.6. PERCHES**

- 3.6.1. Depending on perch height, chicks begin perching at around 7 to 10 days of age, and the amount of time spent perching steadily increases over time. Pullets are more likely to use perches if they are introduced to them at an early age. Conversely, birds reared without perches have difficulty adapting to non-cage systems during lay (Code, section 1.1.6).
- 3.6.2. Access to perches during rearing has been shown to increase nest use and decrease cloacal cannibalism during lay (Code, section 1.1.6).
- 3.6.3. Hens that were reared with perches have stronger bones. The inclusion of perches during the rearing phase promotes bird activity, can help to develop bone strength, can assist with the birds' ability to adapt when they are transferred to the laying barn, and can assist in reducing the number of floor eggs during the laying phase (Code, section 1.1.6).
- 3.6.4. Access to perches and more complex environments (e.g. ramps, ladders, elevated terraces) during rearing is critical for birds destined for non-cage multi-tier systems, because feed and water is provided on elevated tiers (Code, section 1.1.6).
- 3.6.5. Perching is beneficial for birds destined for all non-cage systems; however, in single-tier systems, food and water are provided at ground level. Communication and coordination



between pullet growers and egg farmers can help ease the transition to the layer barn (Code, section 1.1.6).

- 3.6.6. The following requirements apply to any type of pullet housing system where perches are provided, except where specific housing systems are specified (Code, section 1.1.6).

#### **PERCHES REQUIREMENTS**

**(Code, section 1.1.6)**

**Perches must be provided to chicks reared in multi-tier systems from 1 day of age.**

**Terraces and/or elevated perches at varying heights must be provided from no later than 8 weeks of age in multi-tier rearing systems.**

**Perches must be constructed of materials that are easily cleaned and do not harbour mites.**

**Perches must be designed to prevent injury to pullets that are mounting or dismounting as well as to any pullets nearby.**

**Perches must be positioned to prevent trapping and allow access to feed and water.**

**Perches must be positioned to minimize fecal fouling of birds, feeders, or drinkers located below them.**

#### **3.7. LIGHTING**

##### **General:**

- 3.7.1. Controlling light and balancing light intensities in the pullet barns is an essential tool in managing bird health and welfare. Light needs to be bright enough to allow birds to see one another and their surroundings, locate feed and water, and access perches (Code, section 3.4).

##### **Chicks:**

- 3.7.2. Young pullets require adequate light intensity on food and water for the first three days after hatching in order to learn to find food and water.
- 3.7.3. Supplemental heat is essential in maintaining chicks' body temperature during the first few weeks of life when natural brooding is not utilized. However, the use of radiant heat lamps results in constant exposure to light. Continuous light can negatively impact eye development of newly hatched chicks and disrupts rest, which affects the synchronization of chicks' activities (Code, section 1.3).





- 3.7.4. Some chicks continue to rest after arrival from the hatchery, while others seek out food and water. An intermittent lighting program (refer to Figure 1.1) divides the day into resting and activity phases and can assist with synchronising chick activity to improve food and water intake as weaker chicks are stimulated by stronger ones to eat and drink (Code, section 1.3).
- 3.7.5. In commercial settings, the positive welfare outcomes associated with brooding by hens can be achieved by providing simulated brooding cycles of light and dark periods, and/or by providing dark brooders, which are warm, dark, and enclosed areas that may simulate the effects of a brooding hen. Dark brooders have been found to have long-term preventative effects on feather pecking and cannibalism, and can improve behavioural synchrony between birds, reduce disturbances during resting, and result in calmer birds (Code, section 1.3).



Figure 1.1: Example of an Intermittent Lighting Program

#### Pullets:

- 3.7.6. According to breeding standards, the lights have to be adjusted according to the age of the pullets.
- 3.7.7. Synchronizing activity has been shown to promote better rest, and can reduce the development of feather pecking by separating active and inactive birds. In addition, an intermittent lighting program typically results in more uniform flock behaviour as well as lower mortality rates (Code, section 1.3).
- 3.7.8. Ideally, the time of day for start of the light period (lights on) during rearing should be matched to the start of the light period in the laying barn. Simulating the gradual oncoming of night (dusk) by gradually lowering lights at night will help pullets in non-cage systems locate a suitable perch for the night, or move up onto tiers while visually capable. In addition, gradually increasing lighting in the morning (e.g. using dawn to dusk lighting) can enhance welfare by allowing birds to gradually wake up and leave perches (Code, section 1.3).

- 3.7.9. Communication and coordination between pullet growers and egg farmers can help ease the transition to the layer barn (Code, section 1.3).
- 3.7.10. Sudden increases in light intensity should be avoided as it may cause flight reaction in some strains of pullets.
- 3.7.11. During inspection of pullets the light intensity on the pullets must be adequate to allow pullets to be thoroughly inspected and any problems identified.
- 3.7.12. Birds are less fearful during catching and handling in lighting that is lower than their normal light environment (Code, section 3.4).

### LIGHTING REQUIREMENTS

(Code, section 1.3)

**Chicks must be provided with a minimum of 2 consecutive hours of darkness in each 24 hour period.**

**The dark period must be gradually increased to a total minimum of 6 hours in each 24 hour period by 2 weeks of age.**

**Chicks must be provided with a minimum of 16 hours of light in each 24 hour period up to 2 weeks of age.**

**Chicks must be provided with light intensities of at least 20 lux (2 foot candles) for at least the first 7 days that allow them to easily locate feed and water.**

(Code, section 3.4)

**Light intensity must be at least an average of 5 lux at feeders during the light phase where birds are kept in cages. Light intensity may only be reduced to correct injurious behaviour (e.g. feather pecking).**

### 3.8. VENTILATION

- 3.8.1. Ventilation is required at all times to provide fresh air and to help control temperature and humidity. The accumulation of water vapour, heat, noxious gases (e.g. ammonia, methane, carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide) and dust particles may cause discomfort or distress and predispose pullets to the development of disease. Pullets should be protected from extreme weather conditions including strong drafts during cold weather. The ideal:
- relative humidity range is between 55 % and 65%;
  - ammonia level is less than 20 ppm; and



- carbon dioxide level is less than 5,000 ppm (Code, section 3.1).
- 3.8.2. The presence of ammonia is usually a reliable indicator of the build-up of noxious gases. Pullet growers must ensure that they have measuring devices and recording ability in order to monitor levels of ammonia according to Start Clean-Stay Clean™ Pullet standards. Ammonia problems are more likely to occur in early morning and during the winter, when humidity levels may be higher (Code, section 3.1).
- 3.8.3. Mechanically ventilated barns must have a backup power supply or alternative equivalent ventilation system and automatic alarm systems that warn immediately of power or temperature problems. The alarm system must have battery back-up and must operate on a system independent of the barn ventilation, heating and cooling controller and temperature sensors. The alarm system must sense if the barn temperature is too high or too low and if there is a power failure in any power supply phase. Alarms must be sited so that they are easily heard and response to them must be available at all times with restoration of power or emergency ventilation within a suitable time. The entire back-up system must be tested monthly to ensure integrity.
- 3.8.4. All automated growing and environmental control equipment for controlled environment barns must have adequate back-up systems and alarms in case of equipment failure. For existing or new equipment to be used, farm workers must be able to:
- demonstrate an ability to operate the equipment competently;
  - demonstrate an ability to maintain the equipment on a routine basis; and
  - recognize the common signs of a malfunction and know how to apply corrective action.
- 3.8.5. Sudden or extreme variations in barn conditions can be a source of stress to birds, and may contribute to feather pecking (Code, section 3.1).

## VENTILATION REQUIREMENTS

(Code, section 3.1)

**Environmental control systems must be designed, constructed, and maintained in a manner that allows for fresh air and hygienic conditions that promote health and welfare for birds.**

**Action must be taken to manage ammonia levels if they reach a harmful range (e.g. 20 to 25 ppm).**



### 3.9. TEMPERATURE

3.9.1. Newly hatched chicks have a poor ability to control body temperature and require supplementary heat to bring their environmental temperature up to the comfort range as evidenced by alert and active behaviour. When operating under conditions of minimum ventilation during chick start-up, there can be a build-up of CO<sub>2</sub> levels. Subject to seasonal variations, supplementary heat at gradually reducing levels may be required up to and including 19 weeks of age. Pullet growers must know and adhere to the specific breeding management guides for the species under their care because optimal temperature ranges are not the same for all birds or stages of production (Code, section 3.2).

3.9.2. Bird behaviour can be used as a reliable indicator of thermal comfort (refer to Table 3.1 for general guidelines on temperature ranges for bird thermal comfort). Signs that indicate that temperature is too high include:

- frequent spreading and flapping of wings; and
- panting.

Signs that indicate that temperature is too low include:

- feather ruffling;
- rigid posture;
- trembling;
- huddling or piling on top of each other; and
- distress vocalization (Code, section 3.2).

3.9.3. Adequate precautions should be taken to minimize stress produced by temperatures high enough to cause prolonged panting, particularly when accompanied by high humidity. In hot weather, provision of adequate cool water and ventilation is essential and pullets must have access to shade. Under adverse weather conditions pullets must be monitored more frequently.

3.9.4. Where high temperatures are causing distress, appropriate ventilation should be used to control heat build-up within buildings.

3.9.5. The construction and positioning of cages should be such that they do not become heat traps. Minimum and maximum inside temperatures should be recorded on a daily basis.



Table 3.1: Temperature Guidelines for Thermal Comfort for Birds by Age.

Bird Age	Temperature Range
17 days	30–36°C (86–97°F)
1–5 weeks	Lower by 2–3°C (4–6°F) each week to target 21°C (70°F)
6 weeks and Older	10–28°C (50–82°F). Depends on various conditions such as access to outdoors, feed intake, and feather cover.

## TEMPERATURE REQUIREMENTS

(Code, section 3.2)

**Temperatures inside housing systems must be monitored on a daily basis.**

**Temperatures inside housing systems must be maintained within a range that contributes to good health and welfare of the birds.**

**Birds must be monitored for signs of cold or heat stress. Upon discovering birds showing signs of cold or heat stress, remedial action must be taken immediately.**

**The environment for newly placed chicks must be pre-heated to breed-specific temperatures and maintained at a level that promotes good chick health and welfare.**

## 4. PROTECTION

- 4.1. Every reasonable effort must be taken to provide protection from predators or other animals that could expose pullets to disease, including domestic pets. Wild birds, rodents, pets, and other animals should not be allowed in pullet barns.
- 4.2. Pullet growers should ensure that they have an emergency plan in place for fire or other major hazards.
- 4.3. Only authorized personnel should be allowed in pullet buildings. If it is necessary to enter in more than one building, personnel should move from the youngest to the oldest birds and from the healthiest to the least healthy birds, following biosecurity procedures.
- 4.4. Access to property by visitors should be restricted. Visitors must not be allowed into the pullet barn without proper supervision.



- 4.5. Pullet growers should ensure that birds are not exposed to disturbing noises, visual stimuli or strong vibrations. If so, methods of de-sensitization to lower stress levels caused by disturbances should be implemented.
- 4.6. All caretaking activity should be conducted with slow deliberate movements to avoid birds “piling” into corners or around equipment.

## 5. FOOD AND WATER

### 5.1. FEED AND WATER MANAGEMENT

- 5.1.1. Pullets must receive a diet containing adequate nutrients to meet their requirements for good health and vitality. Feedstock containing growth promoters are forbidden. In feed, antibiotics may be given only under the direction of a veterinarian, clearly labeled and stored securely according to label instructions and administered in accordance with federal and provincial legislation regulating their usage.
- 5.1.2. Pullet growers must use humane means to discourage their birds from perching over feeding and drinking facilities, (e.g. roller bars).
- 5.1.3. Pullet growers must monitor feed consumption of pullets daily for any increase or decrease that might be an early indicator of problems such as an emerging medical issue.
- 5.1.4. Feed and water are important for welfare because they contribute to overall bird health and well-being. Working with a qualified advisor (e.g. poultry nutritionist) can assist with ensuring birds are provided with nutritionally balanced diets. Nutrient composition, quantity, and availability of feed that is contaminant-free are all important components of the feed management program, as is access to feeders (Code, section 4.1).
- 5.1.5. Aggressive behaviour may occur when birds are forced to compete for resources. In normal circumstances, all pullets should have access to feed and water at all times (Code, section 4.1).

### FEED AND WATER MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS

**(Code, section 4.1)**

**Access to feed must be provided at all times and delivered in ways that minimize aggression, poor body condition, and injuries.**

**Access to water in sufficient quantities must be provided to all birds at all times in normal circumstances. Interruptions for the purposes of vaccinations or water system maintenance are acceptable.**



**Feed that has become stale, mouldy, or contaminated must not be used, and must be replaced immediately.**

**Feeding and watering equipment must be monitored daily, and corrective action promptly taken when necessary.**

**A plan must be in place to ensure that adequate supplies of suitable feed and water are available at all times, as well as in the event of on-farm emergencies such as power interruptions, mechanical breakdowns, and/or the need to remove and replace feed.**

## 5.2. FEEDERS AND WATERERS

- 5.2.1. Chicks and pullets must have access to feed and water at all times so it is not necessary for all birds to feed or drink simultaneously (Code, section 1.1.3).
- 5.2.2. When calculating the feed space, the age of the birds, their body weight and other factors need to be taken into consideration (Code, section 1.1.3).
- 5.2.3. The feed trough provides access on one side or two sides, depending on the design of the housing. The length of the feeder trough will depend on whether birds can access it only on one side or on both sides (Code, section 1.1.3).
- 5.2.4. In cages, pullets should have access to at least two nipples or cups in case one breaks down. Drinkers need to be of an appropriate design and placed at the optimum height for the size and age of the pullet. Water equipment should be checked daily to ensure that it is working properly.

### FEEDER AND WATERER REQUIREMENTS

**(Code, section 1.1.3)**

**Feed space and waterers (e.g. cups, nipple drinkers) must be provided as indicated in Table 1.1.**

**All birds must have access to at least 2 waterers (e.g. cups, nipple drinkers) in case one breaks down.**

**Automated feeding systems must be designed and utilized in ways that minimize the likelihood of chicks getting caught in them.**



**Table 1.1 - Minimum Feed Space<sup>a</sup> and Maximum Birds per Waterer.**

Bird Type/Age	Minimum Feed Space/Bird	Maximum Number of Birds per Waterer	Minimum Water Space/Bird <sup>a</sup>
Chicks: 0 to 2 weeks	1.0 cm (0.4 in)	30	2.5 cm (1.0 in)
Pullets: 2 to 8 weeks	2.0 cm (0.8 in)	24	
Pullets: 8 weeks to layer barn	4.0 cm (1.6 in)	12	

<sup>a</sup> Perimeter space for round feeders and waterers can be calculated by multiplying linear space by 0.8.

### 5.3. ACCESS TO WATER

- 5.3.1. Water is the birds' most important nutrient. As such, it is important that water is palatable and safe and is supplied continuously to chicks and pullets. The age and body weight of birds, along with ambient temperatures, will affect water requirements (Code, section 4.3).
- 5.3.2. Consumption rates can be affected by factors such as air temperature, relative humidity, and production level or phase. Water consumption will increase in hot weather. Providing cooler water during warm weather by flushing lines will encourage consumption to keep birds hydrated (Code, section 4.3).
- 5.3.3. The quality of water, which includes temperature, salinity, and impurities affecting taste and odour, will also affect consumption. For a variety of reasons, mineral and microbiological content in water can change. Protocols for testing and treating water, as well as checking equipment can be developed and followed to ensure water quality and availability (Code, section 4.3).
- 5.3.4. Careful observation of birds is necessary to ensure they are drinking adequate amounts of water. The Start Clean-Stay Clean™ Pullet standards require daily water consumption records. A variety of watering appliances are used for poultry of different ages. These include nipples, round water dispensers, trigger cups, and open troughs. Birds need to learn how to operate watering devices. If birds are not familiar with the drinker types in the barn, adjustments to the drinkers may be necessary to ensure adequate water consumption (Code, section 4.3).
- 5.3.5. Water must be tested yearly, hygienically managed and not contain any elements which may be harmful to the health of the pullet according to the Start Clean-Stay Clean™ Pullet standards.
- 5.3.6. Producers should ensure that they have an emergency plan in case of water shortage caused by breaks, repairs or failure of pumping equipment.
- 5.3.7. When a pullet growing operation is first established or when a new water source is obtained, the water should be tested for mineral content and microbiological contamination and advice obtained on its suitability for poultry. As the composition of water from varying sources may change with changes in flow or evaporation, the water may require more frequent monitoring





for suitability for use. Information on water testing can be obtained from the local provincial environmental ministry offices.

## **WATER REQUIREMENTS**

**(Code, section 4.3)**

**Water must be palatable and not harmful to bird health.**

**WATER MUST BE TESTED AT LEAST ANNUALLY FOR THE PRESENCE OF COLIFORMS AND FAECAL COLIFORMS, AND CORRECTIVE ACTION MUST BE TAKEN IF NECESSARY.**

## **5.4. NUTRITION**

- 5.4.1. Nutritional and metabolic disorders that may not be infectious can spread quickly through a flock if not identified and treated (Code, section 4.2).
- 5.4.2. Feed formulations and particle sizes should be matched to the different growth stages of birds and feeding and housing systems (Code, section 4.2).
- 5.4.3. The Start Clean-Stay Clean™ Pullet standards require daily feed consumption records.
- 5.4.4. Insoluble grit is beneficial for the hens' digestive systems and should be provided at levels and particle sizes appropriate to the birds' ages (Code, section 4.2).
- 5.4.5. The contamination of feed with mycotoxins poses a serious threat to the health and productivity of poultry. Generally, younger animals are more susceptible to the toxic effects of all mycotoxins (Code, section 4.2).
- 5.4.6. Feed and mineral composition of water should be analysed when bird health indicates a nutrient imbalance or that feed may be contaminated (e.g. mycotoxins). Consult a qualified advisor for guidance (Code, section 4.2).

## **NUTRITION REQUIREMENT**

**(Code, section 4.2)**

**All birds must receive feed that meets their daily nutrient requirements to maintain good health, meet physiological demands, and avoid metabolic and nutritional disorders.**



## 6. HEALTH MANAGEMENT AND HUSBANDRY PRACTICES

### 6.1. PULLET SOURCING AND TRANSITION TO LAY

- 6.1.1. Efforts to match the rearing environment to the adult environment can ease the transition to the layer barn and has the potential to reduce problems such as feather pecking and cannibalism (Code, section 5.1).
- 6.1.2. Access to perches and more complex environments (e.g. ramps, ladders, elevated terraces) during rearing is critical for birds destined for multi-tier systems, because feed and water is provided on elevated tiers (Code, section 5.1).

### **PULLET SOURCING AND TRANSITION TO LAY REQUIREMENT**

**(Code, section 5.1)**

**Hens that will be housed in non-cage multi-tier systems must be sourced from non-cage rearing systems in which pullets had access to perches.**

### 6.2. INSPECTION FREQUENCY AND PROCESS

- 6.2.1. Pullets and barns should be inspected at least twice every 24 hours and action taken to correct any flock health or management issues indicated by records or bird behaviour, as required.
- 6.2.2. During an inspection, the following areas require thorough attention: bird health, injury, behaviours indicative of a problem, feed, water, ventilation and lighting. Dead and injured birds should be removed for disposal or appropriate treatment without delay. When pullets are housed in cages, the daily inspection must include checking for entrapment and checking for escaped birds in manure areas under the cages. The inspection should also include checking the operating condition of automated feeding and watering systems.
- 6.2.3. Where pullets are found to be entrapped, they must be freed immediately and where appropriate, corrective action taken to prevent this situation recurring.
- 6.2.4. Where cages are installed in multiple tiers, it must be possible to inspect pullets in all tiers easily and routinely. Equipment must be available to allow inspection and handling of birds in all levels of cages.



- 6.2.5. Pullets should be checked regularly for evidence of parasites and effective treatment should be provided. Pullets must also be checked regularly for signs of infectious diseases and appropriate action must be taken promptly.
- 6.2.6. An inspection sign-off process should be put in place on all pullet farms to ensure that all the proper inspections have taken place in the course of a day.

### INSPECTION REQUIREMENTS

(Code, section 5.5)

**Flocks must be inspected a minimum of twice daily. Such inspections must include: listening to and looking at the birds, checking for bird health and well-being; checking access to and availability of feed and water; operating condition of equipment; environmental conditions; and disposing mortalities.**

**Appropriate methods or devices must be available to allow inspection of all birds.**

### 6.3. HEALTH MANAGEMENT AND PREVENTION

- 6.3.1. Those responsible for the care of pullets should be aware of the signs of ill-health or distress. Signs of ill-health in pullets include abnormal food and water intake, reduced growth, changes in the nature and level of their activity, abnormal condition of their feathers or droppings or other physical features. Evidence of behavioural changes may indicate ill-health or distress, or both.
- 6.3.2. If persons in charge are not able to identify the causes of ill-health or distress or to correct these, they should seek advice from those having training and experience in such matters. Such persons may be specialist poultry veterinarians or other qualified advisers in private or government employment.
- 6.3.3. Medication must be used only in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, unless professional advice has been given to vary the directions.
- 6.3.4. Pullet growers should also operate an effective program to prevent infectious disease and internal and external parasitism. Vaccinations and other treatments applied to pullets should be undertaken by people skilled in the procedures. Current acceptable vaccination methods include: spray, eye drops, wing poke, water feed and injections. When in doubt on any method of vaccination, pullet growers should check with their farm veterinarian.
- 6.3.5. Dead pullets must be removed and disposed daily. Records of morbidities, mortalities, treatment given and response to treatment must be maintained to assist disease investigations.



**HEALTH MANAGEMENT PLAN REQUIREMENTS****(Code, section 5.2)****A working relationship with a veterinarian must be established.****Records on disease outbreaks, health problems, abnormal conditions noted and causes if known, and remedial actions taken must be maintained.****6.4. SKILLS RELATED TO FLOCK MANAGEMENT**

- 6.4.1. It is essential that sufficient, well-motivated, and competent personnel carry out all necessary tasks, and that personnel are well managed and supervised, fully conversant with their tasks, and competent in the use of equipment (Code, section 5.3).
- 6.4.2. Personnel need to have compassionate, humane, and respectful attitudes, and need to be able to anticipate and avoid many potential welfare problems and have the ability to identify those that do occur and respond to them promptly (Code, section 5.3).

**FLOCK MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENT****(Code, section 5.3)****Personnel must be knowledgeable of normal bird behaviour and signs of poor health, distress, and behaviour problems, or must work in conjunction with experienced personnel.****6.5. DISEASE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT**

- 6.5.1. Biosecurity is an important tool to protect against the introduction and spread of diseases. An effective biosecurity program is based on two main concepts: i) Exclusion (keeping disease out of the flock) and ii) Containment (preventing disease spread within premises or to other flocks). Consultation with a poultry veterinarian or a qualified advisor can assist with developing a biosecurity program to suit specific situations and needs (Code, section 5.4).
- 6.5.2. It is important to be aware of general clinical signs of disease in birds, so that biosecurity practices may be heightened (Code, section 5.4).
- 6.5.3. People, including on-farm personnel and visitors, may inadvertently carry infectious agents into barns. Designated clothing, hand-washing stations, changing footwear, and other strategies can reduce this risk (Code, section 5.4).



**DISEASE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS**

(Code, section 5.4)

**A biosecurity protocol must be developed, followed, and reviewed annually.**

**All farm personnel must be aware of and understand their responsibilities in adhering to the biosecurity protocol.**

**Visitors must not be allowed into the barn without proper supervision or permission, and access to production units by visitors must be monitored.**

**Barns must be left empty for a minimum of 7 days between flocks\*.**

**If signs of a disease are recognized or suspected, or if birds are showing signs of altered behaviour, or mortalities are greater than expected, action must be taken without delay to establish the cause, and/or appropriate intervention must be undertaken by a suitably qualified person.**

**Mortalities must be recorded daily.**

\* The Animal Care Assessment provides for extenuating circumstances that are beyond the control of producers.

**6.6. SANITATION**

- 6.6.1. Facilities and equipment need to be cleaned and sanitized regularly to prevent the accumulation of organic waste and potentially infectious agents in the birds' environments (Code, section 5.4.1).
- 6.6.2. Effective sanitation measures will help to prevent disease transfer from one flock to the next one. Sanitizers are most effective when used on clean surfaces free of organic material such as straw and manure (Code, section 5.4.1).
- 6.6.3. If outdoor ranges are used, they also should be kept clean. It is beneficial to allow range areas to dry thoroughly prior to bird placement (Code, section 5.4.1).

**SANITATION REQUIREMENT**

(Code, section 5.4.1)

**Poultry barns and feeding, watering, and ventilation equipment must be cleaned and a disinfectant applied prior to the new flock being placed.**



## 6.7. PEST CONTROL

- 6.7.1. Monitoring barns is an important step in preventing and/or controlling pests (e.g. rodents, small animals, wild birds, insects, predators). Damage caused by pests takes many forms, including consumption and contamination of feed along with damage to buildings and insulation. Directly related to health, pests are carriers of many diseases, which has an impact on biosecurity (Code, section 5.4.2).
- 6.7.2. It is important to be able to recognize the signs of pest infestation. Given the extreme difficulty of eliminating pests, prevention should be the primary objective. Management programs that eliminate entrances, nesting sites, along with food and water supplies can help to reduce pests (Code, section 5.4.2).
- 6.7.3. Fly control is important in poultry facilities due to possible disease spread, mortality, and food safety concerns (Code, section 5.4.2).

### **PEST CONTROL REQUIREMENT**

#### **(CODE, SECTION 5.4.2)**

**Measures must be taken to control pests including rodents, small animals, wild birds, insects, and predators.**

## 6.8. SICK AND INJURED BIRDS

- 6.8.1. Maintaining daily records water consumption, and, where possible, feed intake is a good management practice that can provide early warnings of declining health (Code, section 5.6).
- 6.8.2. Segregating sick and injured birds with a likelihood of recovery, as well as those that are failing to thrive, to a less-competitive environment can assist with recovery. Euthanasia may be the best option for birds that are unlikely to recover (Code, section 5.6).
- 6.8.3. Flock owners, veterinarians, and laboratories are required to immediately report the presence of an animal that is infected or suspected of being infected with a reportable disease to the appropriate federal or provincial authority (Code, section 5.6).
- 6.8.4. Reportable diseases are listed in the Reportable Disease Regulations under the Health of Animals Act. Refer to Appendix F of the Code: Resources for Further Information. Producers need to be aware of applicable provincial reportable/notifiable disease requirements, as well (Code, section 5.6).



**SICK AND INJURED BIRDS REQUIREMENTS**

**(Code, section 5.6)**

**Sick or injured birds must be promptly segregated for assessment and provided with appropriate care and/or treatment, or euthanized (Refer to Section on Euthanasia).**

**Any suspected cases of reportable diseases must be reported to a veterinarian immediately.**

**Birds that have been identified as sick or injured must be monitored at least twice daily, or at a frequency appropriate to their conditions. If not showing signs of recovery, birds must be euthanized in accordance with the on-farm euthanasia plan (refer to section 6.13. On-Farm Euthanasia Plans).**

**Medication, vaccines, and supplements must be used only in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions unless veterinary advice has been given to vary from the directions.**

**6.9. FEATHER PECKING AND CANNIBALISM**

- 6.9.1. Gentle feather pecking can escalate to severe levels that can lead to cannibalistic pecking. Outbreaks of feather pecking and/or cannibalism may occur among layers or pullets in any type of housing system, representing a significant welfare and production problem. Outbreaks can be identified by increased incidences of severe pecking, rapid rates of feather loss, and increased injury and/or mortality resulting from pecking (Code, section 5.7.1).
- 6.9.2. Once established, these behaviours are harder to control (Code, section 5.7.1).
- 6.9.3. There are multiple risk factors for these behaviours including beak form, lighting, genetics, nutrition, foraging opportunities, and flock size, as well as fearfulness during rearing. The greater the number of protective factors implemented, the lower the risk of feather pecking and cannibalism (Code, section 5.7.1).
- 6.9.4. Should an outbreak of feather picking or cannibalism occur, or an outbreak appears imminent, consultation with an expert in animal care may be necessary to prevent further injury or mortality in the flock.



**FEATHER PECKING AND CANNIBALISM REQUIREMENTS**

(Code, section 5.7.1)

**Corrective action must be taken at the onset of an outbreak of feather pecking or cannibalism.**

**Injured birds must be promptly segregated for assessment and provided with appropriate care and/or treatment, or euthanized (refer to Section 6.12. Euthanasia).**

**6.10. ON-FARM BEAK TRIMMING**

6.10.1. Beak trimming is an effective method for reducing cannibalism and severe feather pecking. Acute and chronic pain and reduced welfare can result if trimming is not carried out properly (Code, section 5.7.1.1).

6.10.2. Typically, beak modification, if deemed necessary, is performed at hatcheries, where it is recommended that the procedure be done as early in the chicks' lives as possible using the infra-red treatment method. For more information, refer to the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Hatching Eggs, Breeders, Chickens, and Turkeys ([www.nfacc.ca](http://www.nfacc.ca)) (Code, section 5.7.1.1).

**ON FARM BEAK TRIMMING REQUIREMENTS**

(Code, section 5.7.1.1)

**When planned on-farm, beak trimming of the new flock must be performed prior to 10 days of age.**

**Beak trimming must not be performed on birds that are older than 10 days of age, unless deemed necessary for emergency welfare reasons after all other measures to control cannibalism have been exhausted. In such cases, beak trimming must be carried out with veterinary consultation and oversight.**

**Beak trimming must be performed only by competent persons using industry approved methods that minimize bird discomfort and equipment that is properly maintained.**

**The producer or a competent designated representative must be readily available throughout the beak trimming process.**

**Do not remove more than one-third of the top beak, as measured from the tip to the entrance of the nostrils.**





## 6.11. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND PREPAREDNESS

6.11.1. Preparedness encompasses activities, programs, and systems developed prior to a disaster or emergency, that are used to support and enhance prevention, response, and recovery efforts. In the context of animal welfare, advanced planning helps to protect the life, health, and welfare of poultry from the impacts of natural, man-made, or accidental emergencies (e.g. power failure, fire, flooding, inclement weather) (Code, section 5.9).

### **EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND PREPAREDNESS REQUIREMENTS**

**(Code, section 5.9)**

**An emergency plan for reasonably foreseeable problems that may affect bird welfare must be prepared and reviewed with all personnel.**

**Emergency contact information must be readily available.**

**At least one responsible individual must be available at all times to take necessary steps in the case of an emergency.**

**A backup power system, where applicable, must be available to ensure that all electrically dependent mechanical systems necessary for bird health and well-being continue to operate during a power outage.**

**All alarms and fail safe devices, including alternate power supply, must be regularly tested.**

## 6.12. EUTHANASIA

6.12.1. Every pullet operation should have provisions for the humane euthanasia of culled pullets. When a chick or a pullet is ill, injured, or unfit for long-time survival, euthanasia may be the most practical and humane way to relieve an animal's pain and suffering. The technique employed should affect the brain first followed by rapid insensitivity and, eventually, of respiratory and cardiac failure. In addition, the euthanasia technique should minimize distress. It is crucial that poultry caretakers have training in the knowledge and skills required for proper execution of euthanasia techniques, since the veterinarian is not always available to do so.

6.12.2. The most effective form of on-farm euthanasia is cervical dislocation. Any other form of euthanasia should be subject to consultation with local ministry officials or a veterinarian. Any bird that is in severe uncontrollable pain should be promptly and humanely euthanized. All carcasses must be disposed of in accordance with applicable provincial, municipal and/or local biosecurity standards and environmental regulations. In all cases, the pullet must be dead before carcass disposal takes place.



6.12.3. Pullets with an incurable sickness or a significant deformity should be removed daily from the flock and humanely euthanized as soon as possible.

#### 6.13. ON-FARM EUTHANASIA PLANS

6.13.1. Comprehensive on-farm euthanasia plans provide consistent guidance about when euthanasia should be applied, by whom, and the methods that should be used. It is important that responsible personnel be made aware of and trained in following the plan (Code, section 7.1).

#### **ON-FARM EUTHANASIA PLANS REQUIREMENTS**

**(Code, section 7.1)**

**An on-farm written euthanasia plan, that at a minimum includes the following elements, must be developed and followed:**

- **methods of euthanasia**
- **which birds have to be euthanized (refer to section 7.3 of the Code: decision making around euthanasia)**
- **a protocol to ensure that euthanasia is carried out in a timely manner**
- **who is authorized to perform euthanasia.**

**The on-farm euthanasia plan must be reviewed annually and revised as necessary.**

**On-farm personnel who are responsible for identifying birds to be euthanized or for performing euthanasia must be aware of the plan and kept apprised of all amendments.**

#### 6.14. SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE, DECISION-MAKING AROUND EUTHANASIA AND METHODS

6.14.1. Personnel involved in euthanasia need to understand how to apply the method being used and the expected outcome, and be able to assess whether equipment being utilized (if any) is in good working order. They must be able to recognize when the bird is insensible and be able to apply a secondary euthanasia method if the first method was ineffective. It is important that those responsible for culling birds are knowledgeable and competent in making decisions around euthanasia (Code, section 7.2).



**SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE REQUIREMENTS****(Code, section 7.2)****Personnel must be competent in identifying birds that need to be euthanized.****Individuals who euthanize birds must be competent in the appropriate euthanasia methods, as well as in determining insensibility.****Personnel must be supervised until proven to be competent in their ability to euthanize birds.**

6.14.2. Poor health, disease, injury, and loss of productivity are just a few reasons that may lead to the decision to euthanize a bird. Frequent routine inspections of flocks are important to identify birds that may require segregation, medical attention, or euthanasia (Code, section 7.3).

6.14.3. Euthanasia may be necessary when a sick or injured bird is not responding to treatment, has a poor prognosis, is unable to access feed or water, or has lost body condition. Additionally, health and welfare risks to the rest of the flock need to be considered (e.g. disease transmission, injurious feather pecking) (Code, section 7.3).

6.14.4. There are two possible management options:

- treat and/or segregate – if appropriate and/or proven medical treatment is available; and
- euthanize – euthanasia may be the best option for welfare reasons (Code, section 7.3).

6.14.5. When a farm has a written policy that clearly states the conditions under which an animal should be euthanized, on-farm personnel are able to more easily perform euthanasia. It is important that when the decision to euthanize is made, the bird be euthanized in a timely manner. Refer to Appendix D of the Code: Example Euthanasia Decision Guidance for further information (Code, section 7.3).

**DECISION-MAKING AROUND EUTHANASIA REQUIREMENTS****(Code, section 7.3)****Personnel must be competent in identifying birds that need to be euthanized.****Sick or injured birds that are suffering and unlikely to recover must be euthanized without delay.**

- 6.14.6. Very little research has been done on the humaneness of various methods of euthanasia. On-farm euthanasia options for individual birds include gas inhalation, cervical dislocation, blunt force trauma, captive bolt, and decapitation (Code, section 7.4).
- 6.14.7. Death may not occur immediately but is the result of eventual respiratory and cardiac failure, which can take several minutes. It is therefore essential that birds be swiftly rendered and remain insensible until death. For this reason, euthanasia methods that affect the brain first are preferred (Code, section 7.4).
- 6.14.8. Immediate application of the same or an alternate approved euthanasia method is required when signs of sensibility are observed (Code, section 7.4).
- 6.14.9. Signs of sensibility include:
- bird blinks when the surface of the eye is touched (corneal reflex); and
  - rhythmic breathing (check for abdominal movement in the vent area) (Code, section 7.4).
- 6.14.10. Absence of these signs indicates that the bird is insensible. Death is confirmed by cessation of breathing and heartbeat (Code, section 7.4).
- 6.14.11. Each farm should select euthanasia methods based on criteria such as humaneness of the method, skill level and abilities of the individuals performing euthanasia, safety for personnel, emotional impact on those applying or observing euthanasia, environmental impacts, carcass disposal methods and use, and practicality (Code, section 7.4).

## **METHODS OF EUTHANASIA REQUIREMENTS**

**(Code, section 7.4)**

**An acceptable method for euthanizing birds must be used. Refer to Appendix E of the Code: Acceptable Methods of Euthanasia.**

**The method used to euthanize birds must be administered by a competent individual in a manner that minimizes pain or distress.**

**Prior to being euthanized, birds must be handled in a manner that minimizes pain or suffering.**

**All equipment used for euthanasia must be well maintained, used correctly, and not overloaded, so that it operates effectively and efficiently.**

**The effectiveness of the application used must be evaluated, and action taken (e.g. repair, replace, alternative method employed) when failure occurs.**



**An alternate back-up euthanasia method must be readily available whenever birds are euthanized, in case the primary method fails.**

**Birds must be inspected to confirm insensibility immediately after the euthanasia method has been applied.**

**If signs of sensibility are observed, a second application of an acceptable method must be immediately administered.**

**Death must be confirmed before leaving birds and disposing carcasses.**

#### 6.15. ON-FARM DEPOPULATION

6.15.1. In some cases, poultry are required to be humanely destroyed on-farm in an emergency such as a disease outbreak, natural disaster, or other unexpected event (Code, section 8).

6.15.2. A written protocol detailing Standard Operating Procedures provides guidance for situations where humane destruction of flocks on-farm is warranted. Protocols will need to be reviewed and updated on a regular basis as new and better methods are developed and approved (Code, section 8).

6.15.3. The written humane on-farm depopulation protocol should include:

- method(s) of destruction;
- continuous monitoring procedures;
- biosecurity considerations;
- identification of appropriately trained individuals to take control of the process;
- reporting procedures to designated authorities;
- personnel considerations, including emotional and physical stress (Code, section 8).

#### **ON-FARM DEPOPULATION REQUIREMENT**

**(Code, section 8)**

**Death must be confirmed before disposal.**



6.15.4. Destroying an entire flock may employ euthanasia techniques, but not all methods used for on-farm depopulation meet the criteria for euthanasia. Despite this, the methods employed for destroying large numbers of birds in emergency situations need to be as humane as possible given the circumstances (Code, section 8.2).

#### **EMERGENCY ON-FARM DEPOPULATION REQUIREMENTS**

**(Code, section 8.2)**

**An on-farm depopulation plan for emergency situations must be developed.**

**Methods for destroying entire flocks on-farm must be as humane as possible given the circumstances and the need to balance the risk for further negative impacts on bird welfare.**

**Refer to Appendix E of the Code: Acceptable Methods of Euthanasia.**



## 7. MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

### 7.1. MANAGEMENT ROLES

#### 7.1.1. PULLET GROWERS

Pullet growers are ultimately accountable for the care and husbandry of their birds and must ensure that their workers:

- have access to a copy of the current version of this policy and of the accompanying program elements; and
- are fully familiar with its content and know how to apply its provisions correctly in each of their own specific area of accountability and have signed-off on their specific role.

#### 7.1.2. FARM MANAGERS

Farm managers must ensure that:

- the names of all workers who are responsible for the care and husbandry of the farm's pullets are identified;
- all farm workers have completed directly relevant and adequate in-house or off-premise training before they are given responsibility for the care and husbandry of pullets;
- they develop risk assessments and implement preventive actions for emergencies such as fire, flood, electrical failure, interruption of supplies, etc.;
- all farm workers are made fully responsible for completing their role in the event of a farm emergency;
- they develop and implement a biosecurity plan in the context of Start Clean-Stay Clean™ to minimize the risk of introducing a disease onto the farm site.



### 7.1.3. FARM WORKERS

Farm workers, i.e. employees of the farm, must ensure that they:

- are following the provisions of the *Animal Care Policy for Pullets* and any accompanying program;
- have all of the necessary knowledge, skills and motivation to ensure that they are competent to care for pullets;
- are able to recognize the signs of good health and well-being, including normal and abnormal behaviours;
- are able to recognize a risk to the care of pullets in its earliest stages, including common diseases;
- handle pullets in a careful, positive and compassionate manner;
- are able to cull birds when necessary, or alert properly trained personnel;
- report to management any instances that the policy is not being followed and;
- sign an annual Employee Code of Conduct for Pullet Care agreement stating that they have read and understood the *Animal Care Policy for Pullets* (refer to Part 2: Employee Code of Conduct for Pullet Care).

## 8. TRANSPORTATION

### 8.1. GENERAL CONSIDERATION

Since the transportation of pullets is stressful for them, care must be exercised to ensure that pullets are not subjected to unnecessary stress during catching, loading, transportation and unloading. Transportation and handling of pullets need to be kept to an absolute minimum. Farm workers involved in the transportation of pullets need to be trained and competent to carry out the tasks required of them. All animals are subject to inspection under the *Health of Animals Act* transportation regulations while in transit. Transportation begins at the time of loading the first pullet at the originating point and ends after the last bird is unloaded at its final destination. Accountabilities during transportation are as follows: while pullets are being loaded, they are the accountability of the pullet grower and the catching crew; while they are being transported, they are the accountability of the hauler; while they are being unloaded at destination, they are the accountability of the layer farmer.





## 8.2. ROLE OF THE PULLET GROWER

- 8.2.1. The pullet grower takes full responsibility for the welfare of the pullets throughout the placement process at the age of 19 weeks. The pullet grower also ensures that all farm staff is aware of and is performing their duties and takes responsibility for ensuring that animal care standards are maintained.
- 8.2.2. It is highly recommended that the pullet grower or his representative be present during catching and loading of pullets and walk through the barn to observe the condition of the flock prior to catching, in the company of the Catching Supervisor.

## 8.3. TRANSPORTATION GUIDELINES

- 8.3.1. Code elements included in this section focus on the aspects of the transport processes that take place on-farm and are thus under the control of the producer (Code, section 6).
- 8.3.2. Information regarding transportation of poultry beyond the farm gate is covered in the *Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals: Transportation*. Information regarding the transportation of hatching eggs and chicks is dealt with in the Hatcheries section of the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Hatching Eggs, Breeders, Chickens, and Turkeys. Refer to Appendix F of the Code: Resources for Further Information (Code, section 6).
- 8.3.3. All parties involved in the catching and transporting process have a responsibility and obligation to ensure catching, transfer, and holding on-farm is undertaken in such a manner that minimizes stress and injury (Code, section 6).
- 8.3.4. It is the producer's responsibility to oversee animal care on-farm and to coordinate with catchers, transporters, and processors to help ensure animal care is maintained as birds leave the farm (Code, section 6).
- 8.3.5. The federal requirements for animal transport are covered under the *Health of Animals Regulations, Part XII (Transportation of Animals)* (Code, section 6).
- 8.3.6. Transportation of day-old chicks is the accountability of the hatchery.
- 8.3.7. The pullet grower must liaise with the hauler and hatchery to ensure that the timing of the placement process does not unduly deprive any bird of food or water.
- 8.3.8. The placement team must never put the speed of the operation before the care of the pullet.
- 8.3.9. Pullets that are visibly unfit (i.e., observed to be lame, injured or ill) must be humanely euthanized immediately by named and trained personnel.



#### 8.4. PRE-TRANSPORT PLANNING

- 8.4.1. Planning is an important component in the transportation process. This includes confirming the actual number of birds to be shipped to assist the catching crews and transporters in ensuring the appropriate number of carts or crates can be loaded with the optimum number of birds in each, taking into consideration factors such as the type of housing birds are to be loaded from, weather conditions, and scheduled delivery times (Code, section 6.1).
- 8.4.2. This also includes ensuring that all personnel (e.g. catching, transporting) are competent in their assigned tasks. Decisions made in the planning phase have a significant impact on welfare during transit (Code, section 6.1).

#### PRE-TRANSPORT PLANNING REQUIREMENTS

(Code, section 6.1)

**The catching and loading processes must be planned in advance to minimize bird handling and the amount of time needed to catch and load birds, and to ensure that each vehicle can leave promptly after loading.**

**Pre-transport planning must take into consideration the type of housing system, the number of birds that will be shipped, and the number of containers that will be needed to ensure that maximum loading densities are not exceeded.**

#### 8.5. FITNESS FOR TRANSPORT

- 8.5.1. Pre-selection and removal of birds that are unfit for transport prior to the arrival of vehicles can assist with expediting the catching and loading process, which can improve welfare (Code, section 6.2).
- 8.5.2. A plan that clearly lays out humane and effective procedures for appropriate treatment or euthanasia for birds that are not fit for transport can assist with a consistent approach to bird welfare (refer to Appendix C of the Code: Guidelines for Transporting Poultry) (Code, section 6.2).



**FITNESS FOR TRANSPORT REQUIREMENTS****(Code, section 6.2)**

**In preparation for transport, the flock must be evaluated for health and fitness and those birds that are deemed unfit for transport must be euthanized, separated, or transported only if for veterinary care and treatment.**

**Birds that are not loaded for transport must continue to be cared for in accordance with relevant sections of this Code (e.g. feed and water, temperature, ventilation, euthanasia).**

**Birds that are visibly sick, injured, or wet, or birds otherwise deemed unfit for transport, must not be loaded.**

**8.6. HANDLING AND CATCHING**

- 8.6.1. The timing of the arrival of the catching team must be planned to minimize interruptions to the removal process.
- 8.6.2. Pullets must have access to water up to the time that the catching team begins to catch the first bird.
- 8.6.3. Concerns regarding the care of pullets at the time of catching must be raised and corrected immediately.
- 8.6.4. The pullet grower has a shared responsibility with the Catching Supervisor for supervising, monitoring and maintaining animal care standards throughout the removal process and the loading of birds into the transport crates.
- 8.6.5. It is important for handlers to move smoothly and quietly around birds (Code, section 6.3).
- 8.6.6. Pullets must be caught individually, carried by both legs and for the least distance possible.
- 8.6.7. Methods that allow birds to remain in an upright position while being removed from cages are used by some producers. In addition, the use of wheeled carts in place of crates can significantly improve welfare in that birds do not have to be transferred multiple times. With a well-trained crew, catching birds in an upright position may not take any longer than using traditional methods if wheeled carts or dollies are used (Code, section 6.3).
- 8.6.8. Low intensity light helps to encourage a calm and resting condition. Night vision goggles have been used so that birds can be caught in the dark without compromising catcher safety. When handled calmly, birds can be herded. Range birds can be loaded more easily by moving them in small groups (Code, section 6.3).



- 8.6.9. Pullets must be handled with care at all times, placed carefully into the transportation cages and neither dropped, nor thrown.
- 8.6.10. Pullets that are visibly unfit before loading must not be transported and must be humanely euthanized, as soon as observed.
- 8.6.11. All members of the catching crew must be trained in the handling of birds and come under the direct supervision of the Catching Supervisor.

### **HANDLING AND CATCHING REQUIREMENTS**

**(Code, section 6.3)**

**Crews must be overseen by the producer or a competent designated representative, who must be readily available throughout the catching and loading process.**

**Corrective action must be taken if crews or individuals are observed handling birds in ways that compromise their welfare.**

**All on-farm and contracted personnel involved in catching must be competent in handling birds, and must not handle birds in such a manner that causes injury or distress.**

**Birds must be placed in transport containers gently and in a manner that allows them to rapidly regain an upright position.**

**When catching birds, light intensity must be low enough to keep birds calm.**

**Easy access to each cage must be provided for catchers.**

### **8.7. LOADING AND UNLOADING**

- 8.7.1. In Canada, poultry can be transported on flat deck trailers using loose crate or cart systems. With loose crate systems, crates are removed from the trailer, loaded with birds, and then returned to the trailer. With carts, birds are loaded in an upright position in the barn, and the carts are wheeled directly onto the trailer for transport (Code, section 6.4).
- 8.7.2. Carts are preferred because they can be brought to the birds, and birds can be loaded directly from the cage to the cart to reduce handling. Commercial producers have started to implement transportation systems that use carts for both pullets and end-of-lay hens. Birds can be kept in carts in the barn until most carts are ready to load on the vehicle, which is better for bird welfare in adverse weather. Regardless of what system is used, it is essential that containers are clean and free from protrusions or sharp parts that will injure birds (Code, section 6.4).



**LOADING AND UNLOADING REQUIREMENTS**

(Code, section 6.4)

The design, construction, space, state of repair, and use of containers and equipment must allow the birds to be loaded, conveyed, and unloaded in ways that minimize stress and/or injury.

Containers with birds must be handled, moved, securely positioned on vehicles, and unloaded in a manner that minimizes stress and/or injury to birds.

Measures must be taken to prevent birds from becoming too hot or too cold or wet during loading and unloading.

Steps must be taken to minimize the amount of time birds are kept in an inverted position during loading.

The number of birds in each container must be determined prior to loading, taking into consideration the available container floor space, body size/weight, prevailing environmental conditions, and duration of transport.

Birds must be loaded in containers in such a way that permits all of them to rest on the floor at the same time when evenly distributed.

**8.8. FACILITIES DESIGN AND MAINTENANCE**

- 8.8.1. Owners and operators of poultry operations have a responsibility to provide facilities and equipment that make bird handling, loading, and unloading possible without causing injury or suffering (Code, section 6.5).
- 8.8.2. Well-designed buildings can help to improve the humane handling of birds and discourage transfer of birds between handlers (Code, section 6.5).
- 8.8.3. Unobstructed laneways and yards can ensure that transport vehicles, including tractor-trailer units, can safely move birds to and from the farm and between barns (Code, section 6.5).
- 8.8.4. Unobstructed access for transport vehicles to the barn is important as well (Code, section 6.5).

**FACILITIES DESIGN AND MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS**

(Code, section 6.5)

When building new barns or renovating existing barns or yards, the way in which birds are moved into and out of barns and/or cages must be taken into consideration with a



view to facilitating safe and humane transfer of birds to and from the transport vehicles (e.g. tractor-trailer).

Driveways and yards must be maintained to facilitate unobstructed, safe, and easy access by transport vehicles.

## 8.9. HAULERS

- 8.9.1. Pullet growers are accountable for ensuring that the haulers they employ are familiar with the *Animal Health Act* regulations in effect at the time and treat pullets according to animal care standards. Conversely, once the pullets have been loaded and have departed the farm, the hauler assumes accountability for the care of the pullets and should sign-off accordingly upon departure.
- 8.9.2. The hauler must ensure that the pullets are fit to travel and that the welfare of the pullets is safeguarded from the time that they are placed into the transportation crates until they are unloaded at their destination.
- 8.9.3. All transport systems must permit adequate ventilation and protect pullets from adverse weather, be thoroughly cleaned before carrying birds to a new site, be well maintained and have no features on the crates or vehicles that could injure the pullets.
- 8.9.4. The hauler should have a contingency plan for handling, catching or euthanizing pullets in case of emergency, and drivers trained in its implementation (e.g. in case of a road accident where a disabled truck may place pullets under stress).



# PART 2: PROCEDURES AND CHECKLISTS



# 1. BIOSECURITY PROCEDURE

The elements of biosecurity for pullets are:

## 1. Accountability:

- The pullet grower is accountable for the biosecurity of the entire operation;
- The pullet grower is accountable to ensure that employees are fully trained in the farm's biosecurity process and are encouraged to bring forward issues for corrective actions; and
- The pullet grower is accountable for performing a biosecurity review with staff at least on an annual basis under the provisions of Start Clean-Stay Clean™. If the pullet barn meets the Start Clean-Stay Clean™ requirements for biosecurity, it will also meet the biosecurity requirements for the animal care program.

## 2. Methods:

- The pullet grower must develop a *Biosecurity Plan* that documents any method related to ensuring on-farm biosecurity and must make available written procedures demonstrating the required steps and must document the training provided to farm employees;
- This plan must be in accordance with the geography and growing conditions prevalent in the area and the farm's Start Clean-Stay Clean™ procedures, as well as the potential risks to the farm;
- Any biosecurity issues and corrective actions taken should be recorded for referral at some later time, if and as required by a competent authority, (e.g. in the case of a disease outbreak);
- The pullet grower must also include in the farm's *Biosecurity Plan* the steps to be taken during an emergency, such as a disease outbreak, to secure the farm against further contagion or for protecting surrounding farms;
- The following checklists are included to assist the pullet grower with meeting the provisions of the Start Clean-Stay Clean™ program.





# PULLET FARM BIOSECURITY CHECKLIST

Date of Plan Update: \_\_\_\_\_

## Part 1: Training Plan

Name of Trained Employees	Signature of Employee	Date	Check (initials)



### Part 2: Risk Assessment

Potential Biosecurity Risks	Probability Hi-Med-Low	Severity Hi-Med-Low	Preventive Measure (A Plan)	Contingency Measure (B Plan)	Check (initials)



### Part 3: On Farm Biosecurity Methods

Start Clean-Stay Clean™ Procedures Adopted	SCSC Reference	Risk Addressed	Check (initials)



### Part 4: Biosecurity Record

Date	Employee Name	Biosecurity Issue Raised	Corrective Action	Check (initials)



### Part 5: Emergency Response

Steps to Take	By Whom	By When	Who to Involve	Check (initials)



## 2. EMPLOYEE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR PULLET CARE

### BACKGROUND

Pullet growers across Canada believe that all those caring for the animals on the farm understand, acknowledge and commit to the animal care principles and values expected in our industry. Employees who work on this farm understand that there is no tolerance whatsoever for unacceptable care of our pullets and are required to report any deficiencies to the pullet grower, the manager or the supervisor as soon as they are noticed.

Accordingly, all employees are required to read, understand and act according to this *Code of Conduct* at all times.

### COMMITMENT

As an employee of this farm \_\_\_\_\_, I have read the *Animal Care Policy and Procedures for Pullets* and agree to uphold and protect the high standards set therein in the daily performance of my work. I agree to meet the following expectations of behaviour:

1. I will not tolerate cruelty to any kind of animals in our collective care.
2. I will handle pullets carefully and compassionately at all times.
3. If I witness any abuse or mistreatment of pullets, I will report it immediately to the pullet grower and/or farm manager.
4. I will ensure that the basic needs of the pullets are met, such as feed, water, lighting, ventilation, temperature and cleanliness and will report any deficiencies immediately.
5. I will bring to the attention of my supervisor the presence of sick or injured pullets, so that, if needed, they can be euthanized as soon as possible by a trained employee.
6. I will ensure that dead pullets are removed immediately from the barn.
7. I will ensure that in handling and catching pullets, I use the utmost care to prevent distress, fear and injury.

I understand that if I am found not to abide by this *Code of Conduct*, I could receive immediate disciplinary action, including dismissal. I also understand that, from time to time, I will receive further training on the proper care of pullets in the course of my employment.

Name and Signature of Pullet Grower: \_\_\_\_\_

Name and Signature of Employee: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Signing: \_\_/\_\_/\_\_\_\_



### 3. EUTHANASIA PROCEDURE

The elements of euthanasia for pullets are:

Accountability:

- The pullet grower or designated and trained employees are accountable for the humane euthanasia of egg-type chicks that are too sick or injured to be treated;
- The pullet grower is accountable to ensure that employees who euthanize pullets are fully trained in the process and are able to handle sick and injured birds with minimum distress and fear;
- Only those employees who have been trained in proper euthanasia methods should perform euthanasia. Training is currently available or under development in the various provinces and pullet growers should refer to recommended euthanasia practices;
- The decision to euthanize a pullet should be made as quickly as possible in order to reduce any pain and suffering of that bird.

Methods:

- The equipment used to euthanize a pullet must be functional and well maintained;
- The methods used must cause instantaneous and painless death or loss of consciousness lasting until death;
- The methods used should be specific to the farm and in accordance with Appendix E of the Code: Acceptable Methods of Euthanasia;
- The employee performing euthanasia must check for signs of insensitivity that include no natural blinking, no breathing, no vocalization or no organized body movement;
- The euthanasia of pullets should be recorded and any issue raised by the process documented for future action if and as required (e.g. a recurring ailment in the pullet flock);
- The pullet grower must develop an on-farm euthanasia plan which documents the methods used, the written procedure demonstrating the required steps and the training provided to those employees who have been given authority to euthanize pullets;
- The pullet grower must also include in the farm's euthanasia plan the steps to be taken during an emergency, such as a disease outbreak, the methods to be used for depopulation, the name of the service provider if used, the gas type and concentration if applicable, the timing of the euthanasia and the number of pullets euthanized;

The pullet grower's euthanasia plan methodology should be signed off by a qualified poultry veterinarian or specialist.



# PULLET FARM EUTHANASIA CHECKLIST

Date of Plan Update: \_\_\_\_\_

## Part 1: Training Plan

Name of Employee Trained in Euthanasia	Signature of Employee	Training Date	Check

Name of Pullet Grower: \_\_\_\_\_

Pullet Grower Signature: \_\_\_\_\_





### Part 2: On Farm Pullet Euthanasia Method

Approved Method Adopted	Check	Guide to Euthanasia Reference*	Check

Name of Pullet Grower: \_\_\_\_\_

Pullet Grower Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Link as required:

<http://atwork.avma.org/2013/02/26/2013-edition-of-the-avma-guidelines-for-the-euthanasia-of-animals-published/>



### Part 3: Euthanasia Record

Date	# of Pullets	Employee Name	Issues Raised	Check

Name of Pullet Grower: \_\_\_\_\_

Pullet Grower Signature: \_\_\_\_\_



### Part 4: Emergency Record (in Case of Disease Outbreak)

Date	# of Pullets	Employee Names	Contractor	Method used	Carcass Disposal

Name of Pullet Grower: \_\_\_\_\_

Pullet Grower Signature: \_\_\_\_\_



## 4. HANDLING, CATCHING AND LOADING PROCEDURE

The elements of handling, catching and loading of pullets are:

Accountability:

- The pullet grower or a competent designated employee should be present during catching and loading;
- The pullet grower or a competent designated employee and the Catching Supervisor should walk through the barn to observe the condition of the flock prior to catching;
- The pullet grower or a competent designated employee verifies the qualifications and training of the Catching Supervisor and the catching crew in attendance;
- The pullet grower or a competent designated employee manages the barn's operations, including ventilation and lighting, during the catching operation;
- The catching crew is accountable for collecting and loading the flock onto the transport.

Catching:

- Pullets should be handled so as to minimize any injury and should not be carried by the wings, head, neck or tail;
- Catching should be carried out in such a way as to avoid crowding or piling in corners to avoid injury or suffocation;
- Catching should be carried out with as little sudden noises and disturbances as possible;
- Catching should be carried out with such lighting as will keep the pullets calm.

Loading:

- Openings for loading should be large enough to permit easy passage of pullets and avoid injury;
- Pullet containers should not be dropped or tipped to avoid the birds piling up against the side;
- Pullets should be loaded into clean, well-maintained transport containers and vehicles;



- The doors of the vehicle should be secured so that birds do not escape during loading or in transit;
- The pullet grower, Catching Supervisor and transporter should consult and collaborate on making decisions for the welfare of the birds, when faced with a situation where the animals may be placed in jeopardy;
- The transport driver must monitor weather conditions to ensure that pullets in transit are kept at a comfortable temperature; and
- Water must not be withdrawn prior to catching.

Requirements:

- A copy of this procedure must be available and accessible on-farm at all times;
- All farm employees that may handle pullets must have been trained;
- Catching Supervisors and catching crews must read and agree to follow the procedure; and
- The Catching Supervisor must register the names of all members of the catching crew and sign the procedure.



# BIRD HANDLING, CATCHING AND LOADING CHECKLIST

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Catching Procedure Performed by: \_\_\_\_\_

Names of Employee	Signature of Catching Crew	Check (initials)

Catching Supervisor Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Pullet Grower Signature: \_\_\_\_\_



## 5. MEDICATION AND VACCINATION PROCEDURE

The elements of the Medication and Vaccination Procedure are:

Accountability:

- The pullet grower or designated employee is accountable for overseeing medication and vaccination of pullets.

Steps:

- The pullet grower or designated employee must make use of medication according to the manufacturer's instructions only, unless veterinary advice has been provided to administer the medication in a different manner;
- The pullet grower should have in place a vaccination program aimed at preventing infectious disease and internal and external parasites;
- Vaccinations and other treatments applied to pullets should be undertaken by people skilled in the procedures;
- Current acceptable methods for vaccinating pullets include: spray, eye drops, wing poke, water feed and injections; and
- When in doubt on any method of medication or vaccination, pullet growers should check with their farm veterinarian.



# MEDICATION USAGE RECORD

Medication Provided	Date	Rationale for Usage	Record of Prescription from Veterinarian	Administered by	Check

Pullet Grower's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_







## 6. ROUTINE INSPECTION PROCEDURE

The elements of an overall routine inspection consist of:

Observation of the bird:

- A visual observation of the flock;
- Signs of disease, illness or injury;
- Respiratory problems, including panting or huddling;
- Lameness;
- Condition of body, including signs of feather pecking or cannibalism; and
- Trapping of birds.

Observation of the facilities:

- Feeder and drinking systems;
- Ambient temperature; and
- Ambient lighting.

Daily (point in time) walk-through process to include:

- Overall appearance of the hens;
- Mortality;
- Trapped pullets;
- Injured pullets;
- Condition of feeders and drinkers; and
- Ambient temperature.

Alarm systems should be checked once per month.

The Routine Inspection Template

- The Daily Inspection Checklist
- The Weekly Inspection Checklist
- Daily Feed and Water Checklist
- Monthly Alarm and Power Systems Checklist
- Daily Barn Temperature Checklist



# DAILY INSPECTION CHECKLIST

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Inspection Performed by: \_\_\_\_\_

Areas to Check	AM	PM	Observations	Check (initials)
Abnormal behaviour of birds				
Signs of disease, illness or injury				
Respiratory problems, panting or huddling				
Lameness				
Overall appearance, signs of pecking, cannibalism				
Trapped birds				
Mortality				
Feed Consumption				
Drinker condition				
Ambient temperature				
Ambient lighting				
Other				

Pullet Grower's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Verification: \_\_\_\_\_



# WEEKLY INSPECTION CHECKLIST

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Inspection Performed by: \_\_\_\_\_

Areas to Check	Observations and Trends	Check (initials)
Abnormal behaviour of birds		
Signs of disease, illness or injury		
Respiratory problems, panting or huddling		
Lameness		
Overall appearance, signs of pecking, cannibalism		
Trapped birds		
Mortality		
Feeder condition		
Drinker condition		
Ambient temperature		
Ambient lighting		
Pest Control		
Other		

Pullet Grower's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Verification: \_\_\_\_\_



# MONTHLY INSPECTION CHECKLIST

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Inspection Performed by: \_\_\_\_\_

Areas to Check	Observations and Trends	Corrective Actions	Check (initials)
Alarm systems			
Power systems			
Ammonia concentration			
General cleanliness			
Vermin management			
Water Quality			
Other Areas			

Pullet Grower's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Verification: \_\_\_\_\_



## 7. VISITOR PROCEDURE

The elements of a Visitor Procedure for pullet farms are:

Accountability:

- The pullet grower or designated and trained employees are accountable for ensuring that visitors to the farm respect all aspects of the Animal Care Policy and Procedures for pullets.

Methods:

- The *Visitor Code of Conduct* should be made available in the *Visitor Log Book* and signed upon entry to the farm.
- The *Visitor Log Book* should clearly state that all visitors are required to sign the *Visitor Code of Conduct*.



## 8. VISITOR ON-FARM CODE OF CONDUCT

### BACKGROUND

Pullet growers across Canada believe that all those caring for the animals on the farm understand, acknowledge and commit to the animal care principles and values expected in our industry. Visitors coming to this farm for whatever reason understand that there is no tolerance whatsoever for unacceptable care of our pullets and are required to report any deficiencies to the pullet grower, the manager or the supervisor as soon as they are noticed.

Accordingly, all visitors are expected to adhere to the standards of animal care of this farm and are required to act according to this *Code of Conduct* at all times.

### COMMITMENT

As a visitor to this farm \_\_\_\_\_, I acknowledge and agree to the following standards of animal care:

1. If I must handle pullets, I will do so carefully and compassionately at all times.
2. I will abide by any procedure or instruction put forward by my farm host that may affect the care of the pullets.
3. I will abide by the farm's bio-security protocols at all times.
4. If I witness any abuse or mistreatment of pullets, I will report it immediately to my host.

I understand that if I am found not to abide by this *Code of Conduct*, I will be escorted off the farm immediately.

Name and Signature of farm visitor: \_\_\_\_\_

Name and Signature of Host Employee: \_\_\_\_\_



# PULLET FARM VISITOR LOG BOOK

Name of Visitor	Date of Visit	Purpose of Visit	Accompanied by	Code of Conduct Signed

Name of Pullet Grower: \_\_\_\_\_

Pullet Grower's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_





# SUMMARY OF CODE REQUIREMENTS FOR PULLET HOUSING AND REARING

The following is a list of the Requirements within the Code. Refer to the cited Code section for further context about the Requirements.

## SECTION 1 Pullet Housing and Rearing

### 1.1.1 Housing Equipment: Design and Construction

- Materials used in the construction of housing and equipment to which birds have access must not be harmful or toxic to the birds, and must be able to be thoroughly cleaned and maintained.

### 1.1.2 Flooring

- Flooring must be designed, constructed, and maintained in a manner that supports the birds' feet and does not contribute to trapping, injuries, or deformities to the birds' legs, feet, and/or toes.
- Housing system floors must be designed and maintained to prevent manure from birds in upper levels from dropping on birds enclosed directly below.
- Existing flow-through pullet cage systems must be replaced by January 1, 2020.

### 1.1.3 Feeders and Waterers

- Feed space and waterers (e.g. cups, nipple drinkers) must be provided as indicated in Table 1.1.
- All birds must have access to at least 2 waterers (e.g. cups, nipple drinkers) in case one breaks down.
- Automated feeding systems must be designed and utilized in ways that minimize the likelihood of chicks getting caught in them.

### 1.1.4 Space Allowance

- Birds must be able to stand fully in an upright position within the enclosure.
- Effective for all holdings for which new construction or re-tooling, including the phases of design, application, approval, planning, and installation, was initiated after April 1, 2017, each chick or pullet kept in pullet cages must be provided with a minimum space



allowance as outlined in Table 1.2:

- Column (b): Final Space Allowance.
- For systems installed prior to April 1, 2017, where chicks and pullets are kept in pullet cages, each bird must be provided with a minimum space allowance as outlined in Table 1.2:
  - Column (a): Interim Space Allowance by January 1, 2020
  - Column (b): Final Space Allowance by January 1, 2022.
- In Single-Tier Rearing Systems, each pullet from 8 weeks of age until transfer to the laying barn must be provided with a minimum of 696.8 cm<sup>2</sup> (108 sq in / 0.75 sq ft) of useable space.
- In Multi-Tier Rearing Systems, each chick and pullet must be provided with minimum space allowances and litter space as outlined in Table 1.2:
  - Column (b): Final Space Allowance.

#### 1.1.5 Special Considerations for Multi-Tier Rearing Systems

- Tiers must be arranged to prevent droppings from falling directly on tiers below, excluding perches, terraces and ramps/ladders.
- The number of tiers must not exceed 4 where the ground level is considered to be one tier.
- Feed and water must be provided on more than one elevation of the system, and must not be provided on the ground level.

#### 1.1.6 Perches

- Perches must be provided to chicks reared in multi-tier systems from 1 day of age.
- Terraces and/or elevated perches at varying heights must be provided from no later than 8 weeks of age in multi-tier rearing systems.
- Perches must be constructed of materials that are easily cleaned and do not harbour mites.
- Perches must be designed to prevent injury to pullets that are mounting or dismounting as well as to any pullets nearby.



- Perches must be positioned to prevent trapping and allow access to feed and water.
- Perches must be positioned to minimize fecal fouling of birds, feeders, or drinkers located below them.

### 1.2 Receiving and Brooding Chicks

- Facilities must be prepared (i.e. heat, clean, feed, water, bedding) in advance of receiving chicks so that they can be placed promptly after arrival.
- Farm personnel must be present at the time of delivery and placement, and must assess the physical condition of the chicks.
- Steps must be taken to prevent chicks from becoming chilled or overheated during unloading and brooding.
- All chicks must be kept, treated, and handled in ways that prevent injury and minimize stress.

### 1.3 Lighting

- Chicks must be provided with a minimum of 2 consecutive hours of darkness in each 24 hour period.
- The dark period must be gradually increased to a total minimum of 6 hours in each 24 hour period by 2 weeks of age.
- Chicks must be provided with a minimum of 16 hours of light in each 24 hour period up to 2 weeks of age.
- Chicks must be provided with light intensities of at least 20 lux (2 foot candles) for at least the first 7 days that allow them to easily locate feed and water.



## CONTACT INFORMATION

### **For further information on this Guidebook, please contact:**

For changes and feedback:

- Katia Colton-Gagnon, General Manager, Pullet Growers of Canada  
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For information on the application of the Guidebook:

- Andrew DeWeerd, Chair, Pullet Growers of Canada  
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### **General contact information**

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