

ALBERTA **POULTRY HANDLING AND
TRANSPORTATION MANUAL**



Partners



Acknowledgments

This manual and accompanying education program will help poultry supply stakeholders understand and implement positive poultry welfare practices during handling and transportation.

This manual was based on the Ontario Poultry Handling and Transportation Manual produced by the Poultry Service Association and Farm and Food Care Ontario, which was based on the Poultry Handling and Transportation Quality Assurance (PHTQA) Certification Program and accompanying training material. Permission to adapt this material for use in Alberta was graciously given by Susan Fitzgerald on behalf of the Poultry Service Association. Additional information has been added to this version to provide relevance to Albertan operators, equipment, and travel.

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CHAPTER 1: Importance of Humane Handling and Transportation of Poultry



Animal welfare has evolved as a high profile issue for every segment of the livestock and poultry industry. All stakeholders, including consumers and the general public, are asking more questions and closely examining industry practices. Livestock and poultry transport is one of the most critical and visible components of the production system and stakeholders across the value chain want assurances that transport is done with optimal animal welfare in mind.



Poultry welfare is everyone's responsibility. Part of this responsibility is to ensure that each person involved in the handling and transportation of poultry has been made aware of requirements and best practices to ensure the health and proper care of poultry during transport. This includes farmers, catchers, truck drivers, processor receivers, plant workers, and the management of all companies along the supply chain. Willful acts of abuse are not tolerated and are punishable by law.

Everyone involved in handling and transporting poultry must accept the responsibility of humane handling and minimizing distress to the birds at all times, including during catching, loading, unloading, transporting and processing. The actions of farmers, catchers, transporters and unloaders have a direct impact on both the physical and mental well-being of the birds. Improper catching, handling, and loading practices create distress and may cause injury to the birds. Workers who are careful and conscientious can reduce potential injuries.

PROPER HANDLING AND TRANSPORTATION OF POULTRY WILL:

- Improve the welfare of poultry by reducing handling and transport stress;
- Address customer/societal concerns and regulatory oversight, (e.g. company reputation, retail audit requirements, government regulations, etc.); and,
- Have positive financial implications by minimizing mortalities and condemnations, avoiding fines, maximizing yields, protecting meat quality and shelf life and safeguarding product integrity (e.g. food safety, etc.).

WHY TREAT POULTRY HUMANELY?

It is essential to handle birds carefully because:

- It is the RIGHT THING TO DO!
- It prevents pain and fear
- It prevents death, bruising and skeletal trauma such as broken bones or dislocated bones
- It improves profitability
- It can create a more positive work environment for employees
- It is the LAW!

Also refer to the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Hatching Eggs, Breeders, Chickens, and Turkeys and the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Pullets and Laying Hens for additional recommendations. Copies of the codes are available at www.nfacc.ca



As recommended in the Codes of Practice, every company should develop its own code of conduct relating to poultry welfare and ensure staff is aware and trained on the relevant practices. All personnel involved in the handling and transportation of poultry must be competent in the tasks they are assigned. The Meat Inspection Act and Regulations, the Meat Hygiene Manual of Procedures and Annexes apply to animals slaughtered in federally registered establishments. Federal requirements for poultry transport and some events occurring during unloading are under the authority of the Health of Animals Regulations, Part XII, Transportation of Animals. If you are processing at a provincially licensed plant, check with your provincial meat inspection department for relevant regulations and guidelines.

Chapter 12 of the Meat Hygiene Manual of Procedures spells out the animal welfare obligations of companies and individuals involved in the handling and transportation of poultry destined for federal processing plants.

On the next page is an excerpt from the manual relating to animal welfare obligations. The complete document can be viewed on the Canadian Food Inspection Agency’s website at www.inspection.gc.ca, then select Food, Meat and Poultry Products, Manual of Procedures, and Chapter 12.

Note: The term “containers” within the context of this manual refers to crates, modules, totes, dollies, carts, drawers, and/or coops.

Meat Hygiene Manual of Procedures

12.2 Requirements and Development of the Animal Welfare Control Program

12.2.1 Introduction

Regulated parties, which can include producers, catching crews, their supervisors, transporters, dispatchers, supervisors, the owners of transport companies, persons in charge of procurement and scheduling at registered establishments, operators of a slaughter establishment, must ensure that all animals are transported in compliance with applicable legislation....

12.2.2 Animal Welfare Control Program Performance Requirements

Operators must develop, implement, and maintain a written Control Program specific for the species, sex, temperament and size and age of all food animals that are handled and slaughtered. The program and its effectiveness must be reviewed on an annual basis.

The Control Program should include the following written control performance requirements, at a minimum:

Humane Handling and Slaughter Competency Requirements

Establishment operators will ensure that all personnel involved in the handling and slaughter of food animals (including contract staff and temporary workers):

1. receive appropriate training to execute the tasks for which they are responsible;
2. are qualified to perform their duties;
3. have training records kept; and
4. are effectively supervised.

Training material must address:

1. normal animal appearance and behaviour;
2. how human actions may affect animal behaviour and welfare;
3. how to recognize animal behaviours of concern;
4. signs of trauma, distress, and disease;
5. humane handling techniques for each species that is slaughtered; and
6. how to report deviations so that timely corrective action can be taken.

Elements of the Animal Welfare Control Program must include:

1. names or position of the persons who are responsible for each task;
2. specific methods and procedures that will be implemented to achieve the outcome standards expected by management (required outcomes);
3. procedures and person(s) who are responsible to monitor and verify that the program is implemented and effective;
4. the frequency and method of checking facilities and equipment;
5. employee training, competence and supervision required to perform the task;
6. procedures to record non-compliances and corrective actions that will /have been taken; and
7. animal welfare contingency plans (Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)) that address predictable events and emergencies that may have arisen during staging of the load, loading, transportation prior to reception of the animals, the time spent waiting to unload (for animals that are still in cages but within the establishment, this includes the time spent waiting while the trailers are parked but the crates/cages have not been yet unloaded), unloading, handling while in lairage, preparation for and/or restraint for stunning, stunning, shackling, and bleeding.

CHAPTER 2: Biosecurity

AFTER THIS CHAPTER, YOU WILL:

- Appreciate the significance of biosecurity procedures in protecting poultry health.
- Understand the importance of all individuals in the poultry supply chain following good biosecurity practices.
- Understand your role in upholding biosecurity.

GUIDANCE FOR GENERAL BIOSECURITY MEASURES

Please note that each farm and each transport company may have its own specific guidelines and that additional measures may be required. Biosecurity practices may also be enhanced if an elevated disease risk has been identified on farm or in the geographic area. Not all procedures may apply to your role in the poultry supply chain.

You may also wish to reference the National Avian Biosecurity Standard and the Poultry Service Industry Biosecurity Guide produced by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency with industry input. Both documents are available for downloading at:

<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/animals/terrestrial-animals/biosecurity/standards-and-principles/eng/1344707905203/1344707981478>

WHAT IS BIOSECURITY?

Biosecurity is the practice of protecting the health of livestock by preventing the introduction and transmission of disease. In practicing biosecurity, the aim is to protect poultry by keeping disease out of flocks, and containing any diseases present. Biosecurity works to keep poultry protected from any type of:

- Virus,
- Bacteria,
- Fungus, or
- Parasite.

The cheapest and most effective way to control disease is to use good biosecurity practices to decrease disease exposure. The impact of disease and pests on poultry farms and the overall poultry industry can be significant:

- Affect poultry health and welfare;
- Can impact the health of service providers;
- Reduce productivity;
- Increase veterinary and labour costs;



- Affect farm incomes;
- Affect domestic consumption of poultry products; and,
- Reduce prices that producers receive for their poultry and products.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE?

Healthy flocks are vital for a healthy industry.

Your actions can impact others and vice-versa:

- Poultry farms and farm incomes;
- Other industry stakeholders and service suppliers, (e.g. processors, grading, feed, equipment, poultry catchers and vaccinators, transporters, etc.) and,
- Rural communities as a whole.

Inadequate biosecurity can lead to industry-wide epidemics that could shut down the entire poultry industry.

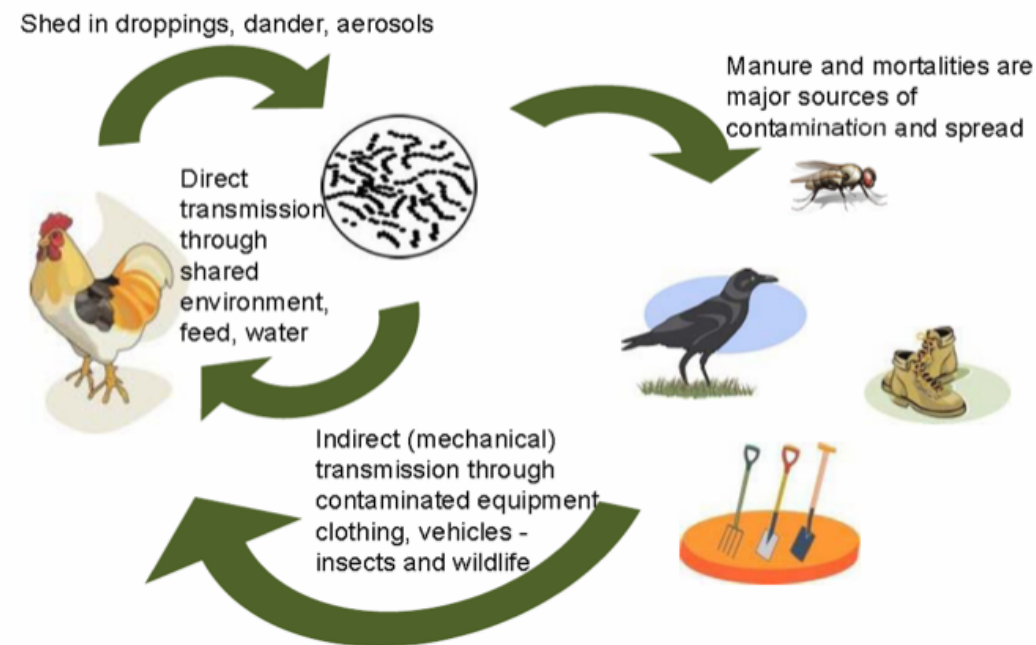


PREVENTING DISEASE SPREAD

Preventing an infection from starting is much easier than trying to deal with the consequences of a disease outbreak on farms or in hatcheries. Therefore, it is very important to follow appropriate biosecurity procedures whenever you are working around live birds – from the hatchery to the farm or pullet barn, between barns on premises, and from the farm to the processing plant.

- The first line of defense is to “keep disease out”.
- If an issue arises - “keep it in” to prevent its spread.
- “Shut it down” as quickly as possible to reduce its impact.
- Some diseases are very difficult to get rid of once they become established in a flock. In certain cases, farmers may only be able to “control” the disease unless a significant financial investment is made to eliminate it from their flock. An example of a poultry disease that is difficult to eradicate is coccidiosis.

The Disease Cycle



PESTS AND DISEASE CAN BE SPREAD BY:

- The clothing, shoes and hair of visitors and employees moving from farm-to-farm, between flocks or production areas on-farm;
- Incoming birds, diseased birds or birds incubating disease;
- Animals other than livestock (pets, wild birds and other wildlife, vermin and insects);
- Contaminated feed, water, litter, manure and soil;
- Damaged eggs;
- The carcasses of dead birds;
- On contaminated farm equipment and vehicles; or
- In airborne particles and dust blown by the wind and exhaust fans.

Human traffic is often responsible for distributing pathogens between facilities, which can result in a disease outbreak.

GENERAL BIOSECURITY PRECAUTIONS

Although all-in, all-out flock management is typically practiced, it is usually at the room or barn level, so there is still a disease risk to the birds that remain on the property in other barns or in the same barn in another room.

If all birds on the farm are shipped and the barns will be cleaned and disinfected before placing a new flock, the biosecurity risk will be minimized. When dealing with farms that have other flocks on farm, or when dealing with young chicks, breeder or layer flocks, the biosecurity risks are higher.



NOT ALL PROCEDURES MAY APPLY TO YOUR ROLE IN THE POULTRY SUPPLY CHAIN

- Ask farmers for their biosecurity protocols and comply with them.
- If your company biosecurity standards are higher than those of the farm, practice the higher level of biosecurity.
- Service providers who own domestic poultry or pet birds are a risk to poultry operations. Establish a company policy to minimize the risk of introducing disease to poultry premises that you service.
- The sequence of farm calls, pick up or delivery, should minimize contamination by travelling from flocks of higher to lower health status and from youngest to oldest. For example with layers, visit the pullet barn first then layer flocks. Work with poultry before working with other animal species, especially swine.
- Before arriving at work, all employees who handle or transport live birds should shower and wear freshly laundered clothing and disinfected footwear.
- Workers should use a new pair of disposable boot covers over disinfected footwear between rooms and/or barns. If disposable boot covers are not available, foot baths on farm can be used. Foot baths are only effective if managed and used properly! Boots should be scrubbed to remove organic matter prior to being placed in the footbath. Workers should stand in the foot bath, not just dip.

Once leaving the property, workers footwear needs to be stored in the "dirty" area of the vehicle after leaving the farm until they are cleaned. The use of disposable coveralls, boots, hats/hairnets, and dust masks aid in preventing the spread of diseases. Proper disposal of these items is crucial, as is the storage of dirty cloth coveralls until washing is completed. If possible, leave trash and disposables at the farm to prevent disease spread from the farm to the plant or transport facility. If it is not possible to leave it on the farm, place it in a secured plastic bag for later disposal.

- Workers should stay in the barns only as long as necessary to minimize exposure to the birds.
- Clean hands with water and a disinfectant soap before and after handling live birds. If water is not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Disinfect other items (safety glasses/goggles, pens, computers, scales, etc.) after handling live birds and before using them again.
- Repeat the cleaning and disinfection process each time you enter a new production facility.



VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT

- All vehicles and equipment used to load, unload, handle, or transport live poultry should be cleaned and disinfected regularly. This includes the exteriors of vehicles, trailers, and any equipment added to the vehicle.
- Disinfectants are ineffective in the presence of organic matter, such as manure, bedding or feathers, so a thorough cleaning is required before the step of disinfecting.
- Apply and use all soaps and disinfectants in accordance to product directions.
- Avoid driving near barns that contain live birds if possible.
- Drive slowly, less than 15 km/hr, when near barns to minimize dust.
- Park in designated visitor parking areas.
- Meet the farmer to get instructions before approaching the barn.
- Avoid parking by exhaust fans and air inlets unless required as part of loading or unloading.

- Do not enter any building on the property except where you need to deliver service unless you have the express permission of the farmer or farm manager.
- Sign the visitor log book, ensuring all information requested is filled in.
- Keep your own records identifying where you have been and when.
- Be aware of biosecurity practices to reduce risk of disease transmission between farms and facilities.

VEHICLES

- Weather permitting, clean and disinfect the interior and exterior of the vehicle (including the trunk if applicable).
- The floor mats, steering wheel, and bucket and brush used for boot cleanup should also be cleaned and disinfected. Use rubber floor mats, which are easy to remove, wash, and sanitize.
- Wipe down hard surfaces using clean water and soap first, apply a sanitizer/disinfectant, and then allow it to dry. No visible feathers, dust, manure or dirt should remain.
- Pay special attention to cleaning organic material from the vehicle's tires.
- After being washed, trucks should be sprayed and soaked with a disinfectant. The disinfectant should have adequate contact time with surfaces.

EQUIPMENT

- Clean and disinfect all crates, containers and other equipment before and after use. Do not move equipment into different poultry buildings without cleaning and disinfecting it first.
- Clean and sanitize other equipment used on the farm, such as scales, computers, chains, panels, etc.
- Poultry containers and loaders should be free of all manure, feathers, egg debris, and other dirt before leaving for the next job.
- Dollies and carts may be washed and disinfected on the truck, or disinfected off the truck and placed back on the vehicle. Both methods can be successful, but it is better to wash poultry dollies and carts individually off the truck, and to clean and disinfect the truck interior and exterior before reloading dollies or carts. The more automated the system, the better the chance for consistent, reliable results.
- Use separate equipment to move end of lay fowl and pullets if possible. If this is not possible, be sure to take extra precautions when cleaning and disinfecting equipment. If transporting end of lay fowl, wait at least a full day (preferably more) before using the same equipment to move pullets.
- Wash and disinfect catching gates with water and detergent and a recommended disinfectant. The preference is for each farmer to have their own gates.

DEPARTING THE PREMISE

When in transit, avoid stopping in areas known, or believed to have a concentration of farms, farm workers and/or farm visitors.

HEIGHTENED DISEASE SITUATION

Sometimes, flocks that are known to have challenged health may need to be transported for controlled marketing. In such cases, follow these additional practices:

- If multiple flocks are serviced the same day, always service the challenged flock last.
- Use disposable coveralls, boots, hats/hairnets, dust masks and gloves. When exiting the barn, remove disposable wear and leave on the farm in a garbage bag for the farmer to dispose of.
- If not using disposable items provided by the farmer, wash clothing and clean and disinfect boots prior to visiting another farm. Ensure the inside of the vehicle is also thoroughly cleaned and sanitized as your clothing and footwear can spread the disease.
- Spray/clean all tires with disinfectant prior to leaving the farm if possible, but at a minimum at the nearest appropriate location after leaving the farm.
- Choose a route that passes as few poultry farms as possible on the way to the end destination.

Also refer to the section entitled, Procedures for Loading a Health Challenged Flock, at the end of Chapter 5: Are Birds Fit to Load?



CHAPTER 3: Transporting Day Old Chicks and Poult

AFTER THIS CHAPTER, YOU WILL:

- Understand the physical and behavioural attributes of day-old poultry.
- Appreciate that biosecurity for day-old poultry is critical due to their under-developed immune systems.
- Properly transport day old chicks/poults.
- Correctly unload chicks/poults at the farm.

Modern hatcheries can incubate and hatch from thousands to millions of birds every week to supply the poultry industry. All day-old poultry are transported to farms in climate-controlled trucks or by plane to domestic and international destinations.

Newly hatched chicks and turkey poults share many characteristics, which are important to understand in order to transport them as safely as possible. The welfare of chicks and poults during transport is a top priority and is the responsibility of all staff involved. The amount of travel time for day-old chicks or poults should be minimized and should ideally not exceed 24 hours and cannot exceed 72 hours.

Current regulations can be found at www.inspection.gc.ca.



BEHAVIOUR OF DAY-OLD POULTRY

- Day-old poultry hatch with a built-in food and water supply, a yolk sac inside their bodies. If properly cared for, they can survive for a few days without food or water. However, early introduction to feed and water stimulates gut and growth development.
- Hatchlings have a high internal body temperature. However, they are unable to regulate their temperature in the first two weeks of life. The external temperature must be kept constant for them.
- An environment that is too hot, cold, or wet is a serious welfare issue and can result in heavy losses at the hatchery, during transport, or at the farm.
- If chicks/poults are hot, they will pant with their beaks open, spread out their wings, and move away from each other if possible. If they cannot rid themselves of excessive heat, they may suffer permanent damage or even death.
- If the environment is too cold, birds will huddle together for warmth. If they are still cold, they may pile on top of each other and smother. A quick way to check whether a chick/poult is cold is to place its feet against your cheek. Cold feet = cold chick/poult. Chilling is a common cause of ascites (water belly) in chicks/poults.
- A baby ear thermometer can be used to check the vent temperature of a sample of chicks and poults to ensure a body temperature range of 39.5° to 40.5°C/103° to 105°F.
- Proper ventilation is critical. Lack of fresh air may damage the chick's/poult's heart and brain, sometimes leading to ascites or death.
- Newly hatched poultry have a natural instinct to look for food right away. A healthy chick or poult is active and alert when approached. They quickly imprint on people and will follow a caretaker/handler as they would their mother. Therefore, you must use caution when moving amongst chicks/poults as they will follow you. Watch your feet!
- A newly hatched bird's immune system is under-developed. Therefore, it is important that the hatchlings' environment and all surfaces they come into contact with be clean and sanitized.

PREPARING DELIVERY TRUCKS FOR TRANSPORT

- Clean and disinfect delivery trucks thoroughly before each use. Clean the inside of the truck as well as the cab. Some hatcheries require a "cleaning and disinfection" certificate with every delivery, which includes:
 - Date of shipment;
 - Vehicle number;
 - Date and time of cleaning and disinfection;
 - Date and time of loading; and,
 - Customer name and delivery time.
- Conduct a pre-trip truck inspection:
 - Check and start power supplies (usually a generator).
 - Make sure all fans in the truck are working.
 - See if filters need to be installed or cleaned.
 - Make sure heaters are working.
 - Verify that the temperature monitoring equipment in the cab is working.
 - Check vents and louvers.

- Heat or cool the truck environment to a temperature range of 21° to 35°C/70° to 95°F before chicks are loaded.
- Relative humidity of the truck environment should be between 50% and 65%.
- The ideal truck environment depends on: weather, load density, type of equipment/chick truck design, and the location of the monitoring sensors. The sensors may be located in the cargo box, where the chicks are transported, or in the re-circulated air stream. The exact location of the sensors in the cargo area is also an important factor to consider. These variables may result in very different monitoring numbers for the same around-chick environment. Hatcheries should determine the ideal range for their individual equipment by monitoring the condition of the chicks from all parts of the truck on delivery at different trip lengths and load volumes to determine best practices for their situation and to interpret the output of the monitoring devices.
- For adequate ventilation, a minimum of 0.71 cubic metres per minute (25 cubic feet per minute) of fresh air per 1,000 chicks must be maintained.
- Check the necessary paperwork (e.g. farm directions, delivery confirmation forms, and other forms as required by regulations) to accompany the delivery.



PREPARING THE CHICKS/POULTS FOR TRANSPORT

- Drivers must follow the hatchery's biosecurity procedures before entering the hatchery. This could include showering and wearing disposable coveralls, boots, hats/hairnets, and gloves whenever entering the hatchery. Since the driver and the vehicle visit other farms on a regular basis, biosecurity is a concern. Drivers should visit only the processing area and only for as long as it takes to load the birds inside the vehicle. Drivers should not enter other hatchery locations.
- Both plastic boxes and birds should be completely dry before transport. Birds should not have any wet or crusty feathers.
- Provide no less than 24.5 cm² (3.8 in²) box floor space per chick and 27.1 cm² (4.2 in²) box floor space per poult.
- If chick paper is used in the boxes, it must be new, clean and dry.
- Chicks and poults must be able to stand erect during transport.
- The birds are counted and placed in new cardboard boxes or in cleaned and disinfected plastic boxes. Ensure the plastic boxes are not damaged.



- Only healthy chicks should be loaded. Birds that are unable to walk, weak, not alert, emaciated or show signs of illness or distress should not be transported.
- The boxes are stacked in a holding area that is temperature and humidity controlled for bird comfort.
- Maintain holding areas for boxes of chicks or poults at a temperature range of 21° to 27°C/70° to 80°F and a relative humidity of 40% to 60%.
- The time from hatching to farm delivery should be kept as short as possible. Ideally, transport time should not be longer than 24 hours and cannot exceed 72 hours. Gel packs or alternative sources of hydration should be provided if the time between hatch and placement will exceed 24 hours.
- Chicks and poults that are deemed unfit for transport must be cared for or euthanized by a trained and competent person.

LOADING THE TRUCK

- Live chicks must always be transported smoothly, slowly, and without causing injury or distress!
- Ensure the truck cargo area is warmed up prior to loading. See recommended temperature ranges in section below (Driver's Responsibilities during Transportation)
- If travelling in a non-climate-controlled vehicle, consider both the outside temperature and the duration of transport when determining the optimum density of chicks or poults in boxes. In hot weather or when transporting chicks or poults over long distances, reduce the packing density.
- Load stacked boxes onto the truck by sliding them or rolling them in on dollies.
- Boxes with chicks or poults must be moved smoothly and in such a way that the chicks or poults do not pile or become trapped.
- Loaded containers should be moved, as much as is possible, in a horizontal position. Avoid tilting, dropping or sudden jarring of loaded containers.
- Secure stacks with separation bars. Avoid overloading the vehicle as this may result in poor ventilation and temperature control. Double-check bird quantity during loading.
- When making multiple deliveries, the birds that will be unloaded first should be placed inside the truck last.
- After the birds are loaded, close, secure, and lock the door.
- Check the temperature sensors again. Some trucks also have automatic temperature recorders that measure temperatures inside the truck at regular intervals. These recordings are printed and kept with the other documents.



DRIVER'S RESPONSIBILITIES DURING TRANSPORTATION

- Monitor the environment in the cargo area (temperature and airflow) by checking the electronic readouts in the cab. Maintain a comfortable environment of 21° to 35°C/70° to 95°F, depending on weather conditions, load density, type of equipment/chick truck design, and the location of the monitoring sensors.
- Keep the fans on.
- Minimize the change in environment if, during transportation, boxes are to be transferred between vehicles.
- When alarm systems are triggered, you need to take immediate action to maintain the desired environment range, e.g. adjust heat settings, increase or decrease ventilation, initiate secondary back-up systems if applicable, contact dispatch for assistance, etc.

UNLOADING THE BIRDS AT THE FARM

- At the farm, drivers should follow biosecurity measures as outlined in Chapter 2 of this manual. In addition, drivers must comply with any additional biosecurity measures requested by the farmer.
- Wear protective clothing (disposable coveralls, boots, hats/hairnets, and gloves) to aid in preventing the spread of diseases while helping to unload chick/poult boxes. Ideally, drivers should not enter the barn.
- Monitor the birds' condition and activity level upon delivery. In a delivery log book, note any abnormalities, including:
 - excessive panting;
 - piling/suffocation in the boxes; and
 - number of dead on arrival (DOAs).
- Any cull chicks found during delivery should be placed in a separate box and euthanized by the flock owner or manager. Euthanasia should only be performed by properly trained and competent personnel.
- Observe conditions in the barn. Note if the building has been adequately prepared to house birds:
 - Is water and feed available?
 - Has the building been preheated to an appropriate temperature, specifically the floor area?
 - Do conditions appear sanitary? e.g. clean bedding
 - Is lighting adequate for birds to find food and water?



UNLOADING FLOOR CHICKS AND POULTS

- Unloading should occur quickly so the chicks are in the outside weather as little as possible.
- To avoid chilling the birds, keep truck doors open only as much as necessary. Keep the birds out of drafts or direct sunlight as much as possible. Plan ahead for unloading into multi-storey barns to minimize chicks' exposure to weather.
- Boxes of chicks may be unloaded into the barn by forklift, dollies or by carrying boxes by hand. No matter how they are unloaded, the boxes must not be stacked so high that they become unsteady. Avoid jarring movements.
- If the tailgate of the truck and the barn door are next to each other, the driver can unload the truck by handing boxes to handlers to carry into the barn.
- Loaded containers should be moved, as much as is possible, in a horizontal position. Avoid tilting, dropping or sudden jarring of loaded containers.
- Unload boxes into the farthest part of the barn first or move the truck from door to door.
- Chicks should be unloaded by tilting the box slightly and pushing them out carefully or by inclining the box slowly and then withdrawing it from under them with a smooth, swift movement. When unloading boxes, ensure the chicks do not become piled or trapped. When removed by hand (with the hands forming a scoop)

the chicks must not be squeezed. Do not drop chicks and poults from heights exceeding 15 cm (5.9 in) onto a hard surface or 30 cm (11.8 in) onto a soft surface.



- When placing chicks in a loose housing facility, the transport container should be carefully placed on the floor, never dropped and the door opened. Birds that do not leave on their own may be encouraged to leave by tilting the container slightly or by removing the birds by hand.
- If chick paper was used in the box, ideally it should be left on the farm as a good biosecurity practice.
- A predetermined number of birds are placed next to feed and water sources at evenly spaced intervals.
- If brooder paper is used, ensure the chicks are contained within the brooding zone.
- Turkey poults are typically unloaded and placed inside brooder rings. The number of poults per ring is determined by ring size and number of feeders and drinkers inside the rings. Confirm with the farmer the number of poults per ring prior to unloading.

UNLOADING CHICKS INTO PULLET CAGES

- Confirm the cage capacity guidelines. Do not exceed them. Make sure cages are clean and prepared for the chicks. Some cages require chick paper to permit the chicks to move freely to feed and water.
- Roll chick boxes into the rows of the pullet barn on the dollies provided by the hatchery.
- Take the chicks out of the box and handle them with care as they are placed into the cages. Chicks should be supported from the bottom and placed gently into the pullet cage. Form a scoop with your hands and never squeeze during handling other than during sexing.
- Be sure to keep an accurate count of how many chicks are placed into each cage. As the chicks grow, their cage space will decrease. If too many chicks are put into the cage, they will have too little space.
- Close the cage door properly. Make sure chicks cannot escape their cages and fall into an area where they do not have access to food and water.



AFTER THE DELIVERY

- Count empty boxes and dollies and place them back in the truck. Then request the necessary delivery confirmation signatures from the customer.
- Drivers should remove their protective clothing (disposable coveralls, boots, hats/hairnets, and gloves) before getting back in the truck and leaving the farm. These items should either be discarded on farm (if disposable) or placed into a garbage bag that is knotted closed for laundering later.
- Since the vehicle has gone to an outside farm location, the driver and the truck are now considered “contaminated.” Upon returning to the hatchery, the vehicle needs to be cleaned and disinfected.’
- Drivers should follow the hatchery’s biosecurity procedures before re-entering the hatchery.

CHAPTER 4: Preparing Birds for Transport

AFTER THIS CHAPTER, YOU WILL:

- Understand the importance of building design in reducing injury and poultry stress.
- Implement flock management practices to prepare the flock for transport.
- Minimize heat and/or cold stress during catching and transport.

Note, this section is applicable to the management decisions and actions taken by the farmer and their personnel. The design of the farm, the euthanasia of birds, daily culls etc. is not the responsibility of the external service provider (e.g. catching crew, processor, etc.). However, it is important that external service providers understand that farmers and farm managers have a responsibility to provide facilities and equipment to make bird handling, loading and unloading possible without causing unnecessary injury or suffering to the birds. There are also a number of flock management practices that will reduce bird stress and improve overall poultry welfare during catching, loading, unloading and transportation.



BUILDING DESIGN

- Proper building design and accessibility for transport vehicles greatly improves the humane handling of loose-housed poultry. Farm owners should ensure that the building design minimizes the transfer of birds between handlers and is adapted to the catching and loading equipment used including sufficient number and size of door and floor openings.
- For multi-storey barns, ensure that floors above the first floor are designed to support the maximum loaded weight of containers, birds, litter, workers, and any other equipment present at loading and unloading.
- If forklifts are being used to move containers, the vertical clearance for all fixed items located in the barn such as radiant tube heaters, box heaters, gas lines, etc. must be verified to exceed the height required by the forklift when placing containers.
- For modular loading, if the barn is longer than 91.4 m (300 feet), provide an access door and hard surface loading area at both ends of the barn to minimize forklift travel distance inside the barn.

- For example, for crate loading broiler chickens, doors should not be less than 120 cm/48 inches wide and 200 cm/78 inches high. When birds have to be handed through floor openings, the openings should not be less than 1 m²/10 ft² for chickens and not less than 1.2 m²/13 ft² for turkeys with no obstructions, e.g. floor joists.
- For hand caught birds being loaded onto trucks, doors should be placed a maximum of 7.62 m (25 feet) from each end of the barn with additional doors placed a maximum of 15.24 m (50 feet) apart.
- Ideally, both external and internal lighting should be dimmable to allow sufficient light for safe loading/unloading while keeping birds calm. This is particularly important for handling spent fowl.
- Provide a smooth transition from inside the barn to the outside loading area (no raised door sills or abrupt grade changes) and vice versa to prevent containers bouncing or being bumped during transport into/out of barn.
- Provide a level and firm loading/unloading area outside of each loading door; a concrete pad is preferred. The surface needs to extend beyond the width of the barn to include the full loading/unloading area over to the truck.
- Eavestrough should be continuous across the loading/unloading areas so birds do not get wet if being transported during a rainstorm.



The roof above load-out doors or loading area must be clear of ice and snow or have ice breakers or ice guards installed to protect workers and the poultry being loaded/unloaded from the possibility of falling ice and snow.

FLOCK MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- The Codes of Practice for all poultry require that poultry housing be designed and constructed in a manner that allows for good ventilation and air quality with respect to temperature, relative humidity, dust level, ammonia, and carbon dioxide. Providing optimum environmental conditions within the barn, will promote a healthy flock.
- Manage barn conditions to keep birds dry, e.g. apply dry bedding to any damp areas of the barn and calibrate misters to maintain appropriate droplet size and prevent leaking. Wet birds cannot maintain their body temperature in cool or cold weather and are more likely to freeze to death during transport.
- Sick, injured or small birds will not be able to adequately access food and water. Therefore, it is important to adopt a daily culling program. This is a humane best practice and is in accordance with the animal care programs of the national poultry associations. This will also minimize the number of DO NOT LOAD birds left in the barn after a load-out. It will improve load-out efficiency and eliminate the need to euthanize a large number of birds left on the farm.
- As part of the daily routine, the farm owner or their personnel should identify birds that have DO NOT LOAD conditions. Refer to “Chapter 5: Are Birds Fit to Load?” for guidelines.
- Birds that are not fit to be loaded should be humanely euthanized by a trained individual from the farm.
- **Euthanasia must result in a rapid loss of consciousness followed by death. It must be performed by properly trained and competent personnel.**

FOR BIRDS BEING SHIPPED TO THE PROCESSOR (IE: BROILERS, TURKEYS, END OF LAY HENS):

- It is important for the farm owner or farm personnel to provide an accurate estimate of average bird weight and bird count as accurately as possible so that the processor can plan for the appropriate number of containers required and loading density. Proper loading density is important for poultry welfare during transport. Bird count can be determined by subtracting cumulative mortality and culled birds from total number of chicks or poults placed.
- The farm owner or farm personnel are to advise processors of any health issues within the flock, e.g. respiratory problems.
- Feed withdrawal times should be determined in consultation with the processor, respecting the transport regulations within the Health of Animals Act. Never withdraw feed from the birds before the agreed upon time. Water should be available to the birds until time of catching. For end of lay fowl, calcium supplementation should continue until feed is withdrawn to maintain bone strength.

FOR BIRDS BEING SHIPPED TO A FARM (IE: DAY OLD BIRDS, PULLETS):

- Ensure the necessary flock documentation for the receiving farm accompanies the birds. For example a permit or flock history certificate.
- Advise the receiving farmer of any health issues within the flock.



PREPARING FOR CATCHING AND TRANSPORT

- Evaluate flock fitness for travel including any flock health challenges. The farm owner or manager should ensure birds are ready to load before crews arrive and humanely euthanize all birds that should not be loaded.
- The farm owner or manager should also:
 - Evaluate flock fitness for travel including any health challenges.
 - Look for signs of heat stress such as rapid and open-mouth panting, wing spreading and squatting close to the ground. Faces, combs and wattles could be red-flushed. The birds may be lethargic and slow moving.
 - Implement protocols to reduce bird stress. For example, add electrolytes or Vitamin C to drinking water one to two days before periods of high heat and humidity. Mist birds only in combination with air movement.
- The farmer must call and notify the processor if birds are not fit for travel on the day of loading anytime up until the catchers arrive so that a decision involving all stakeholders can be made prior to load-out.

- Communication against all stakeholders are critical at all times to ensure birds unfit for travel are not loaded.
- During loading, the farmer and farm personnel should do everything possible to protect the birds from being exposed to a sudden change in temperature. Consider preconditioning the birds by lowering barn temperature in cold weather or raising it in warm weather.
- End of lay hens are more fragile than young birds and must be handled with special care in order to prevent painful injury. Careful handling and proper catching methods can greatly reduce the incidence of injury.
- Be flexible to allow for changes in loading times that will reduce bird stress. For example, loading later in the evening during periods of heat and humidity.
- Develop contingency plans in the event that birds are not fit for travel or if birds cannot be loaded due to flock health issues, extreme cold, snow, wind chill, or road closures or, conversely, extreme heat and humidity.
- At the request of the processor, the farm owner or farm personnel should provide information on barn orientation and loading doors relative to the sun and wind to assist in establishing an appropriate loading time.
- The catching area must promote safe and humane handling and catching. The barn must be prepared by the farm owner or farm personnel before being entered by workers, including raising feed and water lines (if possible) so catchers can walk without obstructions over which they may trip. Equipment should be raised as high as possible to prevent workers striking their heads.

DURING LOADING

- The farmer or farm representative should be present during the catching and loading process to manage barn operations during catching (ventilation, lighting, etc) and to monitor the activities of the crew to ensure that no individuals are deviating from proper bird handling.
- Catchers should be trained on basic bird behaviour during catching, how to handle the type/species of bird, safety precautions, and who to call / what action to take when birds are not fit to travel.
- The ventilation system should be operating for the duration of loading to provide fresh air to the barn area. Ensure the fan exhaust is not causing temperature or dust issues where the truck is parked.
- DO NOT LOAD wet birds in cool or cold weather. Wet birds that are loaded in cool or cold weather are a significant cause of mortalities during transport and dead birds arriving at the plant (DOAs). Every effort should be taken to ensure the birds are dry when they are loaded and stay dry during transport. Protect birds from getting wet during loading by using tarps and eavestroughs.
- When loading birds from a loose housing system:
 - Rounding the corners of barns can prevent bird injury or mortality association with birds piling in the corners of the barn.
 - Small pens can be erected in which to confine a small group of birds.
 - Bring transport crates close to the cages of birds being caught so they are carried for the shortest distance possible. This is less stressful for the birds and may reduce the number of bone breaks.



- When loading birds from a caged housing system:
 - Bring the transport crates close to the cages so the birds are carried for the shortest distance possible. This is less stressful for the birds and may reduce the number of injuries.
 - Catch the bird by both legs. Secure the legs in one hand. Place your other hand under the breast area (keel) of the bird. Lift the bird and gently remove from the cage. Experienced personnel may handle two birds at the same time, as long as the procedure above is followed.
 - Control the birds by securing their legs and supporting the breast while lifting them from the cage. Properly supporting the birds will reduce injury and damage to developing eggs.
 - Take care not to catch wings on the frame of the cage or crate opening. Birds can sustain injuries if they come into contact with equipment during handling.
 - Avoid passing birds between handlers.
- When loading birds into transport crates:
 - Birds should be loaded at the proper density per drawer or crate.
 - To avoid suffocation, load birds upright. Ideally birds should be lowered gently into the crates onto their breast so they can regain their balance before more birds are added.
 - Take care not to catch heads, wings and legs in the crate openings.
 - Keep crates loaded with birds' level. It is important to move them without tipping to prevent bird pileup.
 - Never throw or drop a crate loaded with birds.
- Any unfit birds found during loading should be left in the barn and euthanized by the flock owner or manager. Euthanasia should only be performed by properly trained and competent personnel.

CHAPTER 5: ARE THE BIRDS FIT TO LOAD?

AFTER THIS CHAPTER, YOU WILL:

- Make the decision on whether a bird should be loaded or not.
- Recognize symptoms of a sick versus healthy poultry flock.
- Understand additional biosecurity procedures needed for handling a sick or quarantined flock.



ASSESSING INDIVIDUAL BIRDS

Bird welfare starts in the barn and continues through loading, transportation, and slaughter at the processing plant. Everyone who works with birds is responsible for maintaining bird welfare – it is the right thing to do! You may load or transport birds that are free from infirmity, illness, injury, fatigue or any other cause which may induce undue suffering during the expected journey.

The CFIA has the authority to inspect birds during loading and to stop and inspect trucks during transit. It is important to familiarize yourself with the Health of Animals Regulations. Violators under these regulations may receive Administrative Monetary Penalties (AMPs). Depending on the severity of the violation, these fines could be up to \$15,000. Additionally, CFIA posts repeat offenders (multiple offenses within 5 years) on their website.

The farm owner or manager should ensure birds are ready to load before crews arrive and euthanize all birds that should not be loaded. Any unfit birds found during loading should be left in the barn and euthanized by the flock owner or manager. Euthanasia should only be performed by properly trained and competent personnel.

DO NOT LOAD BIRDS WITH THE FOLLOWING SYMPTOMS:

WEAK AND/OR NOT ALERT

These birds might not run away from you when approached (floor chickens) or move with the group when being herded (turkeys). They might have their heads on the litter and their feathers fluffed up.

These birds should not be confused with large tom turkeys that become fatigued during herding.

SKIN ON HEAD OR NECK IS DARK RED OR VERY PALE

Compared to other birds in the flock, these birds will have discoloured faces. They might also show other symptoms of stress or illness.

Mature male turkeys (toms) can have vibrant blue, red, or purple on the face or neck. These birds are healthy.



SWOLLEN HEAD AND/OR NECK

The face or head will be puffy and eyes might be swollen shut. These birds might also have wounds on their heads.

DISCHARGE FROM EYES AND/OR NOSTRILS



DARK RED, PURPLE, OR BLACK COMBS AND WATTLES

Discoloured combs or wattles indicate that a bird is sick. The bird might also be compromised, for example: weak, not alert, and emaciated.

BLOODY AND/OR PROLAPSED VENTS

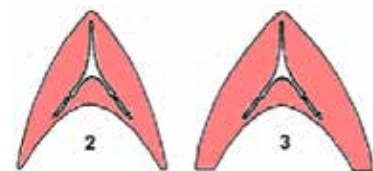
In prolapsed birds, the area under the tail will have exposed red tissue that appears to stick out. There can also be blood in the area. Prolapsed vents are painful and hens can bleed out and die if the prolapse is pecked or stepped on.

Look for this in end-of-lay hens and broiler breeders, in particular.



POOR BODY CONDITION (SEE APPENDIX 1)

Body condition can be assessed using body condition scores, which are determined by looking at keel bone prominence. When you pick up the bird, feel the breast area around the keel bone (breast bone).



A Body Condition Score of 2 or 3 reflect healthy birds with good muscle tone. You will be able to feel good coverage of flesh and muscle in the breast area.



A Body Condition Score of 1 can reflect a compromised broiler chicken or turkey. Segregate these birds and notify the farm manager.



A Body Condition Score of 0 reflects an emaciated, very thin and weak bird. The breastbone is very easy to feel. Emaciated birds will be weak and must not be loaded. These birds do not have the energy reserves to withstand the stress of catching and transportation, and will likely be (DOA).

Thin end-of-lay hens SHOULD NOT be confused with emaciated birds.

End-of-lay hens will be less muscular than broilers or breeders due to their production cycle and genetics. End-of-lay hens may receive a body condition score of 1 and still be loaded. These birds must be handled gently to avoid injury during transport. Cautionary measures might be needed when transporting these birds, e.g. adjustment of loading densities, tarping, etc., especially in extreme weather conditions.

DISLOCATED, BROKEN AND/OR EXPOSED BONES

- Wings might droop on the ground and legs might stick out at odd angles.
- Legs might also be discoloured with bruises.
- These injuries are painful.

BIRDS WITH BROKEN AND/OR EXPOSED BONES

- Birds unable to rise or walk due to physical abnormality or injury should not be confused with turkeys that become fatigued during herding.
- Dislocated and broken bones are painful during catching and transport due to handling bumps and motion.
- Broken bones can also limit the bird's ability to move around in the crate or liner.



CAUTION IN LOADING

UNDER-SIZED BIRDS

Culling undersized birds throughout the production period is a component of good flock management; small birds cannot properly access feed and water. Processing plants may not be able to accommodate smaller sized birds on their shackle lines and increases the potential for improper stunning and missing the automatic knife. Undersized birds arriving at a processing plant may have to be euthanized rather than processed to avoid these welfare issues.

Cuts and lesions on the skin will vary in severity.

- The size of the injury should be considered, as well as its location and how the bird appears.
- If service providers are unsure whether a wound is severe enough to cause undue suffering during transport, speak to a supervisor or the farm manager.

Diarrhea can be due to diet or illness.

- An individual bird with diarrhea is unfit if it also shows symptoms listed under DO NOT LOAD.
- A flock with diarrhea might be wet, and wet birds should not be transported in cool or cold weather if there is a risk the birds will become chilled.



SHOULD THIS BIRD BE LOADED? GUIDELINES FOR TRANSPORTING POULTRY

This decision tree can be used as a quick reference guide to help you decide if a bird should or should not be loaded.

Should this bird be loaded?

DO NOT LOAD DO NOT TRANSPORT

- Weak and/or not alert
- Dark, red, purple or black combs or wattles
- Discharge from eyes/nostrils
- Swollen head/neck
- Skin on head or neck is dark red or very pale (Exception: Toms may have bright blue skin in this area)
- Bloody and/or prolapsed vents
- Emaciated and weak, very thin, easily felt breastbone (Exception: End of lay hens may have pronounced breastbones but if emaciated they must not be loaded)
- Dislocated, broken or exposed bones (including injury due to handling)
- Unable to rise or walk due to physical abnormality or injury

Birds not loaded should be segregated according to on-farm protocol. Notify farm manager of birds left on the farm before leaving.

CAUTION

Environmental

- Wet birds in cool or cold weather
- Heat and/or humidity
- Cold and/or wind chill
- Road closures

Individual Bird

- Minor trauma, wounds or bleeding (including injury due to handling)

Flock

- Diarrhea
- Coughing and sneezing “snicking”
- If a flock is diagnosed with a disease by veterinarian or laboratory, special provisions for loading may be required

Assessment and joint decisions should be made by the producer, catching crew, hauler and processing plant when faced with CAUTION conditions.

REGULATIONS

No person shall load or caused to be loaded an animal that by reasons of infirmity, illness, injury, fatigue or any other cause cannot be transported without undue suffering during the expected journey.

*Health of Animals Regulations
Part XII, 138, 2a*

Do not


- Transport a sick or injured bird
- Load or unload a bird in a way likely to cause injury or suffering
- Crowd birds to such an extent as to cause injury or undue suffering

www.inspection.gc.ca


Violators of the Health or Animals Act will face: Fines up to \$15,000, increased fines for repeat offenders, repeat offenders posted on the CFIA website

Guidelines for dealing with poultry


IDENTIFICATION OF SICK OR INJURED BIRDS




Weak, not alert




Emaciated




Unable to walk




Swollen head



Discoloured comb



Broken leg



Unable to rise/walk due to physical abnormality
Do not confuse with fatigue

LOAD AND TRANSPORT OF HEALTHY BIRDS

1. IDENTIFY

2. CULL

3. DISPOSE

CFIA LIVESTOCK
EMERGENCY
TRANSPORT LINE
1-877-814-2342

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

Maximum Loading Transport Guidelines	Moderate Density	Extreme Heat Density
Broiler Chickens	63 kg/m ²	54 kg/m ²
Broiler Breeders	66 kg/m ²	56 kg/m ²
Turkeys	98 kg/m ²	83 kg/m ²
End-of-lay Hens	63 kg/m ²	54 kg/m ²

Factors to Consider

- Duration of transport (including loading and lairage)
- Weather at load out, along travel route and at processing plant
- Time of day of load out
- Number of birds in barn
- Ventilation and condition of barn

Recommended code of practice for the care and handling of farm animals

Air temperature in load should be maintained at 5°C to 30°C for all birds, except end-of-lay hens, which should be maintained at 13°C to 30°C

Recent research (Mitchell and Kettlewell, 2006) recommends for broilers, an upper in load temperature of 24°C

ASSESSING FLOCK HEALTH

The majority of poultry flocks are very healthy, but any flock can develop an illness. These illnesses usually are discovered and treated before the flock is moved. However, transportation crews should be able to recognize that a flock may have a serious illness and alert appropriate personnel, such as the farm manager or owner to prevent further disease spread.

Any large flock can include the occasional bird that is sick, small, lame, injured, or dead. Finding a few birds like this does not mean the entire flock is sick. Small numbers of sick or injured poultry are either euthanized (culled) before load-out or left in the building to be euthanized by the flock owner or manager. Euthanasia should only be performed by properly trained and competent personnel.

It is not normal to find a large number of sick or dead birds when entering a poultry barn. Some diseases may occur suddenly and spread quickly. If you suspect a serious illness you should notify the appropriate personnel such as the farm manager and processing plant immediately. Follow any special instructions from appropriate personnel, preferably under the advice of a veterinarian. Your crew and vehicles should not travel to other farms that day. You may also need to reroute the vehicles so you pass as few poultry farms as possible when departing. Your vehicles and equipment should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before moving to another farm.



SIGNS OF A HEALTHY FLOCK

- Birds are alert, curious, active, eating, and drinking.
- Birds are uniform in size.
- Feathers are smooth and clean.
- There is no discharge from the eyes or nostrils.
- Combs and wattles are bright red or pink. (Older turkeys may also have some blue, red or purple coloration of the skin on the head and neck. This is normal.)
- Droppings are formed (not runny) and the area under the birds' tails is not crusty or caked with manure.

SIGNS OF A SICK FLOCK

- Many dead birds.
- Swollen, puffy heads and sinuses.
- Failure to react. Birds do not run away and seem lethargic when approached. They may sit around with fluffed up feathers and act sleepy.
- Gasping for breath, coughing, or open-mouth breathing.
- Dark red, purple, or black combs.
- Neurological problems such as head tilt, tremors, or incoordination.
- Many crippled or lame birds that have difficulty walking.
- Dirty, crusty or bloody vents.
- Hemorrhages on the skin and shanks.
- Feather loss
- Diarrhea in conjunction with other symptoms.

PROCEDURES FOR LOADING A HEALTH CHALLENGED FLOCK

Be aware... If veterinarian or lab diagnosis confirms a health issue, the flock may be deemed fit for transport despite the condition of the birds. In this case, special transport provisions may need to be considered, such as:

- Density
- Biosecurity
- Handling
- Loading times
- Time in transit
- Weather conditions
- If a health challenged flock is being transported, the farm should be the only one serviced or be the last visited on that day.
- Individuals working with a known diseased flock should take extra precautions to stay away from other farms. Choose alternate travel routes to keep contaminated dust and feathers from coming into contact with other farms and flocks.
- In some situations, such as an outbreak of AI or other serious disease, permission from Alberta Agriculture and Forestry or the Canadian Food Inspection Agency may be required to enter a quarantined zone.

BIOSECURITY CONSIDERATIONS AFTER LOADING A SICK FLOCK:

- Use disposable coveralls, boots, gloves, and hairnets, and leave them at the farm.
- Rubber boots should be cleaned until there is no visible dirt, feathers, or manure seen and then disinfected. Disinfect all equipment used to service the sick flock, including, but not limited to, nets, gates, clipboards, pens, and panel boards.
- Clean and disinfect all tires prior to leaving the farm if possible but, at a minimum, at the nearest appropriate location after leaving the farm.
- All individuals should launder clothing and shower immediately after working on a farm with a diseased flock. Vehicles and equipment should be cleaned and disinfected immediately after they return to company headquarters.
- In some situations, such as an outbreak of Avian influenza or other serious disease, permission from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency or the provincial agriculture ministry may be required to enter a quarantined or controlled zone.



CHAPTER 6: Pullets and Roosters
(Layers and Broiler Breeders)

AFTER THIS CHAPTER, YOU WILL:

- Identify preparatory steps and equipment needed to load and unload pullets.
- Understand proper handling techniques for loading and unloading loose housed and caged pullets.
- Minimize effects of heat or cold stress during loading and transport.
- Understand biosecurity procedures and their importance for both drivers and catching crews.



A pullet is a young female chicken, from one day of age until the start of egg production. Pullets raised for egg production are typically grown to approximately 18 to 19 weeks of age in a pullet barn. They are then moved to a layer or breeder barn. Some birds may already be in egg production by this time. Handle pullets with care to avoid damaging legs and wings or damaging or rupturing the developing eggs inside the bird. The same is true in the event birds must be moved when in egg production, i.e. from one lay facility to another. Extra care in handling should be taken to avoid internal egg rupture.

A rooster, within the context of this section of the manual, is a young, sexually immature male chicken. Roosters raised for breeding are typically grown to approximately 18 to 20 weeks of age at a rearing facility. They are then moved to a breeder barn.

BIRD BEHAVIOUR

Birds are highly social animals and tend to move together as a flock. The flock has a defined “flight zone,” which determines how close an individual may approach the flock before they all move away as a group. This distance can vary among species, breed and from flock to flock. Experienced catchers observe a flock’s reactions and adapt their distance and catching methods accordingly. New crew members need to follow the actions and directions of the farm manager and experienced catchers so that everyone works as a team to move the flock with optimal animal welfare in mind.

Some pullets and roosters are loose housed and others are caged; care needs to be taken when transferring both types. Birds may become heat or cold stressed during catching and loading.

HEAT STRESSED

Flocks that are heat stressed will show signs of excessive panting, spreading their wings and may be lethargic and slow moving. To reduce the chance of heat stress during periods of heat and humidity, loading is often performed at night or early in the morning when it is cooler.

COLD STRESSED

Flocks that are cold stressed will be huddled together and may not move much. DO NOT LOAD wet birds in cool or cold weather. Wet birds cannot maintain their body temperature in cool or cold weather and are more likely to freeze to death during transport, causing a significant number of DOAs at the plant. Ensure birds are dry when they are loaded and stay dry during transport by using tarps.

The following stressors are important when moving any type of poultry but are even more important for pullets than for meat birds.

Speed: If approached too quickly, birds may become excited causing them to pile up, jump or fly suddenly to escape from the crew. Catchers should walk slowly when moving or approaching the birds.

Bright light: Bright light stresses birds. Lights should be dimmed to calm the birds during loading but must remain bright enough so the crew can safely do their work.

Strangers: Birds show increased stress when unknown people enter the building, especially if they wear bright (particularly white) colored clothing. Crew members should wear darker colors.

Sounds: Birds are stressed by loud noises, so catching and loading should be done as quietly and calmly as possible. No yelling or shouting. Note: When loading in multi-storey barns, do not bang on the walls of the floor on which you are loading. The birds on the other floors will hear the noise and may pile up in fright.

PREPARING TO MOVE PULLETS AND ROOSTERS

PRODUCTION SCHEDULERS AND DRIVERS MUST:

- Know where the farm is located and how far they are driving between farms.
- Know the day's weather conditions. Weather will determine equipment needs and the best time of day to load and move the birds.
- Determine how many birds will be loaded per truck and how many vehicles will be needed.
- Check the equipment. Make sure the truck is suitable for the day's job. A broken down truck may lead to high mortality for the poultry being transported.

PROPER EQUIPMENT

- Make sure containers are in good repair with no holes that would cause injury to the birds' heads, feet, or legs.
- All equipment must be regularly maintained. Casters and wheels must be greased, all doors must work properly, and all broken wire must be repaired.

LOADING CAGED PULLETS

- Dim the lights in the pullet barn to reduce bird stress while handling.
- When removing pullets from the cage, control the birds by securing their legs and support the breast while lifting them from the cage. Then carefully place birds into the container. Properly supporting the birds will reduce injury and possible damage to eggs in the process of development.
- Be careful not to catch wings on the frame of the cage opening when removing birds from cages.
- Keep legs and wings free from the doors when closing and securing containers.
- When loaded into containers, birds must be in an upright position to avoid smothering.
- Loaded containers should be moved, as much as is possible, in a horizontal position. Avoid tilting, dropping or sudden jarring of loaded containers.
- The number of birds placed into each container is determined by the relevant Code of Practice. The processor and/or the transporter must take into consideration the following factors: age and weight of birds, size of container, and outside temperature.
- The farmers receiving or shipping the birds need accurate counts to be sure barns are not over or under filled.
- There are various types of containers with different door sizes and locking mechanisms. Catchers should be familiar with the different containers and adapt their techniques as needed.
- When catching birds that escape from the cages or dollies, follow the same guidelines as are outlined for catching and loading loose housed pullets.



CATCHING/LOADING LOOSE HOUSED PULLETS

- Loose housed pullets are not confined to one area or cage and may be raised on more than one level (an aviary). Loose housed birds must be caught while roosting or driven into nets or catch pens.
- Bird behaviour varies from flock to flock; some are calm while others are flighty and nervous. They may jump up and glide with their wings over short distances. Most will recognize the farmer or other farm personnel, but they do not recognize the crew and will react accordingly. Dark clothing is preferable to white coveralls.
- The crew should knock gently on the outside door before entering the pen. All movements must be slow and steady. Any sudden movement, such as quickly raising one's arms, can send the entire flock into a panic. The entire flock may pile up at the other end of the barn. If a crew member tries to quickly get in and grab some birds, the whole group might startle and fly off to the opposite end of the building and pile. Startling the birds also stirs up a great deal of dust for the workers.
- In aviaries, when birds are startled, they may fly or jump into obstacles, such as perches, and become injured, especially their keel bones.
- Push empty containers into the barn to begin loading.
- Roosting birds are usually loaded at night. Dimming lights while catching and loading helps calm birds and will prevent piling and smothering but you should not drive birds in darkness. You can drive birds toward a lit area so you may want the area behind the net to be brighter than the area you are driving from. Birds should not be

directed towards darkness but rather towards a lit area. As a result, the area behind the net should be brighter than the originating area.



- Move poultry in small groups to a loading area so as to cause as little stress to the birds as possible.
- Smothering is the leading cause of mortality while loading birds although broiler breeders pullets are not as prone to piling as layer pullets. To reduce the risk of smothering, only drive small groups into the net and catch them quickly but carefully. Judge how many birds to drive into the net based on the number of catchers available. If a pile develops, the crew supervisor should walk around to the back of the net and carefully lift it up to break up the pile of birds. If you cannot break up the pile, open or drop the net and move away in a direction that gives the birds an escape route.
- Be aware of what is happening at the other end of the barn and on the other floors with remaining birds.
- The number of birds per hand should be based on bird size, age and catcher capability. Birds should never be carried by the wing, head, neck, or tail.
- When loading caught birds into the container, lift them by the upper hocks while supporting the breast, and then place them carefully into the container.
- Be careful not to catch wings on the frame of the cage opening when removing birds from cages.
- Keep legs and wings free from the doors when closing and securing containers.
- Moving trucks from door to door will reduce the distance needed to move the birds. It is easier to move the containers to the birds.
- Some birds are very territorial, which can make moving the flock a challenge. Loading territorial birds may take extra time. This can be improved by using a center door or two doors in different areas of the barn.
- Roosters are loaded the same way as loose housed pullets but fewer birds are loaded per container.
- The number of birds placed into each container is determined by the Code of Practice and/or the transporter and takes into consideration the following factors: age and weight of birds, size of container, and outside temperature.
- When loaded into containers, birds must be in an upright position to avoid smothering.
- Loaded containers should be moved, as much as is possible, in a horizontal position. Avoid tilting, dropping or sudden jarring of loaded containers.
- The farmers receiving or shipping the birds need accurate counts to be sure barns are not over or under filled.

LOADING, TRANSPORT, AND HOLDING

- Provide adequate ventilation for comfort and to decrease stress.
- Protect birds from extreme heat, cold and wet conditions.
- Depending on the weather conditions and inside barn environment, it could be preferable to stage loaded containers so that they are kept inside the barn until loading is near completion to protect the loaded birds from the elements.
- Close all container doors securely. Poorly secured doors may open and close during transport, injuring the birds or allowing them to escape.

- Secure containers on the truck bed with chains or bars.
- After every row of dollies/carts, put a bar in place. Securing and spacing containers properly allows air to circulate through the truck for ventilation.
- Keep tarps or panels available. You may need to cover the load during poor weather, especially if there is a risk the birds may get wet.
- When loading in hot weather, don't load containers tightly on the trailer. If it is cooler inside the barn, keep loaded containers in the poultry barn until the majority of the birds are loaded. Once the majority of containers are loaded with poultry, begin placing them onto the truck. Consider using portable fans if available in the barn or blowing onto the truck.
- When the final containers are on the truck, secure the entire load for transport.
- After you leave the farm, stop as little as possible until you arrive at your destination to keep the air moving through the load. Eliminating unnecessary stops on route reduces the risk of heat stress in hot weather.
- Minimize the change in environment if, during transportation, containers are to be transferred between vehicles.

MINIMIZE HEAT STRESS DURING LOADING AND TRANSPORT:

- Avoid loading birds during the hottest periods of the day or night.
- Document barn, bird conditions and weather conditions.
- Use best efforts to position the truck so that birds are shielded from direct sun.
- When catching and loading birds, take into consideration options to reduce stress on the birds given the different barn and loading configurations.
- Follow the container density guidelines provided by the relevant Code of Practice and/or transporter unless there is concern that the densities specified are not appropriate in which case contact the company representative.
- Load birds in the minimum time possible without compromising bird welfare.
- After loading, the transporter should proceed immediately to the receiving barn. Should short stops be necessary, document the time and length of stop.
- Develop contingency plans in response to traffic issues that will slow or halt transport. If possible, a longer slower route is preferred to sitting at a standstill in traffic.
- Check load at delivery by documenting the condition of the birds.
- Keep trucks well maintained for hot weather.



MINIMIZE COLD STRESS DURING LOADING AND TRANSPORT:

- Avoid loading birds during the coldest periods of the day or night.
- Document barn, bird conditions and weather conditions.
- Use best efforts to position the truck so that birds are shielded from direct wind. Where possible, stage the loaded containers in the barn, moving all containers to the truck when all birds have been caught.
- Follow the containers density guidelines provided by the Code of Practice and/or transporter unless there is concern that the densities specified are not appropriate in which case contact the company representative.
- Load birds in the minimum time possible without compromising bird welfare.
- DO NOT LOAD wet birds if there is a risk that birds will become chilled. Wet birds cannot maintain their body temperature in cool or cold weather and are more likely to become hypothermic or freeze to death during transport. Every effort should be taken to ensure the birds are dry when they are loaded and stay dry during transport.
- After loading, the transporter should proceed immediately to the receiving barn. If short stops are necessary to allow the load to warm up, document the time and length of stop. If necessary, adjust the tarps.
- Develop contingency plans in response to traffic issues that will slow or halt transport. If possible, a longer slower route is preferred to sitting at a standstill in traffic.
- Check load at delivery by documenting the condition of the birds.
- Keep trucks well maintained for cold weather.

DURING TRANSPORT

- For long distances, stop periodically to check birds for signs of stress. You may need to: open tarps, panels or vents to provide increased ventilation or close them for added warmth; allow time for the load to warm up during cold weather; decrease speed in cold weather to reduce heat loss from the load; during hot temperatures, plan a route where you can maintain a constant speed to provide air flow, etc.
- Signs of overheating may include: red-flushed faces, combs and wattles, and rapid panting and open-mouthed breathing.
- Signs of chilling may include: blue combs, feathers fluffed up, and shivering.
- Signs of lack of oxygen may include: gasping or stretching of neck when breathing, and purple combs and wattles.



UNLOADING PULLETS INTO THE BARN

Take the same safety precautions for unloading as with loading.

When unloading in the heat, break down the trailer and pull the containers apart quickly. Do not allow containers to remain stacked together while the trailer is not in motion for an extended period of time as smothering may occur. Bring some of the containers into the barn and spread them out. Also spread out some of the containers remaining on the truck until they can be brought into the barn.

CAGED

- Catch birds by the upper hocks, support the breast, and remove them from the cart feet first.
- Properly supporting each bird will reduce injury and possible damage to eggs in the process of development.
- Be careful not to catch wings on the frame of the container opening when removing birds from the container.
- Maintain control of each bird and place it headfirst into the cage.
- When closing and securing cages, keep heads, legs and wings free from doors.

MULTI-TIER SYSTEMS (AVIARY)

- Remove birds from container as noted above.
- Birds must be placed in the system near feed and water sources.

LOOSE HOUSING

- Roll the loaded containers into the barn if possible.
- Open cage doors to allow poultry to exit on their own. Some birds may have to be removed from the cart and placed on the floor. To release birds, it is preferable to set them down on their breast or their feet. Releasing birds above the floor may cause them to flap and startle the surrounding birds.
- Watch bird movement while unloading to avoid smothering.
- Use caution when removing unloaded containers from the poultry barn to avoid causing injury to the birds.

SPIKING

Spiking is the addition of young broiler breeder males into an older flock to compensate for the decline in fertility that usually occurs after 45 weeks of age. This decline can be due to a reduction in mating interest, a reduction in sperm quality, lower mating efficiency and excess male mortality resulting in a reduced male to female ratio.

The introduction of at least an additional 20% younger males can cause flock fertility to increase and they can stimulate the existing males' mating activity. Best results are achieved if spiking is done prior to 40 weeks and is not economical if done after 55 weeks. Spiking is usually done once, but can be done twice in the life of the flock.

The introduction of spikers can be a biosecurity risk, so they should all be from the same flock of roosters and tested to ensure health before introduction. The biosecurity risk is a reason that some farmers choose not to spike their flocks. There is also a need to cull the poor performing existing males so that the male to female ratio is not too high.



CHAPTER 7: Broilers

AFTER THIS CHAPTER, YOU WILL:

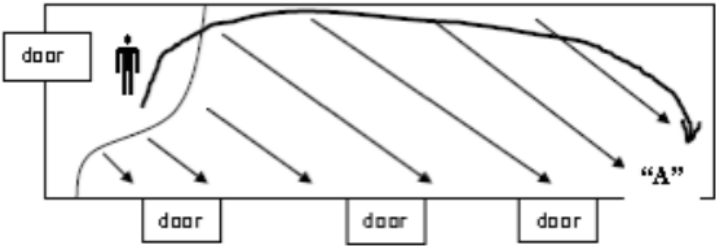
- Appreciate the importance of maintaining containers in good repair.
- Know the different catching techniques used for broilers compared to pullets and end of lay fowl.
- Understand how to minimize heat and/or cold stress during catching and transport.

Broilers are young chickens raised for meat. Broilers must be properly handled to minimize the possibility of injury, pain, and distress. Poor handling may result in scratches, bruising, broken bones, and even death. Inappropriate handling may increase dead on arrivals (DOAs) and condemnations at the plant. Willful acts of abuse are not tolerated and are punishable by law.

BIRD BEHAVIOUR

Birds are highly social and tend to move together as a flock. The flock has a defined “flight zone,” which determines how close an individual may approach before they all move away as a group. This distance can vary among species and from flock to flock. Experienced catchers observe a flock’s reactions and adapt their distance and catching methods accordingly. New crew members need to follow the actions and directions of experienced catchers so that everyone works as a team to move the flock in the least stressful manner possible.

Birds may become heat stressed during catching and loading. It is important to prevent overheating in heavy meat birds. Flocks should be watched closely for excessive panting, especially on hot days. To reduce the chance of heat stress on hot days, loading should be performed at night or early in the morning when it is cooler.



In this diagram the potential danger is that birds may pile into corner “A” and smother each other. To avoid this problem, the crew supervisor should walk around and move the birds out of the corner.

OTHER STRESSORS INCLUDE:

Speed: If approached too quickly, birds may become excited causing them to pile up, jump or fly suddenly to escape from the crew. Catchers should walk slowly when moving or approaching the birds.

Bright light: Bright lights stress birds. Lights should be dimmed to calm the birds during loading, but must remain bright enough so the crew can safely do their work.

Strangers: Birds show increased stress when unknown people enter the building especially if they wear bright (particularly white) coloured clothing. Crew members should wear darker colors.

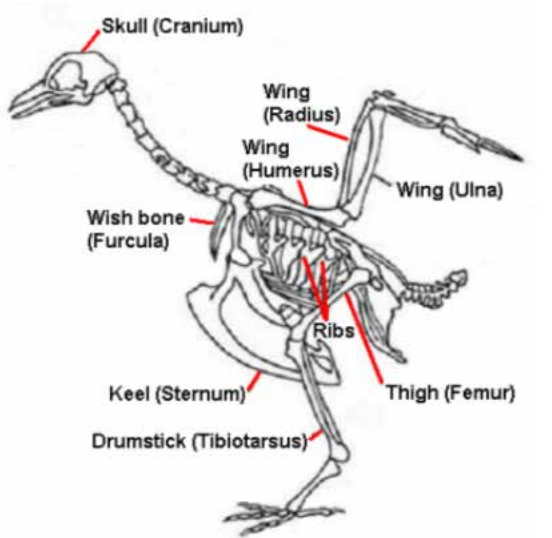
Sounds: Birds are stressed by loud noises so catching and loading should be done as quietly as possible. No yelling or shouting.

PREPARING TO MOVE COMMERCIAL BROILERS

All employees who are handling birds should be trained to recognize animal welfare problems and know who to notify and actions to take if issues arise.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN TRANSPORTING AND HANDLING BROILERS:

- Type of housing and number of floors.
- Time of day or night that birds are caught. This will impact temperature and light availability.
- Size and weight of birds as well as size of containers. There must be enough space so all birds can rest/ sit and move around within the container during transport. Follow the container densities provided by the transporter or processor unless there is concern that the densities specified are not appropriate in which case you must consult with the processor and transporter.
- Weather conditions (e.g. temperature, humidity, precipitation, etc.) during catching and time in transit will determine whether extra measures are needed.
- Crew experience and length of work day. New or inexperienced crews or crew members may need more supervision and/or time to load birds and catcher fatigue may have a negative impact on bird welfare. Ensure that there is enough staff to load the containers and that they have adequate rest breaks.



COMMON TYPES OF TRAUMA IN BROILERS FROM POOR HANDLING:

- Dislocated leg (Femur) from swinging birds by the legs;
- Broken wing bones (Radius, Ulna, Humerus) as a result of crushing wings in the openings of containers;
- Crushed skull (Cranium) from trapping heads in the openings of containers; and,
- Fractured wish bone (Furcula) from rough handling such as tossing birds or dropping them.

BROILER SAFETY ISSUES

BROKEN EQUIPMENT AND OVERLOADING MAY CAUSE DISTRESS OR EVEN DEATH.

Inspect transport containers for;

- sharp edges, holes, or gaps
- broken doors, sides, bottoms, and
- protruding wires.

Mark damaged containers and remove from service as soon as possible. Repair or replace as necessary.

Know the appropriate number of birds per container; check bird size and weight. Follow the container densities provided by the transporter or processor unless there is concern that the densities specified are not appropriate in which case you must consult with the processor and transporter. Refer to the relevant Code of Practice and the poultry loading decision tree discussed in Chapter 5 for further guidance.

Birds should be able to rest/sit during transport without being on top of each other. Be aware of how the surrounding temperature impacts the number of birds per container. If there is a concern that the number of birds per container is not appropriate, consult with your supervisor.

Monitor and verify.

- Record both loading and time in transit. Unusual or excessive times need to be explained.
- Transport time to the processing plant must be taken into account when scheduling trucks.
- Record conditions and temperature at loading.
- Injured, obviously sick birds or birds that are unfit for transport must be euthanized by the farmer or farm manager. Euthanasia must only be performed by properly trained and competent personnel.



CATCHING BROILERS BY HAND

- Dim the lights during catching to decrease bird activity which will also reduce wing flapping and dust.
- The barn should be partially divided with fencing or gates.

- Move and catch birds slowly and quietly to prevent jumping, flapping, piling, or smothering. This will help prevent mortality, injury, and skin scratches on the birds.
- Gently catch broilers by the legs just above the feet and move them to containers in a way to avoid injuring their legs, joints, or wings.
- Do not carry birds by the neck or wings. This can cause injury such as bone breakage and pain.
- Load birds upright in crates or modules to avoid suffocation. Ensure the birds heads, wings, and legs are not caught between the crate or module drawers. The number of birds per hand should be based on bird size, age and catcher capability. The processor should communicate to the catching company the weight and loading density. The loading density is determined by the transporter in conjunction with the processor.
- Transport modules and crates should be appropriately sized and maintained to avoid injury to the birds inside and to prevent them from escaping.
- Ensure crates of live birds are moved without being tipping, thrown or dropped.
- If possible, keep fans running during catching to pull heat and dust away from catching crews. However, ensure that the exhaust is not creating issues beside the truck.
- Before the truck is moved, check for escaped birds on the ground.

MECHANICAL CATCHING AND LOADING BROILERS

- Some poultry catching companies may utilize mechanical “catching” and loading machines. There are different commercial models but all have the same basic functions of a collecting head or “finger” system feeding into a conveyor belt which transports the birds to the transportation containers.
- The operator should ensure the collecting heads or rubber fingers are slowly moved toward the flock allowing them to be loaded onto the collection or conveyor belts in a manner that requires no mechanical force.
- Do not try to push too many birds into the loader at once. Putting smaller groups of birds on at a time will help keep the birds calmer and will allow the operators to maintain a slow, steady belt speed.
- The operator and other crew members watch that birds are not trapped between walls or posts and the machine or under the machine.
- In the case of a bird getting caught, stop the equipment. Determine how the bird is caught in the loader and either stop the conveyor or carefully reverse the conveyor to free the bird. DO NOT put your fingers or hands into pinch points of the conveyor. The welfare of workers and birds is very important and, as such, extreme care should be taken if/when a bird gets caught.
- Close the container when the appropriate number of birds has been loaded.



LOADING AND TRANSPORT

Take necessary precautions to protect birds from extreme heat and cold stress and from getting wet. Provide adequate ventilation for comfort and to decrease stress. Keep overall lairage time as short as possible. Decisions on whether to load birds during extreme weather conditions are jointly made by those involved.

MINIMIZE HEAT STRESS DURING LOADING AND TRANSPORT DURING EXTREME PERIODS OF HEAT AND HUMIDITY:

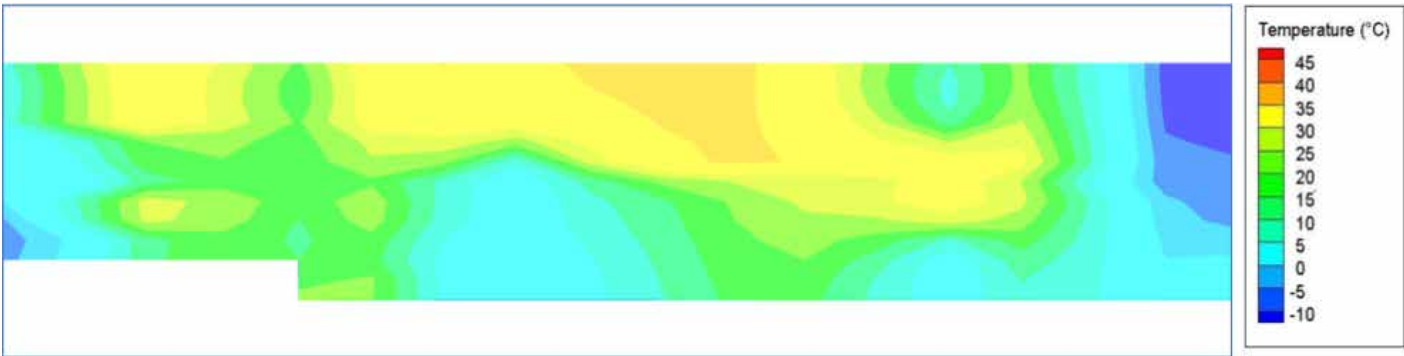
- All stakeholders need to collaborate to avoid loading birds during the hottest periods of the day or night.
- Notify other stakeholders immediately if an excessive number of birds are not fit to travel, conditions do not favour humane transportation, and/or the flock will not be loaded.
- Document barn, bird and weather conditions.
- Use best efforts to position the truck so that birds are shielded from direct sun.
- When catching birds, take into consideration options that minimize stress on the birds given the different barn and loading configurations.
- The processor should communicate to the catching company the weight and loading density. Follow the container densities provided by the relevant Code of Practice. If there is a concern that the densities specified are not appropriate you must consult with the processor and transporter. In extreme heat, maximum loading densities should be decreased by 15% to 20% so birds have additional room to move.
- When loaded into containers, birds must be in an upright position to avoid smothering.
- Load birds in the minimum time possible without compromising bird welfare.
- If forklift equipment is being used to move containers, it must be large enough to handle the expected load, operated by a certified/trained person and maintained in good condition with operating headlights (coloured for catching), taillights, and back-up alarm.
- Only the forklift operator is allowed on the equipment (no passengers).
- Loaded containers should be moved, as much as is possible, in a horizontal position.
- Avoid tilting, dropping or sudden jarring of loaded containers.
- If possible, keep fans running during catching to pull heat and dust away from catching crews. However, ensure that the exhaust is not creating issues beside the truck.
- Before the truck is moved, check for escaped birds on the ground.
- After loading, the transporter should proceed immediately to the processing plant. Should short stops be necessary, document the time and length of stop.
- Develop contingency plans in response to traffic issues that will slow or halt transport. If possible, a longer slower route is preferred to sitting at a standstill in traffic.
- Check load at delivery by documenting the condition of the birds, recognizing the limitations of this observation as only the lower outside perimeter of the truck can be properly visually assessed.
- Keep trucks well maintained for hot weather.



MINIMIZE COLD STRESS DURING LOADING AND TRANSPORT DURING PERIODS OF EXTREME COLD, SNOW OR WIND CHILL:

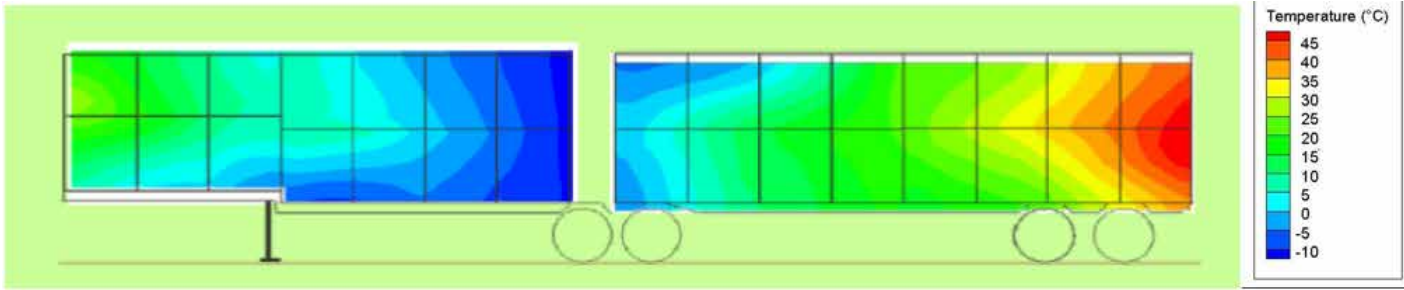
- All stakeholders need to collaborate to avoid loading birds during the coldest periods of the day or night.
- Notify other stakeholders immediately if an excessive number of birds are not fit to travel, conditions do not favour humane transportation, and/or the flock will not be loaded.
- Document barn, bird and weather conditions.
- Use best efforts to position the truck so that birds are shielded from direct wind. This can include drawing the outside tarps to cut down on wind.
- When catching birds, take into consideration options that minimize stress on the birds given the different barn and loading configurations.
- Follow the container density guidelines provided by the processor (or transporter in consultation with the processor) unless there is concern that the densities specified are not appropriate in which case you must consult with the processor and transporter.
- Load birds in the minimum time possible without compromising bird welfare.
- DO NOT LOAD WET BIRDS. Wet birds cannot maintain their body temperature in cool or cold weather and are more likely to become hypothermic or freeze to death during transport (DOAs). Every effort should be taken to ensure the birds are dry when they are loaded and stay dry during transport.
- After loading, the transporter should proceed immediately to the processing plant. If short stops are necessary to allow the load to warm up, document the time and length of stop. If necessary, adjust the tarps.
- Develop contingency plans in response to traffic issues that will slow or halt transport. If possible, a longer slower route is preferred to sitting at a standstill in traffic.
- Check load at delivery to the plant by documenting the condition of the birds, recognizing the limitations of this observation, as only the lower outside perimeter of the truck can be properly visually assessed.
- Keep trucks well maintained for cold weather.

The heat-map graphic below shows the temperature profile along the midline of a 53-foot trailer, with tarps down, transporting broilers in Spring-like weather. The pressures around the outside of the moving trailer result in a relatively low pressure at the front of the trailer and a higher relative pressure at the rear. This causes cooler air to be drawn in at the rear and moved forward, toward where there is typically a vent opening, and then exhausted through openings in the roof. The warm core tends to be near the front.



Graphic courtesy Trever Crowe, University of Saskatchewan.

On a B-train, the middle of the load is warmer than the outer edges with the warmest areas being the front of the lead trailer and the back of the rear trailer. Moisture accumulates in the warmer areas of the trailer. The coldest areas of the load are the back of the lead trailer and the front of the rear trailer. See B-train graphic below.



Graphic courtesy Trever Crowe, University of Saskatchewan

DURING TRANSPORT

For long distances, stop periodically to check birds for signs of stress. You may need to: open tarps or vents to provide increased ventilation or close them for added warmth; allow time for the load to warm up during cold weather; decrease speed in cold weather to reduce heat loss from the load; during hot temperatures, plan a route where you can maintain a constant speed to provide air flow, etc.

SIGNS OF OVERHEATING MAY INCLUDE:

- Red-flushed faces, combs and wattles, and
- Rapid panting and open-mouthed breathing.

SIGNS OF CHILLING MAY INCLUDE:

- Blue combs;
- Feathers fluffed up; and,
- Shivering.

SIGNS OF LACK OF OXYGEN MAY INCLUDE:

- Gasping or stretching of neck when breathing, and
- Purple combs and wattles.

CHAPTER 8: Turkeys

AFTER THIS CHAPTER, YOU WILL:

- Appreciate the safety issues associated with herding turkeys.
- Understand proper handling techniques for mechanical or hand loading turkeys.
- Minimize effects of heat or cold stress during loading and transport.

Poor handling may result in scratches, bruising, broken bones, and even death. Inappropriate handling may also greatly reduce carcass quality, grade and increase the number of (DOAs). Deliberate abuse of the birds is not tolerated and is punishable by law.

BIRD BEHAVIOUR

Turkeys are very curious and will often walk towards people when they enter the barn. They are highly social animals and tend to move together as a flock. The flock has a defined “flight zone,” which determines how close an individual may approach the flock before they all move away as a group. This distance can vary from flock to flock. Experienced catchers observe a flock’s reactions and adapt their distance and catching methods accordingly. New crew members need to follow the actions and directions of experienced catchers so that everyone works as a team to move the flock as calmly as possible.

Birds may become heat stressed during catching and loading. It is important to prevent overheating in heavy meat birds. Flocks should be watched closely for excessive panting, especially on hot days. To reduce the chance of heat stress on hot days, loading is often performed at night or early in the morning when it is cooler.



OTHER STRESSORS INCLUDE:

Speed: If approached too quickly, birds may become excited causing them to pile up, jump or fly suddenly to escape from the crew. Catchers should walk slowly when herding the birds.

Bright light: Bright lights stress birds. Lights should be dimmed to calm the birds during loading but must remain bright enough so the crew can safely do their work.

Strangers: Birds show increased stress when unknown people enter the building especially if they wear bright (particularly white) coloured clothing. Crew members should wear darker colors.

Sounds: Birds are stressed by loud noises so catching and loading should be done as quietly as possible.

Size of bird: Due to their size, heavy turkeys can become exhausted if they try to walk too far, too quickly.

PREPARING TO MOVE TURKEYS

FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN TRANSPORTING AND HANDLING TURKEYS:

Type of housing. Conventional curtain-sided barns have different ventilation systems than barns with solid sidewall construction.

Time of day or night that birds are loaded. This will impact temperature and light availability.

Size and weight of birds, and size of turkey liner and individual containers. Follow the coop density provided by the relevant Code of Practice, the processor, or transporter unless there is concern that the density specified is not appropriate in which case you must consult with the processor and transporter. Refer to the Code of Practice and the poultry loading decision tree for further guidance.

Turkeys should be able to sit during transport without being on top of each other.

Temperatures: Be aware of how the surrounding temperature might affect the number of turkeys per container.

Weather conditions (e.g. temperature, humidity, precipitation, etc.) during loading and time in transit may require extra measures be taken.

ALWAYS:

- Move quietly among turkeys to reduce fear
- Do not yell or shout
- Walk slowly among turkeys
- Watch for turkeys piling into corners along the walls or at the loader. Suffocation or injuries can result
- Watch for turkeys that are unwilling to move

TURKEY SAFETY ISSUES

Broken equipment and overloading may cause injuries or even death.

IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CREW MEMBERS TO:

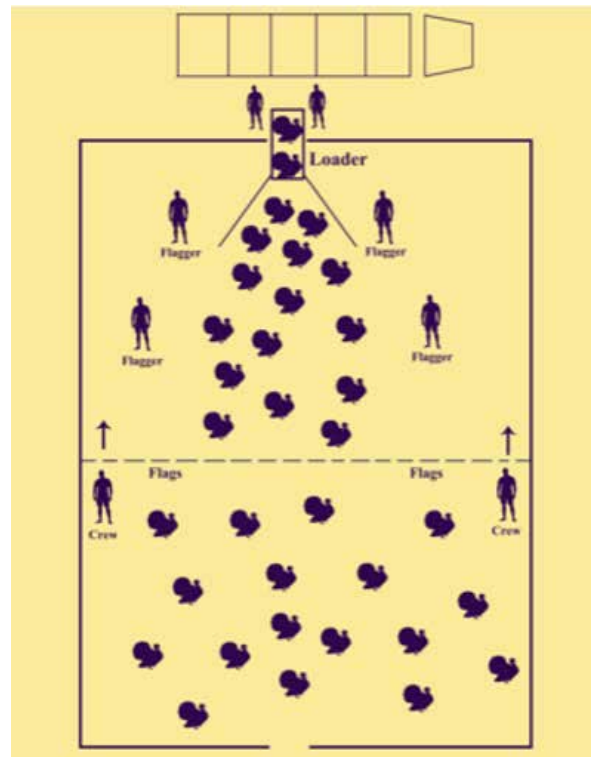
- Inspect containers for:
 - broken doors, sides, bottoms, and
 - protruding wires before each load.
 - Make note of damaged containers and don't load turkeys in those containers if it could cause injury to the birds.
 - Know the appropriate number of birds per container.
 - Check bird size and weight. Birds should be able to sit during transport without being on top of each other.
 - Be aware of how the surrounding temperature might affect the number of turkeys per container.
- Monitor and verify:
 - Record both loading time and time in transit. Unusual or excessive times need to be explained.
 - Transport time to the processing plant should be taken into account when scheduling trucks.
 - Record loading conditions and temperature at loading.
 - Injured, obviously sick birds, or birds that are unfit for transport must be euthanized by the farmer or farm manager. Euthanasia should only be performed by properly trained and competent personnel.
 - Before the truck is moved, check for escaped turkeys on the ground.



MECHANICAL LOADING AND HERDING TURKEYS

Herding turkeys carefully makes catching and loading easier, faster and reduces stress to the flock. Herding birds incorrectly will slow the work of the crew and the flock may suffer injuries, scratches, and possibly deaths due to piling and suffocation. Loading crews need to be aware of how their actions affect flock behaviour and adjust techniques accordingly.

- Dim the lights during catching to decrease bird activity which will also reduce wing flapping and dust.
- Having water and feed lines raised to the ceiling of the building is very important when driving or herding turkeys.
- It is important to herd them slowly and steadily with some breaks. Do not herd turkeys too quickly or in large groups as they will jump on each other causing injury.

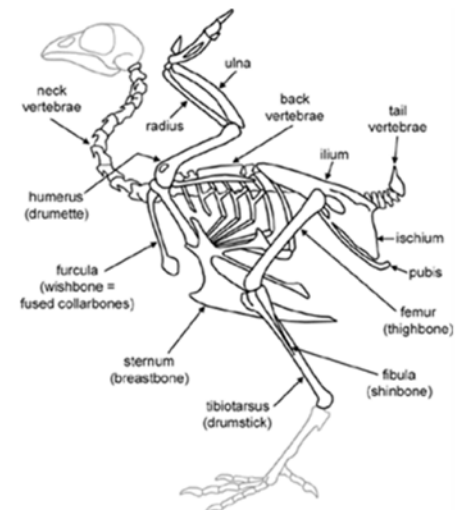


- Herding techniques may differ slightly depending on the size of turkey involved.
- In most situations, the flock is divided into smaller groups for easier catching. This usually involves driving a certain number of birds forward into a pen or towards a loader. Catchers may want to section off part of the barn with gates to keep from pushing all the birds down to the end of the barn.
- The direction of herding birds will be determined by which door or end the turkeys will be exiting the building from.
- When herding heavy turkeys, use gates or nets to corral them in a staging position to avoid them returning to their original position in the barn. The extra stress of walking back and forth in the barn may cause heart attacks or injury.
- Turkeys can be herded by slowly waving flags or garbage bags (which mimics a bird of prey).
- Gently nudging birds to move them forward is acceptable. Kicking birds is never appropriate.
- If a turkey will not walk, it may be carried and placed gently on the loader, provided there is no evidence of injury.
- When necessary, turkeys are carried by holding a leg in one hand and the opposite wing (near shoulder) in the other hand.
- Do not carry turkeys by the head, neck, or tail feathers or solely by the wings.
- Turkeys should be herded to the pre-loader or loader ramp slowly and in small groups. Do this carefully to avoid wing flapping, scratching, or bruising.
- Ensure that the conveyor is running so that any birds that enter the loader begin to move up the conveyor.
- Do not try to push too many birds onto the pre-loader at once. Putting smaller groups of birds on at a time will help keep the birds calmer and will allow the operators to maintain a slow, steady belt speed.
- In the case of a bird getting caught, stop the equipment immediately. Determine how the bird is caught in the loader and either stop the conveyor or carefully reverse the conveyor to free the bird. DO NOT put your fingers or hands into pinch points of the conveyor. The welfare of workers and turkeys is very important and, as such, extreme care should be taken if/when a bird gets caught.
- Stuffers (who catch turkeys at the top of the conveyor) should grab the bottom of the neck and tail to gently guide the turkey into the container.
- If using a loader with a stinger, ensure the turkeys are upright as they are deposited into the container.
- When the appropriate number of turkeys has been loaded into a container, the door is closed.
- Transport containers should be appropriately sized and maintained to avoid injury to the birds inside and to prevent them from escaping.



CATCHING TURKEYS BY HAND

- Dim the lights during catching to decrease bird activity, which will also reduce wing flapping and dust.
- If possible, keep fans running during catching to pull heat and dust away from catching crews. However, ensure that the exhaust is not creating issues beside the truck.
- The barn should be partially divided with fencing or gates.
- If forklift equipment is being used to move containers, it must be large enough to handle the expected load, operated by a certified/trained person and maintained in good condition with operating headlights, taillights, and back-up alarm.
- Only the forklift operator is allowed on the equipment (i.e. no passengers).
- When loaded into containers, birds must be in an upright position to avoid smothering.
- Loaded containers should be moved, as much as is possible, in a horizontal position.
- Avoid tilting, dropping or sudden jarring of loaded containers.
- The loading area where the truck and forklift work must be level and free of potholes or significant build-up of snow or ice.
- Herd and catch turkeys slowly to prevent jumping, scratching, flapping, piling, or smothering. This will help prevent mortality, injury, and skin scratches on the birds.
- Catch turkeys by two legs just above the feet and carry them to containers in a way to avoid injuring their legs, joints, or wings.
- Based on bird size, do not carry more than three birds in total, two in one hand and one in the other. The number of birds per hand should be based on bird size, age and catcher capability.
- Carry heavy turkeys by both legs and one wing.
- To prevent bone breakage, bruising, or damage, do not carry birds by the neck or wings.
- When loaded into containers, birds must be in an upright position to avoid smothering.
- Know the appropriate number of turkeys per container; check bird size and weight. Follow the container densities provided by the processor or transporter unless there is concern that the densities specified are not appropriate in which case you must consult with the processor and transporter. Refer to the relevant Code of Practice and the poultry loading decision tree for further guidance.
- Birds should be able to sit during transport without being on top of each other.
- Be aware of how the surrounding temperature might affect the number of birds per container.
- Containers should be appropriately sized and maintained to avoid injury to the birds once inside and to prevent them from escaping.



LOADING AND TRANSPORT

It is very important to protect turkeys from extreme heat and cold. Provide adequate ventilation for comfort and to decrease stress. Keep overall lairage times as short as possible. Decisions on whether to load birds during extreme weather conditions are jointly made by those involved. Keep written records of loading conditions and specifically note any issues, e.g. strong winds, extreme temperatures, road closures or detours, etc.

MINIMIZE HEAT STRESS WHEN LOADING AND TRANSPORT DURING EXTREME PERIODS OF HEAT AND HUMIDITY:

- All stakeholders need to collaborate to avoid loading birds during the hottest periods of the day or night.
- Notify other stakeholders immediately if an excessive number of birds are not fit to travel, conditions do not favour humane transportation, and/or the flock will not be loaded.
- Document barn, bird and weather conditions.
- Use best efforts to position the truck so that birds are shielded from direct sun.
- When catching and herding turkeys, take into consideration options that reduce stress on the birds given the different barn and loading configurations.
- Follow the container density guidelines provided by the relevant Code of Practice, processor (or transporter in consultation with the processor) unless there is concern that the densities specified are not appropriate in which case you must consult with the processor and transporter. In extreme heat, maximum loading densities should be decreased by 15% to 20%.
- Load turkeys in the minimum time possible without compromising bird welfare.
- After loading, the transporter should proceed immediately to the processing plant. Avoid stopping for any length of time due to rapid heat buildup in the load in extreme hot weather.
- Develop contingency plans in response to traffic issues that will slow or halt transport. If possible, a longer slower route is preferred to sitting at a standstill in traffic.
- Check load at delivery to the plant by documenting the condition of the turkeys, recognizing the limitations of this observation, as only the lower outside perimeter of the truck can be properly visually assessed.
- Keep trucks well maintained for hot weather.



MINIMIZE COLD STRESS WHEN LOADING AND TRANSPORT DURING PERIODS OF EXTREME COLD, SNOW OR WIND CHILL:

- All stakeholders need to collaborate to avoid loading turkeys during the coldest periods of the day or night.
- Notify other stakeholders immediately if an excessive number of birds are not fit to travel, conditions do not favour humane transportation, and/or the flock will not be loaded.
- Document barn, bird and weather conditions.
- Use best efforts to position truck so that turkeys are shielded from the direct wind. This can include drawing the outside tarps to cut down on wind.
- When catching and herding turkeys, take into consideration options that reduce stress on the birds given the different barn and loading configurations.
- Follow the container density guidelines provided by the relevant Code of Practice, processor (or transporter in consultation with the processor) unless there is concern that the densities specified are not appropriate in which case you must consult with the processor and transporter.
- Load turkeys in the minimum time possible without compromising bird welfare.
- DO NOT LOAD WET TURKEYS! Wet birds cannot maintain their body temperature in cool or cold weather and are more likely to become hypothermic or freeze to death during transport (DOAs). Every effort should be taken to ensure the birds are dry when they are loaded and stay dry during transport.
- After loading, the transporter should proceed immediately to the processing plant. If short stops are necessary to allow the load to warm up, document the time and length of stop. If necessary, adjust the tarps.
- Develop contingency plans in response to traffic issues that will slow or halt transport. If possible, a longer slower route is preferred to sitting at a standstill in traffic.
- Check load at delivery to the plant by documenting the condition of the birds, recognizing the limitations of this observation, as only the lower outside perimeter of the truck can be properly visually assessed.
- Keep trucks well maintained for cold weather.

DURING TRANSPORT

- For long distances, stop periodically to check birds for signs of stress. You may need to: open tarps or vents to provide increased ventilation or close them for added warmth; allow time for the load to warm up during cold weather; decrease speed in cold weather to reduce heat loss from the load; during hot temperatures, plan a route where you can maintain a constant speed to provide air flow, etc.
- Signs of overheating may include:
 - Red-flushed faces, combs and wattles, and
 - Rapid panting and open-mouthed breathing.
- Signs of chilling may include:
 - Feathers fluffed up, and,
 - Shivering.
- Signs of lack of oxygen may include:
 - Gasping or stretching of neck when breathing, and
 - Purple wattles.

CHAPTER 9: End of Lay Fowl (Layers and Breeders)

AFTER THIS CHAPTER, YOU WILL:

- Understand proper handling techniques for loading floor and caged end of lay fowl.
- Identify proper equipment to use during loading and while transporting end of lay fowl in extreme weather.

End of lay fowl are birds at the end of their egg-laying or breeding cycle. The age and genetics of these birds places them at greater risk for injuries, such as broken bones and scratches, if handled improperly. Due to potential poor feathering, end of lay fowl also must be protected against weather extremes when removed from farm buildings. It is extremely important to carefully handle these birds from a poultry welfare standpoint even though they are not going to the fresh market.

BIRD BEHAVIOUR

Birds may become distressed during catching and loading. Flocks should be watched closely for excessive panting, especially on hot days. To reduce the chance of heat stress during hot weather, loading is often performed at night or early in the morning when it is cooler.

Extra care must be taken to ensure the birds are not wet in cool or cold weather. Wet birds that are loaded in cool or cold weather is a significant welfare concern. Ensure the birds are dry when they are loaded and remain dry during transport. Tarps can be used during loading to protect the birds from getting wet.

For loose housed birds, it is important to know that birds are highly social animals and tend to move together as a flock. The flock has a defined “flight zone,” which determines how close an individual may approach the flock before they all move away as a group. This distance can vary among species and from flock to flock. Experienced catchers observe a flock’s reactions and adapt their distance and catching methods accordingly. New crew members need to follow the actions and directions of experienced catchers so that everyone works as a team to move the flock in the most calm and least stressful manner possible.



THE FOLLOWING STRESSORS ARE IMPORTANT WHEN CATCHING LOOSE HOUSED BIRDS:

Speed: If approached too quickly, birds may become excited causing them to pile up, jump or fly suddenly to escape from the crew. Catchers should walk slowly when moving the birds.

Bright light: Bright lights distress birds. Lights should be dimmed to calm the birds during loading, but must remain bright enough so the crew can safely do their work.

Strangers: Birds show increased stress when unknown people enter the building, especially if they wear bright (particularly white or red) coloured clothing. Crew members should wear darker colours.

Sounds: Birds are stressed by loud noises, so catching and loading should be done as quietly as possible. No yelling or shouting.

PROPER EQUIPMENT

- Maintain all equipment regularly. Grease casters and wheels, repair or replace any damaged containers.
- Containers should not have any holes that would allow birds to get their heads, feet, or wings caught or sharp edges that could injure birds.
- Doors need to close properly and securely.
- Level the trailer using blocks or jacks to keep wheeled containers from tipping or rolling away from the driver or crew. Falling or runaway containers can injure birds and hurt people!
- Proper tie-down equipment (chains, nylon straps, or bars) is needed to hold containers in place.
- Containers that are stacked should interlock.
- Securing the load and spacing containers properly allows air to circulate through the truck for ventilation.
- Cover the load with tarps or panels during poor weather.



CATCHING/LOADING END OF LAY FOWL

Drivers and catchers may need to transport end of lay fowl from both cage and loose housed operations.

CAGED END OF LAY FOWL:

- Push empty containers into the rows of the layer facility.
- The method used to remove end of lay fowl from the cage should minimize any damage to the birds including, but not limited to, broken bones, bruising, or other trauma.
- The birds must be gently removed from the cages, without excessive force or pulling.
- Both legs should be grasped above the hocks. The birds should never be grabbed by the neck or tail. Care should be taken to watch for toe nails, wings, or other body parts getting caught in the cage door.



- Cage door width and height can vary, locking mechanisms may also differ. Both can impact ease of bird removal. Catchers should be familiar with the different cages and adapt their techniques as needed to prevent injury.
- The process should be closely monitored by the crew foreman.
- Layers are then placed into the container head first while supporting the breast. The bird should be upright on its feet when inside the container.
- When closing the container ensure no part of the bird could get caught causing injury.
- Birds must NEVER be thrown, crushed, kicked, mishandled or abused in any other way. Any abuse witnessed should be reported to the crew supervisor immediately. Efforts to prevent birds from escaping and roaming free in the barn must be attempted.
- When loading birds, container density should allow all birds to be able to sit during transport. Follow the container densities provided by the relevant Code of Practice, the transporter or processor, unless there is concern that the densities specified are not appropriate in which case you must consult with the processor and transporter. Refer to the relevant Code of Practice for further guidance.

LOOSE HOUSED END OF LAY FOWL (BREEDERS AND LAYERS):

- While caged birds are confined for easy loading, loose housed birds must be caught while roosting or driven into corrals or catch pens for loading.
- Push empty containers into the laying area. Lift each caught bird by the upper hocks or thighs, ideally while supporting the breast, and then place it headfirst into the container. Birds may also be carried by the legs, with no more than four birds in each hand. Birds should never be carried by the wing, head, neck, or tail.
- When loaded into containers, birds must be in an upright position to avoid smothering.
- Roosting birds are usually loaded at night. Dimming lights while catching and loading helps calm birds and will prevent piling and smothering but do not drive birds in darkness. Birds should not be directed towards darkness but rather towards a lit area. As a result, the area behind the net should be brighter than the originating area.
- In aviaries, when birds are startled, they may fly or jump into obstacles, such as perches, and become injured, especially their keel bones.
- Smothering is the leading cause of mortality while loading. You may gently drive and corral the whole flock, catching birds on the outside methodically. If a pile develops, the crew supervisor should walk around to the back of the net and carefully lift it up to break up the pile of birds. If you cannot break up the pile, open the net and move away in a direction that gives the birds an escape route.
- Move poultry to the loading area with as little stress to the birds as possible. Moving trucks from door to door will reduce the distance needed to move the birds. It is easier to move the containers to the birds.
- Bird behaviour varies from flock to flock; some are calm while others are flighty and nervous. They may jump up and glide with their wings over short distances. Birds may recognize the farmer or farm manager, but may not recognize external crews and will react accordingly. Dark clothing is preferable to white.
- Some birds are very territorial, which can make moving a challenge. Loading territorial birds may take extra time.
- If present, load roosters last.

LOADING, TRANSPORT, AND HOLDING

- Provide adequate ventilation for comfort and to decrease stress.
- Depending on the weather conditions and the barn environment, it could be preferable to stage loaded containers so that they are kept inside the barn until loading is near completion to protect the loaded birds from the elements.
- Loaded containers should be moved, as much as is possible, in a horizontal position. Avoid tilting, dropping or sudden jarring of loaded containers.
- Protect birds from extreme heat, cold, and wet conditions
- Try to minimize holding times.
- When the final containers are on the truck, secure the entire load for transport.
- After you leave the farm, stop as little as possible until you arrive at your destination to keep the air moving through the load. Eliminating unnecessary stops on route reduces the risk of heat stress in hot weather.
- When transporting birds during extreme temperatures, discussions between all stakeholders should occur to assess whether or not birds should be loaded and if the truck can be delayed until better conditions are available. When deciding to transport, consider temperature (in load), wind chill, humidity level, and precipitation.

IF END OF LAY FOWL IS MOVED IN CARTS:

- Close all container doors securely. Poorly secured doors may open and close during transport, injuring the birds or allowing them to escape.
- Secure containers on the truck bed with chains or bars.
- After every row of containers, put a bar in place. Securing and spacing containers properly allows air to circulate through the truck for ventilation.
- Keep tarps or panels available. You may need to cover the load during poor weather.

Decisions on whether to load birds during extreme weather conditions are jointly made by all stakeholders. Keep written records of loading conditions and specifically note any issues, e.g. strong winds, extreme temperatures, road closures or detours, etc.

MINIMIZE HEAT STRESS DURING LOADING AND TRANSPORT:

- All stakeholders need to collaborate to avoid loading birds during the hottest periods of the day or night.
- Notify other stakeholders immediately if an excessive number of birds are not fit to travel, conditions do not favour humane transportation, and/or the flock will not be loaded.
- Document barn, bird and weather conditions.
- Use best efforts to position the truck so that birds are shielded from direct sun.
- When catching and loading birds, take into consideration options to reduce stress on the birds given the different barn and loading configurations.



- Follow the container density guidelines provided by the relevant Code of practice, or the processor (or transporter in consultation with the processor) unless there is concern that the densities specified are not appropriate in which case consult with the processor and transporter. In extreme heat, maximum loading densities should be decreased by 15% to 20%.
- When loading in hot weather, don't tightly stack containers on the trailer. Keep loaded containers in the poultry barn until the majority of the birds are loaded into the containers. Once the majority of containers are loaded with poultry, begin placing modules onto the truck. Load in a U-shaped pattern, across the back, down each side and then fill in the centre. Using this loading configuration promotes ventilation during the loading process. When the final containers are on the truck, secure the entire load for transport.
- If fans are available, consider using them in the barn or blowing on the trailer.
- Load birds in the minimum time possible without compromising bird welfare.
- After loading, the transporter should proceed immediately to the processing plant. Should short stops be necessary, document the time and length of stop.
- Develop contingency plans in response to traffic issues that will slow or halt transport (see Chapter 12). If possible, a longer slower route is preferred to sitting at a standstill in traffic.
- Check the load at delivery to the processing plant by documenting the condition of the birds. Recognize the limitations of this observation, as only the lower outside perimeter of the truck can be properly visually assessed.
- Keep trucks well maintained for hot weather.

MINIMIZE COLD STRESS DURING LOADING AND TRANSPORT:

- All stakeholders need to collaborate to avoid loading birds during the coldest periods of the day or night.
- Notify other stakeholders immediately if an excessive number of birds are not fit to travel, conditions do not favour humane transportation, and/or the flock will not be loaded.
- Document barn, bird and weather conditions.
- Use best efforts to position the truck so that birds are shielded from direct wind. This can include drawing the outside tarps to cut down on wind. Where possible, stage the loaded containers in the barn, moving all containers to the truck when all birds have been caught.
- When catching and loading birds, take into consideration options to reduce stress on the birds given the different barn and loading configurations.
- Follow the container density guidelines provided by the relevant Code of Practice, processor (or transporter in consultation with the processor) unless there is concern that the densities specified are not appropriate, in which case consult with the processor and transporter.
- Load birds in the minimum time possible without compromising bird welfare.
- Do not load wet birds. Wet birds cannot maintain their body temperature in cool or cold weather and are more likely to become hypothermic or freeze to death during transport. Every effort should be taken to ensure the birds are dry when they are loaded and stay dry during transport.
- After loading, the transporter should proceed immediately to the processing plant. If short stops are necessary to allow the load to warm up, document the time and length of stop. If necessary, adjust the tarps.
- Develop contingency plans in response to traffic issues that will slow or halt transport (see Chapter 12). If possible, a longer slower route is preferred to sitting at a standstill in traffic.

- Check the load at delivery by documenting the condition of the birds at delivery to the plant. Recognize the limitations of this observation, as only the lower outside perimeter of the truck can be properly visually assessed.
- Keep trucks well maintained for cold weather.

DURING TRANSPORT

- Stop periodically to check birds for signs of stress. You may need to: open tarps or vents to provide increased ventilation or close them for added warmth; allow time for the load to warm up during cold weather; decrease speed in cold weather to reduce heat loss from the load; during hot temperatures, plan a route where you can maintain a constant speed to provide air flow, etc.
- Signs of overheating may include:
 - red-flushed faces, combs and wattles, and
 - rapid panting and open-wmouthed breathing.
- Signs of chilling may include:
 - blue combs;
 - feathers fluffed up; and,
 - shivering.
- Signs of lack of oxygen may include:
 - gasping or stretching of neck when breathing, and
 - purple combs and wattles.



CHAPTER 10: Transportation Safety and Emergency Response

AFTER THIS CHAPTER, YOU WILL:

- Know what emergency supplies to carry in the trucks.
- Understand what procedures to follow in case of an emergency.
- Understand how Alberta’s emergency livestock handling equipment trailers may be used in an emergency situation.
- Appreciate how to work with the accident responders and to render aid safely to the birds in the event of an accident

All transport companies should develop emergency response plans and train their employees on the protocols. Consider keeping an outline of the protocols, in simple language, in plain view on the truck’s dashboard or other easily accessible and visible location. In an emergency, a rapid and appropriate response may save lives, both human and animal, and property. The emergency response protocols should include important contact information and directions in case the driver cannot communicate with the first responders.

If the driver is incapacitated, first responders to the accident will be focused on:

- Saving human life;
- maintaining public safety; and,
- salvaging animals and property.



PREPARATION

Ideally, all transporters will participate in a driver training course such as the Canadian Livestock Transport Certification program on a regular basis (approximately once every three years).

Consider carrying additional items beyond mandated equipment in the truck, including, but not limited to:

- Reflective safety vest
- Bolt cutters
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- First aid kit (complete)
- Tarp (10' x 12') with six bungee cords
- Spill kit stocked with snakes, absorbent pads, wooden dowel assortment, stop-leak putty, a plastic garbage bag, chemical goggles, and nitrile gloves. Minimum kit should consist of at least 10 lbs. of un-treated kitty litter
- Fire extinguisher

In the cab, consider securely attaching an emergency number plate to the dashboard, visor or other highly visible location. This plate should explain who to call if the driver is incapacitated. In addition, a cell phone with "in case of emergency" (ICE) numbers should be carried by the driver. For example, "ICE Home", "ICE Boss" would be important.

All trucks should adhere to Ministry of Transportation rules governing safety equipment, truck operation, and safety procedures. Before departure, conduct a walk-around visual check of the truck, trailer, and load. Pay attention to lights, tires, and any loose articles. Make sure tie-downs are secured.

BEFORE STARTING YOUR TRIP:

- Assess the environmental/weather conditions along your route
- Note any detours, construction delays, or roadblocks and alter your route accordingly
- Ensure you have an emergency contact sheet with phone numbers for emergency dispatch, veterinarians or deadstock services, and supervisors
- Note the locations of the emergency livestock handling equipment trailers along your route – call the associated county or Alberta Farm Animal Care's ALERT Line (1-800-506-2273) if you are in need of one of the trailers
- Ensure that any manifests or necessary permits are accessible
- Clearly identify stopping points for rest and meals
- Be aware of other drivers and be mindful of your vehicle's blind spots.

TRANSPORTATION SAFETY

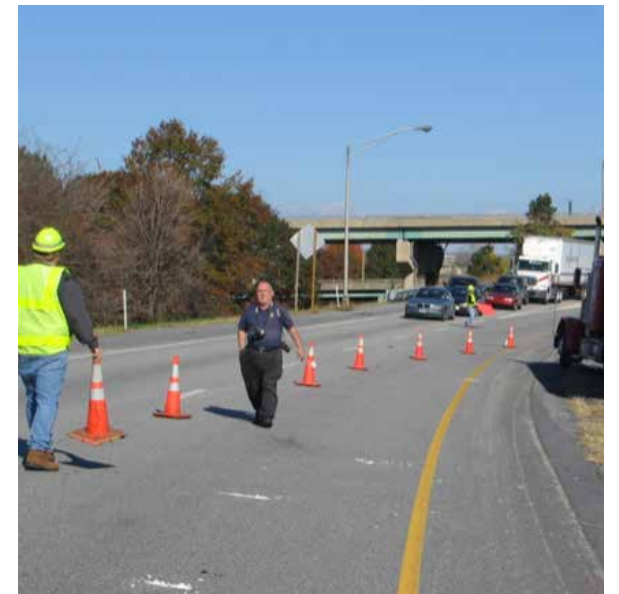
Only the licensed driver should move the truck during loading and is responsible for ensuring all workers and any escaped poultry are clear of the vehicle before moving. It is recommended that trucks be equipped with a movement alert/alarm system that is activated when the truck is being moved during loading. A light alert system may be the best option as an audible back-up alarm may excite the poultry left in the barn.

Ultimately, drivers are responsible for their actions on the road. Key guidelines for drivers include:

- Maintain a safe speed and make sure to keep adequate stopping distances and vehicle spacing dependent on the weight and distribution of the load
- Use a speed appropriate for weather and road conditions
- Be aware of personal health and well-being; pay particular attention to fatigue
- Know the route and traveling distance. When appropriate, plan for location/status reporting
- Be aware of other drivers and remember your vehicle's blind spots

MECHANICAL BREAKDOWN AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE

- When driving, transporters should always have a strategy to exit the road if they lose power or experience some type of breakdown. If a problem is suspected:
- Get the truck out of the traffic lanes, to the side of the road or shoulder if possible.
- Set flashers and slip a reflective vest over your clothing. Exit the truck safely. Use the passenger door if you are on a busy highway. At night, drivers should take a flashlight and swing it as they walk near the side of the road.
- Perform a quick visual inspection of the unit. Check especially for smoke or fire.
- If you discover fire, attempt to extinguish it without lifting the hood or other covers on the truck.
- Set reflectors at a slant pattern starting from the back left corner of the truck to 150 m/500 ft, if possible.
- Make note of the closest mile marker if visible.
- Call your dispatch or 911 if the emergency warrants.
- If there is a leak, stop it if possible using wooden dowels or putty and use absorbent snakes to contain the spill.
- Call for support (tire service, truck service, tow or replacement truck/trailer). Be sure to explain that animals are on board and that a quick response is imperative.
- Consult with dispatch regarding the welfare of the load and alternate plans to get the birds to their destination.
- If the media should arrive at the scene, don't be rude. Be cordial but explain that you are not an authorized spokesperson. Give them the phone number of your dispatch office or other authorized person (see Chapter 12).



IN THE EVENT OF A DELAY

If you are delayed due to construction, an accident, or other type of roadblock:

- Contact dispatch and the destination to let them know of the delay
- Determine a plan of action in consultation with dispatch and/or the destination
- Always consider the welfare of the birds on board

- If there is a concern regarding bird welfare (i.e. hot/cold weather, no ventilation), contact the local authorities, explain the situation, and seek assistance to move around the delay, if possible
- If the delay is due to inclement weather, pull over in a safe place and ensure that the birds are as protected as possible

In the Event of an Accident

- Remain calm! Taking actions without thinking may make the situation worse.
- If a transport truck is involved in an accident and the driver is unhurt, the driver should contact the identified emergency contact person (e.g. dispatcher) as specified in their company protocol as quickly as possible.
- If you are unhurt and able to move, assess the location and status of your truck and load. Put on a reflective safety vest and secure the immediate area.
- Check the condition of other vehicles if involved. Do not move injured passengers unless you must do so for their safety.
- Unless the transport driver is incapacitated, the driver has the responsibility for the truck and load. If the truck / trailer is damaged and cannot be driven from the scene, the driver should immediately contact dispatch and request another truck to pick up crates. Poultry stakeholders (transporters, catching crews, etc.) are knowledgeable in poultry handling and transportation and are appropriate individuals to take control of the scene and coordinate the reloading activities if the driver is unable to do so.
- In the event of an accident or roll-over of a poultry transport truck, an intact load should be pulled upright by a competent wrecker or crane service as soon as it is safe to do so.
- Transporters should contact a commercial catching crew and possibly other transporters as soon as possible to assist with reloading if required.
- Use tarps to block the view of injured birds from public/media view, if possible.
- The most humane option is to transport surviving birds to the processing facility as quickly as possible. Sorting at the scene is not a recommended practice as it negatively impacts the welfare of the surviving birds and endangers human safety. The goal should be to get everyone and everything off the road as quickly and safely as possible.
- On fixed container trailers (e.g. turkeys, end of lay hens, modular units), spilled containers and loose birds are less likely. If the trailer is intact, upright the trailer as soon as possible.
- If containers have been spilled and birds are still inside, turn them upright to prevent suffocation as soon as possible, if it can be done safely.
- Check birds to ensure no heads, wings or legs are protruding from the opening.
- Restack intact spilled containers neatly by the side of the road away from any vehicle(s), reload onto a trailer and transport to the processing facility as quickly as possible.
- If there are loose birds, the driver should contact the nearest emergency livestock handling equipment trailer (housed at County offices and Fire Departments across Alberta) to bring out equipment to contain birds.
- If there are loose birds, re-crate the birds fit for transport, load on the trailer and transport to the processing facility as quickly as possible. Any unfit birds found during re-loading should be euthanized. Euthanasia should only be performed by properly trained and competent personnel.
- Birds may be severely affected by extremes of cold or heat. In cold weather, there should be weather protection in place.

- Birds in a disabled truck may suffocate if the weather protection is left in place on a stationary load.
- Monitor the birds closely and adjust the weather protection if necessary to increase air flow.
- Loose birds should not be chased or caused to fly. It is possible to gently, quietly and calmly herd or direct a small group of birds in a specific direction and to contain them using snow fencing. A long-handled dip net may also help for catching loose birds.
- If possible, take pictures of the accident with a camera or phone. Take pictures from all four sides of the truck to get views of the accident from all angles.
- Do not make statements to the media or other parties. If you have a media card, read what it states to reporters and say nothing further. Do not answer questions from reporters with “no comment.” If approached, be polite and explain you are focused on the care of the birds at this time and direct them to police or fire officials on site. If applicable, tell them that the company information officer will soon make a statement when possible about the accident and the actions being taken or provide them with an appropriate contact.

EMERGENCY LIVESTOCK HANDLING EQUIPMENT TRAILERS

Alberta is a major livestock-producing province with high populations of animals. While most people involved with livestock are adequately equipped to handle animals, incidents can arise where proper livestock handling equipment is not readily available.



The Emergency Livestock Handling Equipment Trailer program, maintained through Alberta Farm Animal Care, helps ensure emergency livestock handling equipment is available, as needed in situations including:

- A large welfare seizure,
- Capturing stray animals,
- Natural disaster (fire, flood)
- Motor vehicle breakdown or incidents during transport, and
- Other incidents where animals must be safely contained, and appropriate handling equipment is not available.

Incidents involving livestock can pose a grave risk to both animal and human safety. Proper equipment and training can mitigate much of the danger to people and the suffering of animals.

In November 2012, AFAC launched a fleet of 5 state-of-the-art livestock handling equipment trailers. These trailers are available for use in any number of situations where loose animals must be contained for the safety and welfare of both the animals and people involved. For example: fire, flood, barn roof collapse, animal welfare seizure, and traffic incidents. Another 12 trailers have joined the first 5 for a total of 17 across the province.

THE FOLLOWING LIST IS AN EXAMPLE OF THE ITEMS THAT ARE CONTAINED IN A TRAILER:

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--|--|--------------------------------|
| • Bags of shavings | • portable lights | • first aid kit | • ladder |
| • Rattle Paddle | • ear plugs | • boots sizes 9,10,12 | • spade, flat shovel, crow bar |
| • Bungee straps | • skill saw and blades | • bump hats | • tarps and tarp straps |
| • Duct Tape | • reciprocating saw and blades | • disposable boots, coveralls | • lariat, ropes |
| • 2,100’ Extension Cords | • tool box with assorted pliers, vice grips, hand saw, screw drivers | • generator with extension cord metal cutting circular saw and blade | • snow fencing |
| • Cordless drill | | • electric metal shear | • hand tools |
| • 8000 Watt Generator | | | • plywood, puck board |
| • 5 Gallon gas container | • bailing wire | | • livestock panels |
| • engine oil | • hand sanitizer | | |
| • hammer and nails | • anti bacterial wipes | • low loading platform for hogs, sheep etc. | |

Transport accidents and other situations involving livestock in distress are never good to see – but they do happen, and it’s essential to have the resources and knowledge to address them. These resources not only minimize stress for the animals but they improve the safety for everyone involved, including people. Having the correct tools and guidelines for the job takes a tremendous stress load off of the first responders. They, in turn, have an added confidence to handle these situations.

If you are in need of one of the trailers, please call 9-1-1 and request one. The dispatchers should be able to connect you to the closest location. Alternatively, you may call Alberta Farm Animal Care’s ALERT Line (1-800-506-2273) and we will do our best to get you connected to the nearest trailer.

CHAPTER 11: Lairage and Live Receiving at Processing Plant

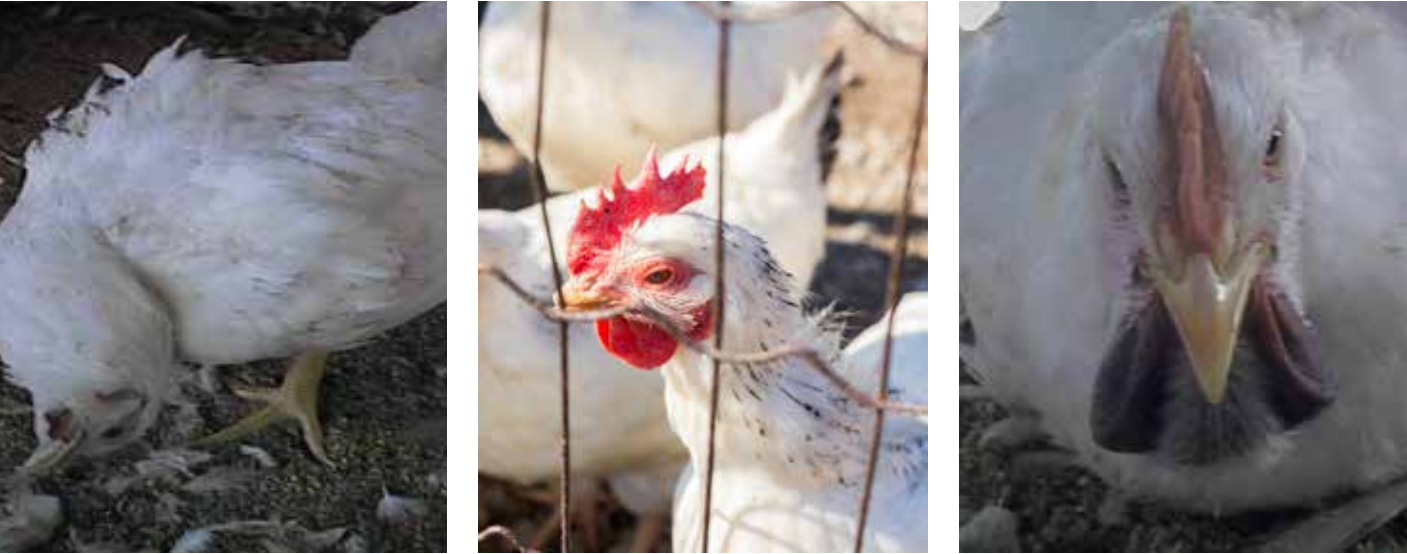
AFTER THIS CHAPTER, YOU WILL:

- Understand how to manage lairage and live receiving to maintain bird welfare
- Understand the appropriate process for receiving and screening poultry upon arrival at the processing plant
- Appreciate the importance of ensuring birds are adequately sheltered and monitored during holding.
- Know the proper procedures for humanely handling birds while unloading and shackling.

SCREENING UPON ARRIVAL AT PROCESSING FACILITY

Upon arrival at the processing facility, the driver should record the time of arrival and advise the designated plant representative (e.g. live haul dispatcher, receiver) of loading conditions and any deviations or unusual circumstances concerning the load.

The driver and designated plant receiver should jointly check the load at delivery by documenting the condition of the birds, recognizing the limitations of this observation, as only the lower outside perimeter of the truck can be properly visually assessed.



WHEN SCREENING THE LOAD, LOOK FOR OBVIOUS SIGNS OF DISEASE OR DISTRESS WHICH MAY INCLUDE:

- skin on head or neck is abnormally dark red or very pale;
- swollen head, neck, wattles and area around eyes;
- discharge from eyes and/or nostrils;
- dark red, purple, or black combs and wattles;
- gasping for breath, coughing, and sneezing;
- bloody and/or prolapsed vents;
- dislocated, broken and/or exposed bones;
- crippled or lame birds;
- dirty, bloody, or prolapsed vents;
- hemorrhages on the skin and shanks;
- weak and/or not alert;
- twisting of the head and neck;
- cuts and lesions; or
- off-colour or bloody diarrhea and feces.

Refer to the Are Birds Fit to Load? table for additional details and examples of diseases and conditions which could cause distress to poultry during handling and transportation.

If you are unsure whether a condition is severe enough to cause distress, speak to a supervisor.

NON-DISEASE FACTORS THAT MAY AFFECT THE CONDITION OF POULTRY INCLUDE:

- cold
- heat
- humidity
- freezing rain and snow
- distance travelled
- density of birds in the container
- time withdrawn from feed and water
- Signs of overheating may include:
 - red-flushed faces, combs and wattles,
 - rapid panting and open-mouthed breathing, and
 - wings spread away from the body.
- Signs of chilling may include:
 - blue combs;
 - feathers fluffed up; and,
 - shivering.
- Signs of lack of oxygen may include:
 - gasping or stretching of neck when breathing, and
 - purple combs and wattles.

Any load exhibiting visible signs of distress or disease should be recorded and reported to the designated plant personnel as soon as possible.

Distressed loads must be given slaughter schedule priority.

HOLDING/LAIRAGE

- While in lairage/holding, the birds should be protected from direct sun, adverse weather and temperature extremes, and provided with adequate ventilation.
- Holding areas should be covered and equipped with proper equipment to ensure proper cooling/warming of birds according to the company guidelines, e.g. fans, misters, heaters, curtains, etc.
- All efforts should be made to control the environment in order to avoid exposure to adverse weather and maintain adequate ventilation e.g. tarp and fan adjustment.
- Holding times of live birds at the plant must be kept to the minimum consistent with good processing practices.
- Birds should be monitored for signs of stress on an ongoing basis while in lairage/holding and corrective action and preventative measures implemented as required.



UNLOADING

- Equipment is to be operated and bird handling practices are to be conducted in such a way to maintain bird welfare, avoiding distress and injury.
- Containers with birds are to be moved as much as possible in a horizontal position and handled smoothly and gently.
- Damaged containers should be segregated at the time of truck unloading for disposal or to be repaired. Damaged containers should be tagged for repair.
- Catch all escaped birds as soon as possible to prevent injury by moving trucks and trailers and place them gently into containers and secure lids/doors. Employees must exercise caution to ensure their own safety around moving vehicles. Any compromised escaped poultry must be humanely euthanized by a trained and competent employee.
- For crates, live receiving employees must avoid stepping or standing directly on the lids as this could cause the lid to collapse and result in injury to the birds.

- Containers must not be thrown, dropped, knocked over, or sent down a slide with a sudden stop at the bottom.
- Containers should be gently removed from the trailer and placed in the staging area.
- From the staging area, the containers are gently placed adjacent to the processing line for manual unloading, or, in the case of automated conveyors, in the unloading cartridge where the drawers will be removed from the containers automatically by the de-stacker and advanced onto a conveyor.
- Containers should be moved as much as possible in a horizontal position and placed smoothly onto the conveyor. Avoid tilting, dropping or sudden jarring of loaded containers.
- The unloading and conveyor system must be designed, maintained, and operated to avoid injury to the birds.
- Birds should not be unloaded on top of other birds.
- Conveyors must have adequate space to accommodate the birds with no obstructions.
- Birds must not be allowed to pile up on the conveyor or the carousel.
- Birds must never be lifted by the wings alone.
- Containers must be checked to ensure that they are empty before entering the washer to prevent any birds from going through the washer.



ELECTRICAL STUNNING

- With electrical stunning, birds must be extracted from the container with all possible care to avoid injury.
- The shackling area must be designed and maintained for the comfort of birds as well as workers in terms of adequate space, lighting, air quality and ventilation.
- Adjust light levels and belt speeds to help keep birds calm and to minimize stress.
- Minimize worker fatigue (e.g. rotate workers, etc.) to prevent inappropriate bird handling.
- Lighting levels in the hanging area should be subdued (e.g. blue lights, low-intensity lighting, etc.) to allow the birds to become calm after unloading.
- Shackles must be properly-sized and well maintained so that birds can be shackled without causing visible injury.

- Shackles must be empty prior to hanging birds so that the bird can be hung and stunned effectively.
- Assigned employees (hangers) should remove DOAs from containers and place them in the assigned containers.
- Obviously injured, moribund or birds otherwise unfit for slaughter must be removed, promptly and humanely euthanized by a trained and competent employee, and then placed in a designated bin.
- Birds with obviously broken and/or dislocated legs must be humanely euthanized by a trained and competent employee.
- Live receiving employees (hangers) should grasp the legs of the bird and remove it from the container.
- The birds are not to be lifted by the head, neck or tail feathers or solely by the wings.
- Birds are to be lifted in a gentle, steady motion and contact avoided with containers or other obstacles.
- Birds are to be placed into the shackles using two hands by grasping both leg shanks of the bird.
- Excessive force/pressure exerted onto the legs is to be avoided. There must be no slamming of birds into the shackles.
- Birds must be shackled by two legs. Birds shackled by one leg are stressed, are often inadequately stunned, and can have wings or other body parts cut by the automatic knife.
- All escaped birds in the hanging area should be caught and shackled as soon as possible.
- Birds should be kept calm after shackling and prior to stunning. Excessive wing activity can be prevented by reduced lighting or breast comforters.
- Minimize the time live birds are in shackles. Birds must not be left alive in shackles during regular breaks or extended periods of time.
- The design of live hang lines should prevent sudden corners, changes in elevation, movements or obstructions that startle the birds or cause wing flapping.



GAS STUNNING

- Depending on the processing facility protocols, assigned employees (hangers) will remove DOAs from containers and place them in the assigned containers OR the facility will have protocols to ensure that DOAs can be differentiated from stunned poultry.
- Birds are gas stunned prior to shackling.
- Employees (hangers) should grasp the legs of the bird and remove it from the container or off the carousel.
- The birds are not to be lifted by the head, neck or wings only.
- Birds are to be lifted in a gentle, steady motion.
- Birds are to be placed into the shackles using two hands by grasping both leg shanks of the bird.
- Excessive force/pressure exerted onto the legs is to be avoided. There must be no slamming of birds into the shackles.
- Birds must be shackled by two legs. Birds shackled by one leg can have wings or other body parts cut by the automatic knife.

GENERAL REQUIREMENT

- Birds must be rendered insensible by the stunner. Stunners must be monitored and correct amperage (electric stunning) or gas concentrations (controlled atmosphere stunning) verified.
- In the case of electrical stunning, pre-stun shocks should be prevented.
- Techniques should result in rapid loss of consciousness and loss of brain function followed by cardiac or respiratory arrest.
- There must be backup personnel after the automatic knife to induce bleed-out in any birds not effectively killed by the equipment. Backup personnel must have sufficient room and lighting to ensure that the blood vessels are cut on 100% of the birds.
- Birds should be bled within 15 seconds of electric stunning and bleed for at least 90 seconds.
- Birds must be monitored on the bleed rail to ensure that they do not return to consciousness and be dead (not showing signs of potential for return to sensibility) before they enter the scald tank.
- Each processing facility must have a contingency plan for ensuring the welfare of live poultry in the event of a power outage of plant breakdown.

CHAPTER 12: Media Relations

AFTER THIS CHAPTER, YOU WILL:

- Recognize what phrases or actions to avoid during an interview.
- Understand how verbal and non-verbal behaviours might be interpreted or misinterpreted by the media.

A reporter or camera crew may show up unannounced at the farm or on the road, especially if a mechanical problem or other emergency has occurred.

Handling reporters and camera crews with courtesy and professionalism is critical. The way they are treated may create their first impression of the poultry industry and may be reflected in how they cover the industry in the news. The same considerations and strategies should be used when dealing with animal activists who may be positioned at entrances to processing plants.

THINGS TO AVOID

In the case of an accident or emergency situation, if you have a media card read what it states to reporters and say nothing further. If applicable, tell them that the company information officer will make a statement about the accident and the actions being taken when possible or provide them with an appropriate contact.

- Never say “No comment.” Saying this makes it seem like you are hiding something. If approached, be polite and explain you are focused on the care of the birds at this time and direct them to police or fire officials on site.
- Don’t use industry terms or abbreviations. Use simple words and phrases.
- If you are repeatedly asked the same question, simply give the same answer.
- When you are finished with your answer, stop talking! Be brief and to the point.
- Don’t ever go with a reporter to watch any video footage.
- Don’t get angry at reporters.
- At all costs avoid jokes; one-liners, clichés, and off-the-cuff comments.
- Do not express personal opinions.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Mind your manners. Be courteous and friendly. Remember that just as you are on the job, so is the reporter. The reporter, no matter how friendly or encouraging, is doing the work he or she is paid to do.
- Reporters have three objectives in an interview: facts, context, and quotes. Everything you say and do (e.g. body language, offhand jokes, etc.) may be observed and reported on by the reporter, who is simply looking for ways to make the story “come alive” for the audience. Be aware of how you are presenting yourself and how that reflects on the industry as a whole.

- A reporter’s finished story will usually include other sources, and may present views that are different from yours especially if the story focuses on a controversy.
- Don’t offer to teach the reporter everything about an issue. You run the risk of unintentionally:
 - misleading/misinforming the reporter;
 - misunderstanding the questions you are being asked (this often occurs when you speak outside your area of expertise);
 - being misunderstood by the reporter.

If a reporter, camera crew or animal activist group arrives at a farm while birds are being loaded or unloaded, employees should stop their work and go on break until the visitors have left unless such a delay may harm the birds. The crew foreman should call the farm manager or other company representative who will decide on an appropriate course of action.

APPENDIX 1: Mitigating Conflict with Animal Rights Activists

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

For many years, animal rights activists have been holding protests outside of slaughterhouses. Most activists attending these events are committed to quietly observing trucks entering slaughter facilities. Recently, a growing number of activists have begun to block trucks from entering facilities. Activists may also attempt to feed and water animals, climb onto trailers to take images or make contact with animals. Occasionally, activists engage verbally with transporters.

WHY ARE THEY HERE?

Animal rights activists do not believe in the use of animals for food, no matter how well animals are treated by their handlers. When they protest outside of processing facilities, they believe they are “bearing witness” to animal suffering. Their goal is to see an end to animal agriculture.

WHAT ARE THEY AFTER?

When activists attend protests at processing facilities, they have a number of goals:

- Voice their opposition to animal agriculture.
- Inconvenience the businesses where the animals are being delivered.
- Identify perceived animal welfare infractions.
- Capture images of transporters/farmers, transport vehicles, animals.
- Speak for and make contact with the animals.
- Gain publicity.

WHAT WE ARE SEEING:

- Animal rights activists outside of slaughterhouses approach trucks to make contact with the animals inside. Sometimes they feed them or give them water. They often take photos or video. They reach through openings in trailers to touch animals.
- Potential issues regarding biosecurity procedures, food safety and animal welfare.
- “24-hour vigils” are becoming increasingly common. Activists stay at facilities for a one-day period, where they make contact with transport trailers.
- Conflict between transporters and activists is becoming more common.
- Activists are blocking trucks and/or standing too close for drivers to safely move ahead. At some facilities, the activists will not allow a truck to pass until police arrive. When police arrive, they often wait a period of time (2 minutes or longer) before permitting trucks to move ahead.
- There are real human safety concerns. In the U.K., one protestor died in a similar situation a number of years ago. A protester was knocked to the ground by a transport truck in 2015 in the US. In Canada, some protestors have been ‘nudged’ by moving vehicles that they have stood in front of.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Establish communication and expectations with the plant regarding delivery timelines, animal welfare, biosecurity and food safety.
- Always maintain your composure. Assume you are being filmed. Activists frequently post videos of their encounters to social media pages.
- If activists are blocking your truck, or if they are too close to safely move forward, stay inside your truck and contact plant security or police for assistance.
- Do not engage in conversation with activists, beyond asking them to move out of the way.
- Avoid use of truck horns. This causes distress for the animals, and inhibits your ability to communicate with plant security and police.
- Once protestors move away, verify it is safe to proceed and move the truck ahead.
- If protestors approach the truck again, stop the truck, warn them again, and call the police.
- Do not engage in physical or intimidating contact with any protestor.
- If you feel you or your property are threatened, contact the police.

SOCIAL MEDIA:

- For farmers and transporters who are active on social media, it is best not to engage in arguments with animal rights activists.
- End the conversation with individuals who antagonize. Block them if necessary.
- Ensure your security settings (photos, physical location, personal information) are not available to public view.

Information provided by Ag & Food Exchange Ltd

APPENDIX 2: Body Condition Scoring in Poultry

Body condition scoring is a useful management tool to assess the individual bird’s health status.

It takes approximately 15 seconds to assign a score on a scale of 0 to 3 to an individual bird. While a subjective tool, it can be very important especially when determining if a bird is fit to load for transport (see Chapter 5: Are Birds Fit to Load?).

HOW TO ASSIGN A SCORE

Use one hand to hold the live bird upside down by both legs. The bird’s head can be facing upwards or downwards, whichever is more comfortable for you and the bird. Use the palm of your other hand to palpate the breast muscles, paying particular attention to the keel (breast) bone and the tip. It is not uncommon for the breast muscles to not be symmetric, with the left breast being heavier.

Note that as the score increases, so will the amount of fat and muscularity and, therefore, body weight. Skeletal size will generally remain similar across the four scores.



BODY CONDITION SCORES

SCORE OF 0 – VERY THIN

A score of 0 reflects an emaciated and weak bird with low breast muscle to bone ratio. The keel bone will be prominent with limited breast muscle development. These birds must NOT be loaded! They do not have the energy reserves to withstand the stress of catching and transportation, and will likely be dead-on-arrival (DOA). These birds need to be euthanized by properly trained and competent personnel only.

SCORE OF 1 – UNDERWEIGHT

A score of 1 reflects a bird with the keel bone still prominent; however there is greater breast muscle development, which feels more flat. These birds may still be compromised and if in doubt, should be segregated before loading. The appropriate personnel, such as the farm manager, should then be notified.

NOTE: If you are noticing many birds in your flock are a body condition score of a 0 or a 1, it is very important that you contact your poultry veterinarian for a flock health assessment



BODY CONDITION SCORE OF 2 – IDEAL FOR LAYERS; UNDERWEIGHT FOR BROILERS AND TURKEYS

A score of 2 reflects a healthy bird with the keel less prominent and moderately developed breast muscle. These birds may be loaded.

BODY CONDITION SCORE OF 3 – OVERWEIGHT FOR LAYERS; IDEAL FOR BROILERS AND TURKEYS

A score of 3 reflects a bird that has a smooth, well-developed breast muscle over the keel. The keel is not easily felt. Research into body condition scoring for poultry has shown that on average, birds with a body condition score of 3 were over 50% heavier than birds with a score of 0. These birds may be loaded.

PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING AS YOU SCORE INDIVIDUAL BIRDS

1. WHAT IS CONSIDERED AN IDEAL BODY CONDITION WILL VARY BETWEEN SPECIES:

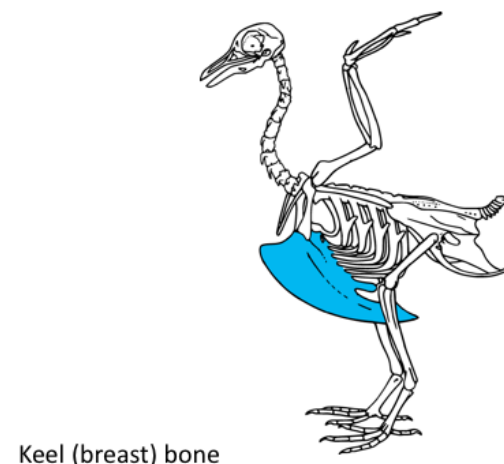
Layers are genetically selected for increased egg production; therefore they are a lean bird. They will naturally be less muscular compared to broilers, breeders, or turkeys and some keel bone prominence will be normal. Do not confuse end-of-lay hens with emaciated birds. They may still be loaded at a body condition score of 1; however, precautionary measures may need to be taken. For example, adjusting loading densities, tarping, etc. especially in extreme weather conditions.

2. THERE MAY BE BREED DIFFERENCES:

Breeds may deposit fat differently than others. For example, white layers have been shown to deposit more fat subcutaneously rather than inside the abdomen compared to brown layers.

3. THERE ARE VARIOUS POSSIBLE CAUSES FOR EMACIATED BIRDS:

They include insufficient feeder and/or drinker space, poor feed or water quality, or metabolic disorders or disease. If you have any concerns, you should talk to the flock owner or manager



Keel (breast) bone

APPENDIX 3: Euthanasia Guidelines

DEFINITION

Euthanasia is the act of inducing humane death (occurs with minimal pain and distress) in an animal.

In raising poultry, at some point you will have a bird become ill or injured. If the bird is not likely to recover or if treatment is not practical, euthanasia may be the most humane option to prevent or alleviate suffering.

CONSIDERATIONS

BIRD WELFARE

The euthanasia method selected must minimize any pain and distress experienced by the bird. With all methods, birds must be restrained properly to ensure effective administration. Having a second person to help with restraint is ideal, particularly with larger birds (e.g. turkeys), but not necessary.

HUMAN SAFETY

The euthanasia method chosen must not pose any safety risks to personnel performing the task. Some methods require a high degree of skill and training (e.g. captive bolt) and can result in operator injury if used incorrectly. Such methods must only be used in controlled conditions with proper equipment and protection.

TRAINING

Birds must only be euthanized by properly trained and competent personnel! All euthanasia methods require specific training to ensure the bird is euthanized in the most appropriate, effective, and humane manner. Individuals trained in euthanizing birds must be monitored regularly to ensure euthanasia protocols are being followed. Training includes knowledge of appropriate euthanasia methods, how to use and maintain euthanasia equipment, how to assess insensibility and death, and the proper way to dispose of a carcass.

Employees who will be euthanizing birds should demonstrate their competency on dead birds before attempting on live birds. Euthanasia protocols should be reviewed regularly as new research and methods become available, and personnel notified of any changes. Personnel must be comfortable with the procedure and understand how birds respond to different euthanasia methods (e.g. blood loss, involuntary reflex movements). Training of employees should be documented and review should occur annually.

LIMITATIONS

Personnel must understand which methods are suitable for certain ages or types of birds. Some individuals may not have the physical strength to euthanize birds properly or be comfortable with the procedure.

EUTHANASIA DECISION GUIDANCE

Individuals who work with birds must be trained to recognize normal bird behaviour and any signs of pain, injury, illness, and distress that indicate euthanasia may be necessary.

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS MAY HELP MAKE DECISIONS ABOUT EUTHANASIA:

- Does the bird appear to be experiencing pain or distress?
- Signs of pain or distress in individual birds may include lethargy, hunched posture with head drawn in, ruffled or dirty feathers (not related to litter conditions), physical abnormality or limited mobility, reluctance to eat or drink, severely injured, swollen head, discolored comb, poor body condition (very thin – score of ‘0’)
- Can the cause of the pain or distress be addressed?
- Is feed and water readily available and can the bird access it?
- Is the bird responsive to treatment and showing improvement?
- Is recovery likely within 24-48 hours?
- Is the bird likely to transmit disease to other birds?

Leaving an animal that is suffering to eventually die is NOT acceptable. Once the decision has been made to euthanize a bird it must be carried out in a timely fashion; therefore it is important that there is always a trained individual available or on-call 24 hours a day to perform euthanasia when needed.

EUTHANASIA METHODS FOR POULTRY

With all methods, birds must be immediately rendered insensible and remain insensible until death. Birds must be checked for signs of sensibility after the euthanasia method has been applied to ensure it was done correctly. Signs of sensibility include:

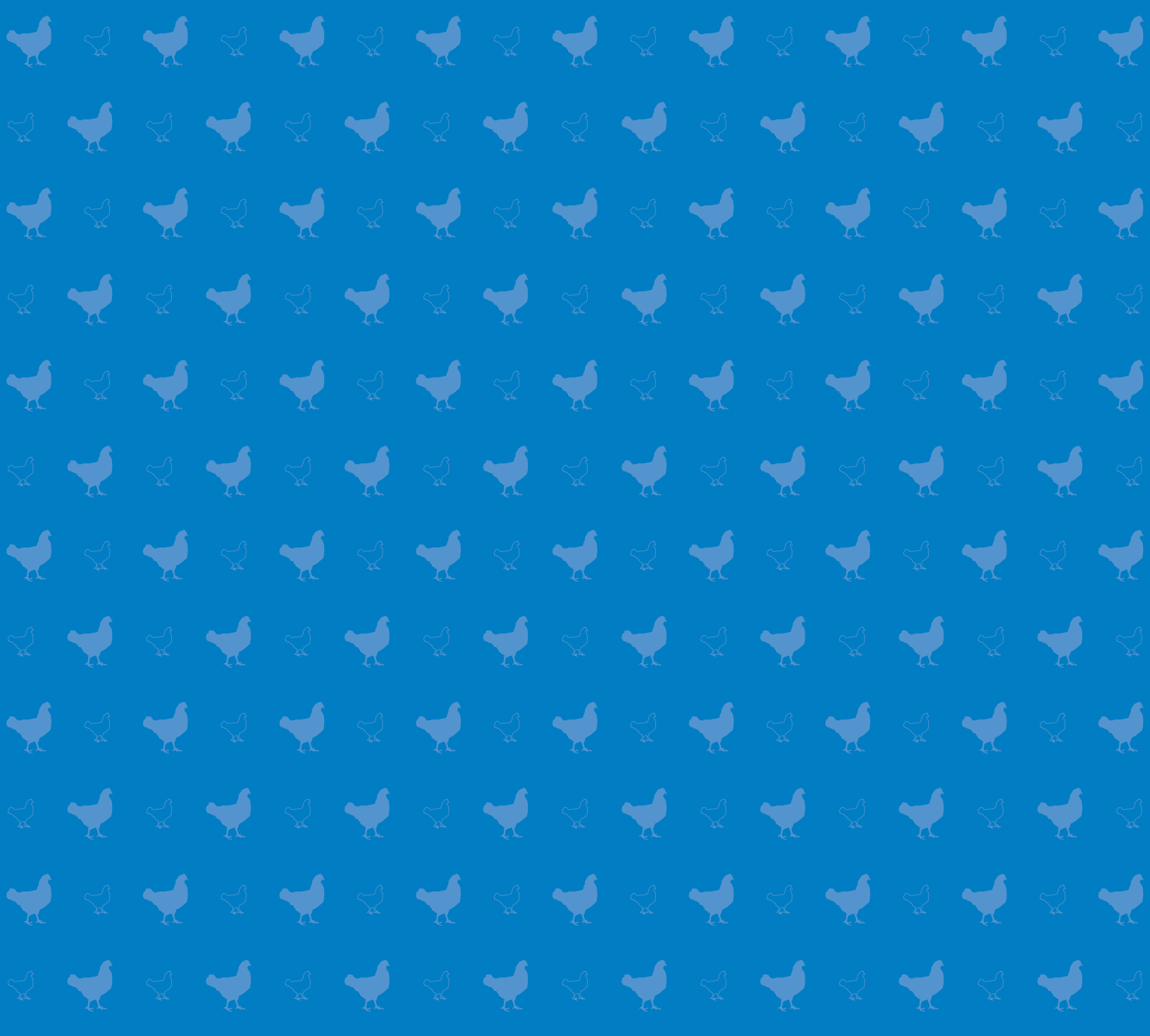
- Bird blinks when the surface of the eye is touched
- Rhythmic breathing (check for abdominal movement in the vent area)
- Vocalization (other than an exhalation that occurs as the lungs deflate)

If signs of sensibility are observed, the euthanasia method must be applied again or another method immediately administered (within 30 seconds). Death is confirmed by termination of breathing and a heartbeat. Death must be confirmed prior to leaving birds and disposing of the carcass.

There are cases where mass depopulation may be necessary due to an emergency situation, such as a disease outbreak. All poultry facilities should have protocols for mass depopulation in place that are reviewed regularly and updated as required. Emotional stress and fatigue may occur, especially when physical methods are used to depopulate a large numbers of birds. Care must be taken to ensure these types of stress do not negatively impact bird welfare. Consultation with a veterinarian may be necessary.

METHODS OF EUTHANASIA ON-FARM (Adapted from National Farm Animal Care Council Code of Practice 2016)			
EUTHANASIA METHOD	ACCEPTABILITY BY BIRD TYPE	CONDITIONS	ADDITIONAL COMMENTS
<i>Non-Penetrating Captive Bolt</i> <i>Penetrating Captive Bolt</i>	Acceptable with Conditions: All Birds	Correct placement of the device on the head is critical	May be more appropriate for large birds
<i>Decapitation</i>	Acceptable with Conditions: All Birds, including Unhatched Chicks and Poults, Chicks and Poults	Instrument must be sharp and of appropriate size Procedure must be carried out in one quick motion and result in a complete severance of the head	Need for environmental sanitation (blood) Risk of disease transmission via blood Effective application may be compromised if operator is fatigued or large numbers of birds are to be euthanized
<i>Gas Inhalation- Carbon Dioxide (CO2)</i>	Acceptable with Conditions: All Birds, including Unhatched Chicks and Poults, Chicks and Poults	Requires specialized equipment (pressure-reducing regulator, CO2 cylinder or tank) and a closed chamber to contain gas Gas must be supplied in a precisely regulated and purified form without contaminants or adulterants Use and maintain equipment according to manufacturers instructions Maintain equipment in good working order	May cause brief periods of distress before birds become insensible Birds should be placed in the chamber in a single layer Use in a well-ventilated area for operator safety Prolonged exposure is required because they are resistant to CO2

<i>Cervical Dislocation- Manual</i>	Acceptable with Conditions: All Birds, including Unhatched Chicks and Poults, Chicks and Poults	<p>Crushing of the neck bones is unacceptable prior to loss of sensibility</p> <p>This method is restricted to smaller birds (e.g. <3 kg), although this may vary depending on operator ability</p>	<p>Performed correctly, cervical dislocation results in the luxation (dislocation) – never crushing – of the cervical vertebrae</p> <p>Alternative methods should be considered (e.g. non-penetrating captive bolt) as in some classes of poultry there is evidence that cervical dislocation may not cause rapid loss of sensibility</p> <p>The site of the dislocation should be as close to the head as possible</p>
<i>Cervical Dislocation- Mechanical</i>	Acceptable with Conditions: All Birds	<p>Crushing of the neck bones is unacceptable prior to loss of sensibility</p> <p>Device must be purpose- designed and appropriate for the size of bird</p>	<p>Cervical dislocation is difficult to perform correctly in large birds (e.g. roosters or those with heavily muscled necks), and therefore may not result in immediate loss of sensibility. It is recommended that larger birds be rendered insensible prior to applying cervical dislocation</p> <p>*Alternative methods should be considered due to difficulty in checking for insensibility with very young chicks and poults</p>
<i>Maceration</i>	Acceptable with Conditions: Chicks and Poults <72 hours, , including Unhatched Chicks and Poults, Chicks and Poults	Must use properly maintained, proven effective, purpose- designed equipment that results in instantaneous and complete maceration	The number of birds/eggs entering the equipment at one time can influence the effectiveness of the equipment



ALBERTA **POULTRY HANDLING AND
TRANSPORTATION MANUAL**

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