



RSPCA AUSTRALIA STANDARD

Meat Chickens

July 2026

RSPCA 

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This *RSPCA Australia Standard — Meat Chickens* applies to farming systems that produce meat chickens in Australia. Systems eligible under the RSPCA Certified Scheme must meet the requirements of this Standard.

This Standard must be read in conjunction with the *RSPCA Certified Operating Rules*, the *Certification Manual*, and the meat chicken *Conformance Guide*. These documents provide guidance on the operation of the Scheme and the certification and assessment process.

This Standard has been developed by RSPCA Australia in accordance with our *Standards Development Document* to achieve a balanced approach having regard, among other things for the RSPCA's policies and the extent to which it is possible and practical to implement such policies in a commercial production system.

Previous editions:

August 2020, March 2020, August 2019, April 2019, May 2013, January 2013, September 2010, January 2010



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INTRODUCTION

Animal welfare is how animals feel, and it can change based on their experiences in day-to-day life. It can range from good, through neutral to poor, and can be anywhere in between at any given moment. Factors that influence animal welfare include an animal's nutrition, health, physical environment, and their interactions with other animals, people and their environment.

Addressing animal welfare issues in farming relies on continuous improvement. RSPCA Australia Standards are developed with a focus on meeting the farmed animal's requirements in terms of highly motivated behaviours, allowing opportunities for positive experiences and thus good animal welfare. The process of developing and reviewing the Standards acknowledges that to achieve a future of higher welfare farming, the requirements within the Standards must be informed by science as well as be realistically achievable by industry.

The meat chicken Standard well exceeds minimum legal requirements and focuses on providing an environment where meat chickens' highly motivated behaviours can be met – be that indoors or outdoors. In preparing this 2026 edition of the meat chicken Standard, the aim has been to provide greater environmental complexity and opportunity for meat chickens to experience positive affective states while also further addressing important challenges relating to the handling, transport, and slaughter of birds. In addition, a final section (section 13 – Enhanced Welfare (Higher welfare strains)) has been added for those seeking to further enhance bird welfare by raising higher welfare meat chicken strains (see glossary definition) with associated requirements that better cater to their higher activity levels (including more space, perches, and pecking objects, natural light, and access to a veranda and/or outdoor area), as well as increased requirements around catching and slaughter.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	4
THE STANDARD	7
1 MANAGEMENT.....	7
Training and competency	7
Internal assessment	7
Animal Care Statement.....	7
Other management or husbandry procedures	8
Records.....	8
2 HEALTH.....	9
Veterinary Health Plan	9
Health monitoring	9
Medicines	10
Bird observations	10
Health records	10
3 SOURCING AND PLACEMENT	11
Pre-placement activities	11
Placement	11
Records.....	11
4 FEED AND WATER	12
5 ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING	13
Shed facilities	13
Temperature and ventilation.....	13
Litter	14
Lighting.....	14
Perches and platforms.....	15
Pecking objects	15
Records.....	15
6 VERANDA	16
Records.....	16
7 OUTDOOR AREA (FREE RANGE).....	17
Records.....	17
8 STOCKING DENSITY	18
Records.....	18
9 ANIMAL HANDLING.....	19
10 EUTHANASIA	20
Captive bolt	20
Carbon dioxide or inert gas mixtures	20

	Manual cervical dislocation	21
11	CATCHING AND TRANSPORT	22
	Planning for catching	22
	Preparation for catching.....	22
	Catching.....	22
	Post catching	23
	Transport	23
	Records	23
12	SLAUGHTER	24
	Lairage	24
	Stunning	25
	Controlled atmosphere stunning systems	25
	Electrical waterbath stunning systems	26
	Slaughter	27
	Animal-based welfare assessment	27
	Records	27
13	ENHANCED WELFARE (HIGHER WELFARE STRAINS)	28
	Chick sourcing	28
	Lighting.....	28
	Perches and platforms.....	28
	Pecking objects	28
	Veranda / outdoor area (free range)	28
	Stocking density	29
	Catching.....	29
	Slaughter	29
	GLOSSARY	30

THE STANDARD

NOTE: Words/phrases highlighted in **bold** within the Standard form part of the requirement/s of the relevant clause and are defined in the GLOSSARY.

1 MANAGEMENT

Training and competency

- 1.01 Persons responsible for the management and/or handling of birds must be appropriately trained and **competent** in their tasks as they relate to the requirements of the Standard at each stage of the production cycle, including, as relevant to their role:
- a) observing birds and identifying normal and abnormal appearance, vocalisation, and behaviour (including **gait**, footpad dermatitis, hock burn and use of **perches/platforms**, **pecking objects**, and **veranda** and/or **outdoor area**)
 - b) identification and appropriate care and/or treatment of injury, disease, or distress
 - c) **euthanasia** (including observing signs of death, and disposal of dead birds)
 - d) maintaining the housing environment
 - e) general management and husbandry
 - f) managing biosecurity requirements
 - g) handling of birds
 - h) catching, loading, transport, and **unloading** of birds
 - i) **stunning** and slaughter of birds at abattoir, including observing **signs of unconsciousness**
 - j) accurate record keeping.
- 1.02 All new staff involved in the catching and loading of birds must have completed or be working towards completing relevant training delivered by a registered training organisation.
- 1.03 Records of staff training and competency assessments must be maintained.
- 1.04 Staff must be available to respond **promptly** to problems that arise, including after hours.

Internal assessment

- 1.05 Producers must ensure that all **sites** have internal assessment systems that:
- a) monitor and verify conformance with the requirements of this Standard
 - b) identify problems where they occur
 - c) provide actions to address problems
 - d) maintain records of all completed internal assessments.

Animal Care Statement

- 1.06 Producers must draw up an Animal Care Statement which specifies general management, monitoring, husbandry, and standard operating procedures (as relevant to the stage of the production cycle, transport, and slaughter), that minimise risk to bird welfare and is implemented and complied with to reflect the requirements of this Standard, including:
- a) procedures for reporting breaches of animal welfare legislation
 - b) internal assessment systems (including regularity of assessments)
 - c) contingency plans/procedures to manage **site** conditions in the event of power failure, equipment failure or other breakdowns, fire, flood, drought, **extreme weather** (including changes to lighting or feed provision during hot weather), feed supply and/or formulation issues, or other **major reportable event**
 - d) husbandry and animal management procedures (including bird observations)
 - e) sourcing and **placement** of chicks
 - f) maximum chick **placement** number for each **shed**

- g) feed and water provision (including **trigger levels** for abnormal feed and water consumption)
- h) maintaining appropriate internal **shed** temperatures and air quality
- i) litter management and treatment (including composting processes where litter is treated and/or composted for re-use)
- j) lighting program (including dark periods and average **light intensity**)
- k) environment and housing (including **perches/platforms, pecking objects**, and **veranda** and/or **outdoor area**)
- l) determining, maintaining, and reviewing **stocking density**
- m) bird handling
- n) catching and transport (including emergency arrangements, journey planning, assessing **fitness for transport**, measures to prevent the risk of **heat stress** and **cold stress**, and safe operation of vehicles)
- o) **lairage**, shackling, **stunning** and slaughter.

Other management or husbandry procedures

- 1.07 Management or husbandry practices that are not routinely used in the Australian meat chicken industry or are not consistent with the intent of this Standard must not be performed unless prior consent has been obtained from RSPCA Australia (this includes trial use of such practices).

Records

- 1.08 Records must be maintained where problems are identified relating to abnormal bird appearance, behaviour, and/or environment or any other circumstances (including with conformance with the Standard or **trigger levels** reached), during checks (e.g. during observations and/or automatic monitoring), assessments, and bird handling procedures (including during **placement**, catching, transport, and slaughter) and include:
- a) date the problem was identified
 - b) nature and frequency of the problem
 - c) nature of **correction** undertaken
 - d) date **correction** was undertaken
 - e) nature of the **corrective action**.

2 HEALTH

Veterinary Health Plan

- 2.01 Producers must draw up a Veterinary Health Plan in consultation with **veterinary advice**, and which specifies bird health management and monitoring procedures that minimise risk to animal health and is implemented and complied with to reflect the requirements of this Standard, including:
- a) biosecurity (including quarantine, cleaning and sanitation procedures, and biosecurity procedures to minimise disease risk, e.g., where an **outdoor area** is provided and during **pick-up**)
 - b) routine health monitoring procedures (including identification and treatment of weak, diseased, or injured birds)
 - c) vaccination program, schedule and procedures including vaccinations received at the hatchery (including a risk analysis and justification where an available and **effective vaccine** is not routinely used)
 - d) use and purpose of veterinary medicines (including, where **antimicrobials** are used, an **antimicrobial stewardship strategy**)
 - e) use and purpose of any other treatments or additives (including probiotics)
 - f) **chick health and welfare program** (including **trigger levels** for day-old mortality (including **euthanasia**), weight, and uniformity)
 - g) **euthanasia** (including procedures for the use of captive bolt, gas, and manual cervical dislocation)
 - h) animal-based welfare assessment (including procedures and **trigger levels** on-farm and at slaughter as relevant for assessing: **gait**, **footpad dermatitis score**, **hock burn score**, not **effectively stunned**, not effectively cut, **red birds**, broken/dislocated bones and bruises, **scratch score**, **breast blister score**, **breast burn score**, **runts**, and carcass condemnation, pre-stun shocks, contact with electrode)
 - i) control of internal and external parasites
 - j) mortalities (including **trigger levels** for 7-day, daily, and total **flock** mortality, leg culls, dead on arrivals (post transport, at **placement** and at slaughter))
 - k) bird comfort (including **trigger levels** for temperature, humidity, and bird behaviour to prevent **heat stress** and **cold stress** in the **shed**, during **placement**, catching and transport, and in **lairage**)
 - l) pest animal control procedures.

Health monitoring

- 2.02 Quarantine and biosecurity procedures, including the development and implementation of an on-farm biosecurity plan, must be in place to minimise the risk of introducing and spreading disease among birds and farms.
- 2.03 Where the cause and/or appropriate treatment of disease is unable to be identified, **veterinary advice** must be sought **immediately** and followed accordingly.
- 2.04 Dead birds must be **promptly** removed from the **shed** and disposed of in a safe and hygienic manner.
- 2.05 Any **major reportable event** must be reported **promptly** to RSPCA Australia and include:
- a) date the problem was identified
 - b) nature of the problem
 - c) nature of **correction** undertaken
 - d) date **correction** was undertaken
 - e) nature of the **corrective action**.

Medicines

- 2.06 Medicines, including **antimicrobials**, must be used responsibly and administered under **veterinary advice** to protect the health and welfare of birds. The use of **antimicrobials** for the purpose of promoting growth is not permitted.
- 2.07 Any **antimicrobial** classified by the Australian Strategic and Technical Advisory Group on Antimicrobial Resistance as being of ‘high’ or ‘medium’ importance for human medicine must not be used in meat chickens, unless **veterinary advice** indicates that the only effective treatment option is an **antimicrobial** from these categories.

Bird observations

- 2.08 Bird observations, except chicks in the first 24 hours following **placement**, must be:
- a) carried out at least three times at regular intervals in a 24-hour period to assess whether bird appearance, vocalisations, general behaviour, distribution, and eating and drinking behaviours are normal
 - b) increased during periods of adverse environmental conditions, including hot weather, disease outbreak, and any other circumstance where bird health or welfare may be compromised.
- 2.09 From 21 days of age, weekly assessments must be made on a random sample of 25 birds representative of the **flock** per **shed**, recording for each bird:
- a) **footpad dermatitis score**
 - b) **hock burn score**.
- 2.10 Birds must be **euthanased immediately** if they are suffering from disease, injury and/or other physical impediment, including abnormal **gait**, and are not able to recover or respond to treatment.

Health records

- 2.11 Health records for each **flock** must be maintained and contain details of the following:
- a) vaccinations
 - b) treatments or medicines administered, including **antimicrobials**
 - c) diseases
 - d) problems with chick health (including but not limited to mortality, weight, and uniformity) at or following the day of **placement**
 - e) weekly age and average weight of birds
 - f) daily mortality separated into deaths and **euthanasia**, including the main reason for cause of death or **euthanasia**
 - g) mortality percentage at end of day of **placement**, at 7 days, and total **flock** mortality
 - h) dates of health and welfare visits (including by a registered veterinarian), any problems identified and action taken.

3 SOURCING AND PLACEMENT

Pre-placement activities

- 3.01 Pre-**placement** preparation of the **shed** must be completed prior to chick **placement** and include:
- a) cleaning, sanitation, and drying of the **shed**
 - b) flushing and sanitation of water lines
 - c) assessing water and feed availability and quality
 - d) appropriate temperature, humidity, air quality and ventilation
 - e) appropriate lighting and **light intensity**
 - f) fresh litter provision (including chick paper where applicable)
 - g) demarcation of the **brood area** (**brooder barriers** and chick paper) where applicable.

Placement

- 3.02 Where chick transport is >6 hours, chicks in transport crates must be provided with hydration supplement, unless contraindicated under **veterinary advice**.
- 3.03 Once **unloading** of a chick transport vehicle commences:
- a) chicks in that vehicle must be placed **promptly** within the **shed**
 - b) chick comfort within the vehicle must be maintained.
- 3.04 When emptying chicks from transport trays onto the **shed** floor:
- a) the tray must be tipped carefully
 - b) chicks must not be tipped from a height >20cm.
- 3.05 Where **split placement** of chicks occurs:
- a) all chicks must be placed within 48 hours of **placement** of the first chick
 - b) environment and housing provisions (including litter, **perches/platforms**, and **pecking objects**) must be provided by the time the oldest chicks are 7 days of age.
- 3.06 Where on-farm hatching is intended to be carried out, a detailed standard operating procedure must be submitted and prior consent obtained from RSPCA Australia.
- 3.07 Chicks must be checked to confirm that their appearance, vocalisations, general behaviour, distribution, and eating and drinking behaviours (including crop fill) are normal at least four times at regular intervals in the 24 hours following **placement**.

Records

- 3.08 The following must be recorded for each **flock** placed:
- a) genetic strain
 - b) name of the hatchery from which the chicks were sourced
 - c) age of breeder (parent) birds
 - d) egg storage time at hatchery
 - e) date and time chicks depart the hatchery
 - f) pre-**placement shed** preparation activities
 - g) date chicks are placed in each **shed** (or in each **flock** if two or more **flocks** are placed in the same **shed**) noting time **unloading** commenced and time **unloading** was completed for each **flock**
 - h) number of chicks placed in each **shed** (or in each **flock** if two or more **flocks** are placed in the same **shed**)
 - i) number of chick transport mortalities (dead on arrivals)
 - j) average chick weight (at **placement**).

4 FEED AND WATER

- 4.01 Birds must have continuous access to feed and water from when they are first placed in the **shed**, unless:
- a) being treated under **veterinary advice**
 - b) where necessary during litter maintenance activities
 - c) in preparation for and during catching
 - d) during transport and prior to slaughter.
- 4.02 Feed and water must be:
- a) of suitable quality
 - b) available in sufficient quantity to meet the daily requirement of birds.
- 4.03 Feeding and drinking equipment must be:
- a) operated and monitored to ensure the daily feed and water requirements of birds are met
 - b) designed, distributed, and positioned to allow all birds to access feed and water with minimal effort and normal posture.
- 4.04 Drinking systems must be effectively managed to:
- a) ensure appropriate water pressure
 - b) prevent crowding at drinker lines
 - c) minimise dripping of water onto the litter.

5 ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING

Shed facilities

- 5.01 All birds must have continuous access to a **shed**.
- 5.02 The **shed**, equipment and other facilities in and around the **shed** (including **veranda** and/or **outdoor area**) must be designed, constructed, operated, and maintained to:
- a) ensure bird safety
 - b) minimise the risk of smothering, injury, **entrapment**, escape, disease, and mortality
 - c) limit the entry of pathogens, animals considered pests, and animals that could cause distress or transmit diseases to the birds.
- 5.03 **Shed** controllers, alarms and monitoring equipment used to automatically monitor **shed** conditions must:
- a) be operational
 - b) have a back-up power supply that is tested at least weekly
 - c) be tested daily if used for automatic control of ventilation, heating or cooling.
- 5.04 A maintenance program must be in place to ensure any facility defects are **promptly** identified and rectified.
- 5.05 Where animals considered pests are present and could cause distress or transmit disease to birds, any control program in place must:
- a) ensure the primary deterrent is the removal of features that may attract their presence (e.g. feed spills, overgrown or neglected areas around the **shed**)
 - b) use the most humane effective techniques that are applicable to the situation
 - c) reduce the risk of impact on non-target species.

Temperature and ventilation

- 5.06 The **shed** and equipment for ventilation, heating or cooling must be designed, constructed, operated and maintained to:
- a) ensure bird comfort
 - b) manage air exchange, air quality (ammonia, carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, and dust), temperature, and humidity
 - c) minimise the risk of **heat stress** or **cold stress**
 - d) minimise noise and prevent noise that could startle birds.
- 5.07 Where present, automatic equipment for ventilation, heating or cooling must be fitted with visual and/or audible alarms that are automatically triggered if equipment is not functioning effectively.
- 5.08 Air quality in the **shed** at bird head height must be managed to ensure air quality parameters do not exceed:
- a) 10ppm of ammonia for chicks ≤ 7 days of age
 - b) 15ppm of ammonia for birds > 7 days of age
 - c) 3000ppm of carbon dioxide
 - d) 10ppm of carbon monoxide.
- 5.09 **Ammonia readings** must be recorded:
- a) daily at bird head height upon first entering the **shed** in the morning
 - b) within one hour after any litter maintenance activities have ceased.
- 5.10 Dust levels at bird head height must be managed to minimise negative impacts on bird welfare.

Litter

- 5.11 Birds must have continuous access to litter.
- 5.12 Where used, chick paper must be removed or substantially broken down by the time chicks are 7 days of age.
- 5.13 The floor of the **shed** (and **veranda** where applicable) must be covered in litter:
- a) continuously from **placement**
 - b) completely and evenly
 - c) that allows birds to dust bathe, scratch, and forage
 - d) to a minimum average depth of 50mm
 - e) that is actively maintained in a dry and friable condition.

Lighting

- 5.14 Chicks ≤ 7 days of age must be provided with a minimum period of continuous darkness:
- a) of at least two hours on day of **placement**
 - b) that is then gradually increased throughout the week to achieve the minimum period of continuous darkness required by 8 days of age.
- 5.15 Birds > 7 days of age, in each 24-hour period, must have a minimum of:
- a) eight hours continuous light
 - b) six hours continuous darkness, unless on the day of catching when 6 hours of darkness does not need to be provided continuously.
- 5.16 The minimum dark period must:
- a) be provided at night
 - b) occur with all lights off.
- 5.17 Chicks ≤ 7 days of age must, during the light period, be provided with a minimum **light intensity** of 20 lux at bird head height across the full floor area of the **brood area**.
- 5.18 Until 31 December 2030, for birds > 7 days of age, the **light intensity** in the **shed** (at bird head height) must ensure that, during the light period:
- a) no area of the **shed** floor is lit at < 10 lux
 - b) the average **light intensity** across the entire **shed** floor is ≥ 20 lux (unless during catching).
- 5.19 From 1 January 2031, birds > 7 days of age must be provided with variable **light intensity** across the **shed** floor, unless during catching, such that, during the light period:
- a) no area of the **shed** floor is lit at < 10 lux
 - b) the brightest lit areas of the shed floor are at least 50 lux
 - c) the average **light intensity** across the entire **shed** floor is ≥ 30 lux
 - d) variation between areas of lower and higher light intensity distributed across the **shed** floor provide birds with the choice to move between differently lit areas.
- 5.20 **Light intensity** between light and dark periods must be adjusted gradually over at least 15 minutes.
- 5.21 Artificial lighting must provide at least the full **light spectrum** visible to humans, unless during catching.
- 5.22 Flickering lights must be replaced **promptly**.

Perches and platforms

- 5.23 Birds ≥ 7 days of age must have access to **perches** and/or **platforms**, based on **shed placement** number, at a minimum of:
- a) 2.7m of linear **perch** space per 1000 birds and/or
 - b) 0.41m² of flat **platform** space per 1000 birds.
- 5.24 **Perches/platforms** must:
- a) be evenly distributed throughout the **shed**
 - b) support the whole of the bird's foot
 - c) be positioned at a height to allow birds easy access at all ages
 - d) from ≥ 7 days, always be accessible to birds, unless the **shed** is being prepared for catching or where temporarily removed for litter maintenance
 - e) where they have been temporarily removed for catching or litter maintenance, be returned **promptly** following completion.

Pecking objects

- 5.25 Birds ≥ 7 days of age must have access to at least one **pecking object** per 1000 birds based on **shed placement** number.
- 5.26 **Pecking objects** must:
- a) be distributed evenly throughout the **shed**
 - b) be maintained, replaced, or changed as necessary to ensure birds have continuous access
 - c) from ≥ 7 days, always be accessible to birds, unless the **shed** is being prepared for catching or where temporarily removed for litter maintenance
 - d) where they have been temporarily removed for catching or litter maintenance, be returned following completion.

Records

- 5.27 The following must be recorded for each **flock**:
- a) date of back-up power supply tests
 - b) date of facility alarm checks
 - c) date of checks of automatic equipment for ventilation, heating and/or cooling as relevant
 - d) daily minimum and maximum **shed** temperatures at bird head height
 - e) date of any litter maintenance or treatment, including, where necessary, the addition of fresh litter and the composting processes where litter is re-used.

6 VERANDA

Where a **veranda** is provided, the following requirements must be met.

- 6.01 Birds must be given the choice to access the **veranda** during daylight hours by 14 days of age at the latest, for a minimum of eight hours each 24-hour period, unless:
- a) under direct **veterinary advice**, including during treatment specified in the Veterinary Health Plan
 - b) **extreme weather** requires birds to be temporarily kept indoors
 - c) on the day of catching.
- 6.02 The total available **veranda** area must:
- a) not be included in the calculation of **stocking density** in the **shed**
 - b) be at least one third the size of the **usable area** of the **shed** floor
 - c) be accessible along the length of the **shed** on both sides, unless the **shed** width is $\leq 14\text{m}$ in which case access may be provided on one side.
- 6.03 The **veranda** must be designed, actively managed, and maintained to:
- a) encourage birds to access all areas
 - b) be free from hazards that may cause injury, distress, or affect the birds' ability to use the **veranda**
 - c) prevent overcrowding
 - d) provide dry and friable litter covering the entire floor area for birds to dust bathe and forage
 - e) provide shade and shelter
 - f) provide adequate air exchange to manage airflow, air quality, temperature, and humidity
 - g) provide natural light
 - h) ensure the roof is waterproof.
- 6.04 Openings to the **veranda** must comprise:
- a) at least 30% of the length of the **shed** where access is provided on both sides of the **shed**
 - b) at least 50% of the length of the **shed** where access is provided on one side of the **shed**.
- 6.05 The openings to the **veranda**, for each side of the **shed** where access is provided, must be designed, constructed, and positioned to:
- a) when open, give birds a clear view of the **veranda** from within the **shed**
 - b) allow birds to pass through and access the **veranda** easily and unhindered using normal posture
 - c) be evenly distributed along the length of the **shed**
 - d) take into account prevailing weather conditions.

Records

- 6.06 The following must be recorded for each **flock** with access to a **veranda**:
- a) dates and times that openings to the **veranda** were opened and closed
 - b) dates and reasons where less than eight hours access per 24-hour period was provided.

7 OUTDOOR AREA (FREE RANGE)

Where the **site** intends to be certified for outdoor (free range) production, the following requirements must be met.

- 7.01 Birds must be given the choice to access the **outdoor area** during daylight hours by 21 days of age at the latest, for a minimum of eight hours per 24-hour period, unless:
- under direct **veterinary advice**, including during treatment specified in the Veterinary Health Plan
 - extreme weather** requires birds to be temporarily kept indoors
 - on the day of catching.
- 7.02 The total available **outdoor area** must be:
- at least the size of the total **usable area** of the **shed** floor
 - accessible along the length of the **shed** on both sides, unless the **shed** width is $\leq 14\text{m}$ in which case access may be provided on one side.
- 7.03 The quality of the **outdoor area** must be such that the **outdoor area** is designed, actively managed, and maintained to:
- encourage birds to go outside and access all areas
 - be free from hazards that may cause injury, distress, or affect the birds' ability to use the **outdoor area**
 - prevent overcrowding
 - provide birds with opportunities to dust bathe and forage
 - provide birds with palatable vegetation
 - provide **overhead cover**
 - discourage access by wild birds.
- 7.04 Openings to the **outdoor area** must comprise:
- at least 30% of the length of the **shed** where access is provided on both sides of the **shed**
 - at least 50% of the length of the **shed** where access is provided on one side of the **shed**.
- 7.05 The openings to the **outdoor area**, for each side of the **shed** where access is provided, must be designed, constructed, and positioned to:
- when open, give birds a clear view of the **outdoor area** from within the **shed**
 - allow birds to pass through and access the **outdoor area** easily and unhindered using a normal posture
 - be evenly distributed along the length of the **shed**
 - take into account prevailing weather conditions.
- 7.06 **Overhead cover** must be designed, constructed, positioned, and maintained to:
- comprise at least 12m^2 per 1000 birds (based on **shed placement** number)
 - encourage birds to access and use all parts of the **outdoor area**
 - have 20% positioned within 3m from openings to the **outdoor area**
 - be distributed evenly across the total available **outdoor area**
 - be of sufficient height for birds to carry out natural behaviours (including wing flapping)
 - not include shade cast by the **shed**
 - not include the eaves unless where specifically designed to do so and prior consent has been obtained from RSPCA Australia.

Records

- 7.07 The following must be recorded for each **flock** with access to an **outdoor area**:
- dates and times that openings to the **outdoor area** were opened and closed
 - dates and reasons where fewer than eight hours access per 24-hour period was provided.

8 STOCKING DENSITY

8.01 **Stocking density** must not exceed, for the **usable area** of the **shed** floor:

Until 31 December 2030:

- a) 34kg per m² for **tunnel ventilated or extractive systems**
- b) 32kg per m² for **other mechanically ventilated systems**
- c) 28kg per m² for **non-mechanically ventilated systems**

From 1 January 2031:

- a) 32kg per m² for **tunnel ventilated or extractive systems**
- b) 30kg per m² for **other mechanically ventilated systems**
- c) 30kg per m² for **tunnel ventilated or extractive systems** and **other mechanically ventilated systems** where an **outdoor area** is provided
- d) 28kg per m² for **non-mechanically ventilated systems**.

Records

8.02 **Stocking density** must be recorded weekly for each **flock**.

9 ANIMAL HANDLING

- 9.01 Birds must be approached and handled:
- a) calmly and quietly
 - b) with an awareness of their natural **flight zone**
 - c) for the minimum time required
 - d) in a manner that minimises pain, suffering, or distress
 - e) in a manner that prevents injury or mortality.
- 9.02 Individual birds must be caught, picked up, and carried with both hands supporting the body of the bird while holding the wings against the bird's body or with one hand securing the legs and the other hand holding the body of the bird against the person's body, unless:
- a) for chicks, where they may be caught, picked up, and carried by the body using one hand
 - b) for weighing, where a bird may be hung off a hanging scale in a bucket or briefly by both legs.
- 9.03 Where birds are required to be caught for transport, the following methods are also permitted:
- a) two-bird upright catching where two birds at the same time are caught around the body and wings, and held together to minimise wing flapping, picked up, and briefly carried
 - b) catching machine
 - c) two-legged catching where birds are caught by both legs then picked up and briefly carried by holding both legs in one hand, with no more than three birds in each hand
 - d) one-legged catching where birds are caught, picked up and briefly carried at or above the tarsal joint (ankle) of one leg, with no more than four birds in each hand.
- 9.04 Catching aids which may cause injury, entanglement, or result in birds being suspended or dragged must not be used.

10 EUTHANASIA

- 10.01 The permitted **euthanasia** methods are:
- a) captive bolt device
 - b) carbon dioxide or inert gas mixtures
 - c) manual cervical dislocation.
- 10.02 Birds must have death confirmed **immediately** after application of the **euthanasia** method by assessing for the absence of the **nictitating membrane reflex**, and at least two of the following signs:
- a) no **corneal reflex**
 - b) no pupillary light reflex
 - c) no rhythmic breathing
 - d) no neck tension
 - e) no vocalisation.
- 10.03 Where **euthanasia** has not resulted in **immediate** loss of consciousness and subsequent death, the method used must be **immediately** repeated or another permitted method must be **immediately** applied.

Captive bolt

- 10.04 Captive bolt devices must be designed, manufactured, operated, and maintained to be:
- a) appropriate for the size of the bird
 - b) fit for purpose
 - c) able to achieve **immediate** death at the first attempt.
- 10.05 The operator of a captive bolt device must:
- a) effectively restrain the bird to enable accurate positioning of the device so that it is in contact with the head of the bird
 - b) aim and discharge the device straight down on the midline of the head (at its highest point), between the eyes and ears where the brain is located.

Carbon dioxide or inert gas mixtures

- 10.06 **Euthanasia** with carbon dioxide or inert gas mixtures must take place in a purpose-built container that is designed, operated, and maintained to:
- a) allow visual observation of birds inside the container
 - b) monitor the gas concentration that birds are exposed to in the container
 - c) have sufficient floor space and height to allow birds to sit or stand comfortably in a single layer
 - d) be used in accordance with the agreed standard operating procedure.
- 10.07 For **euthanasia** with carbon dioxide or inert gas:
- a) delivery of gas into the container must not be aimed directly at birds
 - b) gas must be at a temperature that prevents thermal stress
 - c) carbon dioxide gas concentration must not exceed 30% until birds have lost consciousness, followed by concentration >40% until death.

Manual cervical dislocation

10.08 Manual cervical dislocation must only be performed:

- a) to avoid delay when other **euthanasia** methods are not **immediately** available
- b) without the use of objects to assist, unless for birds <7 days of age where a blunt, fixed, rigid object may be used to assist in cervical dislocation of the first neck vertebrae from the cranium
- c) by holding the bird with both legs in one hand and the head in the other, unless the bird has apparent leg problems, in which case the base of both wings must be held in one hand instead of the legs, with the weight of the bird supported against the person's body
- d) by using a single quick and controlled stretching motion that dislocates the first neck vertebrae from the cranium and severs the spinal cord, causing death at the first attempt.

11 CATCHING AND TRANSPORT

Planning for catching

- 11.01 At least one senior member of the catching team must be responsible for the welfare of the birds including oversight and supervision of the catching process and maintaining the Standard.
- 11.02 All persons involved in the catching, loading, transport, and **unloading** of birds must:
 - a) meet on-farm biosecurity procedures
 - b) be aware of and be able to implement emergency arrangements.
- 11.03 Action must be taken to prevent **heat stress** or **cold stress** in birds at catching, loading, **unloading**, during transport, and while the vehicle is stationary.
- 11.04 **Pick-ups** must not exceed four per **shed**.
- 11.05 **Pick-ups** must not occur on consecutive days in the same **flock**.
- 11.06 Where birds are transferred between **sheds** as part of a **brood-and-move system**, the transfer must not occur more than once per **flock**.

Preparation for catching

- 11.07 Prior to preparation for catching, birds must be:
 - a) visually assessed to confirm they are **fit for transport**
 - b) **promptly euthanased** if identified as not **fit for transport**.
- 11.08 Water facilities must not be removed until **immediately** before catching commences.
- 11.09 Removal of **perches/platforms** and **pecking objects** (as necessary) must coincide with removal of feed or water to minimise disturbance to the birds.
- 11.10 Birds must not be off feed for more than 16 hours prior to slaughter (includes catching, transport, and **lairage** time).

Catching

- 11.11 The catching process must be coordinated and managed to minimise any impact on the birds being caught and those remaining in the **shed**.
- 11.12 Transport modules/crates must:
 - a) be assessed prior to birds being loaded, and any module/crate that may cause injury to birds must not be used to transport birds
 - b) be clean and intact
 - c) provide sufficient floor space to allow all birds to sit comfortably at the same time
 - d) be of sufficient height to allow birds to adopt a natural sitting position with the head extended
 - e) have openings of sufficient size to prevent injury to birds during loading
 - f) be placed to minimise the distance between the module/crate and the birds to be caught
 - g) not be tilted at an angle that may impact bird welfare by piling or smothering
 - h) be closed in a manner that prevents **entrapment** of any bird.
- 11.13 Loading birds into transport modules/crates must:
 - a) take place inside the **shed**
 - b) take place in dim light
 - c) ensure birds are placed into the transport module/crate in a gentle and controlled manner
 - d) ensure birds are upright and settled before closing the transport module/crate.

- 11.14 Where a catching machine is used, it must be operated and monitored to ensure:
- a) catching operates at a speed that maintains birds in an upright position
 - b) the conveyor belt operates at a speed that prevents injury to birds
 - c) the conveyor belt operates at a speed that allows for smooth loading into transport modules/crates
 - d) birds are not run over
 - e) it is only used in **sheds** where conditions minimise the risk to bird welfare (e.g., suitable **shed** size and level floor)
 - f) it is thoroughly disinfected between **sites**.

Post catching

- 11.15 Where a partial **pick-up** of a **flock** is conducted, birds remaining in the **shed** after catching must:
- a) be assessed **immediately**
 - b) be **promptly** provided with feed and water
 - c) have all **perches/platforms** and **pecking objects promptly** redistributed within the **shed**.

Transport

- 11.16 **Transporters** must have emergency arrangements in place that include out-of-hours contacts and standard procedures for protecting bird welfare in the case of breakdowns, unexpected delays, accidents, and any other circumstance that may affect the welfare of the birds during transport.
- 11.17 Access roads and **pick-up** pads must be well-maintained to provide a level and compacted surface and kept clear to ensure access at catching and loading for transport.

Records

- 11.18 Records for catching and transport must be maintained and include:
- a) source farm and **shed**
 - b) name of the persons and company responsible for catching and transport
 - c) time and date feed and water were removed
 - d) time, date, and number of birds assessed as not **fit for transport**
 - e) time and date catching commenced and concluded
 - f) number of birds caught
 - g) time and date of bird departure from farm
 - h) time and date of bird arrival at the abattoir weighbridge.

12 SLAUGHTER

- 12.01 The abattoir must nominate a designated person/s who is:
- a) responsible for the oversight of the welfare of birds at the facility
 - b) responsible for animal-based welfare assessments and monitoring of live bird handling and slaughter
 - c) on **site** when live birds are being unloaded, handled, and slaughtered
 - d) knowledgeable in all facets of handling and slaughter
 - e) responsible for monitoring adherence to the Standard.
- 12.02 A video surveillance system (e.g., Closed Circuit Television) must be installed and operational to allow a clear, unobstructed view, and recording of live birds, including at:
- a) **unloading** from transport vehicles into **lairage** area
 - b) movement of transport modules from **lairage** to loading onto the **stunning** system
 - c) removal of birds from transport modules/crates prior to **stunning**, including the de-stacking or tipping process
 - d) all shackling points prior to **stunning**
 - e) electrical waterbath **stunning** systems at **stunning** unit entry and exit and along the entire waterbath
 - f) controlled atmosphere **stunning** systems at exit after **stunning**
 - g) automatic neck cutting and back-up neck cutting.
- 12.03 Procedures for the use and review of video surveillance footage must be in place and have:
- a) a live stream that is **immediately** available for monitoring at all times if required
 - b) monitoring by authorised staff at least daily to monitor for issues affecting bird welfare
 - c) availability for viewing, both stored and real-time footage, by RSPCA Australia
 - d) storage of footage for a minimum of 30 days
 - e) the date and time of routine monitoring recorded.
- 12.04 **Stunning** and slaughter equipment must be:
- a) designed, manufactured, operated, monitored, and maintained to provide effective restraint, **stunning**, and slaughter
 - b) checked to ensure correct and effective operation **immediately** following any change to processing (including at the start of each shift, a significant change in bird size, and/or breakdown)
 - c) checked to ensure correct and effective operation **immediately** following the identification of any issues.
- 12.05 Methods of **stunning** and/or killing not specified in this Standard must not be performed without prior consent from RSPCA Australia.

Lairage

- 12.06 The timing of catching, transport and slaughter must be coordinated to minimise the time birds are held in **lairage**.
- 12.07 Upon arrival at the abattoir weighbridge, birds must **promptly** be placed in a **lairage** area that is:
- a) covered and able to be enclosed on at least three sides to provide effective shelter, shade, and environmental control
 - b) designed and operated to provide adequate air exchange between and within transport modules/crates
 - c) fitted with fans and misting equipment that are effective at managing the environment to ensure bird comfort
 - d) able to allow effective assessment of birds, including through video surveillance systems and/or in person.

- 12.08 Bird observations in the **lairage** area must:
- a) be conducted upon arrival and hourly thereafter
 - b) assess birds for signs of **heat stress** or **cold stress**
 - c) assess birds for signs of injury, distress, or **entrapment**
 - d) include **prompt** catching or removal of trapped, escaped or fallen birds.
- 12.09 Where transport mortalities have occurred:
- a) they must be reported **promptly** to the consignor with any problems identified
 - b) **corrective action** must be taken by the consignor to address problems identified.
- 12.10 Transport modules/crates must be checked following **unloading** of birds to ensure:
- a) no birds have been left behind
 - b) any modules/crates that may cause injury to birds are repaired or disposed of.

Stunning

- 12.11 Birds must be **stunned** prior to slaughter using one of the following methods:
- a) controlled atmosphere **stunning** (CAS)
 - b) until 31 December 2030, electrical waterbath **stunning**.
- 12.12 From 1 January 2031, electrical waterbath **stunning** is only permitted for use as a back-up method of **stunning** in exceptional circumstances (e.g., in the event of failure of CAS systems), and with notification to RSPCA Australia.
- 12.13 **Stunning** systems that require tipping live birds from transport modules/crates onto a conveyer belt prior to shackling or entering the stunner must:
- a) manage drop distances and be fitted with slides to minimise the distance and manage the angle of tipping between transport module/crate and conveyor belt
 - b) operate conveyor belts at a controlled slow pace to prevent injury, piling or distress to birds during transition.
- 12.14 Following exit from the controlled atmosphere **stunning** system (at the point of shackling) and following exit from the electrical waterbath **stunning** system, birds must be monitored for **signs of unconsciousness** and signs of injury.
- 12.15 Where birds are identified as ineffectively **stunned**, **correction** must be undertaken **immediately**.

Controlled atmosphere stunning systems

- 12.16 Birds in controlled atmosphere **stunning** systems must:
- a) be managed to prevent birds being on top of other birds during **stunning**
 - b) not be exposed to a carbon dioxide gas concentration >20% at first exposure
 - c) not be exposed to a carbon dioxide concentration >30% until all birds have lost consciousness.
- 12.17 Controlled atmosphere **stunning** systems must:
- a) have gas concentration and humidity for each phase clearly displayed and monitored
 - b) have gas temperature at inlets clearly displayed and monitored
 - c) have gas concentration sensors and monitors calibrated regularly, as per the manufacturer's recommendations
 - d) be fitted with visual and/or audible alarms that are automatically triggered if equipment is not functioning effectively
 - e) allow for adjustments to gas concentration and/or temperature to be made as required.

Electrical waterbath stunning systems

- 12.18 Where electrical waterbath **stunning** systems are used, a **site**-specific electrical **stunning** program to minimise negative impacts on bird welfare must be drawn up and:
- a) be reviewed and agreed to by RSPCA Australia at least annually
 - b) be updated **promptly** to reflect changes in practice
 - c) have modifications reviewed and agreed to by RSPCA Australia
 - d) be complied with.
- 12.19 The abattoir must nominate a trained and **competent** person/s who is present during the **unloading**, handling, shackling, **stunning** and slaughter of live birds and who has the authority and responsibility to intervene and initiate **corrective action**, when necessary, to ensure adherence to the Standard.
- 12.20 The shackling equipment and line must be designed, constructed, and operated to prevent:
- a) wing flapping
 - b) head raising
 - c) crowding or bunching of birds along the line
 - d) other disturbance to birds along the line, including sudden changes in light and noise
 - e) ineffective shackling of birds.
- 12.21 A breast comforter must be present:
- a) from the first point at which the bird is shackled up to entry to the waterbath
 - b) that maintains effective contact with the breast of the bird.
- 12.22 The persons shackling birds must:
- a) monitor shackles and ensure they are clear of obstructions before hanging the bird
 - b) place both legs of the birds in the shackles firmly and securely without unnecessary force that could cause pain or disturbance to birds
 - c) prevent birds making forceful contact with the breast comforter once shackled
 - d) prevent birds falling from the shackle line.
- 12.23 Shackles must:
- a) be thoroughly wet at the point when birds are shackled
 - b) have water applied in a manner that prevents birds from being disturbed or soaking their plumage.
- 12.24 Shackling areas must be checked regularly to ensure no birds have escaped or been left behind.
- 12.25 Birds considered **runts** must not be shackled and instead be killed **promptly**.
- 12.26 Birds must not be suspended from the shackle line for more than 60 seconds prior to **stunning**.
- 12.27 Electrical waterbath **stunning** systems must:
- a) operate **electrical stunning parameters** that will **effectively stun** birds
 - b) clearly display the **electrical stunning parameters**
 - c) prevent birds receiving pre-**stun** shocks
 - d) ensure the bird's head is in contact with the electrode or submerged under the water for the entire length of the waterbath or wet plate as relevant
 - e) be maintained and checked by a qualified and independent third party.

Slaughter

- 12.28 **Stunned** birds must be effectively cut and rapidly bled out to ensure birds remain unconscious until death occurs.
- 12.29 Manual and automated cutting systems must always have at least one back-up knife-hand ensuring that all birds identified as not effectively cut are **immediately** cut to bleed out without regaining consciousness until death occurs.
- 12.30 Bleeding out time prior to scalding must be at least 120 seconds.

Animal-based welfare assessment

- 12.31 A random and representative sample of 100 birds from each **batch** must be assessed and have a **trigger level** established for:
- a) not **effectively stunned**
 - b) not effectively cut
 - c) classified as **red birds**
 - d) broken and dislocated bones and bruises (including leg/wing damage and injuries), including likely origin of injury (e.g., catching, transport, shackling or slaughter related)
 - e) **footpad dermatitis score** (both feet)
 - f) **hock burn score** (both feet)
 - g) **scratch score**
 - h) **breast blister score**
 - i) **breast burn score**
 - j) **runts**
 - k) carcass condemnation, including the reason.
- 12.32 For electrical waterbath **stunning** systems, following each calibration of equipment, a random and representative sample of 100 birds from each **batch** must be assessed for:
- a) number of birds receiving pre-**stun** shocks
 - b) number of birds where the head is not in contact with the electrode or submerged under water for the entire length of the waterbath or wet plate as relevant.
- 12.33 Where any **trigger level** is reached during animal-based welfare assessment at slaughter:
- a) **immediate correction** must be undertaken to address the bird welfare impact of the trigger breach, including, as relevant, adjusting or stopping equipment, modifying handling procedures, or removing and attending to affected birds
 - b) the trigger breach must be **promptly** escalated to a person with the authority to initiate a formal investigation and implement changes to prevent recurrence, including as relevant, notification to the farm, **transporter**, and/or catching crew.

Records

- 12.34 The following must be recorded for each **batch**:
- a) number of birds dead on arrival, including the **trigger level** and actual rates
 - b) number of birds **euthanased** prior to slaughter, including the **trigger level** and actual rates
 - c) **lairage holding time**
 - d) date of slaughter
 - e) number of birds slaughtered
 - f) total number of **red birds**
 - g) outcome of animal-based welfare assessment.

13 ENHANCED WELFARE (HIGHER WELFARE STRAINS)

Where the **site** intends to be certified to raise higher welfare meat chicken strains to the RSPCA enhanced welfare requirements, the following requirements must be met.

Chick sourcing

- 13.01 Chicks must be sourced from **higher welfare strains**.

Lighting

- 13.02 [replaces 5.14] Chicks ≤ 7 days of age must be provided with a minimum period of continuous darkness:
- a) of at least four hours on day of **placement**
 - b) that is then gradually increased throughout the week to achieve the minimum period of continuous darkness required by eight days of age.
- 13.03 [replaces 5.15] Birds > 7 days of age, in each 24-hour period, must have a minimum of:
- a) eight hours continuous light
 - b) eight hours continuous darkness, unless on the day of catching when 8 hours of darkness does not need to be provided continuously.
- 13.04 [replaces 5.19] Birds > 7 days of age must be provided with variable **light intensity** across the **shed** floor, unless during catching, such that, during the light period:
- a) no area of the **shed** floor is lit at < 10 lux
 - b) the brightest lit areas of the shed floor are at least 50 lux
 - c) the average **light intensity** across the entire **shed** floor is ≥ 30 lux
 - d) variation between areas of lower and higher light intensity distributed across the shed floor provide birds with the choice to move between differently lit areas.
- 13.05 Natural light must be provided in **sheds** such that, for birds ≥ 7 days of age:
- a) natural light is provided during daylight hours
 - b) **light openings** are evenly distributed in the roof and/or along both long sides of the **shed** wall
 - c) during daylight hours, **light openings** provide an average **light intensity** across the entire **shed** floor ≥ 30 lux.

Perches and platforms

- 13.06 [Replaces 5.23] Birds ≥ 7 days of age must have access to both **perches** and **platforms**, based on **shed placement** number, at a minimum of:
- a) 2.7m of linear **perch** space per 1000 birds
 - b) 0.41m² of flat **platform** space per 1000 birds.

Pecking objects

- 13.07 [Replaces 5.25] Birds ≥ 7 days of age must have access to at least two different types of **pecking object** at a rate of one of each type per 1000 birds based on **shed placement** number.

Veranda / outdoor area (free range)

- 13.08 Birds must have access to a **veranda** and/or an **outdoor area** (free range).

Stocking density

- 13.09 [Replaces 8.01] **Stocking density** must not exceed, for the **usable area** of the **shed** floor:
- a) 30kg per m² for **tunnel ventilated or extractive systems** and **other mechanically ventilated systems**
 - b) 28kg per m² for **non-mechanically ventilated systems**.

Catching

- 13.10 [Replaces 9.03] Where birds are required to be caught for transport, the following methods are permitted:
- a) two-bird upright catching where two birds at the same time are caught around the body and wings, and held together to minimise wing flapping, picked up, and briefly carried
 - b) catching machine.
- 13.11 [Replaces 11.04] **Pick-ups** must not exceed two per **shed**.
- 13.12 [Replaces 11.10] Birds must not be off feed for more than 10 hours prior to slaughter (includes catching, transport, and **lairage** time).

Slaughter

- 13.13 [Replaces 12.11] Birds must be **stunned** prior to slaughter using controlled atmosphere **stunning**.
- 13.14 [Replaces 12.12] The use of **stunning** systems that require shackling of conscious birds is not permitted.

GLOSSARY

NOTE: The GLOSSARY defines words/phrases highlighted in **bold** within this Standard and form part of the requirement/s of the relevant clause.

ammonia readings	Measurements of ammonia concentration at bird head height using an ammonia meter or ammonia test paper at locations representative of litter condition in the shed.
antimicrobial	An agent that kills or stops the growth of microorganisms such as bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites. Ionophores and non-ionophore coccidiostats are a subcategory of antimicrobials. Antimicrobials may be used therapeutically on veterinary advice for the treatment of a diagnosed disease, or they may be used to prevent the occurrence or spread of disease. For these Standards, the term ‘antimicrobial’ excludes anthelmintics, antiseptics, disinfectants, essential oils, feed enzymes, prebiotics, probiotics, and organic acids. The principles of prudent antimicrobial usage can be found in the Australian Veterinary Association ‘Guidelines for prescribing, authorising and dispensing veterinary medicines’.
antimicrobial stewardship strategy	A means of implementing responsible antimicrobial usage that: • demonstrates the principles of prudent antimicrobial usage • considers available evidence of antimicrobial resistance in the Australian meat chicken flock • specifies a year-on-year strategy which considers the reduction, refinement and/or replacement of preventative antimicrobial use • specifies husbandry, management strategies and any alternative preventative treatments, where used, to manage disease risk during any planned reduction, refinement and/or replacement of antimicrobials.
batch	A group of birds from the same farm slaughtered together.
breast blister score	An assessment of breast blisters: • 0 – no blisters • 1 – small and colourless blisters • 2 – one or more large or dark coloured blisters
breast burn score	An assessment of breast burns: • 0 – no burn • 1 – slightly pink burn • 2 – dark pink to red burn, large inflammations, dark spots
brood area	Area in the shed in which chicks are placed and contained for at least the first seven days and no longer than 14 days, unless the brood area comprises the entire usable area within a shed.
brood-and-move system	A housing system whereby day-old chicks are placed and reared in one shed and then transferred at an older age to another shed for grow-out.

brooder barrier	Temporary partitions that contain chicks within a certain area in the shed (the brood area) to maintain an appropriate brooding environment, humidity, and temperatures for the chicks. A curtain barrier may be provided if heaters are not equally distributed inside the shed.
chick health and welfare program	A program describing aspects of managing chick health and welfare, including but not limited to: • transport from hatchery to shed • brooding set-up and management • access to feed and water • thermal comfort (temperature, humidity, ventilation) • chick behaviour.
cold stress	A condition in which a bird is unable to maintain core body temperature within the normal range resulting in core body temperature falling below the normal range. Signs of cold stress include huddling, shivering, feather fluffing, pale comb, lethargy, and collapse.
competent	Having the necessary knowledge, experience, skill, and ability to undertake a task successfully.
corneal reflex	Blinking in response to touching the bird's eye.
correction	Action taken to address an identified problem.
corrective action	Action to eliminate the root cause of an identified problem and prevent its reoccurrence.
effectively stunned	A stun is effective where, following the stunning procedure, the bird is unconscious and will not regain consciousness prior to cutting (bleed out) and prior to entering the scalders.
effective vaccine	A vaccine that has demonstrated its ability to protect meat chickens from a particular infectious disease known to be present or be a risk in commercial production systems and/or farming regions.
electrical stunning parameters	Key factors that affect the outcome of an electrical stun: waveform (AC and DC), voltage (V), total current (mA), and frequency (Hz). Together with average current per bird (mA), stun duration (secs), line speed, bird-related factors and number of birds in the waterbath, these key factors influence the effectiveness of electrical stunning.
entrapment	A situation in which a bird's body or part of their body is trapped, and the bird is unable to move freely.
euthanasia/euthanased	Humanely ending the life of an animal when it is in the interest of their welfare.
extreme weather	A weather event which may include heavy and/or prolonged rain, hail, snow, wind, or extremely high or low temperatures that may affect the welfare of the exposed birds.

fit for transport	A bird satisfying all the criteria for catching, loading and transport: strong enough to undertake the journey, can walk normally and bear weight on both legs, is not emaciated or visibly dehydrated, is not blind in both eyes, is not in a condition that could cause it increased pain or distress during transport, is not suffering from visible distress or injury, and is suitable for processing.
flight zone	The area around an animal that if encroached upon by a potential threat, will trigger escape behaviour. This is the distance a bird will let a person approach before moving away.
flock	A group of birds of the same or similar age raised together within the same usable area of a shed until pick-up. Where two or more groups of birds are housed within the same shed, each group must have equipment (drinkers, feeders, perches/platforms, and pecking objects) that operates independently of each other for that group to be considered a separate flock.
footpad dermatitis score	An assessment of footpad lesions: • 0 – no lesion/s or very small superficial lesions (1-2mm), slight discolouration in a limited area, mild hyperkeratosis (thickening of the skin) • 1 – <5mm (area affected does not extend over the entire plantar pad, substantial discolouration, dark papillae, superficial lesion and no ulceration) • 2 – ≥5mm (greater surface of plantar pad usually affected, sometimes with lesions on toes. Deeper lesion/s with ulceration, sometimes haemorrhage, scabs of significant size, severely swollen footpad).
gait	A bird's walking ability. Birds are considered to have a normal gait if they can walk at least ten continuous steps without limping, without needing to balance using the wings or 'walking' with the aid of the wing tips, and without sitting or falling.
heat stress	A condition in which a bird is unable to maintain core body temperature within the normal range resulting in core body temperature exceeding the normal range. Signs of heat stress include loss of appetite, increased respiration rate, excessive drinking, open mouth breathing, lethargy, and reluctance to move.
higher welfare strains	Strains of meat chicken with demonstrated improved welfare outcomes in relation to factors such as mortality rate, general mobility, activity level, leg and foot health, and feather condition. Examples of higher welfare strains include Hubbard Redbro (indoor use only), Hubbard Norfolk Black, JA757, JACY57, 787, 957, or 987, Rambler Ranger, Ranger Classic, and Ranger Gold or other strains that meet criteria determined by RSPCA Australia.

hock burn score	An assessment of hock burn: • 0 – no lesion/s or very small and superficial (<1mm), slight discolouration in a limited area, mild hyperkeratosis • 1 – area affected does not extend over hock, substantial discolouration, dark papillae, superficial lesion, no ulceration • 2 – greater surface of hock affected. Deeper lesion/s with ulceration, sometimes haemorrhage, scabs of significant size, severely swollen area
immediate/immediately	To make a priority and address without delay.
lairage	Designated area at the abattoir into which birds are moved following transport and used for the purpose of holding birds prior to slaughter.
lairage holding time	Holding time commences when the birds first arrive at the abattoir and ends when the last birds in the batch are moved out of the lairage area in preparation for stunning.
light intensity	The luminance emitted by a light source and expressed in lux.
light openings	Openings (including windows, (tubular) skylights, and similar light inlets) in the shed roof and/or wall that allow natural light (including at least UV-A wavelength) to enter the shed. Adding covers to light openings or other means of diffusing or controlling direct sunlight or preventing heat stress or cold stress (e.g., using double-glazed or reflective glass) is permitted. Air inlets, fans and other such equipment are not considered light openings.
light spectrum	The segment of the electromagnetic spectrum that is visible to the human eye, encompassing wavelengths from approximately 380 to 700 nanometres (nm). Different wavelengths appear visually as different colours, for example 450nm appears blue, 550nm appears green, and 650nm appears red to the human eye.
major reportable event	A circumstance that has a significant adverse impact on the welfare of the birds. A major reportable event includes sustained at or above-trigger mortality rate(s) and animal-based welfare assessment outcomes or unusual/unexpected incidences of high mortality, injury or disease including those resulting from endemic and/or exotic disease outbreaks; natural events; predator incursions; infrastructure or equipment failure; feed supply and/or formulation issues; transportation (including chick transport mortalities); poor bird management or handling (including during rearing, catching, transport, stunning or slaughter); or other circumstance deemed reportable by company/producer standard operating procedures.
nictitating membrane reflex	The third eyelid slides across horizontally in response to touching the bird's eye.
non-mechanically ventilated systems	Housing systems that rely on natural airflow to manage air exchange, air quality and bird comfort within the shed. Stirring fans may be used to assist with air movement within the shed.
other mechanically ventilated systems	Housing systems, other than tunnel ventilated or extractive systems, that rely on the use of air inlets (curtains or vents), stirring fans, water-based cooling (not including evaporative cooling), and at least two extraction fans to manage air exchange, air quality and bird comfort within the shed.

outdoor area	An outside space (range) immediately adjacent to the shed. Netting may be used to cover and/or enclose the outdoor area.
overhead cover	Artificial or natural shade and shelter (not including the shed) that is provided in an outdoor area and which offers birds protection from overhead predators and the sun. Overhead cover is measured as the area directly underneath the artificial structure or natural feature.
pecking object	An addition to the environment of the birds, which promotes complexity, increases behavioural opportunities (e.g., pecking, foraging, exploration, and ground-scratching), and the opportunity to experience positive affective states. Object types may include, but are not limited to, materials such as pecking substrates and blocks, scattered pellets and whole grains, vegetative matter, suspended brassicas, blocks or reflective balls, and straw bales. For birds to maintain interest in a pecking object it must be manipulable and changed as necessary.
perch/perches	Standing or suspended narrow linear bar structures between 5cm and 15cm in width elevated above the shed floor and provide a surface for birds to step up or jump on to sit, stand, roost, or rest. Birds must be able to keep the centre of the foot flat. Curling of the toes is permitted but the toes must never meet.
pick-up/s	Removal of live birds from the shed. This includes partial (also known as thinning) or full depopulation for slaughter, or transfer of birds in a brood-and-move system.
placement	The action of putting a group of chicks (or birds of an older age if part of a brood-and-move system) arriving at the farm together, into a shed for brooding (or grow-out if part of a brood-and-move system).
platform/platforms	Standing or suspended structures >15cm in width elevated above the shed floor and provide a flat surface (solid, slatted, or mesh) for birds to step up or jump on to sit, stand, roost, or rest.
prompt/promptly	To make a priority and address with minimal delay.
red bird	A bird carcass which is red in colour at exit of scalding and has the neck partially or not cut indicating the bird was potentially conscious upon entering the scalding.
runts	Birds significantly smaller than the flock average and at risk of ineffective stunning.
scratch score	An assessment of wounds (scratches or pecks on the whole body): • 0 – no scratches • 1 – small, superficial scratch or scratches, scratch or wound (<1.5 cm) or healed scratch • 2 – large scratch or wound (>1.5 cm)
shed	A housing structure consisting of at least four walls and a roof that provides all birds with protection from cold, heat, weather (e.g., wind and rain), predators, and animals considered pests.

signs of unconsciousness	Indicators used at the abattoir after stunning which demonstrate that a bird is no longer aware of its surroundings or able to feel pain. Signs of unconsciousness may include an absence of spontaneous blinking, lack of corneal reflexes, no rhythmic breathing, no vocalising, no wing flapping, no swallowing, no headshaking, no reaction to comb pinch, and no muscle tone.
site	The location at which one or more facilities for housing or slaughtering birds is situated.
split placement	The placing of more than one group of chicks (usually two) into the same shed.
stocking density	Space allowance expressed in kg per m ² calculated on the basis of bird live weight and the usable area available to the flock.
stun/stunned/stunning	A procedure or the act of carrying out a procedure that has as its primary purpose to render the bird unconscious and insensible to pain.
transporter	The company responsible for a livestock transport vehicle and its driver.
trigger level	A predetermined threshold agreed to by RSPCA Australia which sets in motion a course of action to investigate and address the cause of a breach of that threshold.
tunnel ventilated or extractive systems	Housing systems that rely on the use of air inlets, evaporative cooling and extraction fans capable of at least one air exchange per minute and an air speed of at least 2.5m per second to manage air exchange, air quality, and bird comfort within the shed. Stirring fans may be used to assist with air movement within the shed.
unloading	The point in time at which birds are taken off the transport vehicle. For chick deliveries, unloading commences when the back door of the truck is opened. For birds arriving at processing plants, unloading commences when the first module is transferred to lairage.
usable area	Littered indoor floor area that is always accessible to birds.
veranda	A roofed and enclosed area joined to the shed in which birds can forage and dust bathe. The veranda protects birds from weather extremes and contact with wild birds while providing natural light and natural ventilation through a combination of solid and permeable (e.g., wire mesh) walls.
veterinary advice	Recommendation/s provided by a registered veterinarian with expertise in poultry health.

END OF STANDARD



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