

Poultry Handling and Transportation Manual



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

Acknowledgement

This manual 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 Ontario was graciously given by Dr. Eva Wallner-Pendleton on behalf of Pennsylvania State University and Rafael Riveria on behalf of the U.S. Poultry and Egg Association. That resulted in an Ontario Poultry Handling and Transportation Manual produced by the Poultry Service Association and Farm and Food Care Ontario. That document was further revised and expanded by the Poultry Service Association and the Canadian Poultry and Egg Processors Council into this current edition which is applicable across Canada.



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Poultry Handling and Transportation Quality Assurance (PHTQA) Certification Program

Poultry Service Association

The views expressed in the Poultry Handling and Transportation Manual are the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the governments of Canada and Ontario.

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Poultry Handling and Transportation Manual

There is a commitment within the poultry industry and with individual companies to address poultry welfare. All segments of the poultry supply chain accept the responsibility of humane poultry handling and minimizing stress to the birds during catching, loading, transporting, unloading and processing.

This manual and education program will help poultry stakeholders understand various aspects of poultry welfare and provide an opportunity to share company and industry expectations on handling poultry. The actions of all members in the poultry supply chain have a direct impact on both the physical and mental well-being of birds. Improper handling, catching, loading, transporting, unloading and processing practices create stress and may cause trauma to the birds. Workers who are careful and conscientious can reduce the potential for injuries.

The benefits of this training will accrue all along the poultry supply chain including farmers, poultry catchers, transporters, and processors. This training will:

- improve the well-being of poultry by reducing handling and transport stress;
- address customer/societal expectations and regulatory oversight, e.g. company reputation, retail audit requirements, government regulations; and,
- have positive financial implications for the poultry handling, transportation and processing sectors, e.g. minimize mortalities; maximize yields, protect product quality and shelf life, safeguard product integrity, etc.

Facility managers and key decision makers, while they may not spend time working directly with birds, also benefit from the knowledge gained from this manual and taking the education course. When they are aware of the responsibilities, laws and regulations, they are more equipped to support a culture of maintaining high standards for bird welfare. In addition, they will be equipped to better understand the challenges of transporting poultry and to offer support to those individuals who are tasked with the direct care of poultry on a daily basis.

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Please note that this manual is focused on poultry welfare. For worker safety practices and protocols for on-farm loading of chicken broilers and turkeys, refer to the Broiler Chicken Industry Safe Work Practices and the Turkey Safe Work Practices manuals. Both manuals are available at www.poultryserviceassociation.com.

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Disclaimer

The contents of this manual, associated training and presentations do not guarantee good practices in the handling and transporting of poultry. These are the sole responsibility of the poultry industry stakeholder.

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CHAPTER 1

Importance of Humane Handling and Transportation of Poultry

Importance of Humane Handling and Transportation of Poultry

After completing this chapter, participants will be able to:

- Understand the importance of bird welfare throughout the poultry industry.

Animal welfare has become a high profile issue for every segment of the farmed animal 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 farmed animal production system and stakeholders want assurances that transport is done with 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

procurement, 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 stress to the birds during catching, loading, transporting, unloading and processing.
- The actions of farmers, catchers, transporters and unloaders have a direct impact on both the physical and mental well-being of 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 well-being 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 for the poultry handling, transportation and processing sectors (e.g. minimize mortalities, maximize yields, protect meat quality, shelf life, etc.), and safeguard product integrity (e.g. food safety, etc.).

Why Treat Poultry Humanely?

- ✓ It's the **RIGHT THING TO DO!**
- ✓ Prevent pain and fear
- ✓ Prevent death, bruising and skeletal trauma such as broken bones or dislocated bones = Reduces monetary losses
- ✓ 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 <http://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. In addition, 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.

An excerpt from the Meat Hygiene Manual of Procedures, Chapter 12 relating to animal welfare obligations is included on the following page. This manual can be used to assist in meeting the requirements of Chapter 12 but it is the responsibility of individual companies to ensure that they are in compliance. 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.

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.

Meat Hygiene Manual of Procedures

Chapter 12: Food Animal Humane Handling and Slaughter

- Animal Welfare Requirements

Part A: All Species

Selected excerpts:

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):

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

Training material must address:

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

Elements of the Animal Welfare Control Program must include:

- names or position of the persons who are responsible for each task;
- specific methods and procedures that will be implemented to achieve the outcome standards expected by management (required outcomes);
- procedures and person(s) who are responsible to monitor and verify that the program is implemented and effective;
- the frequency and method of checking facilities and equipment;
- employee training, competence and supervision required to perform the task;
- procedures to record non-compliances and corrective actions that will /have been taken; and
- 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.

Source: <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/food/meat-and-poultry-products/manual-of-procedures/chapter-12/animal-welfare-requirements/eng/1392144659190/1392144660111> and accessed March 1, 2017.

Discussion Questions and Notes

1. Why is bird welfare important?

2. Are there laws that pertain to bird welfare?



CHAPTER 2

Biosecurity

Biosecurity

Objectives: After this chapter, participants will be able to...

- Appreciate the significance of biosecurity procedures in protecting poultry health.
- Understand the importance for drivers, catching crews, and other poultry handlers to follow good biosecurity practices.

Although all-in and all-out bird catching/loading is commonly practiced, it is usually at the floor or barn level, so there is still a disease risk to the birds that remain on the premises in other barns or in the same barn on another floor.

If all birds on the premises are shipped and the facilities will be cleaned and sanitized before placing a new flock, the biosecurity risk will be low.

The following provides guidance for general biosecurity measures. Please note that each company may have its own specific guidelines and that additional measures may periodically be required if disease is suspected or known to be present. 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?

Simply the protection of poultry from any type of:

- virus,
- bacteria,
- fungus, or
- parasite.

Impact of diseases and pests:

- compromise poultry health and welfare;
- 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 about biosecurity?

Your actions 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.

A major disease outbreak 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 working around live birds – from the hatchery to the farm or pullet barn, between barns on a premises, and from the farm to the processing plant.

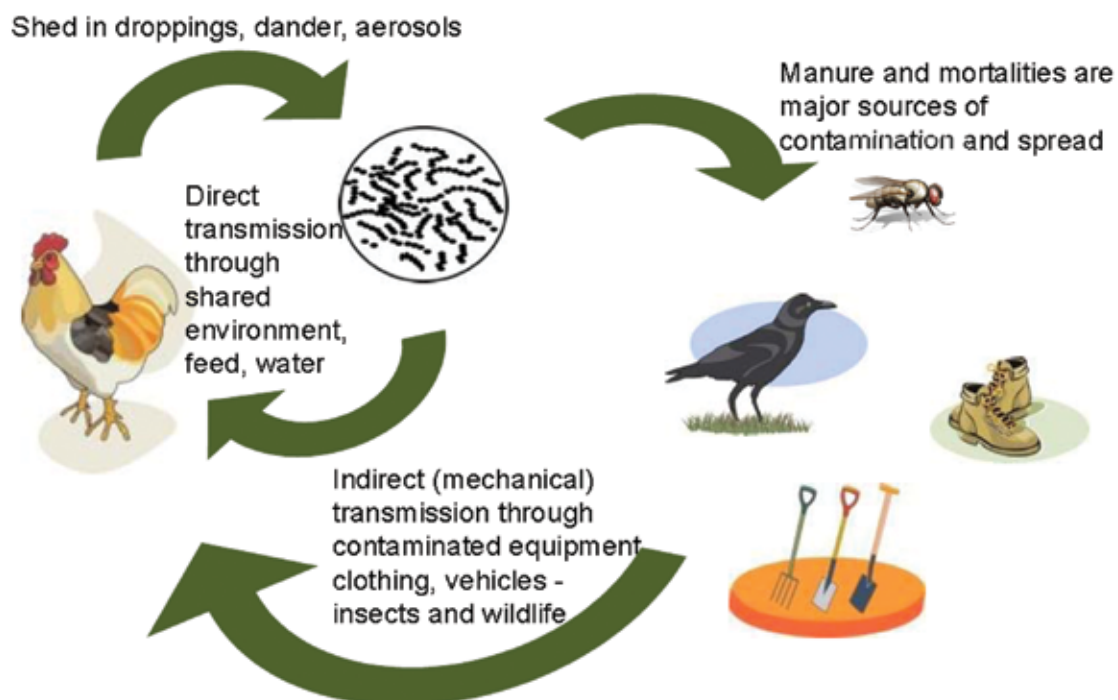
- First line of defense - **“keep disease out”**.
- If an issue arises - **“keep it in”** to prevent its spread.
- **“Shut it down”** as quickly as possible to reduce its impact.
- Some diseases are very difficult to get rid of once they become established in a flock. In certain cases, farmers may only 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 near impossible to eradicate is coccidiosis.



Pests and Disease can be Spread By

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

The Disease Cycle



General Biosecurity Precautions

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, if all birds on the premises are shipped and the facilities will be cleaned and disinfected before placing a new flock, the biosecurity risk will be low. Conversely, when dealing with young chicks or breeder and layer flocks, the concern is high.

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 potential 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, do pullet barn first then adults.
- Before arriving at work, all employees who handle or transport live birds should shower, and wear freshly laundered clothing, gloves and disinfected footwear.



- The use of disposable coveralls, boots, hats/hairnets, dust masks and gloves 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.
- 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 and wash hands with soap and water as soon as possible.
- Spray other items (safety glasses/goggles, pens, computers, scales, etc.) with a sanitizer after handling live birds and before using them again.
- Repeat the cleaning and disinfection process daily at a minimum.

Vehicles and Equipment

- Avoid driving near barns that contain live birds if possible.
- Drive slowly when near barns to minimize dust.
- Avoid parking by exhaust fans and air inlets unless required as part of loading or unloading.
- Look for designated visitor parking for crew vans.
- 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.
- Keep your own records identifying where you have been and when.
- Drivers should be aware of biosecurity practices to reduce risk of disease transmission between farms and facilities.
- All equipment used to load, unload, handle, or transport live poultry should be cleaned and sanitized regularly based on the level of biosecurity risk and concern. This includes the exteriors of vehicles, trailers, and any equipment added to the vehicle.



Vehicles

- Weather permitting, clean and sanitize the interior and exterior of the vehicle (including the trunk if applicable). Disinfect if necessary.
- The floor mats, steering wheel, and bucket and brush used for boot cleanup should also be 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 sanitize other equipment used on the farm, such as scales, computer, chains, panels, etc.
- Poultry containers¹ 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 the 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.

Heightened Disease Situation

Sometimes, flocks that are known to be health challenged 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 items such as coveralls, gloves, masks and boot covers as safety considerations allow. 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 van or truck 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 6: Are Birds Fit to Load?

1. The term "containers" within the context of this manual refers to crates, modules, totes, dollies, carts, drawers, and/or coops.

Discussion Questions and Notes

1. What steps can you take to prevent diseases from spreading from flock to flock, farm to farm, company to company?

2. When visiting multiple flocks in a day, how should you sequence your calls?

3. The manual describes minimum biosecurity procedures and heightened biosecurity procedures during disease situations. How are these two procedures different?

CHAPTER 3

Hatchery

Hatchery

Objectives: After this chapter, participants will be able to...

- Understand the physical and behavioral 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. Nearly all day-old poultry are shipped to farms in specially designed trucks.

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.



Behavior of Day-Old Poultry

- Day-old poultry hatch with a built-in food and water supply in the form of a yolk sac inside their bodies. If properly cared for, they can survive for a few days without additional feed or water. However, early introduction to feed and water stimulates beneficial gut development and overall growth.
- 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 or too cold 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 are not able to 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 some will be smothered. 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 human 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 not fully developed. Therefore, it is important that the hatchlings' environment and all surfaces they come into contact with be clean and sanitized. Remember to practice good biosecurity!



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/poults 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/truck design, and the location of the monitoring sensors. The sensors may be located in the cargo box, where the chicks/poults 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/poult environment. This is because the actual chick/poult box temperature and chicks/poults inside the box will be substantially hotter than outside the box. Hatcheries should determine the ideal range for their individual equipment by monitoring the condition of the chicks/poults from all parts of the truck upon delivery following 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/poults 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 freshly laundered clothing, coveralls, boots, and hair nets. Since the driver and the vehicle visit other farms on a regular basis, biosecurity is a concern. Drivers should visit only the loading area at the hatchery and only for as long as it takes to load the birds inside the vehicle. Drivers should not enter other hatchery locations.
- The birds are counted and placed in new cardboard boxes or in cleaned and disinfected plastic boxes. Ensure the plastic boxes are not damaged.
- 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 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 from time of hatching. 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

- Ensure the truck cargo area is warmed up prior to loading. See recommended temperature ranges in section below.
- 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. Avoid sudden, jarring movements.
- 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, 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 basic biosecurity measures as outlined in Chapter 2 of this manual. In addition, drivers must comply with any additional biosecurity measures requested by the farmer.
- As appropriate, wear protective clothing (e.g. coveralls, boot covers, hair net) while helping to unload the chick/poult boxes. Ideally, for biosecurity reasons, 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).
- Observe conditions in the barn. Note if the building has been adequately prepared to house birds:
 - Are 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?
- If barn conditions are clearly inadequate for the birds (i.e. temperature), placement should be delayed until corrected.



Unloading Floor Chicks and Poults

- Unloading should occur quickly so the chicks/poults are in the outside weather as little as possible.
- To avoid chilling the birds, keep truck and barn 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 the birds' exposure to weather.
- Boxes of chicks/poults 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.



- When emptying boxes, lower the box close to the floor and tip it so chicks/poults are unloaded onto the barn floor. 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.
- 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. This is done by gently tipping the boxes.
- 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 before proceeding to unload chicks. Do not exceed the guidelines provided.
- Check that 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 by forming a scoop with your hands. Chicks should never be squeezed during handling other than during sexing. Chicks should be supported from the bottom and placed gently into the pullet cage.
- 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.
- If handlers do not use gloves, they should wash their hands and/or use hand sanitizer before and after unloading.
- Close the cage door properly. Make sure chicks cannot escape their cages and fall into an area where they do not have access to feed and water.



After the Delivery

- Count empty boxes and dollies/carts and place them back in the truck. Then request the necessary delivery confirmation signatures from the customer.
- Drivers should remove their coveralls, hair nets and boots before getting back in the truck and leaving the farm. These items should either be discarded (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 potentially "contaminated." Upon returning to the hatchery, the vehicle should again be cleaned and disinfected.
- Drivers should follow the hatchery's biosecurity procedures before re-entering the hatchery.



Discussion Questions and Notes

1. Describe the behavior of day-old poultry when they are too cold or too hot.

2. What steps can the chick/poult truck driver take to keep the birds as comfortable as possible during...

- a. loading?
- b. in transit to the farm?
- c. unloading?

3. Baby chicks and poults have immature immune systems at hatch. What steps can be taken to reduce their exposure to infectious diseases...

- a. in the hatchery?
- b. inside the hatchery truck?
- c. at the farm?



CHAPTER 4

Vaccination

Vaccination

After this chapter, participants will be able to...

- Appreciate why poultry is vaccinated.
- Identify the different methods of vaccinating poultry.
- Understand the procedures for proper poultry vaccination.

Poultry is vaccinated to: protect the bird against specific diseases; promote performance; and confer protection from disease to offspring. Some vaccines, such as Salmonella vaccines, also protect human health.

Vaccination can be done in the hatchery or in the barn.

At the hatchery, vaccines can be administered in-ovo (in the egg), with a subcutaneous (under the skin) injection or via a spray cabinet with coarse spray or large droplet.

Vaccination in the barn can be administered by:

- course spray via backpack sprayer, either manual or electric pump;
 - The sprayer must be dedicated for vaccine use only.
 - Distilled water must be used when mixing the vaccine solution.
 - While vaccinating, turn down the lights and minimize ventilation.
 - Direct the spray 1 metre (3 feet) above the birds' heads.
 - As the spray drifts down on the birds you should observe birds head shaking which is a sign that the spray has come in contact with the birds' eyes, mouth and nasal passages.
- water vaccination through the water system;
 - This can be done with a medicator/proportioner or through a stock tank (preferred method).
 - Restrict the birds' access to water for about one hour in hot weather and at least two hours in the cooler months to ensure that all birds will be thirsty.
 - Knowing the water consumption of the flock is critical so that you can determine the right amount of stock solution to prepare.
 - Mix the vaccine with a stabilizer (usually skim milk powder) and a blue dye. When administering, the water lines are flushed till you see the blue dye coming out the end to ensure that the dye is throughout the water lines. You can see the dye on the birds' beaks to know that they have received a successful dose.
- intraocular (eye drop) or nasal spray;
 - The vaccine is mixed and put in the applicator bottle and a drop (0.03 mL) is placed into the eye or nasal cavity and absorbed.
 - Often blue dye is added to this vaccine to make identifying vaccinated birds easier. Blue dye on the bird's tongue indicates the vaccine was absorbed.



Dye on tongue = positive

- wing web with a two pronged needle applicator;
 - The bird is vaccinated on the underside of the wing.
 - If needed, remove feathers around the site to expose the skin for application.
 - Dip the needle in the vaccine and then pierce the middle of the skin web at the elbow joint.
 - Avoid feathers, bones and blood vessels.
 - Care should be taken to change needles as needed (every 500 birds).
- injectable vaccines.
 - These can be either subcutaneous (under the skin) or intramuscular (into a muscle).
 - Subcutaneous sites include the neck (pulling the skin on the back of the neck up to create a pocket between the skin and the neck muscles) and inguinal fold (the pocket created by the skin between the abdomen and the thigh).
 - Intramuscular sites include the breast, the leg muscle, the wing muscle and the tail head.
 - Avoid major vessels, nerves, joints and the bone.
 - Consider the appropriate gauge and size of needle for the type of vaccine being given.
 - Vaccine needs to be kept at an appropriate temperature. Cold vaccine will distress the birds but too warm will compromise the effectiveness of the vaccine.
- To vaccinate birds subcutaneously and intramuscularly requires at least two people: a bird handler to hold and present the bird while the other person prepares and gives the injection.
- The way you hold the bird will depend on where you are injecting the vaccine. Control the birds by securing their legs and wings. Refer to examples shown. Birds should never be carried by the head, neck, tail, or solely by the wing,
- Avoid dropping birds from height after vaccination.

Safety Issues:

Care should be taken with vaccines including storage, mixing, and application. Appropriate personal protective equipment should be worn during application to prevent inhalation, injection or ingestion. Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) should be kept at hand for all vaccines that you may use. For example: the adjuvants used with some injectables can cause significant harm if self-injected. The person should be taken immediately to hospital and the hospital staff presented with the MSDS sheet to aid in patient treatment.

KEY POINTS IN ADMINISTRATION OF INACTIVATED VACCINES

Preparation of Working Area



- Divide areas between vaccinated and non-vaccinated birds. Ensure netting is high enough so birds do not fly over.



- Use a comfortable, efficient working area.

Preparation of the Equipment



Before use:

- Sterilize syringe and use new needles (18G-19G x 1/4"-1/2").
- Check the equipment for accurate dose delivery. Calibration is mandatory. A calibrated tube may be used for dose calibration.

Preparation of the Vaccine

Warm-up the bottle



- Prepare the bath with clean water. Avoid dust getting into the bath.
- Take vaccine bottles from refrigerator 12 to 24 hours before vaccination and pre-warm the vaccine to the desired temperature (between 85-100°F).



Max.
100°F

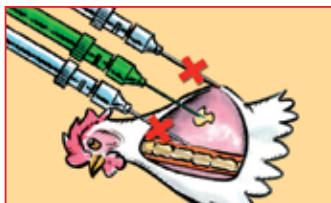
- Use a quick individual warm-up device to maintain spare bottles kept in cool pack.
- Do not overheat and cool-down bacterins (the vaccine emulsion can break-down and cause harsh reactions).



- Shake regularly to be sure that the emulsion is evenly warmed.

Vaccination Technique

Subcutaneous = SC
Intramuscular = IM



SC neck injection:

- Correct injection in the neck is critical. SC injection should be placed in the lower part of the neck, under the skin. DO NOT inject the neck muscles and/or bones!



IM breast injection:

- Inject into the thicker part of the breast muscle (approximately 1 to 1.5 inches lateral to the keel bone).



IM thigh/leg injection:

- Inject into side of the leg, midway between the hock joint and the knee joint.



SC injection of the inguinal fold:

- Place the needle directed horizontally toward the inguinal fold of the skin at approximately 45-degree angle to the back bone.



Bird handling:

- Take the bird by the wings and the legs.
- Do not stretch the legs too much backwards.



Bird positioning:

- Place the bird against the breast plate.
- Release the bird only when the red LED turn ON.



Bird positioning:

- The vaccine should be located inside the muscle, on the upper part of the breast.
- No vaccine should be observed on the feathers or superficially under the skin.



During injection:

- Check regularly for dose accuracy.



SC tail-head injection:

- Inject into the underside of the tail.
- DO NOT remove the needle too quick, to avoid vaccine leakage from the injection site.



During injection:

- Check regularly for dose accuracy.
- Occasionally gently shake the vaccine bottle.



- Randomly examine vaccinated birds to verify the correct site of vaccination.
- For SC, check for the presence of emulsion under the skin.

- Avoid causing trauma to the birds during vaccination or inducing infection with contaminated equipment.
- Change needles frequently (every 3,000 – 5,000 birds is recommended).
- Oil vaccines cause local reactions assuming longer immunity for better prevention and control of disease.
- Do not freeze inactivated products.
- Do not administer inactivated vaccines 42 days before slaughter.

Diagrams provided courtesy of Ceva Animal Health.

Discussion Questions and Notes

1. Why is poultry vaccinated?

2. What are some of the different methods of vaccinating poultry?

3. Why is blue dye added to water vaccines?

CHAPTER 5

Preparing Birds for Transport

Preparing Birds for Transport

Objectives: After completing this chapter, participants will be able to...

- Understand the importance of building design in reducing injury and poultry stress.
- Identify 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 improve the humane handling of loose-housed poultry. Farm owners must ensure that driveways and yards are well maintained and free from any obstructions.
- Farm owners should ensure that 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. Openings through which birds are passed must be wide enough to ensure that birds are not injured.
- For multi-storey barns, ensure that floors above the first floor are designed to support the maximum loaded weight of containers², 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 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 square feet for chickens and not less than 1.2 m²/13 square feet for turkeys without 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.



2. The term "containers" within the context of this manual refers to crates, modules, totes, dollies, carts, drawers, and/or coops.

- 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.
- Eaves trough 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/unloading area must be clear of ice and snow or have ice breakers or ice guards installed to protect workers and poultry from the possibility of falling ice and snow.

Flock Management

- 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.
- Barn conditions must be managed to keep birds dry, e.g. dry bedding applied to any damp areas of the barn, 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 6: Are Birds Fit to Load? for additional guidance.
- Euthanasia must result in a rapid loss of consciousness followed by death. It must be performed by personnel who have been properly trained and are competent in the euthanasia methods and protocols used on-farm.
- It is important for the farm owner or farm personnel to provide an accurate estimate of average bird weight and bird count so that the processor can plan for the appropriate number of containers required and calculate correct 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 the total number of chicks or poults placed.
- The farm owner or farm personnel are to advise processors of any health issues with the flock at any time prior to loading, 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.

Preparing for Catching and Transport

- The farm owner or manager should ensure birds are ready to load before crews arrive and euthanize all birds that should not be loaded.
- The farm owner or manager should also:
 - Evaluate flock fitness for transport 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, birds with red/flushed faces, combs and wattles or birds that are difficult to move (lethargic).
 - Implement procedures 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 contact the processor if birds are not fit for travel on the day of loading anytime up until the catchers arrive so that stakeholders³ can make informed decisions for bird welfare before loading starts.
- Communication amongst all stakeholders is 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.
- 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 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 or transporter, 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.
- 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 outside at the truck.
- DO NOT LOAD wet birds in cool or cold weather. Wet birds that are loaded in cool or cold weather are at high risk of poor welfare including death (DOA's).
- 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 eaves troughs.
- 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.



3. This manual uses the term "stakeholders" to encompass farmers (both shippers and receivers), catching company, transporter and processing plant.

Discussion Questions and Notes

1. What protocols should you follow to best prepare the flock for transport?

2. Why is it important to accurately report the number of birds and the average bird weight to the processor?

3. What are the signs of heat stress?

4. What are the concerns around loading wet birds?



CHAPTER 6

Are Birds Fit to Load?

Are Birds Fit to Load?

Objectives: After this chapter, participants will be able to...

- Recognize symptoms of a sick versus healthy poultry flock.
- Understand additional biosecurity procedures needed for handling a sick or quarantined flock.

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, external service providers (e.g. catching crew, transporter, etc.) 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 and to avoid loading compromised birds.



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 designated farm personnel. 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, 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 after departing.

Signs of a Healthy Flock

- Birds are alert, curious, active, eating, and drinking.
- Birds are close to each other in size (weight).
- 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 soiled with manure.
- Dead or sick birds, if any, are very difficult to spot.



Signs of a Sick Flock

- Many dead birds.
- Swollen, puffy heads and sinuses.
- Failure to react. Birds do not run away 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 or are unable to walk.
- Dirty or bloody vents.
- Hemorrhages on the skin and shanks.
- Diarrhea in conjunction with other symptoms.



Assessing Individual Birds

The farm owner or designated farm personnel should ensure birds are in good condition 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 designated farm personnel. Euthanasia should only be performed by properly trained and competent personnel.

Do Not Load:

Weak and/or not alert

- These birds may 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 may indicate that a bird is sick. The bird might also be compromised (weak, not alert, and thin).



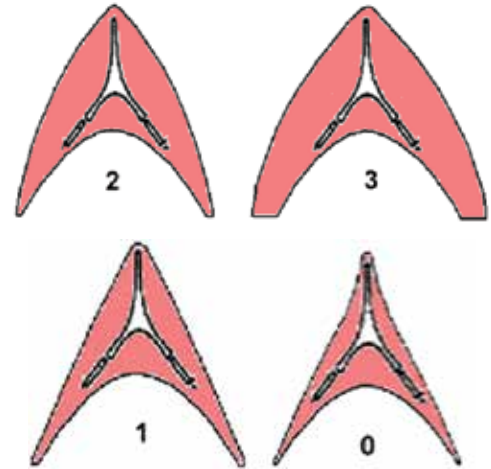
Bloody and/or prolapsed vents

- 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 condition in end-of-lay hens and broiler breeders.



Poor body condition

- **Body Condition Scores of 2 or 3** reflect healthy birds with good muscle tone.
- A **Body Condition Score of 1** can reflect a compromised broiler chicken or turkey.
- Segregate these birds and notify the farm manager or designated farm personnel.
- A **Body Condition Score of 0** reflects an emaciated, very thin and weak bird.
- The breastbone is very easy to feel.
- The muscles dip into the breastbone on the side (concave breast muscle).
- 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 dead-on-arrival (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. Cautionary measures might be needed, e.g. adjustment of loading densities, tarping, etc.

Dislocated, broken and/or exposed bones

- These injuries are painful. Catching and handling birds with dislocated and broken bones results in unnecessary pain. Health of Animals regulations are clear that transportation of animals with broken bones is unacceptable.
- Wings might droop on the ground and legs might stick out at odd angles.
- Legs might also be discoloured with bruises.
- Broken bones can also limit the bird's ability to move around in the container.
- Birds unable to rise or walk due to physical abnormality or injury should not be confused with turkeys that become fatigued during herding.



Caution in Loading

Under-sized birds.

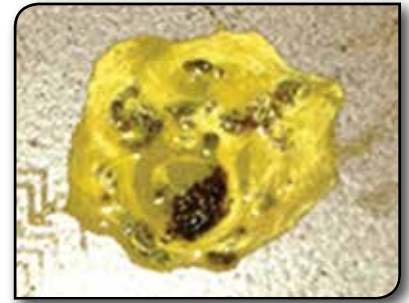
Culling undersized birds throughout the production period is a component of good flock management; small birds cannot properly access feed and water. Processing plants may not be able to accommodate smaller sized birds on their shackle lines and increases the potential for improper stunning and missing 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.

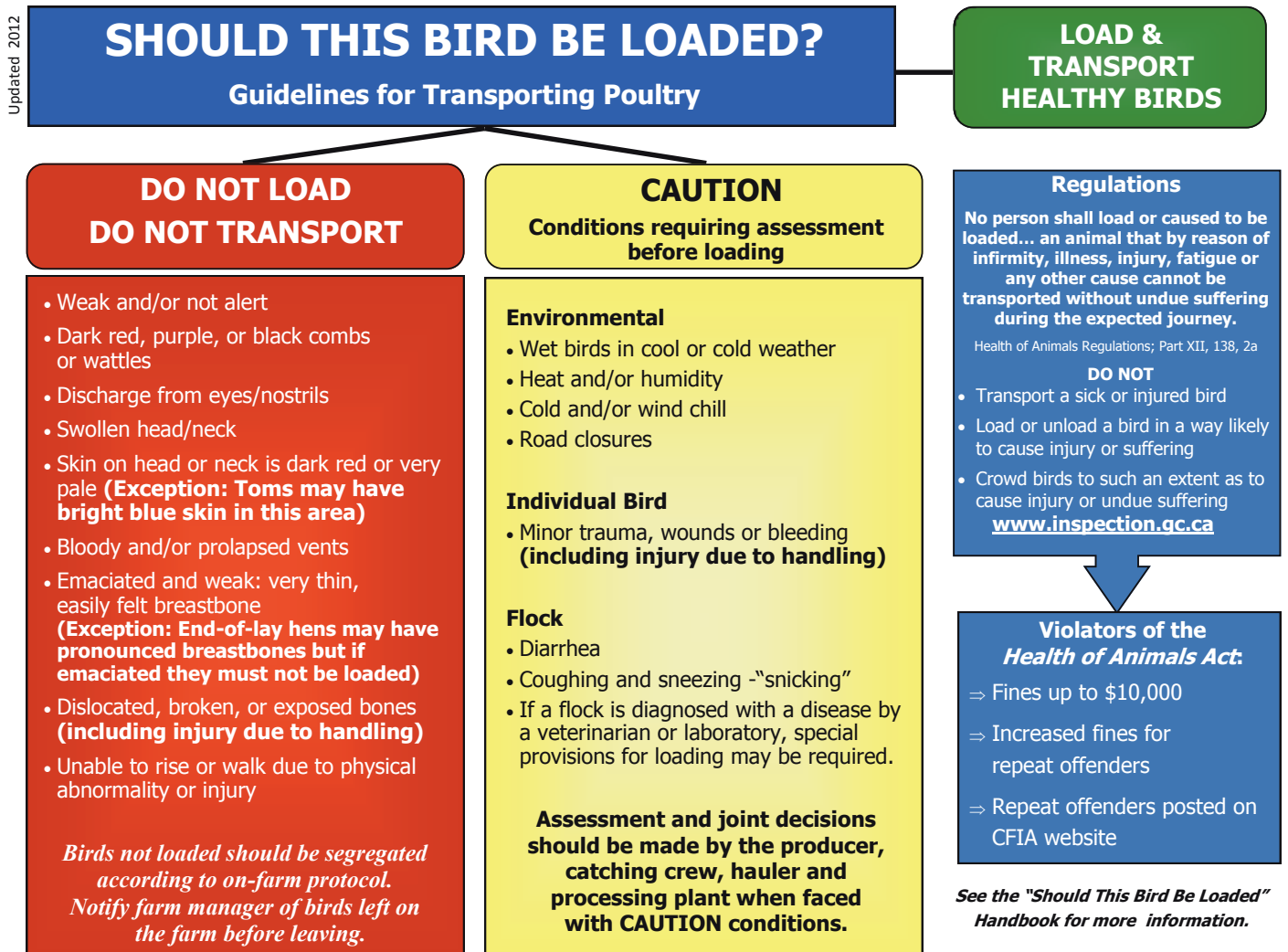
- The size of the injury should be considered, as well as its location and how the bird appears.
- If service providers are unsure whether a wound is severe enough to cause undue suffering during transport, speak to a supervisor.

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 cold weather.



Should This Bird Be Loaded? Decision Tree



Should This Bird Be Loaded? Decision Tree - Continued

Updated 2012

Guidelines for Dealing with Poultry

Identification of Sick or Injured Birds



Weak, not alert



Emaciated



Unable to walk



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



Swollen head



Discoloured comb



Broken leg

LOAD & TRANSPORT 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

Reference: The Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals - Poultry

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 the barn
- Ventilation in barn
- Condition of barn (eg. litter)

Recommended Code of Practice for the Care & 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, 2008) recommends for broilers, an upper **in load** temperature limit of 24°C.



Procedures for Loading a Health Challenged Flock

Be aware...

If the flock veterinarian or lab diagnosis confirms a health issue, the flock may still 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 avoid other farms. Choose alternate travel routes to keep contaminated dust and feathers from coming into contact with other farms and flocks.
 - Use disposable coveralls, boots, gloves, and hairnets, and leave them at the farm.
 - Disposable boots are preferred but if using rubber boots they must be cleaned until there is no visible dirt, feathers, or manure 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.

Discussion Questions and Notes

1. How can you tell if a bird should not be loaded?

2. What should you do with sick or injured birds you see at the time of loading?

CHAPTER 7

Pullets and Roosters (Layers and Broiler Breeders)

Pullets and Roosters (Layers and Broiler Breeders)

Objectives: After this chapter, participants will be able to...

- 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 at a pullet farm. They are then moved to a layer or breeder farm. 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 at a rearing facility. They are then moved to a breeder barn.

Bird Behavior

- 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 birds move away, usually as a group. This distance can vary among species and from flock to flock. Experienced catchers observe a flock’s reactions and adapt their movements and catching methods accordingly. New crew members need to be trained on basic bird behavior and to follow the actions and directions of experienced catchers so that everyone works as a team to move the flock.
- Some pullets and roosters are loose housed and others are caged; care needs to be taken when transferring birds from both systems.
- Birds may become heat stressed during catching and loading. Flocks should be watched closely for excessive panting, especially on hot days. 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.
- The following guidelines are important when moving any type of poultry but are even more important for pullets:
 - **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) colored 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. **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 containers⁴ 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 during handling.
- When removing pullets from the cage, control the birds by securing their legs and support the breast while lifting them from the cage. You can also hold the bird securely by cupping your hands around their wings. Carefully place birds into the container. Properly supporting the birds will reduce injury and possible damage to developing eggs.
- 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 and takes 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 containers, 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 behavior 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 will not recognize the crew and will react accordingly. Dark clothing is preferable to white.

4. The term "containers" within the context of this manual refers to crates, modules, totes, dollies, carts, drawers, and/or coops.

- 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 flock into a panic. The entire flock may pile up at the other end of the barn. Likewise, if a crew member tries to quickly get in and grab some birds, the whole group may startle and fly off to the opposite end of the building and pile up. 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 herd birds in total 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.

- Move poultry in small groups to a loading area to reduce bird stress.

- Smothering is the leading cause of mortality during loading birds although broiler breeder 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 the net 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 other floors with birds remaining.

- 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 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.

- Birds may be carried by the legs, with no more than four birds in each hand. 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.

- Do not catch wings on the frame of the cage opening while removing birds from cages.

- Keep legs and wings free from the doors when closing and securing containers.

- Roosters are loaded the same way as loose housed pullets but there will be fewer birds per container.

- The number of birds placed into each container is determined by the relevant 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 and cold.
- 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.
- Depending on the trailer design, 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.
- When loading in hot weather, do not 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 when loading and transporting during extreme periods of heat and humidity:

- 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.
- If loading damp birds, load them last if possible.
- 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 e.g. regularly service engines, top-up fluids, etc.



Minimize COLD stress when loading and transporting during periods of extreme cold, snow or wind chill:

- 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 container 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. 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 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 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 doors to allow poultry to exit on their own. Some birds may have to be removed from the container 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 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.



Discussion Questions and Notes

1. Why are there additional handling considerations with pullets versus meat birds?

2. According to this chapter, what is the proper method to restrain a caged pullet?

3. Why is it important to not place too many birds into a layer cage?

4. Describe symptoms of heat stress and cold stress in transported poultry.

5. When loading and transporting pullets during hot weather, what are some different practices you might consider to reduce heat stress?

CHAPTER 8

Broilers

Broilers

Objectives: After this chapter, participants will be able to...

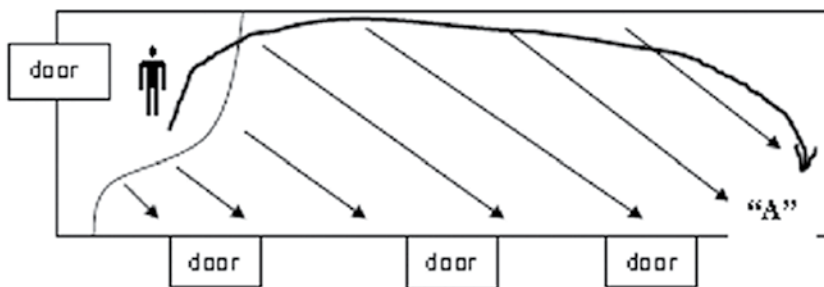
- Appreciate the importance of maintaining containers⁵ in good repair.
- Understand the different catching techniques used for broilers compared to pullets and end of lay fowl.
- Understand how to minimize heat and/or cold stress during catching and transport.

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



Bird Behavior

- 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 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 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.

- 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 in hot weather. To reduce the chance of heat stress in hot weather, loading is often performed at night or early in the morning when it is cooler.
- Other factors that can result in increased stress 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.



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

Preparing to Move Commercial Broilers

Factors to consider when transporting and handling broilers:

- Type of housing, number of floors of birds.
- Time of day or night that birds are caught. This will affect temperature and light availability.
- Size and weight of birds as well as size of containers. Bird size and container size will determine the number of birds that can be transported per container. 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. Catcher fatigue may also negatively impact bird welfare. Ensure that there is enough staff to load the containers and that they have adequate rest breaks.

Broiler Safety Issues

Broken equipment and overloading may cause distress or even death.

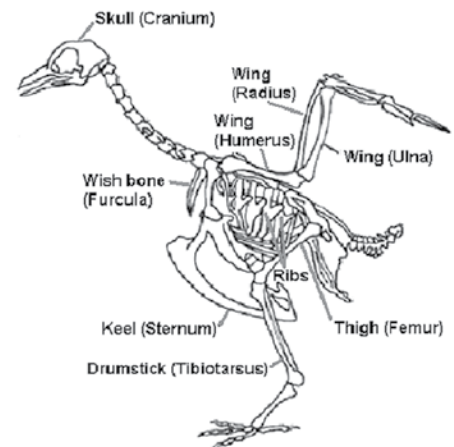
- Inspect transport containers for;
 - broken doors, sides, bottoms, and
 - protruding wires.



- 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 6 for further guidance.
- All birds should be able to rest on the floor of the container at the same time without being on top of each other.
- Be aware of how the surrounding temperature might affect the number of birds per container.

COMMON TYPES OF TRAUMA IN BROILERS:

- **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.



HANDLE BIRDS CAREFULLY:

- **DO NOT** swing birds by the legs when you are carrying them.
- **DO NOT** carry birds by wings or neck.
- **DO NOT** carry more than FOUR birds in one hand, unless instructed by your supervisor.
- **DO NOT** throw or drop birds.
- Minimize passing of birds between people.

- 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 should 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 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.
- The number of birds per hand should be based on bird size, age and catcher capability. For chickens that weigh more than 1.8 kgs (4 lbs.), the maximum number of birds per hand is four.
- Heavier birds should be carried by two legs.
- To prevent bone breakage, bruising, or damage, do not carry birds by the neck or wings.



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 conveyer 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 calm 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

- When loaded into containers, birds must be in an upright position to avoid smothering.
- Transport containers should be appropriately sized and maintained to avoid injury to the birds inside and to prevent them from escaping.
- 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 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) and taillights.
- 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.

Protect birds from extreme heat and cold. 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 the stakeholders 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 during loading and transporting during extreme periods of heat and humidity:

- All stakeholders⁶ 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.
- 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. In extreme heat, maximum loading densities should be decreased by 15% to 20%.
- Load birds in the minimum time possible without compromising bird welfare.
- If loading damp birds, load them last if possible.



- 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, e.g. regularly service engines, top-up fluids, etc.

6. This manual uses the term "stakeholders" to encompass farmers (both shippers and receivers), catching company, transporter and processing plant.

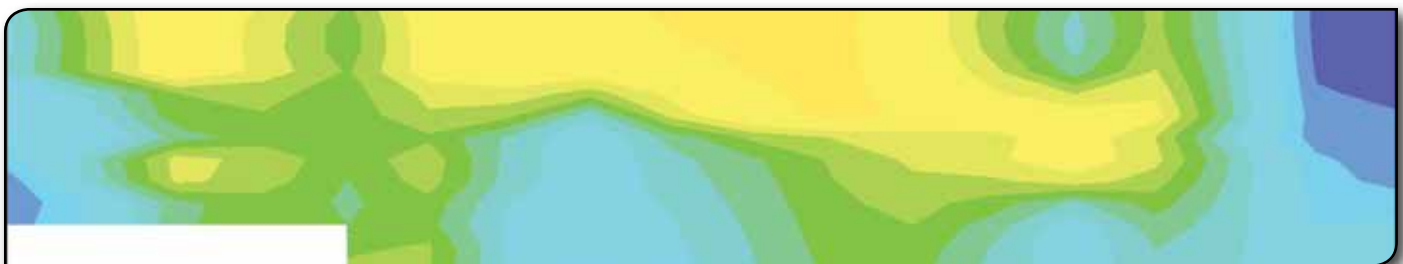
Minimize COLD stress when loading and transporting during periods of extreme cold, snow or wind chill:

- 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.

The 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.

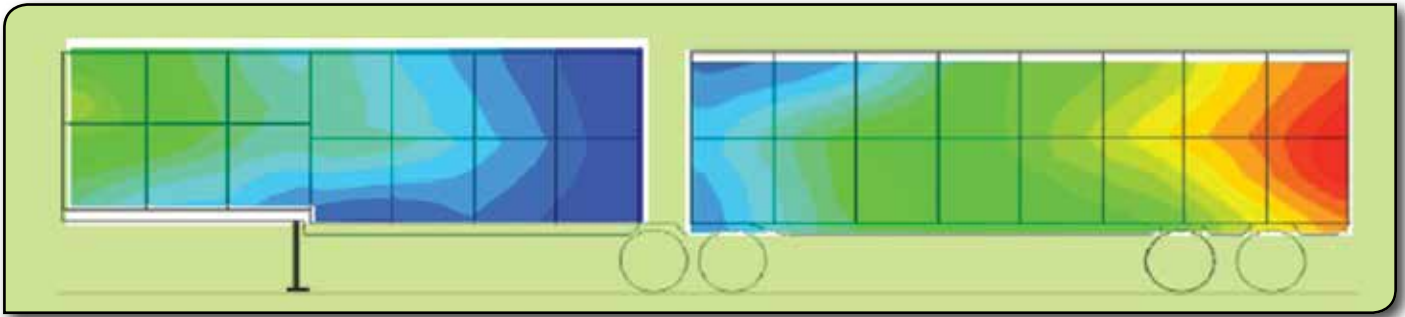


Front

Rear

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.



Temperature Distribution in B-train Trailer courtesy Trever Crowe, University of Saskatchewan

- 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:
 - 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.



Discussion Questions and Notes

1. What is the maximum number of broilers that can be caught in EACH hand? Why would you double leg catch?

2. What changes should you make to accommodate daylight versus night time loading?

3. What protocols should you follow for loading during high heat or extremely cold conditions?

4. What are the concerns around loading wet birds?

CHAPTER 9

Turkeys

Turkeys

Objectives: After this chapter, participants will be able to...

- 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 dead on arrival (DOAs) at the plant. Deliberate abuse of the birds is not tolerated and is punishable by law.



Bird Behavior

- Turkeys are curious and will often walk towards people when people enter a barn. Turkeys are also 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, usually as a group. This distance can vary from flock to flock. Experienced handlers 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.
- Turkeys may become heat stressed during catching and loading. It is important to prevent overheating especially with heavy toms. 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 done at night or early in the morning when it is cooler.
- Other stressors include:
 - **Speed:** If approached too quickly, turkeys may become excited causing them to pile up, jump or fly suddenly to escape from the crew. Handlers 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 containers⁷. Follow the container 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 discussed in Chapter 6 for further guidance.
 - Turkeys 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.
- Weather conditions (e.g. temperature, humidity, precipitation, etc.) during the loading and time in transit may require extra measures be taken.



Turkey Safety Issues

Broken equipment and overloading may cause injuries or even death.

Catchers, stuffers⁸ and transporters need to:

- Inspect containers for:
 - broken doors, sides, bottoms, and
 - protruding wires.
- Make note of damaged containers and do not 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 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.

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.



7. The term "containers" within the context of this manual refers to crates, modules, totes, dollies, carts, drawers, and/or coops.

8. Individuals who catch turkeys at the top of the conveyor.

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 behavior 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 turkeys 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.
- 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 result in heart attacks or injury.

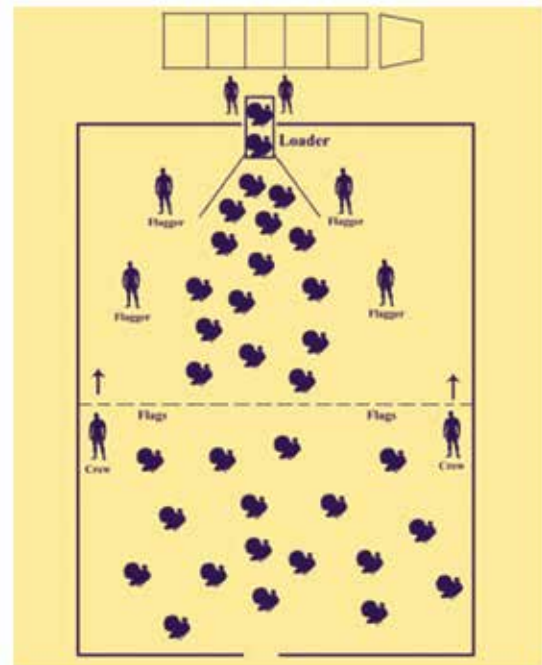


Diagram © Lindsay Harlow 2010



- 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 two legs just above the feet. Carry heavy turkeys by both legs and one wing.
- 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 birds calm and will allow the operators to maintain a slow, steady belt speed.
- In the case of a bird getting caught, stop the equipment. Determine how the bird is caught in the loader and free the bird by carefully reversing the conveyor. 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 after 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.
- 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.



HAND CATCHING

- **DO NOT** swing birds by the legs when you are carrying them.
- **DO NOT** carry birds by wings or neck only, but you may need to control the bird's wing actions to avoid injury.
- Based on bird size, maximum amount of birds to carry is no more than three birds total, two in one hand and one in the other.
- **DO NOT** throw or drop birds.

COMMON TYPES OF TRAUMA IN TURKEYS:

- **Broken wing bones** (Radius, Ulna, Humerus) as a result of loading and herding
- **Dislocated joints** from poor handling during load out procedures
- **Scratching and bruising** from herding and rough handling.

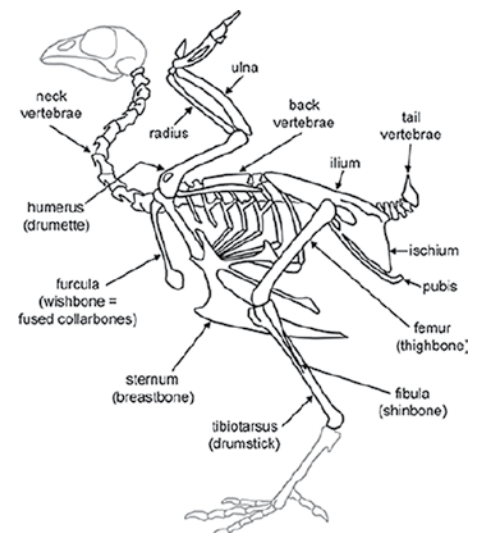


Diagram of a Turkey Skeleton

- 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 discussed in Chapter 6 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, Transport, and Lairage

Protect turkeys from extreme heat and cold. Provide adequate ventilation for comfort and to decrease stress. 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 transporting during extreme periods of heat and humidity:

- All stakeholders⁹ 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 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.
- If loading damp turkeys, load them last if possible.
- 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, e.g. regularly service engines, top-up fluids, etc..



9. This manual uses the term "stakeholders" to encompass farmers (both shippers and receivers), catching company, transporter and processing plant.

Minimize COLD stress when loading and transporting 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 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.



Discussion Questions and Notes

1. What problems can arise if turkeys are herded too quickly?

2. If a turkey must be carried, what is the proper way to do this?

3. What is the proper technique for placing a turkey into the transport container?

4. What is the proper method of moving turkeys from one end of the barn to the other?

CHAPTER 10

End of Lay Fowl
(Layers and Breeders)

End of Lay Fowl (Layers and Breeders)

Objectives: After this chapter, participants will be able to...

- 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 of these birds places them at greater risk for injuries, such as broken bones and scratches, if handled improperly. It is important to carefully handle these birds at all times. Due to potential poor feathering, end of lay fowl also must be protected against weather extremes when removed from farm buildings.



Bird Behavior

- 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.
- 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.
- The following factors can increase stress 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) colored 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 containers¹⁰.
- 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 will be injured.
 - Birds must not be thrown, crushed, kicked, mishandled or abused in any other way. 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.



10. The term "containers" within the context of this manual refers to crates, modules, totes, dollies, carts, drawers, and/or coops.

- **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 nets or catch pens for loading.
- Push empty containers into the laying area. Lift each caught bird by the upper hocks or thighs while supporting the breast, 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. 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 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 behavior 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. This can be improved by using a center door or two doors in different areas of the barn.
- If present, load roosters last.



Loading, Transport, and Holding

- Provide adequate ventilation for comfort and to decrease stress.
- 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.
- 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 and cold.
- 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.

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 when loading and transporting during extreme periods of heat and humidity:

- All stakeholders¹¹ 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, do not tightly stack containers on the trailer. If applicable, 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 containers onto the truck.
- If using dollies, 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.
- If loading damp birds, load them last if possible.
- 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 to the processing 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 hot weather e.g. regularly service engines, top-up fluids, etc..



11. This manual uses the term “stakeholders” to encompass farmers (both shippers and receivers), catching company, transporter and processing plant.

Minimize COLD stress when loading and transporting 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. 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. 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 at delivery to the plant, 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:
 - 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.

Discussion Questions and Notes

1. Name two welfare concerns that specifically pertain to end of lay fowl during handling and transportation.

2. In many cases, end of lay fowl are first loaded into containers inside the rows of the barn. When the containers are full, they are loaded onto the truck. Why would it be beneficial to not load the containers onto the truck as they are filled?

3. What is the correct method to carry loose housed end of lay fowl to the container?



CHAPTER 11

Transportation Safety and Emergency Response

Transportation Safety and Emergency Response

Objectives: After this chapter, participants will be able to...

- Identify what emergency supplies to carry in the trucks.
- Understand what procedures to follow in case of an emergency.
- Appreciate how to work with the accident responders and to safely handle 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 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:

1. saving life;
2. maintaining public safety; and,
3. salvaging animals and property.



Preparation

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

- Reflective safety vest.
- Bolt cutters.
- Flashlight with extra batteries.
- Complete first aid kit.
- 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 federal and provincial 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.

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 for weight of the load.
- Use a speed appropriate for weather and road conditions.
- Be aware of personal health and well-being.
- Know the route and traveling distance. When appropriate, plan for location/status reporting.
- Clearly identify stopping points for rest and meals.
- Be aware of other drivers and be mindful of 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 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 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 metres/500 feet 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, do not 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.



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, 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. 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.
- 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. turkey liners, dollies, pullet carts, modular units, etc.), 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 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, re-load the birds fit for transport into containers, 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 may be possible to gently, quietly and calmly herd or direct a small group of birds in a specific direction. A long-handled dip net is ideal 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 make a statement when possible about the accident and the actions being taken or provide them with an appropriate contact.



Discussion Questions and Notes

1. Besides federal or provincial mandated safety equipment, what additional items might you consider carrying in trucks?

2. What are some factors to consider regarding the welfare of the birds in the case of a) a mechanical breakdown and b) an accident?

3. In the case of an accident, what procedures might be performed to render aid to the birds?

CHAPTER 12

Lairage and Live Receiving at Processing Plant

Lairage and Live Receiving at Processing Plant

Objectives: After this chapter, participants will be able to...

- 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.
- Understand the proper procedures for humanely handling birds while unloading and shackling.

Screening Upon Arrival at Processing Facility

- Companies are encouraged to develop and implement animal welfare policies and procedures for receiving and monitoring bird welfare.
- 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 and sneezing;
 - bloody and/or prolapsed vents;
 - dislocated, broken and/or exposed bones;
 - twisting of the head and neck;
 - cuts and lesions; or
 - off-colour or bloody diarrhea and feces.



Refer to Chapter 6: Are Birds Fit to Load? 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 without 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.



Edema in wattle

- 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.
- Loads with distressed birds must be slaughtered as soon as possible.



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 suitable equipment to ensure proper cooling/warming of birds according to established protocols, 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 a 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 outlined in company protocols.



Unloading

Equipment is to be operated and bird handling practices are to be conducted in such a way to avoid distress and injury.

- Containers¹² 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 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.

HANDLE BIRDS CAREFULLY

- **DO NOT** lift birds by the head or neck or solely by the wings.
- **DO NOT** throw or drop birds.
- **DO NOT** allow birds to pile up on conveyors.
- **DO NOT** slam or use excessive force when shackling birds.
- Ensure birds are shackled by two legs.



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, after confirming they are dead, place them in the assigned containers.

12. The term "containers" within the context of this manual refers to crates, modules, totes, dollies, carts, drawers, and/or coops.

- Obviously injured, moribund or birds otherwise unfit for slaughter must be removed, promptly and humanely euthanized by a trained and competent employee. After confirming the bird is dead, it is placed in a designated bin.
- 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. If lines are stopped due to a mechanical breakdown birds should either be removed or euthanized.
- The design of live hang lines should prevent sudden corners, changes in elevation, movements or obstructions that startle the birds or cause wing flapping.



SIGNS OF PROPERLY ELECTRICALLY STUNNED POULTRY

- neck arched with head held vertically;
- no rhythmic breathing;
- rigidly extended legs;
- constant, rapid body tremors;
- absence of a third eyelid (nictitating membrane) reflex; and,
- wings held tightly against body.



Absence of a third eyelid reflex.

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.

SIGNS OF EFFECTIVE GAS STUNNING CAN INCLUDE

- loss of posture;
- loss of rhythmic breathing;
- pupils dilated; and
- wings drooping.

General Requirement

- Birds must be rendered insensible by the stunner; birds should be monitored for insensibility. 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.
- Stunning methods 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 are 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 or plant breakdown.



A ventral neck cut is made across main blood vessels; carotid arteries and jugular veins.

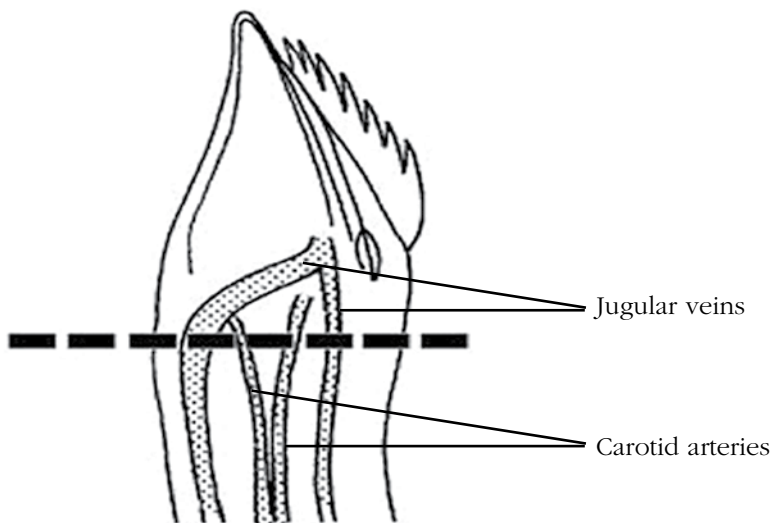


Image: Humane Slaughter Association, 2005

Discussion Questions and Notes

1. What are some visible signs of distress or disease that should be recorded and reported following inspection upon load arrival at the processing facility?

2. What is the proper procedure for shackling poultry?

3. What are the signs of properly stunned poultry; both electrical and gas?

4. How quickly after electrical stunning must the birds be bled and for how long?



CHAPTER 13

Media Relations

Media Relations

Objectives: After this chapter, participants will be able to...

- Recognize what phrases or actions to avoid during an interview.
- Understand how verbal and non-verbal behaviors 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.
- Do not 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.
- Do not ever go with a reporter to watch any video footage.
- Do not get angry at reporters.
- At all costs avoid jokes; one-liners, clichés, and off-the-cuff comments.
- Do not express personal opinions.



Never say “No comment.” Saying this makes it seem like you are hiding something. If necessary, explain why it is not appropriate or possible for you to answer the question.

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.
- Do not 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.

For additional training and resources related to media and difficult questions or people, contact Farm & Food Care Canada at www.farmfoodcare.org/canada.

