

**ANIMAL WELFARE AND
BROILER CHICKEN PRODUCTION**

Article X.X.3.

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2. Semi-intensive systems

~~Birds~~ Broilers are confined in a ~~roofed structure~~ poultry house but provided with ~~an~~ access to a restricted outdoor area. ~~They may be kept in cages (e.g. wire or plastic floor or deep litter floor) or on deep litter, a slatted floor or a combination of the two.~~

Rationale for commenting on Article X.X.3:
Editorial suggestion

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Article X.X.4.

Criteria or measurables for the welfare of broilers

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It would be impractical at this time to assign numeric values to measurables (e.g. to specify a certain mortality rate as 'acceptable' or 'optimum',) due to the large variations in the commercial production systems used by OIE Members.

Rationale for commenting on Article X.X.4:
Inserted a missing closed parenthesis.

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The following outcome based measurables are useful indicators of broiler welfare:

1. Mortality (dead, culled) and morbidity

Daily, weekly and cumulative mortality (dead or culled) and morbidity rates should be within expected ranges. Any abrupt increase in the daily mortality or morbidity rate not connected to a specific disease could reflect a different animal welfare problem.

Rationale for commenting on Article X.X.4.1:
Connections between animal health and welfare have been stated as one reason for the OIE's assuming responsibility for setting international animal welfare standards. In contrast, the text provided implies that disease problems are distinct from welfare problems. By the OIE's definition of 'animal welfare,' poor health, including the presence of disease, is a welfare problem. Therefore, if disease is ruled out, then we are looking at a different animal welfare problem.

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3. Contact dermatitis

Contact dermatitis affects skin surfaces ~~which that~~ have prolonged contact with litter or other flooring surfaces, including the foot pad, rear surface of the hock and, when severe, the breast area. The conditions are manifested as blackened skin progressing to erosions and fibrosis on the lower surface of the foot pad, at the back of the hocks, and sometimes in the breast area. If severe the foot and hock lesions may contribute to lameness or serve as a portal of entry for secondary ~~infections~~ pathogens.

Rationale for commenting on Article X.X.4.3:

Editorial suggestion

Infection,' as defined by the OIE, "means the entry and development or multiplication of an infectious agent in the body of humans or animals." Infections, however, not enter lesions; infections are the result of pathogens that enter lesions. An alternative to 'pathogens' may be 'infectious agents.'

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7. Abnormal behaviour - feather pecking and cannibalism

Feather pecking is the pecking or pulling of the feathers of other broilers, and can result in significant feather loss. Cannibalism is the tearing of the flesh of another bird, and can result in severe injury, and even the death of the pecked broiler. These are abnormal behaviours (Mench and Keeling, 2001; Rodenberg and Koene, 2004; Newberry, 2004) with multi-factorial causes that are not usually seen in commercial broiler stocks, although they can occur under some circumstances. Feather pecking may sometimes lead to cannibalism or may occur independently; once started, these problems can spread rapidly through the flock.

General comment for Article X.X.4.7:

Feather pecking can include self-pecking (self-mutilation) or pecking of others (allopecking) with different causes. Should a distinction between these two problems be acknowledged?

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Article X.X.5.

Recommendations

1. Biosecurity and animal health

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2. Environment and management

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2.13. Handling and inspection

Broilers should be inspected at least twice every a day. ~~This inspection~~ Inspection should have three main objectives: ~~to pick up dead birds;~~ 1) to identify sick or injured ~~birds~~ broilers to treat or cull them, and 2) to detect and correct any welfare or health problem in the flock (e.g. related to the supply of feed and water, thermal conditions, ventilation, litter quality), and 3) to pick up dead broilers.

Inspection should be done in such a way that ~~birds~~ broilers are not unnecessarily disturbed, for example ~~personnel~~ animal handlers should move quietly and slowly through the flock.

Rationale for commenting on Article X.X.5.2.13:

We assume the intent was to replace the word 'personnel' with 'animal handlers', but in the version provided for comment both words were struckthrough.