

Consultation on Standards for Soil Association Organic Poultry

July 2012



Summary

Poultry is an area in which non-organic farming has moved far from anything which might be considered natural for a chicken, with huge decreases in costs of production through intensification and industrialisation. This has disconnected large numbers of indoor-reared poultry from the farmland required to feed them and dispose of their waste. The very low cost of non-organic chicken and eggs has inevitably put pressure on organic producers and standards-setters to achieve reductions in cost by moving to more intensive organic production. This has resulted in a wide range of scales and types of organic poultry production in the EU. The standards under which organic poultry are kept for eggs and meat have been subject to considerable debate and, despite Soil Association standards being in place since 1987, common European organic standards were not agreed until 2000. Our experience of the implementation of both sets of organic standards for many years has shed light on the strengths and weaknesses of each and prompted a review of our own standards that we hope will also provide a basis for influencing EU standard-setting in this sector.

Organic standards have always protected chickens from the worst abuses of intensive production, but we aim to do better than simply avoid the worst aspects of other systems. We are determined to strengthen our standards in line with organic principles, improving their impact in light of current scientific evidence, the experience of organic producers, as well as ideas from pioneering non-organic schemes such as woodland production.

Why are we proposing to change our standards?

We know we have high standards but we also know from our own inspections that in some cases their intended outcome is not delivered on the ground, particularly with regard to the welfare of the birds and the management of the pasture. Along with support to producers through advice and training, we want to make sure our standards are as effective as possible in achieving their intended results.

Up until now, in the absence of objective, repeatable methods to measure bird welfare, our standards have aimed to deliver high welfare by tightly controlling various factors of the birds' surroundings. Our current standards specify each detail of the housing and range design, effectively prescribing a uniform system for our farmers that has the fewest risk factors for bird health and well-being. But this one-size-fits-all approach has some drawbacks. Our strict requirements exclude some innovative management practices that are proven to be effective and in doing so, our standards may fail to deliver best practice.

Recent results and experience from AssureWel, the research partnership between the Soil Association, Bristol University and the RSPCA, have given us the scientific basis to assess welfare outcomes objectively through a clear set of inspectable measures. Being able to evaluate welfare itself, rather than relying on a set of proxies, allows us to manage risk effectively within a more diverse range of systems.

This 'outcome-based approach' is a way of checking that the system is achieving what it is set up to achieve and is more rigorous while being less prescriptive. Being clear about the required outcomes within the standards gives producers the means to innovate within this framework and design their individual system to comply whilst meeting the

demands of their specific market. It will also help producers and inspectors focus on what is important to birds and their place in the whole farm system.

For example, the weight of current scientific evidence does not strongly support the theory that flock size per se is a key factor in bird welfare.¹ A lower flock size is likely to be easier to manage, easier to assess and easier to integrate into a mixed farming system, but that's not to say that a skilled and attentive stockperson could not manage a larger flock to achieve equally high outcomes. Meanwhile, there is strong evidence that range quality is a crucial factor in bird welfare. Good range encourages the birds to roam further by providing belts of shelter from predators and the weather, so birds never feel far from safety. Enrichment, such as a tall crop to explore, keeps the birds interested and outside for longer, while a thriving ecosystem on the pasture allows them to supplement their diet by foraging for worms and insects.

With more sophisticated assessment tools at our disposal, we are in a position to review our standards to help farmers to deliver consistently excellent outcomes in their organic systems. Given the diversity of location, size and systems, the outcomes approach means that both compliance and best practice can be achieved in different ways across the country. It also provides a structure for recognising achievement among our producers.

What we are doing

This review changes the way we write standards by re-focusing on the principles of organic production and adopting an outcomes approach for poultry on Soil Association farms. We have extended this approach beyond welfare to cover all aspects of organic poultry management, including environmental and resource-use elements of the system.

To achieve this we have reviewed each section of the current layer and table bird standards and specified:

- the overall aims of the section
- the outcomes that the system must achieve
- the key requirements that producers must meet
- what good practice looks like, specifying the direction for those wanting to go the extra mile.

We have also identified specific criteria for assessing whether the outcomes have been achieved and examples are given below. These details will be supplied separately to the standards and will give producers a clear guide to what their inspector will be looking for on their visit as well as providing the basis for on-going self-assessment.

¹ References and further reading are provided on our consultation website: www.soilassociation.org/consultation

Consultation

The proposals within this document have been developed with the Soil Association's Poultry Working Group and the Agriculture Standards Committee. They aim to improve the impact of our organic standards and promote best practice among our producers, in line with the Soil Association's strategy. However, at this stage they are only proposals and we want to hear your feedback to make sure we get our standards right. Soil Association standards for poultry should be challenging yet practical, covering the crucial factors that affect the welfare of the birds and the sustainability of the system, as well as yielding high quality organic produce. An open and thorough consultation is a crucial part of the process to ensure that all views are considered when drafting the standards.

We will hold two rounds of consultation. In the first round we intend to have an open discussion about the general approach and proposed draft standards. Feedback from this will allow us to refine a set of standards proposals that we will consult on in the second round. Alongside the second round we will also seek views on our overall strategy for promoting best practice in the poultry sector, recognising that we can contribute not only through our standards but also through practical work with farmers, the supply chain and consumers, and advocating improvements in policy.

The first round of consultation will run from July 16th to August 27th 2012 and we invite responses from all with an interest in organic standards, whether they are producers, retailers, consumers, farming and environmental organisations or others.

At all stages in the consultation you can find out what is happening and submit your comments here:

- On-line at www.soilassociation.org/consultation
- by e-mailing consultation@soilassociation.org
- calling 0117 314 5000 and requesting the Standards Team
- or writing to Consultations, Soil Association, South Plaza, Marlborough Street, Bristol, BS1 3NX

An 'outcomes' approach to welfare...and beyond

Most welfare standards for farm animals, such as those used by farm assurance schemes, are based on 'inputs': they describe what must be provided to the animals in terms of certain resources such as housing, space, feed, veterinary care and management practices.

However, from the animal's point of view, many of these factors interact and assessing the provision of resources alone is not sufficient to get the whole picture. It is important therefore to also look at the impact of these inputs on the health, physical condition and behaviour of the animals. Directly assessing the animals themselves tells us whether the 'outcome' of all the interactions between the various aspects of their environment is resulting in a good life for the animal. This process is known as 'welfare outcome assessment'. It is a practical and scientifically informed method of assessment that aims to provide a more objective, accurate and direct picture of animal welfare.

Essentially, this is a way of checking that the system is achieving what it is set up to achieve – a valid test in any standards. Since excellent welfare is just one of the many things an organic system aims to achieve, we propose to extend the outcomes approach

to cover all aspects of organic poultry management, including environmental and resource-use elements of the system. Making the aims and required outcomes explicit within the standards provides producers with a clear basis for regular self-assessment against the 'big picture' objectives.

A change in structure

This review changes the way we write standards by re-focusing on the principles of organic production and adopting an outcomes approach for poultry on Soil Association farms.

To achieve this we have reviewed each section of the current laying and table bird standards to specify:

- the overall aims of the section
- the outcomes that the system must achieve
- the key requirements that producers must meet
- what good practice looks like, specifying the direction for those wanting to go the extra mile.

Aims for chapter

At the beginning of the poultry chapter we will provide an accessible summary of what we aim to achieve with our standards in this farming sector. This will also serve as a short explanation for consumers and others, such as journalists, of the characteristics and benefits of Soil Association poultry production.

Example:

Soil Association organic standards for poultry aim to produce high quality, high welfare food from birds that are healthy and thriving and reared in a way that encourages them to carry out their natural behaviour. Birds are given easy access to pasture with shelter and vegetation that allows them to range and forage freely outdoors and are provided with comfortable housing. The system is also designed to reduce environmental impact through integration with other farming enterprises - manure is recycled into nutrients for crops, birds have a natural diet grown as locally as possible, while soil health on the range is maintained through regular rotation.

Aims for section

At the beginning of each section of the standards we will state the aims that the subsequent requirements are intended to achieve. The aims clarify the overarching objectives of each element of the system and highlight the organic principles as a point of reference to guide decision-making on farm.

Example:

- Birds are healthy and thriving, and exhibit natural behaviour.

Outcomes

Each section will state a list of outcomes that need to be achieved for a system to fully meet the aims of the standards. A focus on outcomes is an acknowledgement that there is more than one way to do things and gives the producer the opportunity to demonstrate compliance. If our farmers know the key outcomes we want their system to achieve, they can innovate within this framework and design their individual system to comply whilst meeting the demands of their specific market. Given the diversity of location, size and systems, the outcomes approach means that both compliance and best practice can be achieved in different ways across the country. It also provides a structure for self-assessment and for recognising achievements among our producers.

Example:

- The results from the key welfare measures indicate excellent bird health and welfare
- Birds have not undergone any mutilation
- Self-assessment of the key welfare measures is carried out regularly and the farmer/manager acts to avert problems and improve the results
- The farmer/manager has demonstrable knowledge of bird health and welfare and is competent in self-assessment

Note: Key welfare measures are set out below under 'assessment criteria'.

Requirements

There is still a place for a prescriptive element to the standards and some of them link to sections of the European Organic Regulation that we are legally obliged to include. We will retain many of our resource-based standards as they secure some important outcomes. The 'Requirements' section will include those of the current standards we are keeping and any new standards that need to be specific and rigidly applied.

Example:

20.5.3

You must monitor the health and welfare of your poultry and keep records of:

For all poultry:

- veterinary treatments
- mortalities and the cause of death
- footpad dermatitis

For broilers only:

- hock damage, and
- reject percentages and the cause of rejection.

Good Practice

These recommendations for good practice highlight ways to optimise your system.

Example:

You should:

- choose a breed that is suitable to thrive under organic, free-range conditions
- use slow growing strains for meat production.

Assessment criteria

For those who are used to working with the current standards, the outcomes may at first appear lacking in quantitative detail. Our aim is to afford the farmer flexibility to meet

these outcomes in a number of different ways, but we want to apply more rigour, rather than less, in assessing whether the outcomes are achieved. Provided separately to the standards will be a set of specific assessment criteria that will give producers a clear guide to what their inspectors will be looking for. These will be developed in tandem with the new standards, but the following provides an example of how we might inspect against the welfare outcomes listed earlier:

- *Key welfare measures for hens:*
At inspection, your inspector will assess a sample of 50 of your oldest hens for the key welfare measures. These are:
 1. Feather loss on the back and rump area and the head and neck area
 2. CleanlinessWhilst with the flock they will note:
 3. Antagonistic behaviours
 4. Flightiness
 5. Presence of hens requiring further care

- *Key welfare measures for table birds:*
Your inspector will assess a sample of 50 birds for:
 1. Cleanliness
 2. Lameness
 3. Skin lesions on wing and/or leg
 4. Respiratory problemsWhilst with the flock they will note:
 5. Any abnormal behaviour

- You must provide evidence that the farmer/manager has been assessing the flock monthly for the key welfare measures as above. Where the results highlight an issue, evidence that action has been taken to remedy or manage the problem will be requested.

- The inspector will carry out joint scoring of a small number of birds to ensure the farmer/manager is competent in self-assessment

Proposed standards changes

In the following section we propose aims, outcomes and several standards changes for each section of the existing laying and table poultry standards. At this point, these are suggestions only, and we invite your feedback and contributions.

For clarity, amendments to existing standards are written in the following format: Underlined text is new text; text with ~~strikethrough~~ is deleted; normal text is unchanged.

Chapter 10 Animal welfare

It is suggested that the following is added to the animal welfare chapter in order to introduce the concept of welfare outcomes assessment and clarify our intention to extend this approach to all livestock species in time.

Most welfare standards for farm animals, such as those used by farm assurance schemes, are based on 'inputs': they describe what must be provided to the animals in terms of certain resources such as housing, space, feed, veterinary care and management practices.

But, it is important to know what effect these inputs are having on the welfare of the animals and therefore we need to look at the 'outcomes': the impact of these inputs on the health, physical condition and behaviour of the animals themselves. This process is known as 'welfare outcome assessment'. It is a practical and scientifically informed method of assessment that aims to provide a more objective, accurate and direct picture of animal welfare.

We are reviewing and evolving our standards for livestock to incorporate measuring animal based outcomes as part of the inspection process and to encourage self-assessment of these measures by the stockperson as part of their on-going management and care of their stock. The first revision is of our poultry standards in which we outline their expected outcomes.

20.1 Poultry within your farm system

Aims

- The poultry enterprise is fully integrated into a mixed or diverse farming system
- Land used for the poultry enterprise has good soil health, supports vegetation and is disease-free.

Outcomes

- At least one third of feed and bedding material is grown on farm or on a linked farm
- Manure from the poultry house is used responsibly and does not exceed the farm's/ linked farm's nitrogen allowance
- Nutrients from the poultry range are used effectively within the rotation.

A central tenet of organic farming is the whole system approach. In a mixed farming system, pollution and waste are avoided by turning outputs from one enterprise into valuable inputs for another. The environmental sustainability credentials of organic poultry production rest on the recycling of manure into nutrients for crops, the health of the soil on the range and the provenance of feed and bedding from a local organic source. We propose the above aims and outcomes in order to focus attention on this important element of the standards.

20.2 Converting table and laying poultry

Aims

- Birds are well-adapted to their organic, free range living conditions
- The poultry enterprise is well-managed to organic standards

Outcomes

- Use of organic chicks/pullets from organic parent flocks
- No or minimal use of non-organic inputs to the system

The above aims and outcomes are suggested with the intention of highlighting the importance of using appropriate breeds to thrive outdoors and organic stock to maintain the integrity of the system. No significant changes are proposed to the existing standards.

20.5 Welfare of poultry

Aims

- Birds are healthy and thriving, and exhibit natural behaviour.

Outcomes

- The results from the key welfare measures indicate excellent bird health and welfare
- Birds have not undergone any mutilation
- Self-assessment of the key welfare measures is carried out regularly and the farmer/manager acts to avert problems and improve the results
- The farmer/manager has demonstrable knowledge of bird health and welfare and is competent in self-assessment

The outcomes above have been added with the intention of allowing us to test how well the resources satisfy the needs of the birds and to what extent they use, and benefit from the opportunities provided by the resources. Inspectors will use welfare outcome measures alongside the resource standards to give a rounded view of the welfare on farm. Close monitoring of animal health and welfare is essential in order to be able to detect and remedy problems before they become serious issues. Regularly focusing on a sample of individual animals looking for key animal-based indicators provides objective evidence of what is really happening at animal level and gives early warning to adapt management strategies to solve the issue. It is important therefore that the stockperson is also using the welfare outcome measures and adapting the management in the day-to-day care of the animals to promote best health and welfare.

The existing standards will remain in place to complement the above outcomes, with one amendment for clarification:

20.3.2

You must maintain good standards of health and welfare in your flock. If you do not, ~~we will require you to~~ you must change the way you manage your operation poultry enterprise in order to retain Soil Association certification.

20.6 Feeding poultry

Aims

- Birds have ready daytime access to a natural diet that meets their nutritional requirements

Outcomes

- Birds have easy access to grit, feed and water
- Natural sources of food from the range are optimised
- There are good scores on key welfare measures, especially on stress-related factors such as aggressive behaviour and injurious feather pecking
- Feed contains only permitted ingredients

The outcomes for this section largely reflect the existing requirements, with an additional welfare check. However, the requirement to optimise nutrition from the range is a new introduction to these standards.

Protein sources for organic poultry feed have been subject to long discussion within the EU. Poultry are naturally omnivorous and grain-based organic feeds do not typically provide sufficient methionine and lysine (essential amino acids) to support modern breeds and their production rates. The addition of synthetic amino acids is banned in organic poultry diets by the EU Organic Regulation. Historically this gap has been met with a small permitted inclusion of non-organic protein crops such as soya or by adding fishmeal to the diet. The EU intends to phase out the use of non-organic crops by 2015 and significant challenges remain if this deadline is to be met. There is evidence that much of the birds' requirement for these proteins can be met through foraging on a well-managed insect-rich pasture. This option is far preferable to the use of non-organic feeds in environmental terms and fits with the aims and outcomes from other sections of our standards that emphasise the importance of soil health, appropriate vegetation on the range and the use of suitable robust breeds. Our intention is to steer producers towards this path and communicate it to the consumer to create a market for this approach.

20.7 Housing poultry

Aims

- The housing environment facilitates the expression of the birds' natural behaviour
- Birds utilise the whole indoor and outdoor environment
- Birds can move freely in, out and around the house and obtain refuge from bullying
- Flock size is appropriate for the level of management provided
- Birds are not in excessive competition for access to feeders and drinkers
- The housing facilities are in good condition and provide good thermal conditions, humidity and air quality
- The poultry enterprise is integrated into the whole farm system
- Disease is avoided through good range rotation and management
- Manure deposited in the house and on the range is used effectively

Outcomes

- There are good scores in key welfare measures, especially cleanliness and aggression

- Birds show no lameness or leg injury
- Birds are carrying out natural behaviour
- All birds are actively using the range
- Housing gives easy access to the range for all birds
- The house provides areas for refuge
- Birds do not exhibit signs of thermal stress
- Mobile housing is used where possible
- There is no or limited soil and pasture damage
- There are no disease or parasite problems
- Manure collected in the house is used effectively to produce organic crops on the farm or on linked units
- Manure deposited on the range is used effectively by the vegetation or following crops

Housing is one of the major financial investments in any poultry production system. Decisions about the size and nature of the house can have a profound effect on the way in which the system performs, how well it fits within the farm and the demands it places on the wider environment. Housing provides many of the resources and opportunities that the birds require to meet their fundamental needs to live a good life and to grow or lay in a way that allows the producer to make a return on their investment. It can also have a significant impact on the nature, quantity and quality of work involved in running the enterprise. Good decisions about housing can be hard to make. Bad decisions about housing can be hard to live with – for the farmer and for their birds.

The outcomes for this section seek to highlight the wide range of functions that housing must fulfil and that it must deliver good outcomes in all areas at all times.

Flock size

Flock size is directly linked to choice of house and has been the Soil Association's key point of difference among UK and EU organic certifiers, with the intention of guaranteeing the optimal system for both the birds and the environment. Our lower flock size limits were designed as a precautionary measure to ensure compliance to other elements of the standards. However, experience has shown that smaller flocks do not necessarily result in better outcomes with regard to the welfare of the birds and the management of the range.

Current scientific evidence does not strongly support the theory that flock size per se is a key factor in bird welfare.² Instead, the most important management criteria appear to be: amount of space per hen; total space available; ease of access to the range; enrichment and shelter on the range; availability of refuge within the house; and regular and attentive inspection of the birds. Many of these factors are more straightforward to manage with a lower flock size – assessment of the birds will be quicker, range vegetation is more easily maintained and the enterprise may be simpler to integrate into a mixed farming system. For these reasons, some Soil Association producers find a smaller flock suits their system best and choose not to go to the maximum flock size permitted in our standards. However, we also know that a larger flock can be kept to equally high welfare and environmental outcomes with skilful and attentive management.

² References and further reading are provided on our consultation website: www.soilassociation.org/consultation

In the light of recent research into management practices and welfare assessment, we propose to shift our focus away from limiting flock size as a way of trying to deliver good results and to concentrate more directly on welfare outcomes within the standards. Our intention is to ensure that Soil Association standards on welfare and environmental performance are high in the most meaningful areas. One way forward would be to offer flexibility within the standards to go up to the EU Organic Regulation's flock size limits but balance this with tougher requirements for all producers on welfare outcomes and range management – which is what the original flock size limits were designed to achieve. There would be no change to the required amount of space per bird in the house or on the range – a larger flock will require correspondingly larger areas indoors and outside.

The current standards permit producers to use a higher flock size if their management plan demonstrates sufficient measures to safeguard the health and welfare of the birds and maintain good environmental conditions. It is stated that if health and welfare breaks down, the flock size must be reduced. However, this approach has proved problematic to implement and is not always the most practical or effective way of addressing welfare issues among the birds. As such, the current standards may be seen more as a punitive measure than an appropriate solution to welfare problems. Improving the range quality, housing design or litter management may be more effective, depending on the specific problem. The only punitive measure in place should be the loss of Soil Association certification.

Therefore, it is suggested that in terms of implementing these standards, compliance is focused directly on the outcomes. A management plan will be required for all flocks, but if a producer is not achieving satisfactory outcomes, regardless of flock size, then they will be required to adapt their system to address the underlying problem. For example, if the birds are not ranging well, there may be a number of ways to remedy this and the responsibility is on the farmer to find the best way to do this. One might choose to plant more bushes on the range to provide better shelter and enrichment, while another might find that reducing their flock size works best for them. Either way, in order to award Soil Association certification their inspector will need to see evidence that the birds are ranging better, the situation is being monitored and the outcome has been achieved.

It is proposed that the current flock size section of the housing standards is deleted and replaced with the simple statement of the current EU Organic Regulation flock size limits. The intention is for producers to find the flock size that enables them to achieve the required outcomes within their farm system and with the management resources they have available.

20.7.19

The number of birds in each poultry house must **not** exceed:

- 3000 laying hens
- 4800 table birds
- 3200 male or 4000 female ducks
- 5200 guineafowl
- 2500 turkeys or geese

To put these in context, the RSPCA's Freedom Food standards specify a flock size limit of 16,000 laying hens and have no upper limit on table birds, though their guidance suggests a limit of 15,000. Non-free-range poultry in the UK are typically kept in sheds of 40,000 table birds and 100,000 laying hens.

Scientific research has shown that in flock sizes above 100 the birds do not form stable social groups as they are unable to recognise more than 100 birds individually.³ Instead of trying to enforce a hierarchy, they adopt an approach of social tolerance, which means that levels of aggression tend to be lower. This information invalidates standard 20.7.2 and we therefore propose to remove it.

20.7.2

~~If your housing unit has more than 100 adult birds then you must allow the development of social groups within the unit through:~~

- ~~• the number and distribution of feeders, drinkers and other facilities, and~~
- ~~• providing partitions.~~

20.8 Access to pasture and range

Aims

- Birds are ranging and foraging sufficiently to meet their behavioural and nutritional needs
- Poultry have easy daytime access to disease-free range with good ground cover, appropriate overhead cover and environmental enrichment
- The flock and pasture/ranging area are actively managed to encourage birds to fully utilize the whole outdoor environment

Outcomes

- There is clear evidence that all birds are using most of the ranging area
- There are specific management practices to encourage extensive ranging by all birds
- There are excellent scores in key welfare measures
- Birds have easy access to and from the range
- Birds have easy access to water when outdoors
- Birds have enrichment and overhead protection from predators and the weather throughout the ranging area
- Birds have the opportunity to forage, rest, preen, dust-bathe and socialise.
- There is no or limited aggressive behaviour
- There is good ground cover on most of the range at all times
- Parasite infections and disease are non-existent or at low levels

Our aim is for the Soil Association's key point of difference in poultry production to be excellent range quality and use, with healthy soil, appropriate vegetation, cover and enrichment that result in a genuine outdoor life for the birds. Good range encourages the birds to roam further by providing belts of shelter from predators and the weather, so birds never feel far from safety. Enrichment, such as a tall crop to explore, keeps the birds interested and outside for longer, while a thriving ecosystem on the pasture allows them to supplement their diet by foraging for worms and insects. Range quality has been identified as one of the key factors in poultry welfare and the standards need to make sure that Soil Association certified systems deliver in this area. The variety in range quality currently seen between licensees could be addressed by moving to a more

³ References and further reading are provided on our consultation website:
www.soilassociation.org/consultation

outcome-based approach where the evidence that the birds are using the range fully becomes the focal point of the licensee's responsibility and the inspection process. This would enable us to accommodate the findings of the recently published scientific research which identifies pasture management practices that improve the welfare and quality of life, as well as the key role of the range in providing a proportion of the birds' nutritional needs.⁴

In addition to the above outcomes, the following further changes are proposed to add rigour to the ranging requirements:

20.8.2

Your poultry must have:

- ~~access to properly managed pastures which are well covered with suitable vegetation~~
- ~~access to shelter at all times~~
- ~~protection from predators, and~~
- ~~enough cover in the free range areas to imitate their native habitat and encourage them to range fully. This can be either natural (such as trees, shrubs and cover crops) and/or artificial (such as screens and trailers).~~

20.8.2

You must demonstrate that you are actively managing your flock and pasture/ranging area to encourage your birds to fully utilize the whole environment to express their natural behaviour and fulfill their needs.

This must include:

- Building design to enable all birds easy access to and from the range
- Access to water and foraging, with good ground cover of suitable vegetation
- Protection from the weather and predators throughout the ranging area
- Environmental enrichment throughout the ranging area
- Specific management practices to encourage extensive ranging by all birds.

20.8.3

Your poultry must have continuous and easy daytime access to pasture, except in adverse weather conditions, from an early age, but at least for:

- all the laying life of laying poultry
at least two thirds of the life of table poultry.

20.8.8

Waterfowl must have access to a stream, pond or lake whenever the weather allows, with sufficient water for them to sit in and dip their heads into.

20.7 Transporting and handling poultry

Aims

- Birds are comfortable throughout transport and handling

⁴ References and further reading are provided on our consultation website:
www.soilassociation.org/consultation

Outcomes

- Caught birds are free from injury and fit to transport
- Birds are thermally comfortable at all times
- Birds arrive at their destination in good condition
- Unfit birds are not transported and are dealt with humanely without delay

It is proposed that the following recommendations are changed to requirements to fully safeguard the welfare of the birds. However, the first bullet point has been deleted from 20.9.1 due to its impracticality – birds could be injured if standing during transport.

20.9.1

During transport you ~~should~~ **must** make sure your birds have:

- ~~enough space to rest and stand up without restriction~~
- protection from large fluctuations in temperature, humidity and air pressure, and
- shelter from extremes of weather.

20.9.2

You ~~should~~ **must not** leave a vehicle that is loaded with poultry for any length of time unless there are suitable ventilation facilities for them.

Feedback

We invite your feedback on any and every proposal within this document. We are committed to the outcomes approach and we are keen to hear whether you think we have identified the correct outcomes here, or if you can suggest alternatives or additions to improve them. We also want to know if the management requirements are appropriate and whether the proposed aims fit with your vision of organic poultry. In addition, we welcome your suggestions for implementing these standards in the most practical way, along with any research or experience that might inform the development of the standards.

We have tried to explain the thinking behind the most significant changes we are proposing, but at this stage it is very much an open process and the final standards will depend on your feedback to the consultation. Our aim is to work with organic producers, consumers and everyone in between to develop robust standards for organic poultry production and support best practice in the sector.

Please send your views to consultation@soilassociation.org or get in touch on 0117314500 if you would like to talk about the consultation by telephone or arrange a meeting.

The proposed standards amendments are provided in full in Appendix 1.