

GOOD LIFE OPPORTUNITIES FRAMEWORK

Laying hens

HANDBOOK



LivWel+

Livestock Positive Welfare





Positive welfare leads to a good life

Good farm animal welfare is about more than preventing harm to animals – it's about creating the conditions for every animal to enjoy life. Animals value **positive experiences** such as feeling comfort, pleasure, interest, confidence, and good health. Allowing animals to make their own individual choices is also valuable. These help them to be relaxed, content, and able to cope well, which also supports growth and productivity. Enjoyable experiences are known as “**positive welfare**”.

To date, the main focus for farm animal welfare has been on preventing suffering. This approach is captured in the “Five Freedoms” for animal welfare, which aims to make sure animals are free from hunger and thirst, discomfort, pain, injury, disease, fear, distress, and from being stopped from behaving naturally. These harmful experiences are described as “**negative welfare**” which continue to be monitored and minimised.

For welfare to be truly good, positive experiences need to greatly outweigh any negative ones.

Defra's Animal Welfare Committee (formerly the Farm Animal Welfare Council) explains this through the idea of a “good life.” They rank animal welfare on a scale:

- **Life not worth living** – mostly negative experiences.
- **Life worth living** – a mix of positive and negative experiences.
- **Good life** – mostly positive experiences.

If animals are given resources (e.g. space, companions or enrichment) they value and that allow them to feel comfort, pleasure, interest, confidence, and good health, they have the chance to experience positive welfare and live a “good life.”

Good Life Opportunity Framework - Positive welfare tiers

Using advice from experts and research from scientific studies, scientists have created a framework that shows what farm animals need to feel comfort, pleasure, interest, confidence, and good health – and therefore live a good life.

The framework has three levels, ranging from **Welfare +**, giving animals some positive experiences that are better than the legal minimum standards, to **Welfare +++**, giving animals the best possible chance for a good life, with many opportunities for positive experiences

Moving up the tiers, animals have:



- More favoured resources (from the animal's point of view)
- A greater amount of resources
- More choice in resources
- Monitoring of behaviour and use of resources, so changes can be made to give them even more positive experiences

Defining opportunities for a good life for livestock

There are five categories of opportunities for positive experiences in farm animals:

Comfort

- Comfort focuses on the animals' ability to choose an environment that is physically and thermally comfortable.

Pleasure

- Beyond meeting their basic needs, hens gain pleasure from food – especially when they have a choice in what they eat and can carry out natural activities like foraging and grazing.
- Young hens also enjoy performing pleasurable behaviours like play.
- Hens also experience pleasure from nurturing experiences between mother and chicks.

Confidence

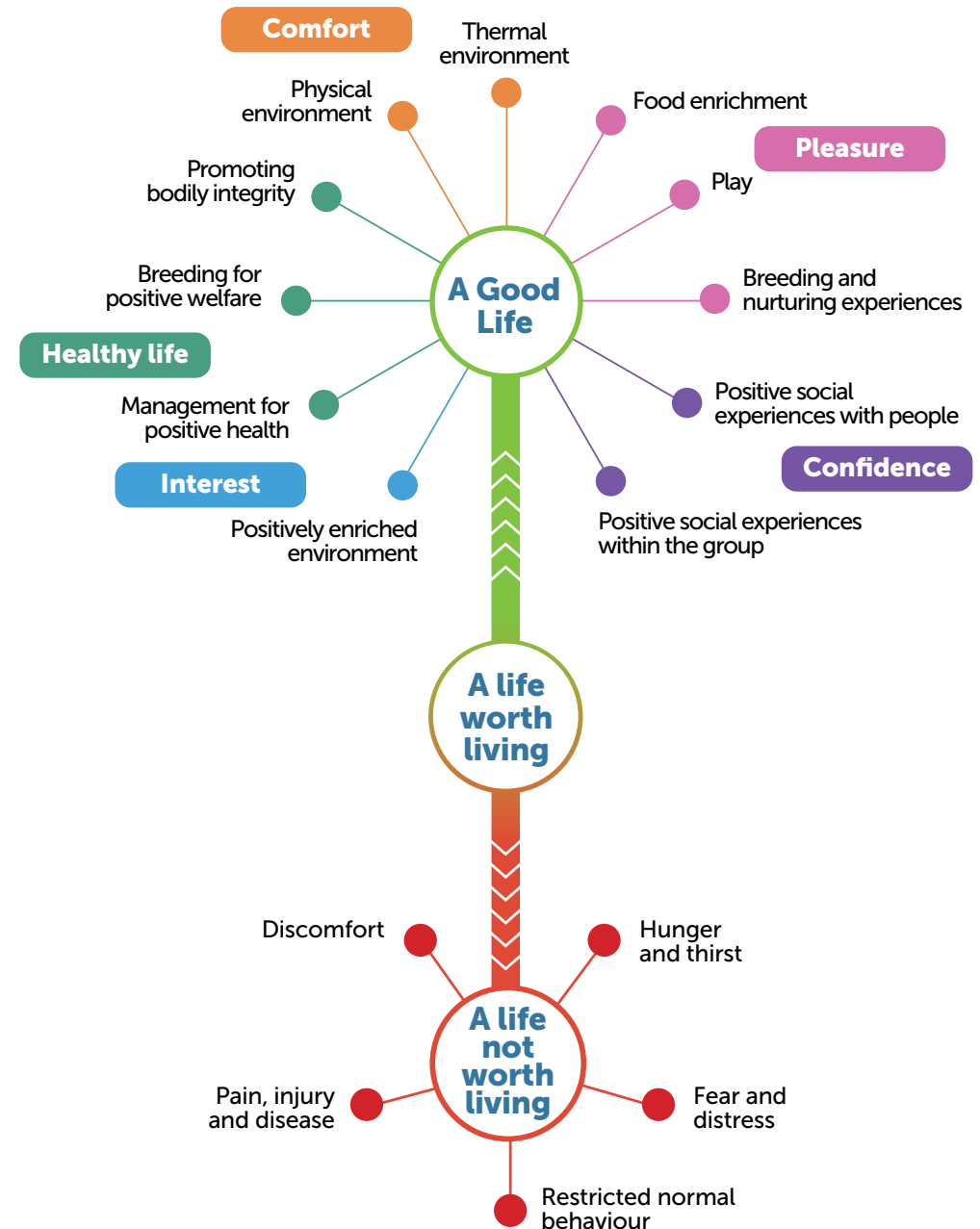
- When hens are handled and managed in ways that help them feel safe, they can build trust with and enjoy the company of people.
- Hens are flock animals and want to be around other chickens.

Interest

- Hens are inquisitive animals. They benefit from chances to explore, learn, show natural behaviours, and make choices in a varied and interesting environment throughout their lives.

Healthy life

- A healthy life is needed for a good life with day-to-day health managed effectively.
- Long term health and welfare is positively influenced by breeding choices.
- By not removing part of the beak, hens are able to perform behaviours that are core to their basic nature.



Comfort: Physical environment

POSITIVE FRAMEWORK TIERS



- Floors and perches are sufficiently dry and clean
- Perches:
 - are aerial
 - allow all birds to perch at the same time and rest undisturbed
 - correct diameter for the bird to grasp
 - comfortable i.e. no sharp corners
- Design and location of perches, tiers and ramps ensure prevention of collisions, falls, trapping of claws and defecating on other birds
- Perches and platforms at different levels to support different behavioural uses (e.g. rest, preening), including refuge from other birds
- Litter is dry and compressible
- Suitable level and period of darkness (8 hours) for undisturbed, nighttime rest plus a period of twilight



- Separate dimly lit resting area provided
- For the first two weeks of life, chicks should be provided with dark brooders or mother hens of sufficient size/quantity that most (>50%) can rest beneath them
- At least two types of perch e.g. different diameters, shapes and/or materials. (The most preferred type is wooden with a diameter of 3–5 cm and a rounded profile with a flattened top)



- From 6 weeks of age, more than enough perch length for all birds to choose where and with whom to rest
- More than two types of perches including at least some wooden perches with a diameter of 3–5 cm and a rounded profile with a flattened top
- Birds are observed and management is adjusted to optimise physical comfort and rest

SCIENTIFIC REASONING

Hens naturally want to perch on raised structures from as young as 9 days old¹. Perches are their preferred places for comfortable resting².



Hens show a preference for wooden perches with a flattened top and about 3 cm in diameter³. However, it's important to give them a choice of different perches, as not all birds like the same type. Enabling individual choice in both resources and space improves wellbeing, allowing them to adapt to their environment according to their individual needs^{4,5}.

When chickens can access an outdoor range area, they perform more comfort behaviours like preening⁸⁻¹⁰.



Litter should be dry and comfortable so birds can rest on it if they wish. Hens prefer sand, or wood shavings for resting^{6,7}.

Physical comfort is about hens being able to choose a suitable, comfortable resting place, rest undisturbed and together if they choose.

- Bergmann et al 2017
- Olsson & Keeling 2002
- Chen et al 2014
- Englund & Cronin 2023
- Prasad-Shreckengast et al 2024
- Monckton et al 2020
- Holt et al 2023
- Dikmen et al 2016
- Sokołowicz et al 2020
- Fiorilla et al 2024

Full reference list available on request

Comfort: Thermal environment

POSITIVE FRAMEWORK TIERS



- Housing maintained at a comfortable temperature
- Perch space to allow all birds to roost at the same time
- Litter maintained in a dry condition
- Access to an outdoor area with open air (e.g. veranda/winter garden or, ideally, a range)
- Access to some shade or shelter when outside (e.g. trees, hedges, portable shelters)
- If using the house in the day, there is a choice of temperatures (e.g. birds able to move closer to or away from ventilated areas)



- Daily access (at least four hours per day) given to a well drained range, unless extreme weather prevents this
- Access to a range of shelter types and shade intensities (e.g. trees, hedges, portable shelters)



- Shelter from weather around pop-holes e.g. cover from wind and rain
- Protection from weather on the range that all birds can access at once
- Birds are observed and management is adjusted to optimise thermal comfort

Thermal comfort is about providing a comfortable temperature as well as a choice of temperatures, so all hens can adapt as they prefer.

SCIENTIFIC REASONING



Covered outdoor areas such as verandas/winter gardens, and even more so access to a varied range, gives birds more choice over temperature, letting them find the most comfortable spots and helping them regulate their body heat. Shade, shelter, and windbreaks are needed for outdoor protection and comfort.

Thermal comfort means helping birds avoid getting too hot or too cold. Insulated housing with dry litter, no draughts, and good ventilation is essential. Perching also helps birds stay cool by improving airflow¹.

Hens like to synchronise certain behaviours, like resting and preening, therefore having enough space for all birds to use shelter and perches together improves their wellbeing².



1. Riber et al 2017
2. Keeling 2017

Pleasure: Food enrichment

POSITIVE FRAMEWORK TIERS



- Enough food to feel full at all production stages (including in the days (except the last 12 hours) prior to depopulation)
- Regular access to insoluble grit from an early age
- Diet includes an even distribution of wholegrain (e.g.

whole oats, wheat, corn, maize, barley) and/or other sources of fibre, (e.g. alfalfa, pea, silage)

- Enough space for all birds to access food simultaneously if meal-fed
- Access to a foraging substrate e.g. wood-based litter, straw, sand, oat hulls/husks, soil



- Diet includes more than one type of high value food e.g. wholegrain, rice, insects, forage crops/edible vegetation
- Some food offered daily outside

of standard feeders e.g. in the house: scatter fed, strung up vegetables, edible pecking blocks and/or naturally foraged on a diverse range

- More than one type of foraging substrate provided



- Feed fed in a non-concentrated form e.g. mash rather than pellets
- Diet includes more than two types of high value food including a range with access to insects and mixed species pastures
- Dietary components to improve gut health e.g. Allium species, essential oils, propolis, quinoa,

dietary fibre, black soldier fly larvae, probiotics

- More than 2 types of foraging substrate provided, including soil-like substrate (e.g. soil, compost)
- Feeding choices are monitored and acted on e.g. more preferred types of feed and foraging opportunities and novelty offered, within a nutritionally balanced diet

SCIENTIFIC REASONING



Feeling full gives birds pleasure¹, so they should always have enough food to satisfy hunger at every stage, including in the days before depopulation.

Dietary components such as garlic, probiotics, and essential oils can improve gut health and therefore mental wellbeing due to the gut-brain connection⁵⁻¹⁰. They have been found to increase positive behaviours such as comfort behaviours and activity, and reduce aggressive behaviours and injurious feather pecking^{4, 11-12}.

1. Mellor 2015
2. Rose et al 1995
3. Bach et al 2019
4. Makinde 2022
5. Abad et al 2021
6. Cheng et al 2019
7. Khan et al 2021
8. Jiang et al 2023
9. Wu et al 2022
10. Laptev et al 2021
11. Hu et al 2022;
12. Elokil et al. 2022
13. Bongiorno et al 2023
14. Oddon et al 2024
15. Colombino et al 2021
16. Ndotono et al 2022
17. Seehuus 2013
18. Breitsameter et al 2014
19. Zheng et al 2021
20. Holt et al 2023

Finding pleasure from food is about providing variety and opportunities to naturally forage.

Foods high in fibre, like whole grains, help chickens feel full and can reduce harmful pecking. Chickens also prefer whole grains to pellets². When fed high-fibre grains, they show more foraging, dustbathing, and comfort behaviours^{3,4}.

Insects like black soldier fly larvae are highly valued by chickens. They increase foraging and comfort behaviours^{3,4} and improve gut health^{15,16}.

Range access gives birds more chances to engage in motivated behaviour to look for and find plants and insects, which is linked to positive mental states such as excitement¹⁷. Mixed-plant pastures boost foraging and healthy gut bacteria¹⁸⁻¹⁹.

Litter that chickens can scratch supports their strong urge to forage. They prefer soil-like materials, for example mushroom compost¹⁸. Offering several litter types helps meet different needs and preferences²⁰.

Pleasure: Play

POSITIVE FRAMEWORK TIERS



- Sufficient space to allow at least some chicks/pullets to perform play behaviours e.g. play-fight, jumping, running and wing flapping



- Sufficient space to allow most chicks/pullets to perform play behaviours



- Sufficient space to allow all chicks/pullets to perform play behaviours
- Chicks and pullets given access to different types of perches, litter and other environmental enrichments
- Enrichments are replenished/changed regularly to maintain novelty
- Birds are observed and management is adjusted to increase play behaviour e.g. trialling objects that chicks might like to play with

SCIENTIFIC REASONING

Having more space encourages play in chickens more than adding objects. Play includes sparring and frolicking¹⁻⁶.



Environments that offer a choice of enrichment types, such as different litter and perch options, increase frolicking and sparring in young birds^{9,10}. Changing enrichment items unpredictably also increases sparring play¹¹.

Chicks show object play called "worm running" — one chick runs with a worm-like item while others chase and try to grab it⁷. Twisted paper straws encourage this behaviour^{6,8}.

1. Newberry et al 1999
2. Newberry et al 2018
3. Baxter et al 2018
4. Baxter et al 2019
5. Baxter et al 2020
6. Rayner et al 2020
7. Cloutier et al 2004
8. Baxter et al 2021
9. Vas et al 2022
10. Holt et al 2023
11. Skånberg et al 2022

**Pleasure from
play is promoted by
providing plenty of space,
companions and
interesting objects.**

Pleasure: Nurturing experiences

POSITIVE FRAMEWORK TIERS



- Nest boxes:
 - are secluded, clearly separated from other areas, and draught free
 - have low light levels
 - have a solid floor
- contain substrate which encourages nesting behaviour e.g. straw, shavings, husks
- At least 1 nest box per 5 hens, or if group nest boxes are used there are partitions at least every metre



- More than 1 nest box per 5 hens
- More than one type of nesting floor substrate
- Wooden nestboxes provided
- Chicks reared using dark brooders



- Chicks reared with a mother hen
- Adult hens given the opportunity at least once in their lives to choose to go broody, incubate eggs and rear chicks
- Birds are observed and management is adjusted to optimise nesting opportunities

Enabling pleasure from nurturing focuses on the hen's preference for nesting behaviour and the opportunity to raise her chicks.

SCIENTIFIC REASONING

Hens highly value nesting sites. They prefer nests that are private, sheltered, and dimly lit^{1,2} and choose wooden over plastic nest boxes³. Adding nesting material encourages nesting — a rewarding, positive behaviour⁴.



Dark brooders mimic aspects of mother hens by providing a warm, dark, and quiet place to rest. This reduces feather pecking and fear, improves gut health, and increases foraging in chicks into adulthood⁵⁻⁷.

Chicks raised by hens show lasting welfare benefits — more confidence, better social skills, more synchronised behaviour, and less feather pecking than those raised artificially^{10,11}.

Mother hens also pass on healthy gut microbes to chicks, improving their gut and mental health^{10,11}.

Caring for chicks is rewarding for hens too, providing positive feelings and pleasure⁴.



1. Kruschwitz et al 2008
2. Ringgenberg et al 2015
3. van den Oever et al 2020
4. Mellor 2015
5. Nordquist et al 2020
6. Sirovnik & Riber 2022
7. de Jong et al 2022
8. Hewlett et al 2014
9. Edgar et al 2016
10. Moran 2019
11. Kraimi et al 2019

Confidence:

Positive experiences with stock keepers

POSITIVE FRAMEWORK TIERS



- Stock keepers are calm and quiet around birds, with constant and sudden noises avoided
- Stock keeper behaviour towards, and handling of, hens is gentle, calm and confident from an early age, including catching and handling in an upright position
- Stock keepers and contract catching teams have been trained and/or are experienced in catching and handling hens
- Efforts to improve the predictability for birds by signalling stressful events e.g. knocking on the door before entering



- Birds associate the presence of humans with neutral interactions e.g. talking to birds, maintaining regular visual contact, gentle touching



- Birds associate the presence of humans with positive interactions e.g. feeding preferred foods, feeding from hand
- Formal training of stockkeepers on chicken welfare and handling
- Positive reinforcement used for all handling as far as possible e.g. leading birds using preferred foods
- Birds are monitored and action taken to increase confidence around humans
- Catching teams at depopulation catch and handle birds in an upright position

SCIENTIFIC REASONING

Quiet, gentle stockkeepers are essential for low-stress handling¹. All handling should be calm and careful. Holding birds upright is less stressful than holding them upside down². Frequent gentle handling from birth improves the human–animal bond³ and supports better health and early survival⁴.

Positive interactions, such as gentle touching and hand-feeding favourite foods, strengthen the human–animal relationship^{8,9}, meaning birds will be calmer around stockkeepers which can improve ease of handling.

Reducing sudden noises and movements helps prevent fear and startle responses. Playing the radio or music can calm hens and increase comfort behaviours¹¹⁻¹³.



Seeing and hearing humans often — for example, talking softly to hens — reduces fear and stress^{5,7}. Handling from an early age helps build trust³.

Training farmers to assess welfare outcome measures has been shown to improve their ability to care for their animals even more than they already do¹⁰.

1. Coleman & Hemsworth 2014
2. Wolff et al 2019
3. Siegel & Gross 2000
4. Orihuela 2021
5. Zulfiki et al 2002
6. Taylor et al 2021
7. Ferreira et al 2024
8. Zulkifli 2013
9. Bongiorno et al 2023
10. Michaelis et al 2022
11. Jones & Rayner 1999
12. Wang et al 2024
13. Zhao et al 2023

Ensuring confidence with stockkeepers requires good training and catching and handling hens in a calm and confident manner.

Confidence:

Positive social experiences within the flock

POSITIVE FRAMEWORK TIERS



- Fewer than 9 birds/m², to give birds space to avoid negative interactions
- Resources (food, water, enrichment) provided in sufficient quantity and spread out evenly to avoid antagonistic interactions between birds
- Visual barriers e.g. bales, vertical panels and/or raised platforms to allow birds to avoid negative social interactions and create the perception of smaller group sizes

- Sufficient pophole space to avoid competition for access to an outdoor area
- Policy for removing 'pariah birds' e.g. by removing/culling
- New birds introduced to flock using strategies to reduce negative interactions e.g. visual barriers
- Sufficient good quality litter available to perform dustbathing as a social group activity without being disturbed
- No birds isolated, e.g. hospitalised birds given at least visual social contact



- Stable groups of familiar individuals promoted
- Fewer than 6 birds/m² to give birds space to avoid negative

interactions and choose which birds to spend time with

- Resources (food, water, resting/perching places, enrichment) provided in sufficient quantity to allow groups of birds to perform activities simultaneously



- Birds given environmental enrichment in the rearing period
- Space for all birds to choose who to spend time with
- Resources (food, water, resting/perching places, enrichment) provided in sufficient quantity to allow most birds to perform activities simultaneously

- Birds kept in small (around 100 bird) flocks
- Cockerel within the flock, and if more than one, signs of aggression between cockerels closely monitored and rectified
- No or minimal mixing of birds
- Birds monitored and action taken to reduce negative and increase positive interactions

SCIENTIFIC REASONING



Hens are social animals. To ensure they have positive social experiences, they need space so they can be selective and synchronised, and stable groups so they can form stable hierarchies.

Allowing chickens to avoid negative interactions is key to increased social confidence. More space, visual barriers, and enough resources help hens avoid conflict¹.

Chickens raised in enriched environments form more cohesive groups and show less feather pecking^{5,6}.

Keeping flocks stable reduces aggression toward unfamiliar birds and supports lasting social connections^{1,2}. Hens form stable connections with each other and often perform daily behaviours together, like dustbathing at the same time^{2,3}. Providing enough resources so several birds can use them at once supports this synchrony⁴.

While research on ideal flock size is limited, smaller groups tend to have better welfare — for example, groups of 100 or 300 showed better welfare than 1000 or 5000⁷. Chickens prefer smaller, more natural groups where they can recognise each other². Therefore, around 100 hens may be optimal for welfare and preference.

Including cockerels creates a more natural social structure, leading to increased ranging, reduced fear, and improved gut and mental health⁸⁻¹¹.

1. Freire et al 2003
2. Gomez et al 2022
3. Collins et al 2011
4. Keeling 2017
5. Campbell et al 2018
6. Zepp et al 2018
7. Kiani, 2022
8. Kraimi et al 2019
9. Chen et al 2020
10. Bestman & Wagenaar 2003
11. Oden et al 2005
12. Yan et al 2022

Interest:

Positively enriched environment

POSITIVE FRAMEWORK TIERS



- In housing, continuous access to at least 1 type of enrichment item, evenly distributed in sufficient quantity for at least a quarter of the flock to use simultaneously, to allow investigation and foraging behaviour, e.g. hanging jute rope/soft string, pecking stones/blocks, forage blocks, lucerne bales, hay bales, plastic drums, hanging plastic objects, balls
- Continuous access to litter maintained in a friable condition for dustbathing and foraging
- Housed hens have access to a naturally lit veranda/winter garden or ideally, a range
- Sufficient natural lighting to encourage investigation, foraging and dustbathing e.g. covering at least 3% of the internal floor space
- Stocking density allows space for foraging and dustbathing e.g. not exceeding 9 laying hens per m² of usable area



- Daily access (at least four hours per day) given to a well drained range, unless extreme weather prevents this
- At least two types of enrichment items available for investigation (can include a range of different vegetation types outdoors)
- Outdoor access given from 12 weeks of age
- Range contains covered structures e.g. shade and shelter panels and/or tall plants, hedges/shrubs
- Covered structures and/or vegetation start no further than 3m from the pop holes and are distributed evenly throughout entire range
- Covered dustbathing opportunities e.g. roofed sandpit distributed evenly on the range which start no further than 10m from the pop hole(s)



- At least 3 types of complex items for investigation provided, including variety of vegetation on the range)
- Outdoor access given from at least four weeks of age
- New items for investigation introduced regularly (can include rotation between vegetation-containing pastures)
- Shelter/cover provided in the form of vegetation providing overhead cover, including trees, on at least 25% of range area and including some mature trees (>2 years)
- Quality of the range environment is maintained throughout all seasons e.g. reduce mud around popholes, range management to maintain vegetation
- Birds monitored and action taken to provide a more enriched environment



Promoting interest in hens requires a rich, diverse and interesting range, as well as providing enrichments in the house, to increase the opportunity for foraging and investigative/manipulation behaviours.



A more complex environment encourages chickens to explore and forage, behaviours linked with positive mental states¹. Enrichment also improves health².

Access to enrichment from birth supports gut health, lowers fear, increases activity, exploration, and foraging, and improves mental wellbeing³.

Dry, scratchable litter allows natural dustbathing and foraging⁴.

A veranda or “winter garden” gives birds extra space to forage and dustbathe. It can also hold extra enrichment and encourages outdoor activity⁵.

Chickens prefer natural light to artificial light. Natural light increases enrichment use, outdoor activity, exploration, foraging, and dustbathing⁶.

Outdoor access further boosts foraging and comfort behaviours⁷. Access to the range from an early age encourages ranging⁸.

Trees, especially those over two years old, promote more ranging and foraging than tall grass⁹. A mix of trees, hedges, and shrubs gives shade, shelter, and variety, supporting maximum range use¹⁰⁻¹¹.

Chickens have evolved to be jungle animals. They prefer dense natural vegetation over artificial shelters and range more, and further, on ranges with such vegetation, especially trees¹²⁻¹³.



1. Manteuffel et al 2009
2. BenSassi et al 2019
3. Jacobs et al. 2023
4. de Jong et al 2007
5. Riedel et al 2022
6. Wichman et al 2021
7. Fiorilla et al 2024
8. Gilani et al 2014
9. Dal Bosco et al 2014
10. Larsen et al. 2017
11. Zeltner & Hirt 2008
12. Stadig et al. 2018
13. Riber et al. 2018

Healthy life:

Management policy for positive health

POSITIVE FRAMEWORK TIERS



- Health and welfare plan setting out health and husbandry activities, developed with appropriate veterinary advice, and reviewed every 12 months or more
- Inspections made at every level of multi-tier systems
- Any variation in normal feeding, drinking or behaviour given immediate attention to identify the cause
- Specific training received on medication and humane culling
- Pain relief used as part of management of unwell animals, when needed



- Procedures in place to reduce the risk of disease and other negative consequences from being outdoors, e.g. predation
- Regular dialogue i.e. every 6 months with vet and/or other advisors/consultants to improve welfare
- Carry out welfare outcome monitoring in addition to daily livestock inspections
- Welfare outcome monitoring data used to adjust resources and/or management to improve health and welfare accordingly



- Formal training given on medication and humane culling
- Farm staff take active part in welfare activities with wider benefits (e.g. member of scheme policy/management group, peer advisor, on farm welfare research)

SCIENTIFIC REASONING



The health of an animal is more than the absence of illness; it includes feeling well, and the ability to thrive with good physical and mental wellbeing¹.

The need for daily care, to implement immediate treatment of illness, and provision of pain relief are essential for positive health⁴.

Positive welfare includes both short-term positive experiences and long-term wellbeing. Wellbeing is related to resilience. A resilient hen can adapt positively and maintain health, which is a proposed indicator of positive welfare^{2,3}.

Recording and analysing flock data with vets enables proactive management and long-term welfare planning⁴.

Managing for positive health focuses on proactive interventions that promote health and resilience.

1. Mattiello et al., 2019
2. Colditz, 2022
3. Rault et al., 2025
4. FAWC, 2009

Healthy life: Breeding for positive welfare

POSITIVE FRAMEWORK TIERS



- Breeding choices are made that recognise the undesirable side-effects of genetic selection for production efficiency and attempt to reduce/mitigate for current health and welfare problems (e.g. bone fractures, feather pecking)



- Breeding choices made for future flock health and welfare, valuing these EQUALLY to production factors
- If own replacements are not home bred or selected by the unit manager, feedback given to the breeders/genetic companies/rearers as to what traits are important to the manager



- Breeds/birds chosen for long term improvement of flock health and welfare, temperament, resilience and metabolic normality, including suitability to particular type of land/system in which they will be placed, valuing these MORE than choices made for production factors

SCIENTIFIC REASONING



Breeding for high production can reduce welfare. For example, laying hens need large amounts of calcium for eggshells, which increases the risk of osteoporosis and fragile bones¹.

Feather pecking is partly genetic². Breeding programmes can reduce it by tracking and selecting against this behaviour in individual birds³.

1. Fernyhough et al 2020
2. van der Eijk et al 2018
3. Ellen et al 2019
4. De Haas et al 2013
5. Rozempolska-Rucinska et al 2020
6. Fernyhough et al 2020
7. Malchow et al 2022
8. Rieke et al 2021

Parent flocks should be managed and housed like commercial hens so that breeding can select for good welfare traits⁴.

Different breeds show differences in curiosity, fear, and foraging, meaning breeding can promote positive traits such as confidence, interest, good health, and social behaviour^{5,6}.

Breeding for positive welfare means selecting the right breeds and traits to ensure a healthy life through long term positive wellbeing and resilience.

Breeding for welfare instead of only production can lead to “dual-purpose” breeds used for both eggs and meat. These birds have better feather condition and much less severe feather pecking than commercial laying breeds^{7,8}.



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Healthy life:

By promoting bodily integrity

POSITIVE FRAMEWORK TIERS



- Some birds not beak trimmed AND appropriate interventions/management strategies to prevent feather pecking



- Majority (>50%) of birds on the farm not beak trimmed



- None of the birds on the farm are beak trimmed

SCIENTIFIC REASONING



The beak is a sensitive tool used for finding and picking up food, preening, nest building, and dustbathing. Trimming limits these natural behaviours by reducing the hen's ability to grasp and manipulate objects¹.

Beak trimming causes pain and loss of feeling¹, reducing a hen's ability to enjoy positive experiences.

1. Riber & Hinrichsen 2017

By not removing part of the beak, hens are able to fully perform activities that are core to their basic nature.

Notes

LivWel+ focuses on evolving farm animal welfare assessment into capturing “positive welfare” opportunities, but this sits alongside measuring and minimising “negative welfare” which can be done through AssureWel welfare outcome assessment protocols. For more information about AssureWel visit: www.assurewel.org/layinghens

LivWel+

Livestock Positive Welfare



To find out more about the
LivWel+ project contact:
kstill@soilassociation.org

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Soil Association
Spear House, 51 Victoria Street, Bristol BS1 6AD
T 0117 314 5000
Registered charity no. 206862
www.soilassociation.org