FARM ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST
LAYING HENS
Produced in consultation with the ECOA Animal Welfare Task Force

This checklist is intended as a supplementary checklist for use with an organic inspection or for farmers to assist with determining the welfare status of the hens and the identification of areas for improvement.

GENERAL DETAILS

| Farm name: _____________________________ | Person(s) present for assessment: |
| Assessed by: ___________________________ | Date & time (start – finish): |
| Type of operation: _____________________ | |
| Type of bird: _______ # of flocks: _______ | Flock size: _______ Age of flock: _______

LIVING CONDITIONS

1. Adult hens/sq metre of indoor floor space: ________ Meets standard? Yes ☐ No ☐
   Organic standard: 6 hens/m²
   BCSPCA brown egg layers: 5.26 hens/m² (2.05 ft²/bird)
   BCSPCA white egg layers: 5.88 hens/m² (4.83 ft²/bird)

2. Feeder space/bird: ___________________________ Meets recommendations? Yes ☐ No ☐
   Type of feeder system used:
   Minimum recommended: pans 20-30 birds/round feeder; troughs 4-5 linear cm/bird
   Guidance: look for size uniformity in birds, and signs of aggression to determine if space is adequate.

3. Drinker space/bird: __________________________ Meets recommendations? Yes ☐ No ☐
   Type of drinker system used:
   Minimum recommended: 50-75 birds/round waterer; 6-10 birds/nipple or cup; 3-4 cms of water trough

4. Condition of feed and water: Clean ☐ Fresh ☐ Moldy ☐
   Comments:

5. Evidence of rodents: Yes ☐ No ☐
   Comments:
6. Litter in good condition and well maintained? Yes ☐ No ☐

Comments:

7. a) Individual nest box provided: Yes ☐ No ☐ Colony nest box provided: Yes ☐ No ☐
   b) Number of nest boxes: ________ Birds/nest box: ________ OR Linear space/nest box ________

   Meets recommendations? Yes ☐ No ☐

Guidance: look for number of floor eggs and prevalence/occurrence of egg eating.
Minimum recommended: 1/5-7 birds; communal: 120 sq.cm/bird

8. Nesting materials provided: Yes ☐ No ☐

9. Perch space/bird: ___________________

   Meets recommendations? Yes ☐ No ☐

 Minimum recommended: 18-20 cm/bird

10. Air quality: Ammonia level high ☐ Dusty ☐ Good ventilation ☐ Regular temperature checks ☐

 Guidance: Ideally a meter should be used to measure ammonia – a human can become desensitized.
 Ammonia should ideally be \leq 10 ppm and not more than 25 ppm. Wet litter is an indicator of potential for high levels. Dust levels that impair visibility in the barn are a concern.

11. Hours of light per day: __________ Light levels (measured at bird level): __________

 Maximum: 16 hours of continuous artificial light - Minimum: 20 lux (2 footcandles)

12. Dust bathing areas provided: Yes ☐ No ☐

13. Is grit provided? Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☐

(Only necessary if birds on pasture or fed whole grains)

14. Number & size of pop holes: __________ Birds/pop hole: ________

   Meets recommendations? Yes ☐ No ☐

 Minimum: 1/600 birds, minimum size 45 cm x 100 cm

15. Outdoor range: Vegetation (% cover): ______ Shade provided ☐ Rotation ☐
   good drainage (no standing water) ☐

16. Average loss from predators? __________

Comments:

**BEHAVIOUR AND HEALTH**

Obtain information from health records or observations as appropriate.
1. Mortality rate of existing flock: _________
   Reasons for losses: __________________
   Maximum acceptable level: 1-2%/month of egg laying period

2. Number of cases of cannibalism in existing flock:

3. Diseases identified:

4. Sick/lethargic birds - # seen: _______

5. Are beaks trimmed or tipped? Yes □  No □
   Comments:

6. Plumage condition - To determine an overall impression of condition of birds:
   Mid way through the barn in an area roughly 2m x 2m determine percentage of birds with good (score 4) and poor (score 1-2) plumage condition (estimate only – there is no need to handle the birds). If the flock is less than 1500 hens do this once, if the flock is greater than 1500 birds, score 3 separate areas of the barn (try to evenly distribute the scoring area).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of barn</th>
<th>Percentage of birds with good plumage</th>
<th>Average % over all areas of bird</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neck (4)</td>
<td>Breast (4)</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of birds with poor plumage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neck (1-2)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3</td>
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</tbody>
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Guidance: poor plumage conditions in >25% is a concern requiring changes in management practices.

7. Wounds and other body conditions.
   Sample the populations as described above – it can be done at the same time. Birds do not need to be handled to do the scoring.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of barn</th>
<th>Percentage of birds with condition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wounds on comb</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Many</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>Average</td>
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Guidance: the condition observed in more than 15% of flock is a concern – causative factors should be determined and management practices modified as necessary.

**OTHER MANAGEMENT**

1. How often are birds monitored: ____________
   Guidance – should be at least twice a day.
2. Emergency back-up systems in place and operational:  Yes  □ No □

*Emergency systems should be run at least once a month.*

3. On-Farm HACCP program in place: Yes □  No □

4. Staff knowledgeable of poultry behaviour and diseases:  Yes □ No □

5. Automated chicken catchers used: Yes □ No □

6. Biosecurity plan: Yes □ No □

7. Birds at end of production cycle - on farm disposal using:

- Macerator □
- Electrocution □
- CO₂ gassing □
- Other (describe) □
- Transportation to processor □

*Guidance: on farm disposal is recommended to prevent suffering if transportation distances are long.*

8. Disposal of mortalities: Buried □ Incinerated □ Composted □ Other □

*Comments: Quebec's "On-Farm Poultry Composting Guide" is available in French and English: [http://www.mapaq.gouv.qc.ca/NR/rdonlyres/3C3B9C7F-7D6C-4286-AD6C-CBFF9C0552DF/0/GUIDECOMPOSTAGEVOLAILLESMORTESonfarmpoultrycompostingguideAODBTD2006ANGLAIS.pdf](http://www.mapaq.gouv.qc.ca/NR/rdonlyres/3C3B9C7F-7D6C-4286-AD6C-CBFF9C0552DF/0/GUIDECOMPOSTAGEVOLAILLESMORTESonfarmpoultrycompostingguideAODBTD2006ANGLAIS.pdf)*

9. Proximity of chicks to heat source: Even distribution □ Huddled □ Away from source □

10. Presence of elevated perches: Yes □ No □

11. Stimulation of foraging behaviour (e.g. grain in litter) Yes □ No □

12. Are pullets allowed outside: Yes □ No □ At what age?

**Summary of concerns:**

**Changes since last assessment:**

**Recommendations:**

Funding for this bulletin provided in part by:

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