

Reports and Comments

Scottish Parliament: Welfare of meat chickens and meat breeding chickens: guidance

In March 2018, and as reported on in *Animal Welfare* 27(2), the Code of Practice for the Welfare of Meat Chickens and Meat Breeding Chickens in England, was updated by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). Responsibility for animal welfare is a devolved issue in the UK, in which the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales and the Northern Ireland Assembly have the power to make primary legislation. The Scottish Parliament has just published their own updated guidance on meat and meat breeding chickens.

Following the lead of the Defra code, the Scottish Parliamentary guidance gives detailed information about the needs of meat chickens and meat breeding chickens and how to meet these needs in accordance with good practice. It takes into account new legislation and advances in scientific and veterinary knowledge and differs from the Defra code in only a few places. These differences relate to additional specific guidance on catching and handling, culling and disease control.

On catching, the guidance specifies that birds must not be carried by the wings, neck, head or tail and that catching and handling should always be monitored by a supervisor, who should stop the process if the correct procedure is not followed or teams are caught being non-compliant with bio-security or welfare standards. On culling, it requires that training should be provided by a stockperson with appropriate experience, and all stockpersons should understand the signs associated with effective stunning and culling, and on disease control that transport lorries and crates arriving on the farm should be assessed for cleanliness and that once again a supervisor should be present during the loading of birds onto transport lorries.

As with the Defra code, the guidance contains a number of Annexes that provide further links to useful information (eg applicable legislation) and worked examples (eg cumulative daily mortality rate).

Guidance for the Welfare of Meat Chickens and Meat Breeding Chickens (April 2019). A4, 68 pages. Scottish Government. Available online: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/guidance-welfare-meat-chickens-meat-breeding-chickens>.

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CCAC Guidelines: Non-human primates

The Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) is an independent, non-profit organisation that develops and maintains standards on the ethics and care of animals in science throughout Canada. It is also responsible for the assessment and certification of Canadian institutions that utilise animals for scientific research.

CCAC Standards are periodically reviewed and updated in line with current scientific evidence and the latest standards to be updated are the: *CCAC Guidelines: Non-Human Primates*.

The revised guidelines are comprehensive, covering: breeding and procurement; appropriate facilities and facility management; animal husbandry, handling, restraint and training; welfare assessment; health and disease control; experimental procedures; end of study; and human safety. Thirty-two guidelines are provided overall.

There is an emphasis throughout the document on the use of positive reinforcement as the most appropriate method for training non-human primates and it is expected that all staff who handle animals are trained in this technique. It is noted that as well as minimising stress for the animals, it also increases safety for personnel.

Examples of how positive reinforcement may be used to assist with animal care are provided, such as the use of fruit juice as a positive reinforcement reward during training, or the distribution of treats at the front of a cage to habituate animals to being in close proximity to humans, which facilitates housing management. It is also expected that positive reinforcement is used during handling and restraint: 'Any handling or restraint technique should be introduced gradually through positive reinforcement training to minimize stress for the animals' (Guideline 13).

The social nature of non-human primates and the welfare benefits of housing animals in either pairs or groups is frequently highlighted, whilst also noting that individual animals differ. Guideline 15 states that this individuality should be taken into account when training and caring for animals: 'A flexible training programme should be developed for each animal following standard procedures and tailored to individual differences in learning.'

Negative reinforcement is only considered appropriate if the technique is first justified to, and approved by, the animal care committee. Positive punishment (introducing something negative when an inappropriate behaviour is performed to reduce its frequency) should not be used.

The guidelines support the application of Russell and Burch's Three Rs: Replacement, Reduction and Refinement of animal use (with a focus on refinement) and act as a framework for the implementation of evidence-based practices which, in-turn, should result in the improvement of non-human primate welfare.

CCAC Guidelines: Non-human Primates (2019). A4, 87 pages. Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC). ISBN: 978-0-919087-75-0. Available online at: https://www.ccac.ca/Documents/Standards/Guidelines/CCAC_Nonhuman-Primates_Guidelines-2019.pdf.

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