EURCAW Poultry SFA

European Union Reference Centre for Animal Welfare *Poultry-SFA*



Seventh EURCAW-Poultry-SFA & EU Member State Competent Authorities network meeting

Online meeting,29-30.09.2026

Co-funded by the European Union

anses

IRTA Institute of Agrifood Research and Technology

AARHUS UNIVERSITY

IZSLER

Welcome

Virginie Michel– EURCAW-Poultry-SFA



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Agenda day 1

Tuesday, September 29th morning: 09:00 – 12:35 CET

09:00	09:10	Welcome & EURCAW-Poultry-SFA short introduction (V. Michel)
09:10	09:20	DG SANTE Introduction (L. Toft Holm)
09:20	10:40	EURCAW-Poultry-SFA highlights since last meeting part 1
10:40	11:50	Q2Es feedback from requestors *Q2E-EURCAW-Poultry-SFA-2025-011, second stunning in broiler (P. van Weel)*
		Break: 11:00 – 11:20
		Q2E-EURCAW-Poultry-SFA-2025-008, duck catching (M. Correia and L. Maciel) *Q2E-EURCAW-Poultry-SFA-2026-002: broiler fasting (K. De Paepe)*
11:50	12:30	Topics proposed by Member States: open discussion *Feed and hydration of poultry during long transports of Poultry* *how poultry are affected by noise exposure? Are there any recommendations regarding how noise levels should be measured in poultry houses?*
12:30	12:35	Closure (V. Michel)

Agenda day 2

Wednesday, September 30th morning: 09:00 – 12-35 CET

09:00	09:05	Opening (V. Michel)
09:05	09:50	Interactive session: : Calming the catch: lessons and experiences from the field (M. Looije – Eyes on animals)
09:50	10:10	Presentations of Member States: *Calculation of usable area in laying hen facilities* (M. Correia and L. Maciel)
10:10	11:15	EURCAW-Poultry-SFA highlights since last meeting part 2 *Break 20 min at 10:30*
11:15	11:45	Spanish Roadshows feedback (M. Camiña Montero, I. Clares Moral)
11:45	12:05	Open discussion on Depopulation in case of Avian Influenza (V. Michel)
12:05	12:30	Survey introduction + open discussion on Competent Authorities' future needs (E. Nehlig)
12:30	12:35	Closure (V. Michel)

DG SANTE Introduction

Laerke Toft Holm – DG SANTE



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EURCAW-Poultry-SFA EU Network Meeting

DG SANTE, Unit G3, Animal Welfare

29th September 2026

European Commission

EURCAW-Poultry-SFA & DG SANTE

Designation

Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/1685

Operational since February 2020

Official Controls Regulation 625/2017, art. 95: the Center supports the activities of the Commission and of the Member States in relation to the application of the rules on animal welfare

What to do

Current work programme: 2025-2027

Tasks in line with Official Controls Regulation 625/2017, art. 96

Liaison with DG SANTE

Regular meetings four times a year

Ad hoc meetings

Meetings with the other EURCAWs

Ongoing contact

Current EU animal welfare legislation



Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU

Recognises animals as sentient beings



5 Directives on animals kept in farms

- General requirements for all animals
- Laying hens
- Calves
- Pigs
- Chickens for meat production



3 Regulations

- **Animal transport**
- Killing of animals
- Dogs and cats

The fitness check of the AW legislation – main outcomes

- The EU legislation improved the welfare of several categories of farmed animals, such as pigs, calves and laying hens, broilers.
- Contributed to more equal conditions for the operators in the internal market.
- At present there are differences in application and enforcement, numerous stricter national measures that are causing a fragmented internal market.
- The current standards grant a sub-optimal level of animal welfare as they are out of pace with science, technology (AI, sensors,AW indicators) and citizens expectations (ECI)
- Most of the requirements are not applicable on imported animals and products

EU Vision for Agriculture and Food (2025)

"The Commission will ***closely exchange with farmers, the food chain and civil society*** *and on that basis* ***present proposals on the revision of the existing animal welfare legislation, including its commitment to phase out cages****."*

"In the area of animal welfare, the Commission will make sure that future legislative proposals ***apply the same standards for products produced in the EU and those imported from third countries****."*

Consultations

- On 18 June 2025, a **Call for Evidence** was launched to gather initial input from stakeholders and the public (around 600 replies received).
- On 19 September 2025 a **public consultation** was launched (almost 200 000 replies received).
- Complemented by **targeted surveys**, stakeholder **interviews** and **panel discussions** at the EU Animal Welfare Platform meetings in 2025 and the conference organised by the Danish EU Presidency on 1 December 2025.

(+ ad hoc meetings)

- Impact assessment
  - External study (surveys, targeted interviews) and modelling (JRC).
  - Assessment of animal welfare, economic, environmental and social impacts of certain policy options.

EU Livestock Strategy

*"*A strategy for a resilient, competitive and sustainable livestock sector, fitting territorial diversity and showcasing European excellence*"*

"a **long-term framework to strengthen the resilience, competitiveness and sustainability** of Europe's livestock sector"

Animal welfare?

"…enforcement of existing rules and a progressive follow-up to the European Citizens' Initiative 'End the Cage Age' is needed to address citizens' concerns, focusing on sectors where a transition to non-confined housing system is feasible, is evidence-based and accompanied by sufficient transition periods and financial support allowing farmers to adapt".

What are we exploring

Main options being considered in the impact assessment process:

- **Phasing out of cages** for certain species, as a follow-up to the European Citizens' Initiative « End the cage age ».
- **Equivalent animal welfare rules** for imported products.
- More use of **animal welfare indicators**.
- Phase out the systematic culling of **male day-old chicks.**

No policy decisions taken yet!

What now?







Sector-by-sector approach

- Poultry (laying hens and broilers)
  - Expected to be adopted in December 2026
  - Working group meetings hereafter
- Pigs
  - Expected to be presented in first half of 2027
  - Working group meetings hereafter

Other ongoing activities

- Indicators – subgroup and study

Fill in copyright information.

Thank you



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Question?



Introduction to EURCAW-Poultry-SFA

Virginie Michel– EURCAW-Poultry-SFA



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EU Reference Centers for Animal Welfare

Art. 95 of **'The Official Controls Regulation'**: *"The Commission shall, by means of implementing acts, designate European Union reference centers for animal welfare that shall support the activities of the Commission and of the Member States"*

EURCAW Pigs — *Since October 2018*

EURCAW Poultry SFA — *Since February 2020*

EURCAW Ruminants & Equines — *Since June 2021*

EURCAWaqua — *Since May 2024*

Main role:

→ to assist the NCAs in performing better official controls and enforce EU animal welfare rules.

→ to provide scientific information on:

- On-farm welfare: e.g. Directive 95/58/EC
- Animal transport: Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005
- Protection of animals at the time of killing: Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2099

EURCAW Pigs
EURCAW Poultry SFA
EURCAW Ruminants & Equines
EURCAW aqua

Target groups:

- Competent Authorities, Policy Workers
  and their 'support bodies': science, training, communication

This means we cannot formally respond to questions from farmers, NGO's or other stakeholders in the livestock production chain.

EURCAW Pigs
EURCAW Poultry SFA
EURCAW Ruminants & Equines
EURCAWaqua

5 activities (= 5 Work Packages (WP))

1. COORDINATED ASSISTANCE (WP1)
2. ANIMAL WELFARE INDICATORS (WP2)
3. SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL STUDIES (WP3)
4. TRAINING COURSES (WP4)
5. DISSEMINATING RESEARCH AND INNOVATIONS (WP5)



EURCAW-Poultry-SFA has 5 Priority areas

1. Broiler chickens on farm
2. Laying hens in alternative housing systems
3. Consciousness and welfare during stunning and killing process at slaughter and on farm
4. Rabbits on farm, with a focus on alternative housing systems
5. Turkeys on farm



EURCAW-Poultry-SFA team

Virginie MICHEL



Maryse GUINEBRETIERE



Antonio VELARDE



Aranzazu VARVARÓ



Bethany BAKER COOK



Frédérique MOCZ



Emilie NEHLIG





Aida XERCAVINS



Xènia MOLES



Anja B. RIBER



Leonardo J. VINCO



Clara TOLINI



Steen H. MØLLER



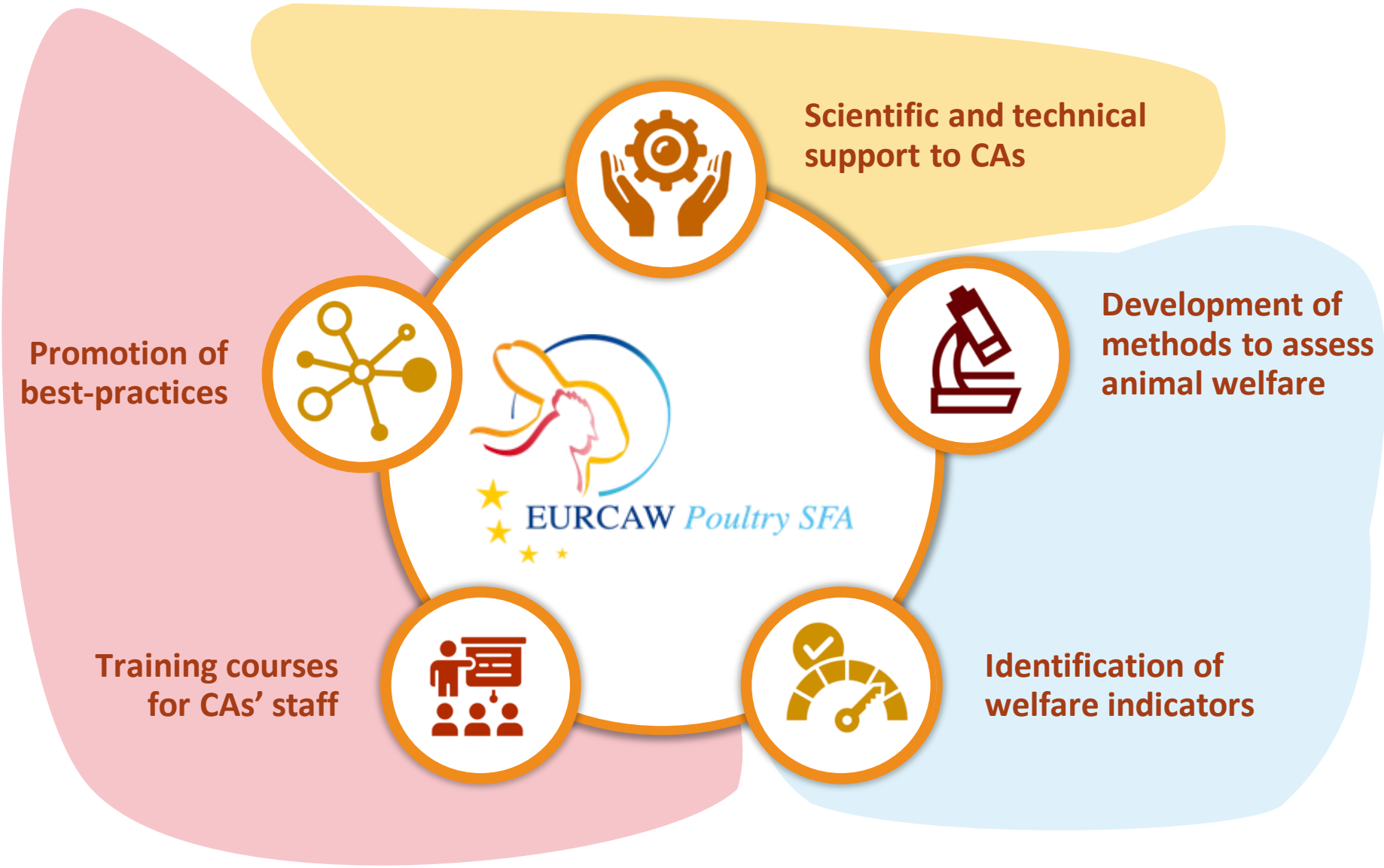
Emily LEISHMAN



What the Centre can/can't do

The Centre is	The Centre is not
To **assist** EU Commission and MSs	To be questionned by other institutions
Able to **deliver** scientific and technical advice	To do risk assessment
To **help implementation** of legislation	To interpret legislation

EURCAW-Poultry-SFA in a nutshell



What we do?

Production of:

- Indicators, Thematic and Good Practices Factsheets,
- Report about experimental/technical studies,
- Reviews,
- Webinars/workshops on dedicated thematics
- Knowledge pills
- Q2E infographics based on Q2E answers
- Newsletters and news items
- Videos
- Translation of Factsheets into 6 languages

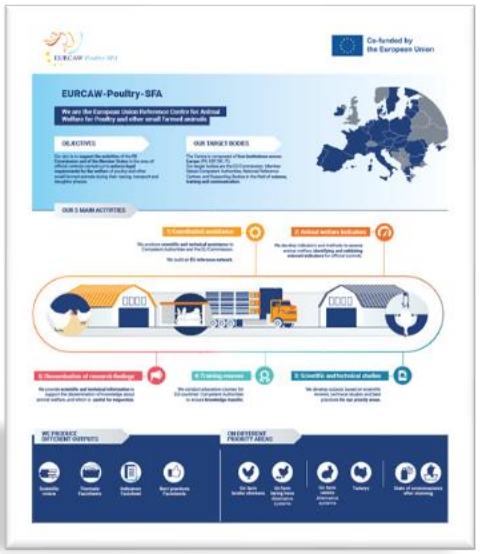
Presentation of the Centre

Website: https://www.eurcaw-poultry-sfa.eu



Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJLyk_iCWSU

Infographic:
https://sitesv2.anses.fr/en/system/files/240411Infografia_Eurcaw%20Final.pdf







Leaflet:
https://sitesv2.anses.fr/en/system/files/Leaflet.EN_22.pdf

Question?



EURCAW-Poultry-SFA highlights since last meeting part 1



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EURCAW-Poultry-SFA highlights since last meeting part 1

- Fitness for transport of end-of-lay hens: towards practical guidelines (Aida Xercavins)
- Assessing state of consciousness and inter-observer repeatability after waterbath stunning in ducks under commercial conditions (Aranzazu Varvaró Porter)
- Environmental enrichments for rabbits (Xènia Moles)
- Guidance for the assessment of the stunning equipment (Aida Xercavins)
- Training update (Aida Xercavins)
- Dissemination and Communication update (Emilie Nehlig)

Fitness for transport of end-of-lay hens: towards practical guidelines

Aida Xercavins – EURCAW-Poultry-SFA



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Introduction

Why is it important?

Description EFSA (2022)

- Making sure that animals are fit for transport before departure is of utmost importance (Grandin, 2001; Cockram, 2019).
- A scientific definition of "fitness for transport" does not exist (Herskin et al., 2021).
- Unfit often relates to health impairment, but also cover certain age groups or physiological stages.
- Challenges associated with transport are greater for weak or vulnerable animals (less able to cope with hazards).

Why is it important?

State of the art: EoL hens

- Poorly feathered owing to wear and tear feather loss in cage systems and to injurious pecking in all systems (more sensitive to cold stress)
- Metabolically exhausted with few body reserves (prolonged hunger)
- Still laying eggs of high-water content (prolonged thirst)
- Osteoporosis (bone fractures)



Introduction

Council Regulation (EC) 1/2005, of 22 December 2004

«No animal shall be transported unless it is fit for the intended journey, and all animals shall be transported in conditions guaranteed not to cause them **injury** or **unnecessary suffering**» (Annex I, Chapter I, Point 1).

«Animals that are **injured** or that present **physiological weaknesses** or **pathological processes** shall not be considered fit for transport and in particular if:

(a) they are **unable to move** independently without pain or to walk unassisted;

(b) they present a **severe open wound**, or **prolapse**;

However, sick or injured animals may be considered fit for transport if they are:

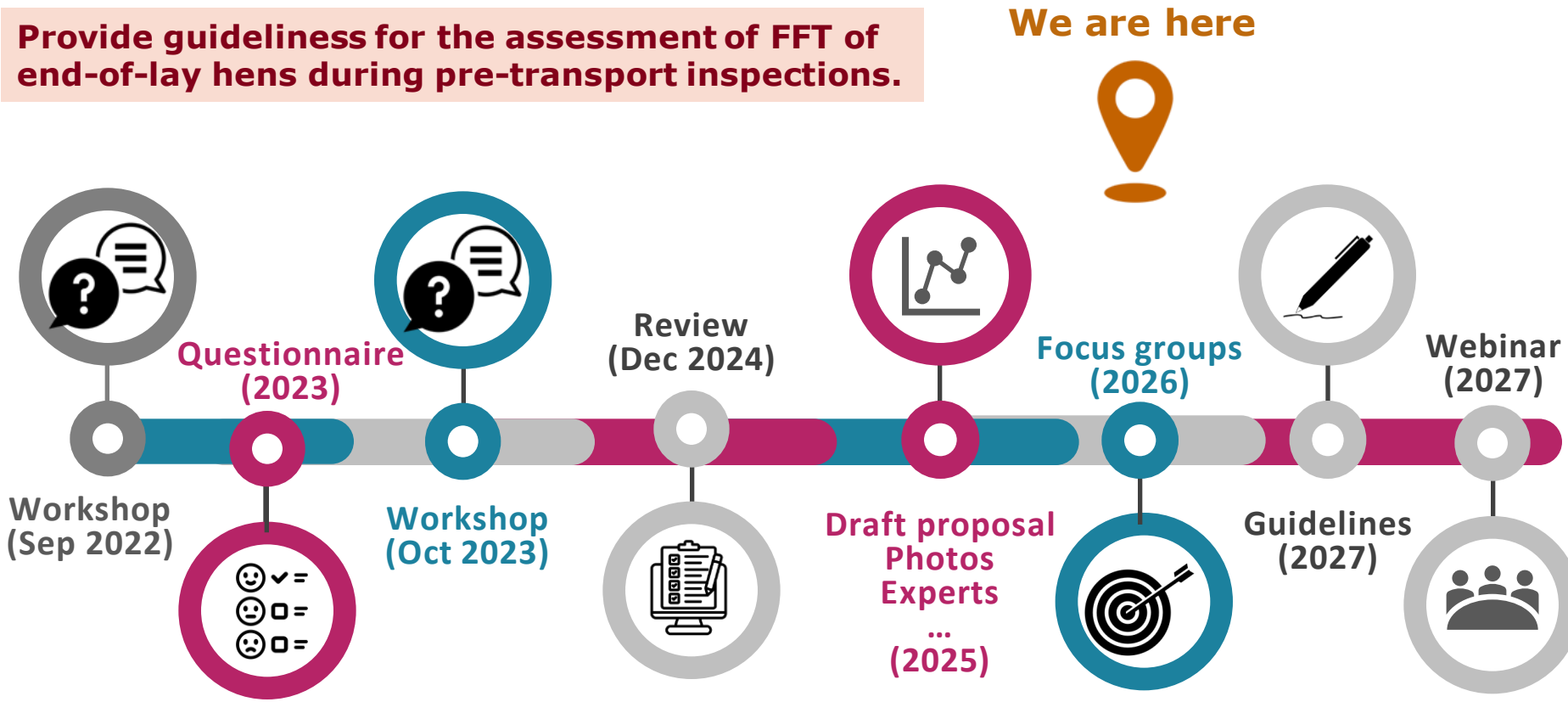
(a) **slightly injured or ill** and transport would **not cause additional suffering**; in cases of doubt, veterinary advice shall be sought» (Annex I, Chapter I, Point 2).

Inspection EFSA (2022)

- Birds unfit for transport should receive appropriate treatment or be immediately humanely killed.
- To minimize the risk of birds becoming unfit for transport between the last inspection and the time of catching, the final inspection should be as close to the time of catching as possible (a maximum of 12 h prior to catching).
- Birds must also be inspected during catching and crating.
- Birds injured during the catching process should not be loaded.
- The fitness for transport is difficult to assess during catching and once the birds are in containers.

Objective:

Provide guideliness for the assessment of FFT of end-of-lay hens during pre-transport inspections.



From general information...

... to very detailed data

What has already been done?

- **2022: Workshops to approach this topic**
- **2023: Survey for CAs** (to know the current situation)



- **2024: Workshop focused on indicators**
- **2024: Extensive Review about the fitness for transport assessment for end-of-lay hens**

  For each indicator, a brief definition, the methods available for their assessment, the criteria used to decide the fitness for transport of birds and the knowledge gaps encountered were included

  https://zenodo.org/records/14677399

What are we doing now?

- **Field visits to get photos, as examples for the guidelines or for training**
- **Focus groups to discuss how to approach the gaps of knowledge in the guidelines to harmonize the text and find a consensus:**

- 12/02/2026 Focus group on "Severe open wounds"

- 03/03/2026 Focus group on "Prolapses" and "Emaciation"

- 16/04/2026 Focus group on "Severe lameness" and "Broken bones and dislocations"

- 04/09/2026: Focus group on "Evident signs of illness" and "Poor feather coverage and wet plumage in low effective temperatures"

- Planned for November: Focus group about "Logistics" (i.e. methodology on how to assess the indicators during inspection)

What are we doing now?

After we publish the guidelines, we will also organize online training to help understand the guidelines (2027)

Proposal about the final format of the guidelines:

- **For official veterinarians, as detailed as possible, complemented by photos**
- **Discussion of indicators: during the online training session**

Question?



Assessing state of consciousness and inter-observer repeatability after waterbath stunning in ducks under commercial conditions

Aranzazu Varvaro Porter
EURCAW-Poultry-SFA

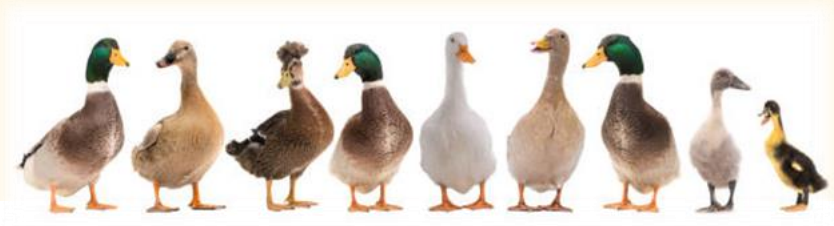
Co-funded by the European Union

This study was carried out in the framework of EUPAH&W SOA14 activity co-funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe Project 101136346 EUPAHW in collaboration with EURCAW-Poultry-SFA Project 101198566EURCAW-Poultry-SFA 2025-2027—SMP-FOOD-2025-EURL-EURC-PJG-IBA.

Introduction

Why is it important?

- **WBS remains widely** used in EU poultry slaughterhouses.
- **Welfare concerns:** inversion, shackling and pre-stun shocks may cause distress/pain, while variation in electrical resistance can result in ineffective stunning or recovery of consciousness before death.
- **Knowledge gap:** ABIs have been investigated in broilers and turkeys, but their validity, prevalence and inter-observer repeatability have not been systematically assessed in ducks under commercial conditions.



Introduction

Objectives of the study

1. Assess the **inter-observer repeatability** of the most valid and feasible indicators of consciousness according to the EFSA
2. Elucidate the **association** among the indicators
3. Assess **efficiency of stunning**
4. Find **key factors** of effective stunning
5. **Other welfare issues**
   - Shackling
   - Pre-stun shocks
   - Re-stunning
   - Line stop



Materials and methods

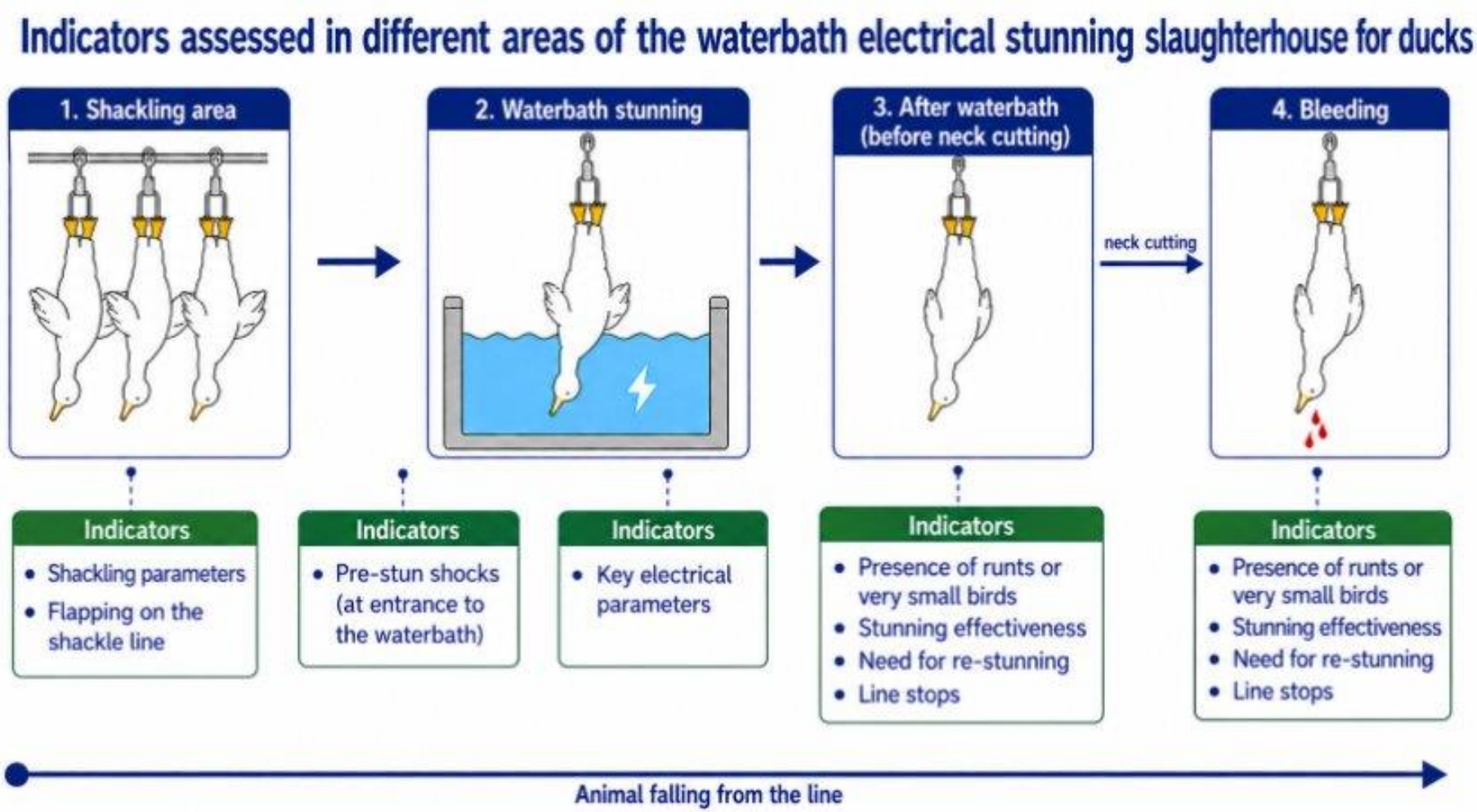
Study design

- **9 commercial SHs** equipped with WBS
  - France: 5 SHs
  - Spain: 1 SH
  - Italy: 3 SHs
- **Selection** to capture a diversity of commercial conditions
- **3 trained observers** participated in the study
- **Data collection:** March 2025 – January 2026



Source: EURCAW-poultry-SFA

Materials and methods



Materials and methods

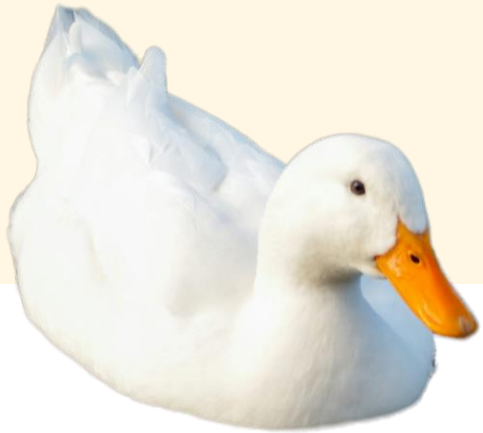
ABI	Definition	Outcome of…
Tonic and clonic seizures*	Bird shows arched and stiff neck and wings held tightly close to the body (at least one wing).	Unconsciousness
Breathing	Minimum of two movements of the bill or abdominal muscles around the cloaca associated.	Consciousness
Spontaneous blinking	Bird opens/closes eyelid on its own without stimulation.	Consciousness
Wing flapping	Ample flapping characterized by coordinated movements of both wings, that may be more or less vigorous. Asymmetrical flapping in birds with wing injuries should be considered.	Consciousness
Head shaking	Bird shakes its head from side to side, or twists its head.	Consciousness
Head raising	Attempt to regain posture and/or elevate the head more than 45 degrees from a fully dropped position.	Consciousness
Raised head*	After exiting the WBS, the bird raises its head more than 45° from the fully dropped position and maintains this elevated position until neck cutting.	Consciousness

* Tonic and clonic seizures and raised head were only assessed before neck cutting

Preliminary conclusions

PRELIMINARY

- **Slaughter conditions varied considerably:** Differences in line speed, staff, shackling duration and breast support.
- **Pre-stun shocks were a major welfare concern:** Observed in all assessed batches and very high prevalence in some SHs
- **Management during line stops differed substantially:** Highlighting the need for consistent and immediate corrective actions to prevent suffering in potentially conscious birds



Preliminary conclusions

PRELIMINARY

Field-validated ABIs: Prevalence and inter-observer repeatability of ABIs were assessed across 9 commercial SH, a first for ducks under field conditions.

Before neck cutting: Presence of tonic-clonic seizures is a recommended indicator to assess.

During bleeding: Wing flapping (excellent) and head raising (very good) are the most reliable indicators to monitor routinely.

Precautionary principle: Any sign of consciousness, or any doubt, before neck cutting or during bleeding must always lead to immediate re-stunning.

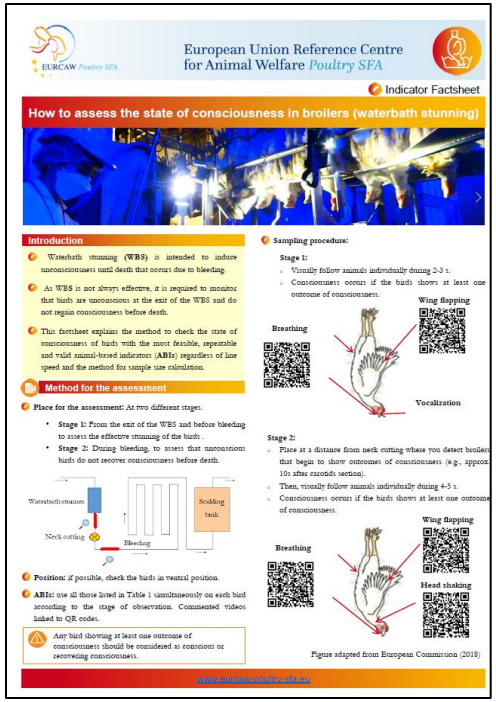


Assessing state of consciousness and inter-observer repeatability after waterbath stunning in ducks under commercial conditions

REPORT: May 2027

WEBINAR: 2027

FACTSHEET: September 2027





Questions?



Environmental enrichments for rabbits

Xènia Moles – EURCAW-Poultry-SFA



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WP3 Review on enrichments for farmed rabbits

- Relevant enrichments for rabbit welfare
- Gap of knowledge and recommendations

- Thematic Factsheet



https://zenodo.org/records/18259438

Type of enrichments for rabbits

- **Social**
- **Physical/structural**
- **Occupational**
- Nutritional
- Sensory







Social enrichments

Provision of direct contact with conspecifics (in pairs or groups) or indirect contact by visual, olfactory, and auditory cues from conspecifics housed in the same room

Direct contact

Group housing

- fewer stereotypes
- greater range of natural, species-specific behaviours
- recommended for growing rabbits only



Indirect contact

Mirrors

- partially mimic social interaction
- increased grooming behaviour
- suitable for breeding does
- Limitations: impossible to perform allo-grooming or resting in group or couple

Physical or Structural enrichments

physical elements that increase environmental complexity

Elevated platform

Growing rabbits

- species specific behaviours, physical activity and resting without compromising productivity
- Hiding and resting place (over and under the platform)
- Preference for slatted plastic



Recommended

Breeding does

- Hiding place (over)
- Preference for slatted plastic
- Increase space allowance

Pay attention to cage hygiene and schedule regular cage cleaning procedures.

Physical or Structural enrichments

physical elements that increase environmental complexity

Hiding places (tubes, boxes..)

- Good results in laboratory rabbits
- In commercial settings →
  - limited impact on aggressive behaviour and injuries of rabbit does
  - limited use in growing rabbits near the slaughter age (63-70 days) with negative effects on growth



Not recommended

Overview of 2025-2027 Work Programme

Occupational enrichments

Enrichments promoting mental engagement, opportunities to explore, manipulate objects, and make choices, which could help prevent boredom and the development of abnormal behaviours.

Manipulable material

- Increases the time spent performing **active, exploratory, digging and chewing behaviour**
- **Reduce** abnormal behaviours (cage biting) lowered serum cortisol levels
- Improve gut health

Gnawing material

- **Considered also a nutritional** enrichment
- It facilitates the expression of **species-specific behaviours**
- Rabbits consistently spend more time in environments where gnawing substrates are available
- In its absence, rabbits frequently develop **abnormal behaviours**, including stereotypies and aggression
- Slightly reduced percentage of injuries in **does** kept in a part-time housing system

Occupational enrichments

Enrichments promoting mental engagement, opportunities to explore, manipulate objects, and make choices, which could help prevent boredom and the development of abnormal behaviours.

Example of Manipulable material

- Plastic balls,
- toys with bells,
- empty cans,
- destructible devices,
- digging substrates (i.e., ground soil).

There is gap of knowledge regarding the safety and usefulness of not edible occupational enrichments in promoting **on-farm rabbit welfare**

Occupational enrichments

Enrichments promoting mental engagement, opportunities to explore, manipulate objects, and make choices, which could help prevent boredom and the development of abnormal behaviours.

Example of Gnawing Materials

- **Straw**: >12-week-old rabbits and breeding does
- **Wooden sticks**: growing rabbits
- **Pressed hay cubes**: >12-week-old rabbits; breeding does; growing rabbits

Position in the cage:

- **Growing rabbits**: sticks should be mounted horizontally on the cage -better than suspended-
- **Does**: gnawing material should be put on the platform





Recommendations

- The use of natural, chewable materials is the prevailing recommendation.
- Special attention is needed to the position of the gnawing materials in order to ensure accessibility and hygiene (EURCAW Poultry SFA, 2022).
- When gnawing material is available, all the aspects related to stocking density and management should be considered in order to ensure hygiene and encourage exploratory behaviour.



Gap of Knowledge

- **No studies** have yet assessed rabbits' motivation to access gnawing materials using validated methods such as **willingness-to-pay** or other **motivation-based tests**

Overview of 2025-2027 Work Programme

Questions?



Guidance for the assessment of the stunning equipment

Aida Xercavins– EURCAW-Poultry-SFA



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Objective

Technical guidance to assess the stunning equipment in SLHs
Considering the **whole stunning process: restrain, stunning and bleeding**

To develop a **checklist of key parameters** for each step:

- What must be controlled
- How it should be measured
- How compliance is verified

Examine how well **the system suits the intended animals**

Common EURCAW initiative lead by us

Example: Waterbath stunning

The assessment process is organised into two stages:

Stage 1 – Assessment of the equipment before installation

- Step 0- Equipment design, suitability and readiness before installation

Stage 2 – Assessment of the equipment after installation (during operation)

- Step 1- Shackling
- Step 2- Entry into the waterbath
- Step 3- Electrical stunning
- Step 4- Exit from the waterbath and neck cutting

2027 – future?

Early 2027: publish the first guidance on WBS
We are currently working on CAS

Feedback from CAs

If useful, we can keep developing guidance for other methods/species or including methods for killing on farm

If useful, we can improve the format of the checklist

Training update

Aida Xercavins– EURCAW-Poultry-SFA



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Training reports

Review of existing training activities and materials:

- Depopulation/Killing rabbit on farm (Dec 2025)
- Depopulation/killing poultry on farm (Sept 2026)
- Fitness for transport (ongoing, planned for end 2026)



Knowledge pill 2026



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cRzrWv29CcQ

Knowledge pill 2027: ongoing work



Webinars

- **Depopulation methods in cases of Avian Influenza (06/11/2025)**



103 people
15 EU Member States

Belgium,Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Li thuana, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Spain and Sweden and one EFTA country (Norway).

Combined with a workshop to improve the welfare assessment protocols

Webinars

Planned for 2027:

- Indicators of the state of consciousness after waterbath stunning for ducks
- Fitness for transport
- On-farm killing methods for rabbits



Dissemination and Communication

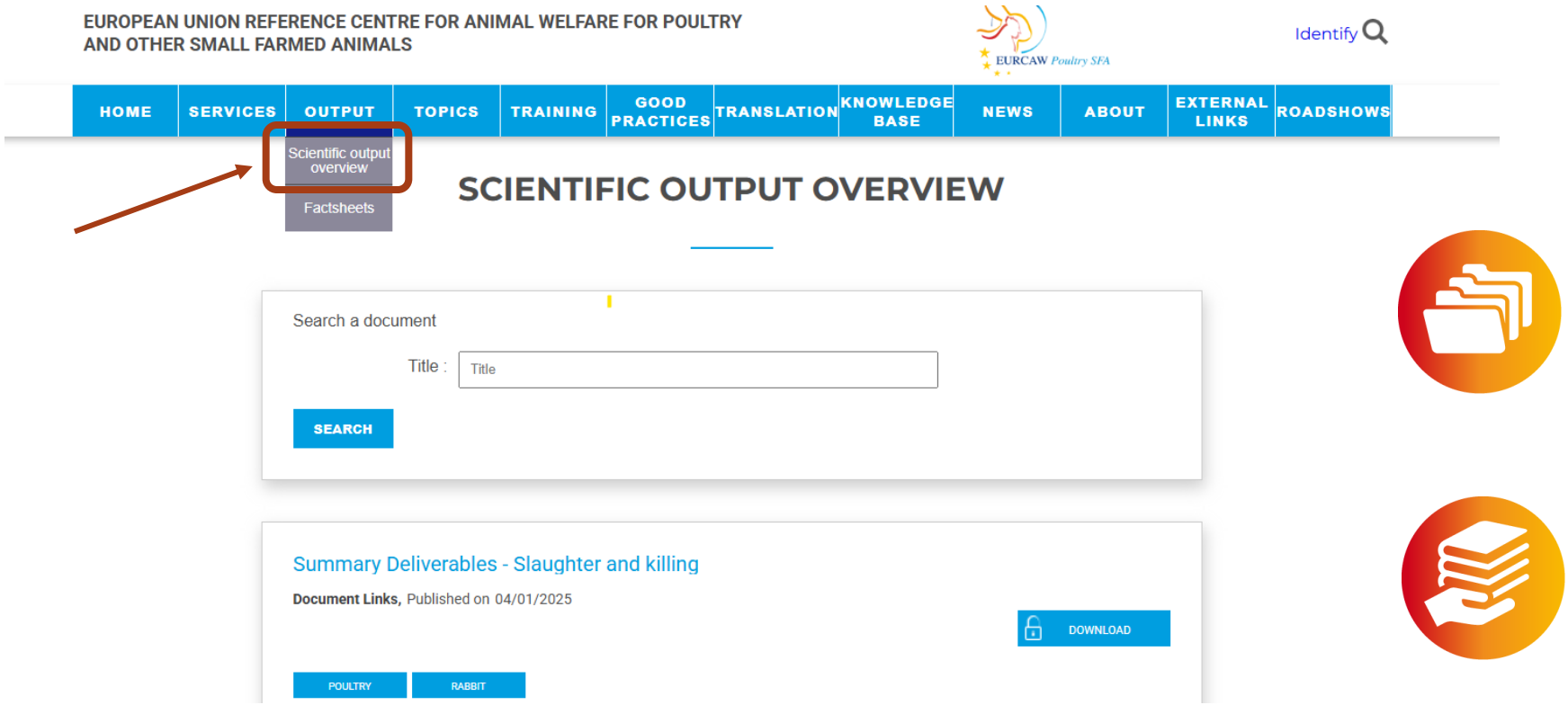
Emilie Nehlig– EURCAW-Poultry-SFA



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Dissemination:

The **scientific overview** page permits to download a list of all the outputs produced by the Centre since its creation, by topics: slaughter and killing, broiler chicken, laying hen, turkey, rabbit. This page is updated regularly.



Dissemination:

Our new video is online : *Focus on turkey output on farm, during transport and at the time of killing*

Take a look here: https://youtu.be/SfOf1J7R9IM



Slide show with links is available here





Dissemination

The EURCAW-Poultry-SFA LinkedIn account :
https://www.linkedin.com/company/eurcaw-poultry-sfa

--> Follow us !!

Newsletters → *Sign-up!!*

https://sitesv2.anses.fr/en/minisite/sfawc/subscribe-eurcaw-poultry-sfas-newsletter

Latest issue: https://zenodo.org/records/19001874



Factsheets are translated into 6 languages:
DE, ES, FR, IT, PL, NL (thanks to the Flemish AW NRC)

Dissemination

Translation initiative

Second semester of 2024, the EURCAW-Poultry-SFA conducted a survey on the Centre's activities and Member States' needs.

Regarding translation, some MSs mentioned that they *would accept to do the proofreading of the translated factsheets in their country's national language.*

→ This summer, a trial was done with Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Portugal, and Sweden.
Two pre-translated factsheets using DeepL were sent to be proofread by the end of the year. Thank you!!!!

Feedback from MSs varied: some pre-translations are better and more accurate than other depending on the language.
The Center is working on a disclaimer and will publish asap the translated FSs.

Interest from other MSs?

Dissemination



Q2Es feedback from requestors

Emilie Nehlig– EURCAW-Poultry-SFA



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Update since last meeting

Q2Es: → all Q2E answers are available online:
https://www.eurcaw-poultry-sfa.eu/en/minisite/sfawc/question-eurcaw-q2e

Latest Q2Es:

- Q2E-Poultry-SFA-2025-004: Broiler Cannibalism Causative Factors
- Q2E-Poultry-SFA-2025-006: Broiler Cannibalism Prevention
- Q2E-Poultry-SFA-2025-007: Broiler Cannibalism Emergency Measures
- Q2E-Poultry-SFA-2025-008: Duck catching
- Q2E-Poultry-SFA-2025-005: Pre-stun shocks in waterbath stunning of Poultry
- Q2E-Poultry-SFA-2025-011: Second stunning in broilers
- Q2E-Poultry-SFA-2026-002: Broiler fasting

Ongoing Q2Es:

Q2E-Poultry-SFA-2026-004: Poultry stocking density
Q2E-Poultry-SFA-2026-005: depopulation of poultry by gas into containers

Link to Q2E webform:
https://www.eurcaw-poultry-sfa.eu/en/minisite/sfawc/q2e-webform

Q2E-EURCAW-Poultry-SFA-2025-011, Second stunning in broiler

Petty van Weel – (The Netherlands)



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Netherlands Food and Consumer
Product Safety Authority
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries,
Food Security and Nature

Q2E-EURCAW-Poultry-SFA-2025-011, second stunning in broiler

Petty van Weel Senior inspector Poultry welfare

29-09-2026

Background

1. *“A broiler slaughterhouse using gas stunning equipment have been experiencing issues with the stunning process. In response, the company has taken action.*

2. *As inadequately stunned broiler might be occasionally missed, the company has decided to add an extra waterbath stunner (WBS) to the line after the controlled atmosphere stunning (CAS) system.*



Intern gebruik

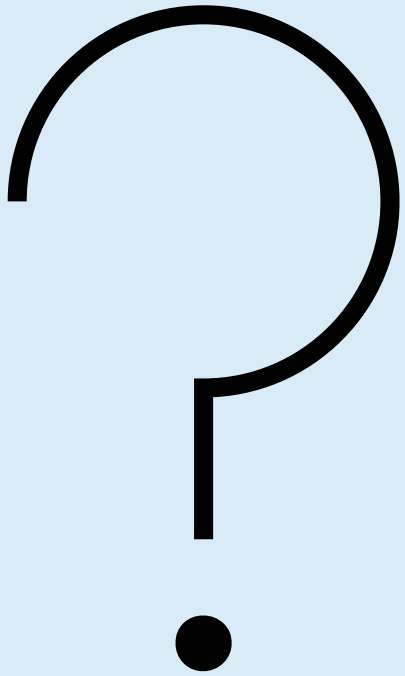


Context of the Q2E

- New subject
- Well-substantiated answer to the slaughterhouse
- Contacted the EURCAW, but also the EC

Questions

1. Is there any scientific or practical knowledge about the use of two stunning methods in succession?
2. Could these interfere with each other?
3. Is it still possible to properly monitor the stunning methods?



Intern gebruik

The answer

- a second stunning method: not address the underlying cause of ineffective stunning
- at risk of experiencing fear and pain for being shackled conscious.
- WBS is not recommended as a routine second stunning method.
  an emergency back-up
- only animals that are ineffectively stunned are re-stunned using the back-up method, which should be applied immediately upon detection of signs of consciousness
- corrective back-up measure, only to individual animals
  not as a routine procedure applied to all animals.
- no scientific studies (CAS is followed by WBS in poultry)
  theoretical: the use of two stunning methods in succession could interact due to the physiological effects induced by the first method.
- There is no scientific evidence assessing the validity of monitoring indicators of consciousness when CAS and WBS stunning methods are applied consecutively.

Conclusions

- Routine application of a second stunning method to all birds does not address the underlying causes of ineffective stunning with Controlled Atmosphere Stunning (CAS), complicates the assessment of the animal's state of consciousness, and the relevant indicators of consciousness after a combination of CAS and WBS are currently unknown. It also has potential negative effects on carcass quality and does not provide additional animal welfare benefit.
- The CAS system mentioned by the requestor requires thorough evaluation to identify factors contributing to ineffective stunning. Relevant parameters include stunner type, gas composition and concentrations, characteristics of the stunning phases, bird density, stun-to-stick interval, and other operational conditions.
- Continuous monitoring of animal-based indicators (ABIs) of (un)consciousness is essential after CAS, with emphasis on the training and competence of personnel to correctly detect and interpret indicators of ineffective stunning or recovery of consciousness.
- A second stunning method must be applied only as a corrective or back-up measure for individual birds in which the first stunning method may have failed, and it should be applied as soon as possible after exiting the CAS system using appropriate equipment (e.g., captive bolt or head-only electrical stunning).
- Waterbath stunning (WBS) must be used only as an emergency in the event of CAS system failure and is not routinely applied following CAS.

Netherlands Food and Consumer
Product Safety Authority
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries,
Food Security and Nature

The answer was very useful!

The process was good:
submitted the form (quite easy)
very quick meeting
substantiated answer

We communicated the answer with the slaughterhouse

The slaughterhouse is now using the waterbath as an electrostimulator
The NVWA is still in debate if this is allowed

Netherlands Food and Consumer
Product Safety Authority
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries,
Food Security and Nature



Thank you!

Questions?

Break

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Q2E-EURCAW-Poultry-SFA-2025-008, Duck catching

M. Correia and L. Maciel– (Portugal)



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Experience of a question put to EURCAW-Poultry SFA

Maria Correia
Luís Maciel



dgav
Direção Geral de Alimentação e Veterinária



03 Case Start - Inspection of a duck farm: follow-up to a complaint

05 Contact EURCAW Poultry-SFA

06 Experience wit EURCAW Poultry-SFA

07 Feedback from the EURCAW Poultry-SFA

08 Practical Application of Information

Case Start - Inspection of a duck farm: follow-up to a complaint

Problems identified:

- Catching the animals by the head
- Carry several animals on one's head for some time



Case Start - Inspection of a duck farm: follow-up to a complaint

Information from the producer:

- **Procedure set out in the breed manuals**

Young and adult ducks can be lifted by the neck and held by the wings, taking care to support the body.



Contact EURCAW Poultry-SFA – 10/2025

Q1: Does catching ducks by the neck induce pain, handling stress and injuries?

Q2 What are the optimal methods of catching ducks that minimize the risk of pain, stress and injury to the birds?



Experience wit EURCAW Poultry-SFA

Formulation of the Questions

- Online platform

Clarifications

- E-mail

A more in-depth look at the issues

- online meeting



Feedback from the EURCAW Poultry-SFA

01/2026

Type and level of production provided by the requestor

Type of production: Duck

Level: Transportation

Keywords: Handling

Background context provided by the requestor

This query concerns the recommended methods for duck catching, their advantages and disadvantages in terms of traumatism and other lesions at the slaughterhouse (ante- and post-mortem inspection).

Questions raised by the requestor

Q1: Does catching ducks (more than 7 days of age) by the neck induce pain, handling stress and injuries?

Q2: What are the optimal methods of catching ducks (more than 7 days of age) that minimize the risk of pain, stress and injury to the birds?

Answer

Introduction

Although domestication and subsequent genetic selection of poultry have reduced the magnitude of their handling stress, poultry still perceive humans as predators (Gerritzen and Raj, 2009; EFSA, 2022) and birds can show moderate adverse effects (e.g. higher plasma corticosterone concentrations) from catching (example in laying hens: Gerpe et al., 2021). In particular, fear responses are characteristic from the domestic duck, showing significant vigilance behaviour and flight response to humans or non-human objects (e.g. herding robots, vehicles, model of a fox or cylinders) being reported (Henderson et al., 2000, 2001; EFSA, 2023).
Handling birds may cause fear and/or pain (due to injuries due to escape attempts) if the methods used are not appropriate for the species concerned. Handling/catching stress indicates that the animals experience stress and/or negative affective states such as fear resulting from human or mechanical handling (EFSA, 2022). Even if the duration of the handling is limited, the welfare consequences can persist throughout the entire transport operation. In ducks, poor catching and handling can lead to fear and pain due to injuries, leading for example to lameness, especially because catching them by the leg may lead to hip dislocation (HSA, 2025).

Q1: Does catching ducks by the neck induce pain, handling stress and injuries?

Catching and handling of poultry, whatever the method, are generally recognized to cause fear and distress (Gerritzen and Raj, 2009). Catching methods should be adapted to the characteristics of the bird species being handled. According to EFSA (2022), whatever the species, domestic birds should be carried upright by holding the wings against the body and not inverted or by their neck or wings. In the EU Factsheet about "how to handle and restrain poultry" it is stated never try to move a bird by lifting/dragging by the neck/head/wing/tail (European Union, 2018).

No references describing the negative consequences of catching ducks by the neck have been found. However, as for all domestic birds, handling is a stressful event for ducks. Catching ducks by the neck while supporting their body weight and without obstructing the windpipe is not expected to injure or cause pain to the bird. In contrast, lifting ducks solely by the neck is likely to cause handling stress and pain due to neck supporting all the body weight and this could lead to injuries in neck tissues including in the trachea and/or suffocation (according to EURCAW expert's opinion).

Questions to EURCAW is a service provided by the EU Reference Centres for Animal Welfare. EURCAW-Poultry-SFA offers it via its website. The service is open to CAs, NRC, SBs and their representatives of EU Member States and to the EU-Commission. Within its resource limits, the Centre will provide a scientifically supported answer. However, neither the Reference Centre, nor the experts involved can be held responsible for its use. EURCAW-Poultry-SFA was designated by the European Union on 4 October 2019 through Regulation (EU) 2019/1685, in accordance with Articles 95 and 96 of Regulation (EU) 2017/625. Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or Hadea. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

Q2E-EURCAW-Poultry-SFA-2025-008
06 January 2026
Duck catching
https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18160993

Q2: What are the optimal methods of catching ducks that minimize the risk of pain, stress and injury to the birds?

When carrying ducks, the weight of the bird body must be supported either by a hand or arm placed under its body, or by holding the bird with a hand on either side of its body with the wings in the closed position (Figure 1) (Defra, 2002; HSA, 2018; RSPCA, 2023). According to RSPCA (2023) guidance, ducks must not be carried: hanging head downwards, by the legs, by the wing(s), by the head, by the tail or by the neck. However, it can be recommended to gently lift the duck by the base of the neck for a minimal time, without applying excessive pressure, before transferring the bird to the catcher's hands and arms. Holding briefly by the base of neck minimizes flapping and therefore reduces injury (HSA, 2018). In addition, if ducks are lifted by the base of neck, care must be taken to ensure the bird's windpipe is not likely to be obstructed and the movement should be smooth and gentle, without sudden change in direction (RSPCA, 2023). Once the weight of the animal is supported by the hand/arm, controlling the legs with the fingers is recommended to control the bird if it wriggles or scratches, and the wings can then be controlled by the opposite hand or by holding the bird against the operator's body, under the arm (HSA, 2025). Since the legs are weak, catching of carry ducks by the legs will easily cause disjointed or broken legs (Defra, 2002; Clauer and Skinner, 2007; HSA, 2018; RSPCA, 2023).



Figure 1. The weight of the bird body must always be supported either by a hand or arm placed under its body (image from HSA, 2025)

Conclusions

Catching and handling of poultry, whatever the method, are generally recognized to cause negative affective states such as fear or pain. No references describing the negative consequences of catching ducks specifically by the neck have been found. However, catching ducks by the neck while supporting their body weight and without obstructing the windpipe is not expected to cause injure or cause pain to the bird. In contrast, lifting ducks solely by the neck is likely to cause handling stress and pain, considering their body weight, and it could lead to injuries in the trachea or other neck tissues or suffocation. To prevent this, when carrying ducks, the weight of the bird must be supported either by taking the body of the bird by a hand or arm placed under its body, or by holding the bird with a hand on either side of its body with the wings in the closed position.

References

Clauer PJ, Skinner JL, 2007. Raising waterfowl (A3311). University of Wisconsin-Madison Extension. Cooperative Extension Publishing, Madison. Available from: https://learningstore.extension.wisc.edu/products/raising-waterfowl-p11987?_pos=2&_sid=aab1a1af9&_ss=r

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Practical Application of Information

- **Notice to Producer regarding changes to procedures**

- **Notice to the official DGAV services in all regions to take this recommendation into account and to disseminate it**



Practical Application of Information

The producer has amended the Manual on the catching of adult ducks

A check was carried out to verify the procedure

	APANHA DE PATOS	I_93 Rev.:01 Out. 25

CUIDADOS NOS PROCEDIMENTOS DE APANHA

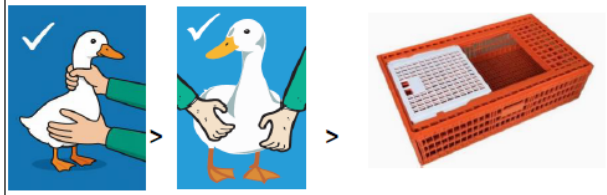


Manuseamento cuidado de forma a evitar fracturas, deslocamentos ósseos, hematomas ou qualquer factor de sofrimento ou stress das aves;

Apenas poderão ser apanhados 2 patos de cada vez;

Se um animal for ferido acidentalmente durante a apanha, este deve ser sujeito a um abate de emergência de forma a abreviar o seu sofrimento;

PROCEDIMENTO DE APANHA (de acordo com Manual Cherry Valley Farms)



1 - Levantar o(s) pato(s) pelo pescoço, utilizando uma mão;

2 - Suportar o corpo do(s) mesmo(s) com a outra mão de forma a reduzir ao mínimo o tempo que o pato se encontra suspenso apenas pelo pescoço;

3 - Podem-se apanhar 2 patos numa só mão, colocando um dedo ou mais entre cada um;

4 - Colocar nas jaulas de transporte;

5 - Fechar tampa das jaulas antes empilhar;

PROIBIÇÕES NOS PROCEDIMENTOS DE APANHA



1 - NUNCA apanhar / segurar pelas asas, cabeça ou pernas, que são facilmente danificadas;

2 - NÃO DEVEM SER DERRUBADAS, ATIRADAS, IRADAS ou INVERTIDAS;

3 - NUNCA obstruir a traqueia ou torcer a cabeça ou pescoço;



Conclusion

- It is easy to submit a query to the Reference Centre
- Appropriate response time from the Reference Centre
- In-depth analysis of the issue. Exchange of emails and an online meeting
- Time taken for the relevant Reference Centre to issue a position statement
- Dissemination of the Reference Centre's position through the publication of a factsheet
- Enables the standardization and improvement of procedures across the EU



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Thank You

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Direção Geral de Alimentação e Veterinária

Q2E-EURCAW-Poultry-SFA-2026-002: broiler fasting

Karlien De Paepe– (Belgium)



Co-funded by
the European Union

QUESTION TO EURCAW: BROILER FASTING



Vlaanderen
is diervriendelijk

DEPARTEMENT
OMGEVING

CONTEXT OF THE QUESTION

Opinion of the Flemish Animal Welfare Council on the welfare of poultry before slaughter (2025):

- **The aim should be to have a period of no longer than 12 hours between the withdrawal of feed and slaughter of broilers (and max. 10 hours for laying hens), but the feasibility and the impact on food security should be reseached**

- **Recommend research: research on the time it takes to empty the crop and the stomach of poultry, and the factors that may influence this process**

QUESTION TO EURCAW

Decision to pose this question to EURCAW:

“Is there any information available on the time it takes to empty the crop and the stomach of poultry after feed withdrawal, and are there any factors that may influence this time?”

Vlaanderen
is diervriendelijk

QUESTION TO EURCAW

We received a very comprehensive answer.

Conclusion:

"According to literature, complete emptying of the gut of broilers pre-slaughter will not occur within 24 h of feed withdrawal. However, a substantial decrease in contents of crop, gizzard and small intestines can be accomplished within 8-10 h of fasting which includes catching, transport and lairage. Contamination risk at the slaughter line will be at its lowest around 12 h of fasting, while both shorter and longer fasting time will increase the risk of carcass contamination."

Vlaanderen
is diervriendelijk

FOLLOW-UP

- No further research into this topic was deemed necessary
- Communication to poultry sector that they should make efforts to be able to ensure a period of feed withdrawal of maximum 12 h.

Vlaanderen
is diervriendelijk

Topics proposed by Member States



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Topics proposed by Member States

Topics proposed:

- Feed and hydration of poultry during long transports of Poultry
- how poultry are affected by noise exposure? Are there any recommendations regarding how noise levels should be measured in poultry houses?
- Poultry catching
- Enrichments in broiler chickens

Feed and hydration of poultry during long transports :

Leonardo James Vinco– EURCAW-Poultry-SFA



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Feed and hydration of poultry during transport

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 1/2005
On the protection of animals during transport and related operations

CHAPTER V
WATERING AND FEEDING INTERVALS, JOURNEY TIMES AND RESTING PERIODS

Point 2.1. For poultry, domestic birds and rabbits water and feed must be available in adequate quantities, unless the journey lasts less than 12 hours, excluding loading and unloading time.

< 12 h: no requisites

≥ 12 h: available in suitable quantities

Chicks: up to 24 h (within 72 h from hatching)

Feed and hydration of poultry during transport

COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 1/2005

On the protection of animals during transport and related operations

Challenging to provide in cage transport systems

Day old chicks: High water content gels are used.

Would the same system be applicable to the transport of adult birds ?

Feed and hydration of poultry during transport

On Field Trial

Field test on the effects of a newly-developed **transport feed** (TF) on the welfare of **pullets** both during lairage and long distance transport

Assessment of the efficacy based :

- TF consumption
- body weight loss
- body temperature
- blood stress indicators

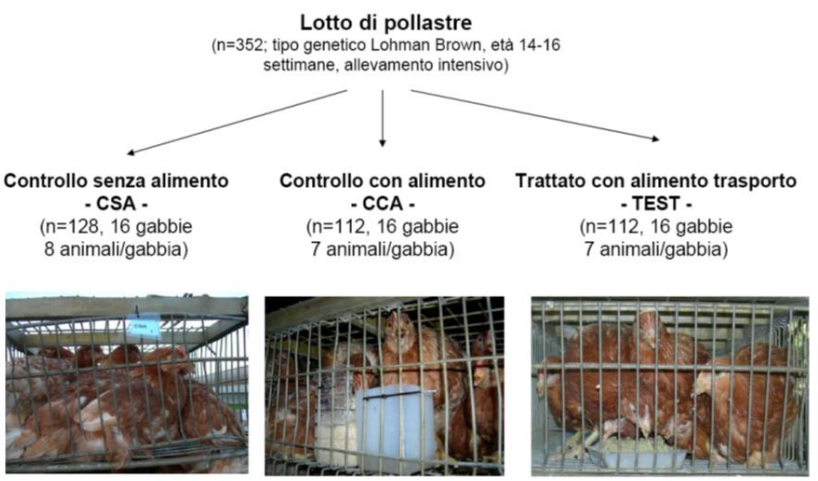
Messa a punto di alimenti per pollastre sottoposte a trasporti di lunga durata

[1] Petracci M., [2] Amadori M., [2] Archetti I.L., [1] Bianchi M., [3] Montella L., [1] Cavani C.
[1] *Dipartimento di Scienze degli Alimenti, Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna*
[2] *Centro di Referenza Nazionale per il Benessere Animale, IZSLER, Brescia*
[3] *AUSL Bologna*

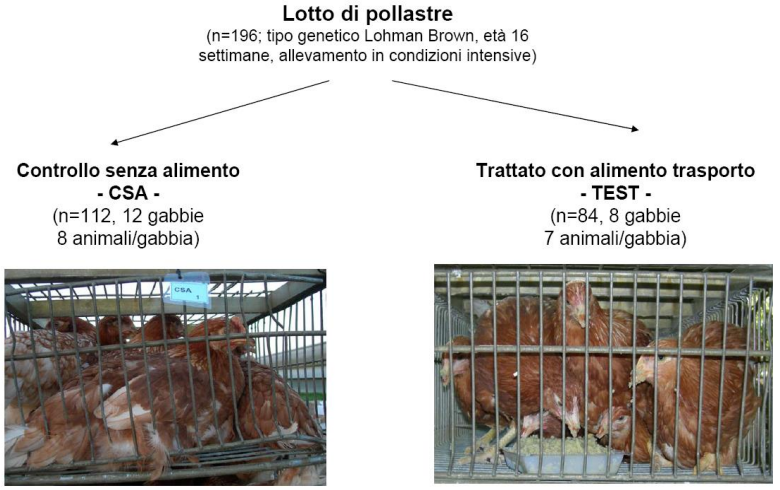
Feed and hydration of poultry during transport

Trial design

Lairarge

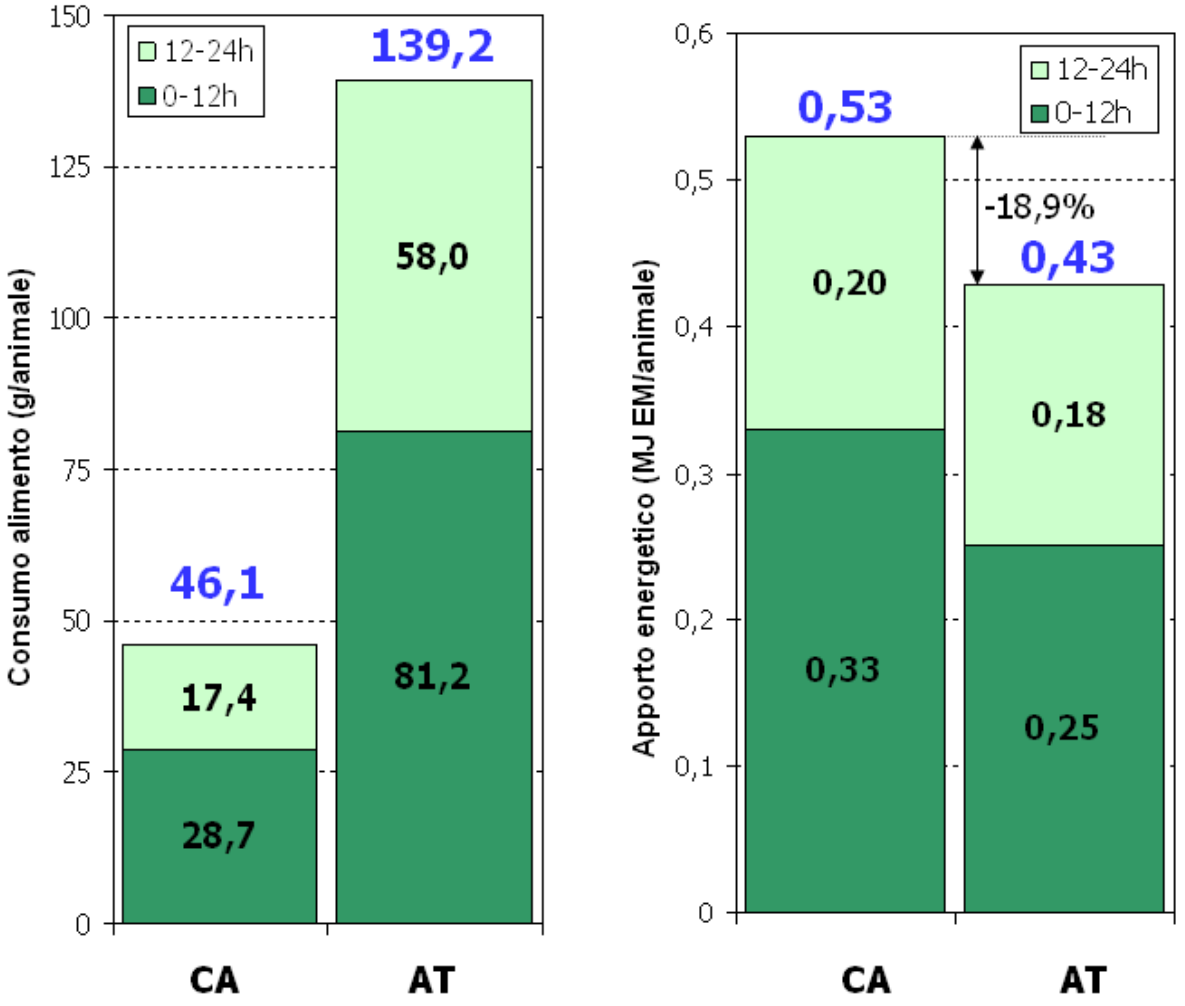


Transport



Petracci M, et Al. *University of Bologna*

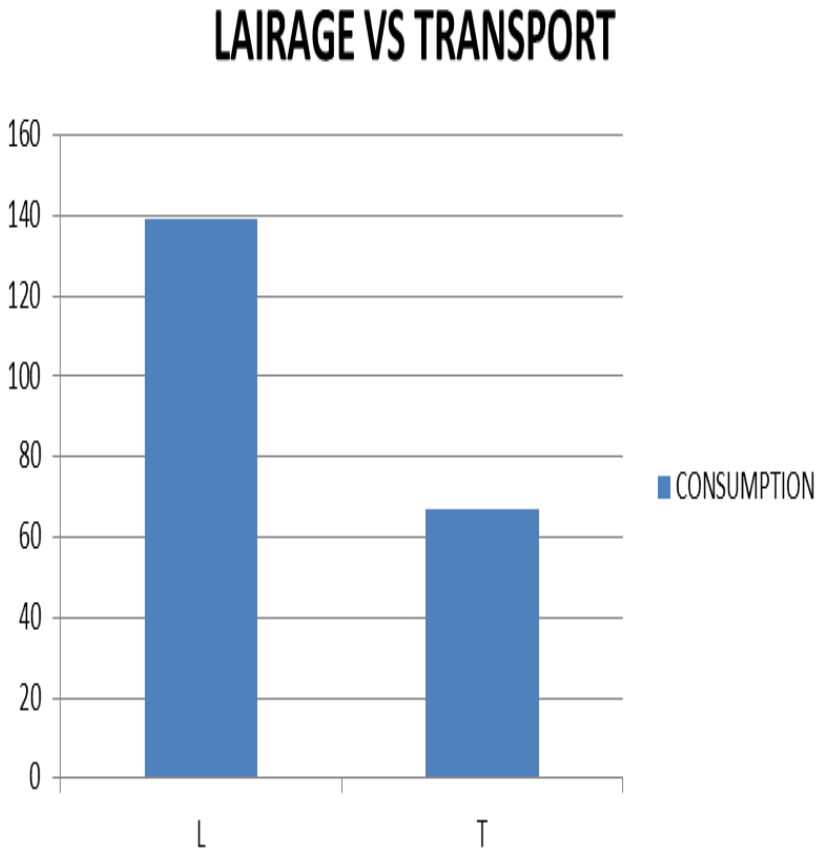
Feed consumption LAIRAGE

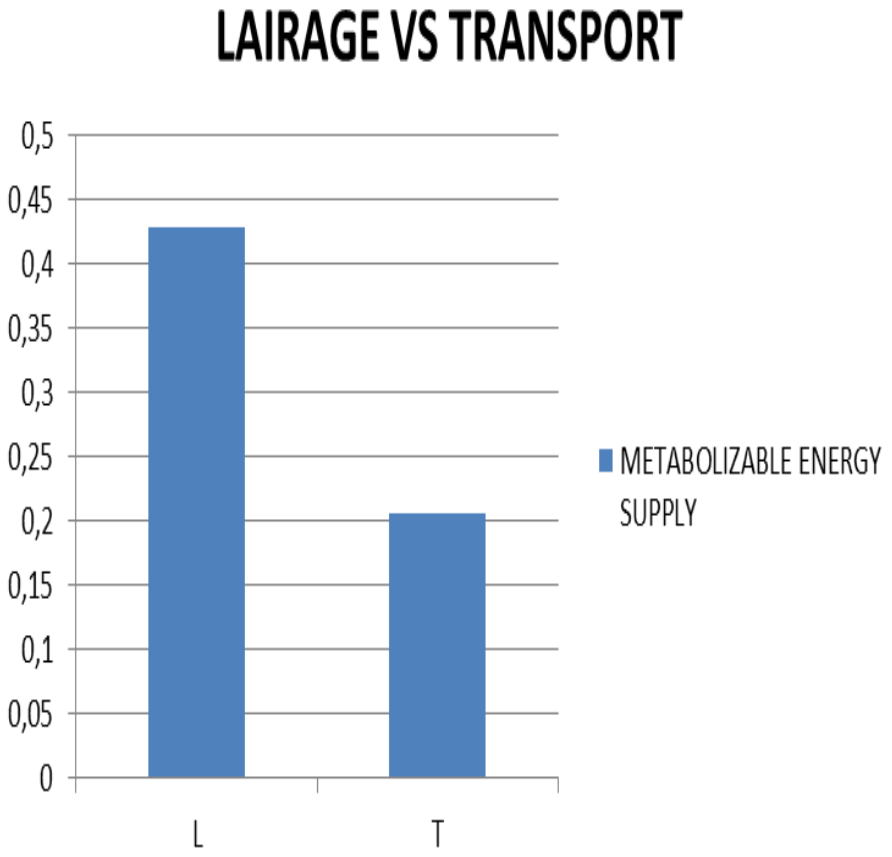


Petracci M, et Al. *University of Bologna*

Feed and hydration of poultry during transport

Feed consumption TRANSPORT

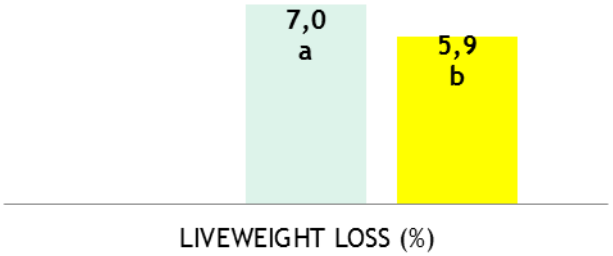


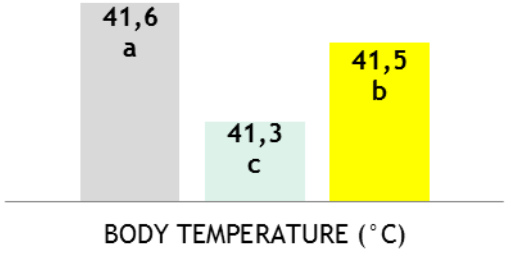


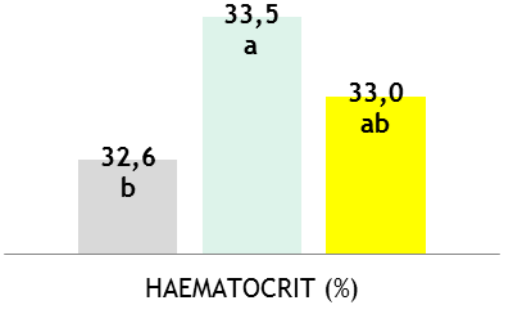
Petracci M, et Al. *University of Bologna*

Feed and hydration of poultry during transport

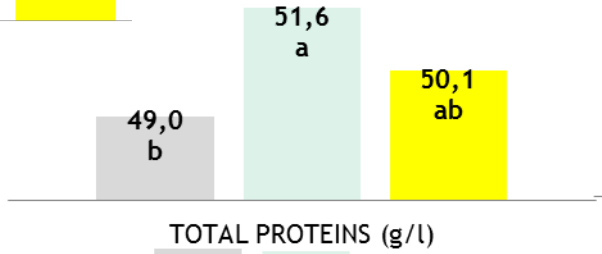
Phisiological indicators

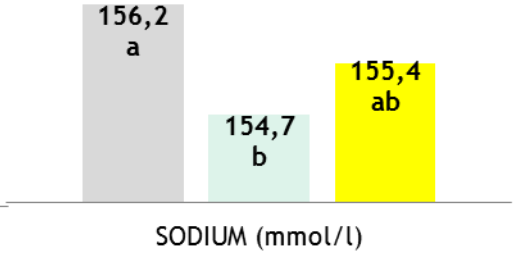


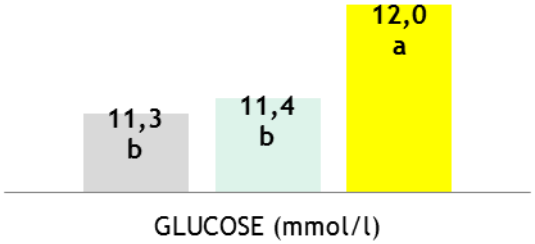


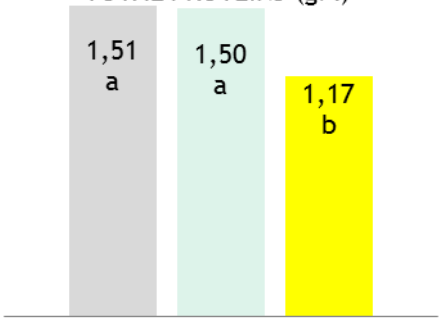


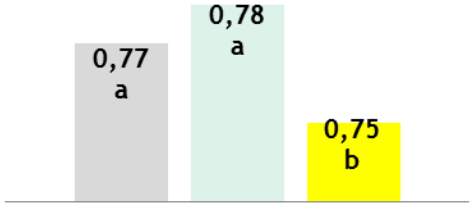


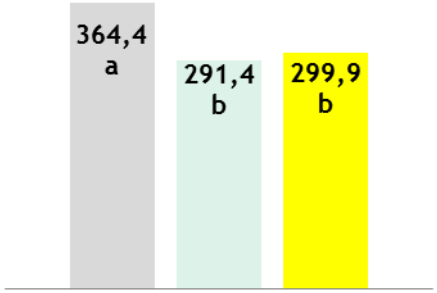












Petracci M, et Al. *University of Bologna*

Phisiological indicators

Compared with transported controls, fed animals showed:

- ☑ Lower liveweight loss
- ☑ Lower drop in body T
- ☑ Lower corticosterone (less stress)
- ☑ Lower oxidative stress (ROMs)
- ☑ Higher glucose (better energy balance)
- ☑ Smaller signs of dehydration (HCT and TP closer to baseline)

Physiological values generally closer to basal conditions
The only parameter that remained clearly affected by transport regardless of feeding was antioxidant capacity (OXY-TA).

Petracci M, et Al. *University of Bologna*

Feed and hydration of poultry during transport

Main conclusion: TF provided during long-distance transport (24H) appears to partially counteract the negative effects of fasting, dehydration, stress, and oxidative imbalance, resulting in animals that are physiologically closer to their pre-transport condition.

Main issue: low consumption of the TF in transit
Possible role in stress response of inflammatory cytokines with anorectic effect

TF can reduce transport stress in poultry

However, the mode of delivery needs to be improved.

Training the pullets prior to transport?

Petracci M, et Al. *University of Bologna*

Feed and hydration of poultry during transport

Messa a punto di alimenti per pollastre sottoposte a trasporti di lunga durata

[1] Petracci M., [2] Amadori M., [2] Archetti I.L., [1] Bianchi M., [3] Montella L., [1] Cavani C.
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[3] *AUSL Bologna*

Welfare of poultry during transport — Poster

Effect of feeding during long transport on welfare of laying pullets

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2IZSLER, Via Bianchi 9, 25124 Brescia, Italy
3AUSL, Bologna, Italy



Open discussion



Topics proposed by Member States

How poultry are affected by noise exposure? Are there any recommendations regarding how noise levels should be measured in poultry houses? :

- Scarce literature
- No recommandation regarding noise levels assessment

<u>EFSA report on laying hens (2023):</u>

- Hens' hearing depends on the frequency (tone) and the pressure level of the sound, this latter having the major influence on the subjective impression of loudness.
- able to detect very low-frequency tones **(< 20 Hz**) at pressure levels of approximately **40–80 dB**
- Most sensitive to tones between **400 and 4,000 Hz** which can be detected at pressure levels below **20 dB**

Topics proposed by Member States

How poultry are affected by noise exposure? Are there any recommendations regarding how noise levels should be measured in poultry houses? :

EFSA report on laying hens (2023):

- Exposure to sound **≥ 80 dB** led to more resting behaviour, reduced egg production and is a risk factor for the early onset of feather pecking. It also increases stress in laying hens and broiler chickens.
- However **80 dB** is already a high sound level -> Average noise levels inside commercial laying hen housing have been reported as 59.7–63.4 dB (Lourenconi et al., 2015)
- Even classical music played at **75 dB** has been associated with increased fearfulness in hens (Campo et al., 2005)
- Recommendation from the EFSA report: **Noise levels should not exceed 75 dB.**

Topics proposed by Member States

How poultry are affected by noise exposure? Are there any recommendations regarding how noise levels should be measured in poultry houses? :

Study of Chang et al. (2024) "Effects of environmental sound stimulus on behavioral responses, cortisol levels, and horizontal immunity of transferred pullets"

- The aim of this study was to investigate the effects of prolonged exposure to varying levels of music or noise on the behavioral, physiological, and immune responses of pullets following their transfer to an egg-laying facility.

- 5 groups:
  - 0 dB sound stimulation
  - low-decibel music (65–75 dB)
  - high-decibel music (85–95 dB)
  - low-decibel noise (65–75 dB)
  - high-decibel noise (85–95 dB)

- Pullets received music or noise stimuli 10 h per d from 1-day-old to 16-wk-old and were then transferred to the egg-laying facility.

Topics proposed by Member States

How poultry are affected by noise exposure? Are there any recommendations regarding how noise levels should be measured in poultry houses? :

Study of Chang et al. (2024) "Effects of environmental sound stimulus on behavioral responses, cortisol levels, and horizontal immunity of transferred pullets"

- Transfer itself is stressful and detrimental to pullet welfare (behavior, cortisol, immunity) but **long-term noise** exposition may mitigated its effects

- Long-term sound, especially high-decibel sound, appeared more effective than "low-decibel" sound at mitigating some negative behavioral and immune effects of transport stress, though it was associated with **higher cortisol** than the low-decibel condition.

  "Low-decibel sound"=65–75 dB -> not far from the recommended threshold

- **Noise level is not the only factor that may affect poultry welfare -> duration, frequency, variability, suddenness etc. should also be considered.**

How poultry are affected by noise exposure? Are there any recommendations regarding how noise levels should be measured in poultry houses?

Open discussion



Closure day 1



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Agenda day 2

Wednesday, September 30th morning: 09:00 – 12-35 CET

09:00	09:05	Opening (V. Michel)
09:05	09:50	Interactive session: : Calming the catch: lessons and experiences from the field (M. Looije – Eyes on animals)
09:50	10:10	Presentations of Member States: *Calculation of usable area in laying hen facilities (PT)*
10:10	11:15	EURCAW-Poultry-SFA highlights since last meeting part 2 *Break 20 min at 10:30*
11:15	11:45	Spanish Roadshows feedback (M. Camiña Montero, I. Clares Moral)
11:45	12:05	Open discussion on Depopulation in case of Avian Influenza (V. Michel)
12:05	12:30	Survey introduction + open discussion on Competent Authorities' future needs (E. Nehlig)
12:30	12:35	Closure (V. Michel)

Wednesday, September 30th morning: 09:00 – 12-35 CET



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Interactive session:
Calming the catch: lessons and experiences from the field

Madelaine Looije – Eyes on animals



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CALMING THE CATCH

- LESSONS AND EXPERIENCES FROM THE FIELD -



Eyes *on* Animals

Watching out for their welfare


Eyes on Animals


INSPEKCJA
TRANSPORTU
DROGOWEGO
© David Chalimoniuk


Eyes on Animals


Photo by Andrzej Skowron
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Eyes on Anim


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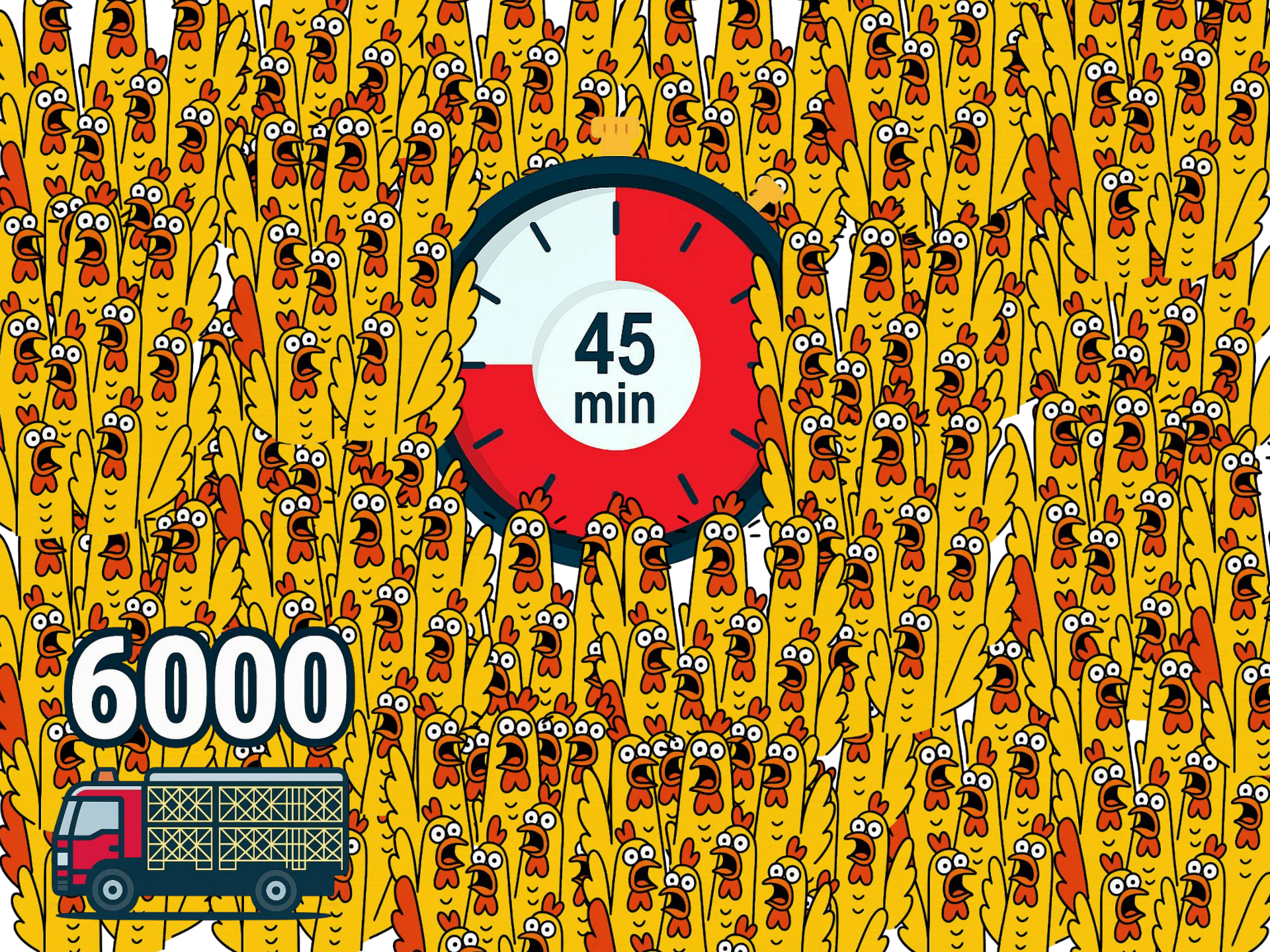
What is the ideal catching method according to slaughterhouses and transporters?

ILVO
Flanders Research Institute for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food



- As fast as possible -

ILVO
Flanders Research Institute for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food


45
min
6000



UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Broom, 1990

‘Catchers, **encouraged to empty hen houses very quickly**, are the major cause of very poor welfare.’

Hoorweg, 2024; Cockram, 2020 and De Lima, 2019

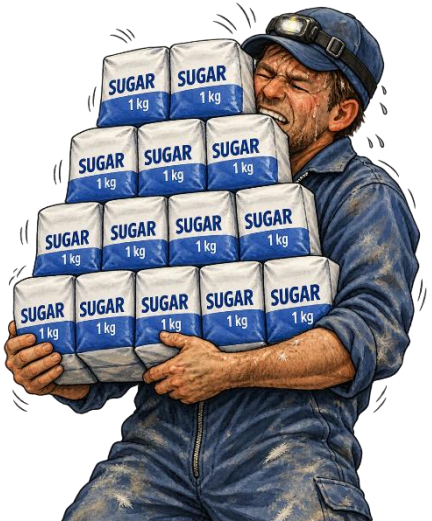
Faster catching causes more injuries, more wing flapping and more collisions.

ILVO
Flanders Research Institute for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

What do we know about the work of a chicken catcher?



- Carry ~**5-6 birds at a time** **(~14-17 kg)**
- Work up to **8 hours per day**, sometimes longer





- **8-10%** use **painkillers**
- **8-14%** had catching-related injuries in the previous 12 months

ILVO
Flanders Research Institute for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

Consequences of high-speed catching





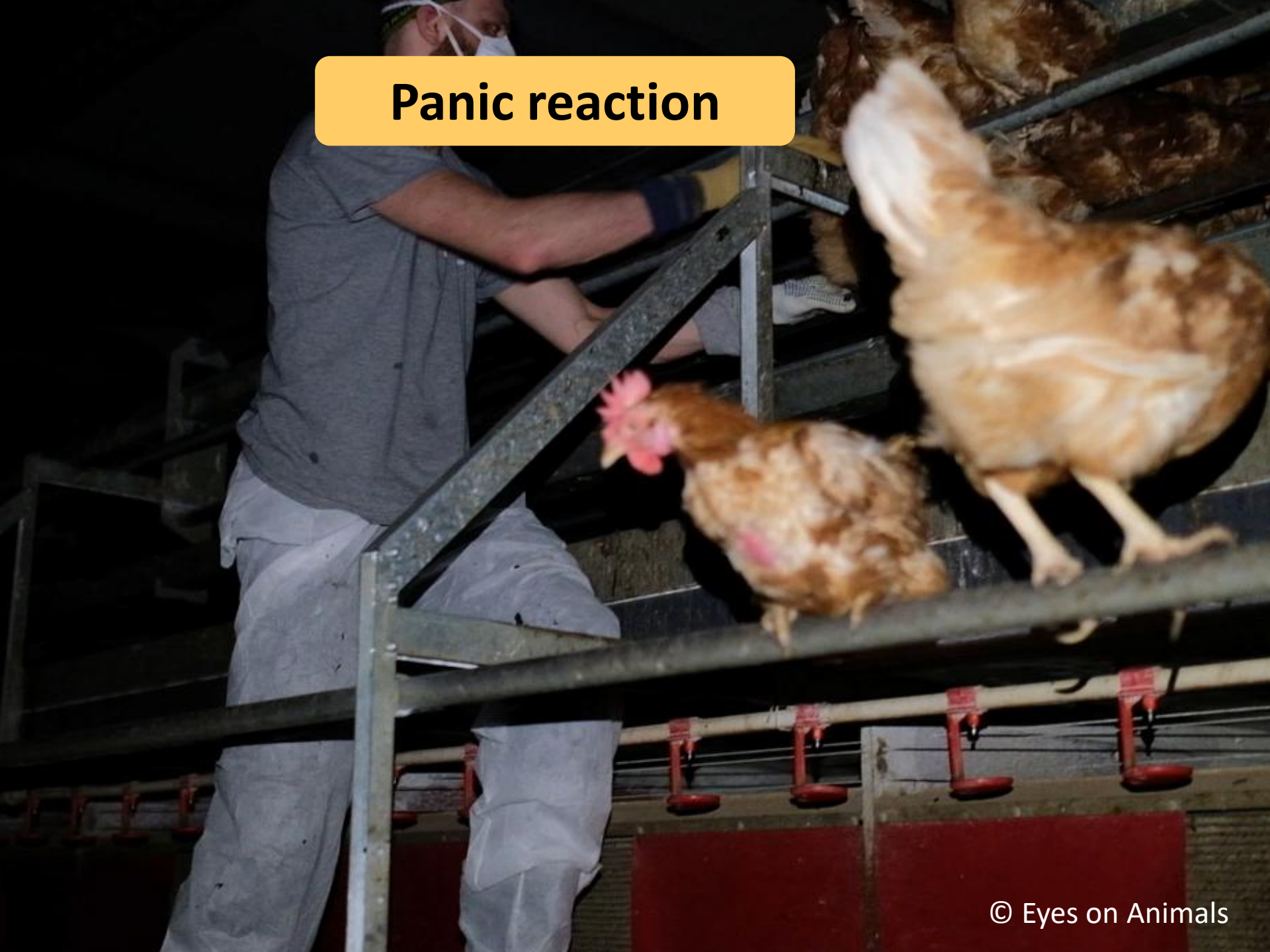


Changing the catching method alone will not solve the problem if high catching speeds are maintained



CATCHING AND LOADING BY THE LEGS

- INHERENT PROBLEMS -


Panic reaction
© Eyes on Animals

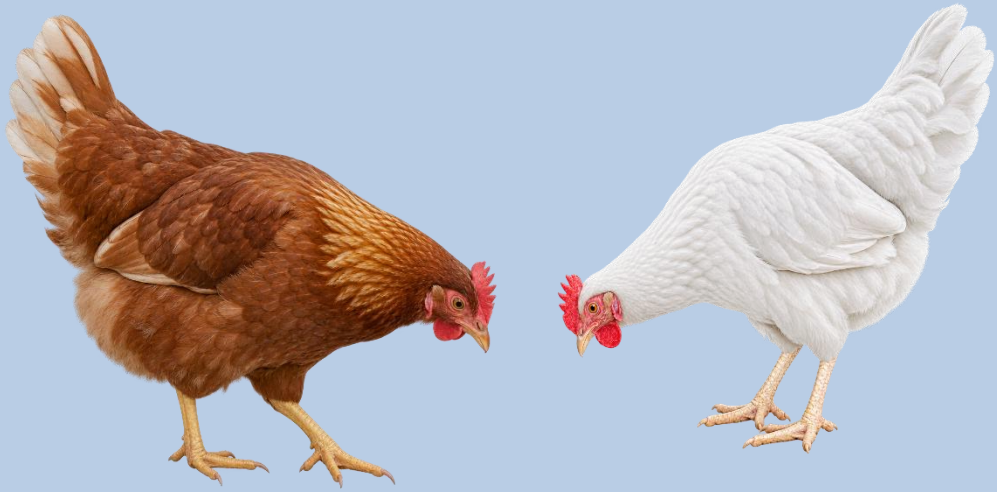

Eyes on
Animals

THE BEHAVIOURAL EVIDENCE IS CLEAR

Struggling, escape attempts, wing flapping and vocalizations are clear signs of fear and distress.

Laying hens

- Main causes of injury and fear -



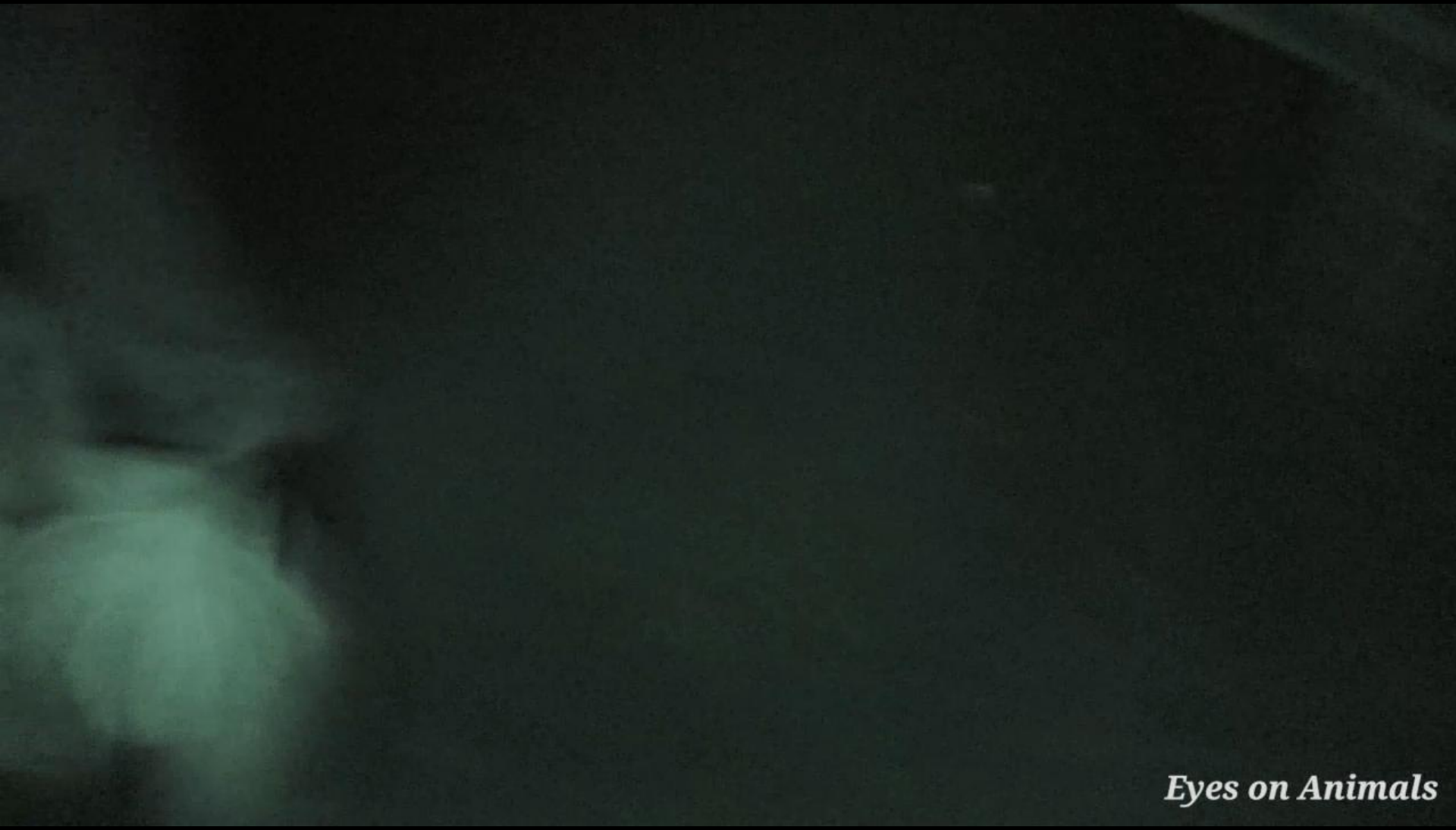

Many metal parts – high risk of collisions
© Eyes on Animals

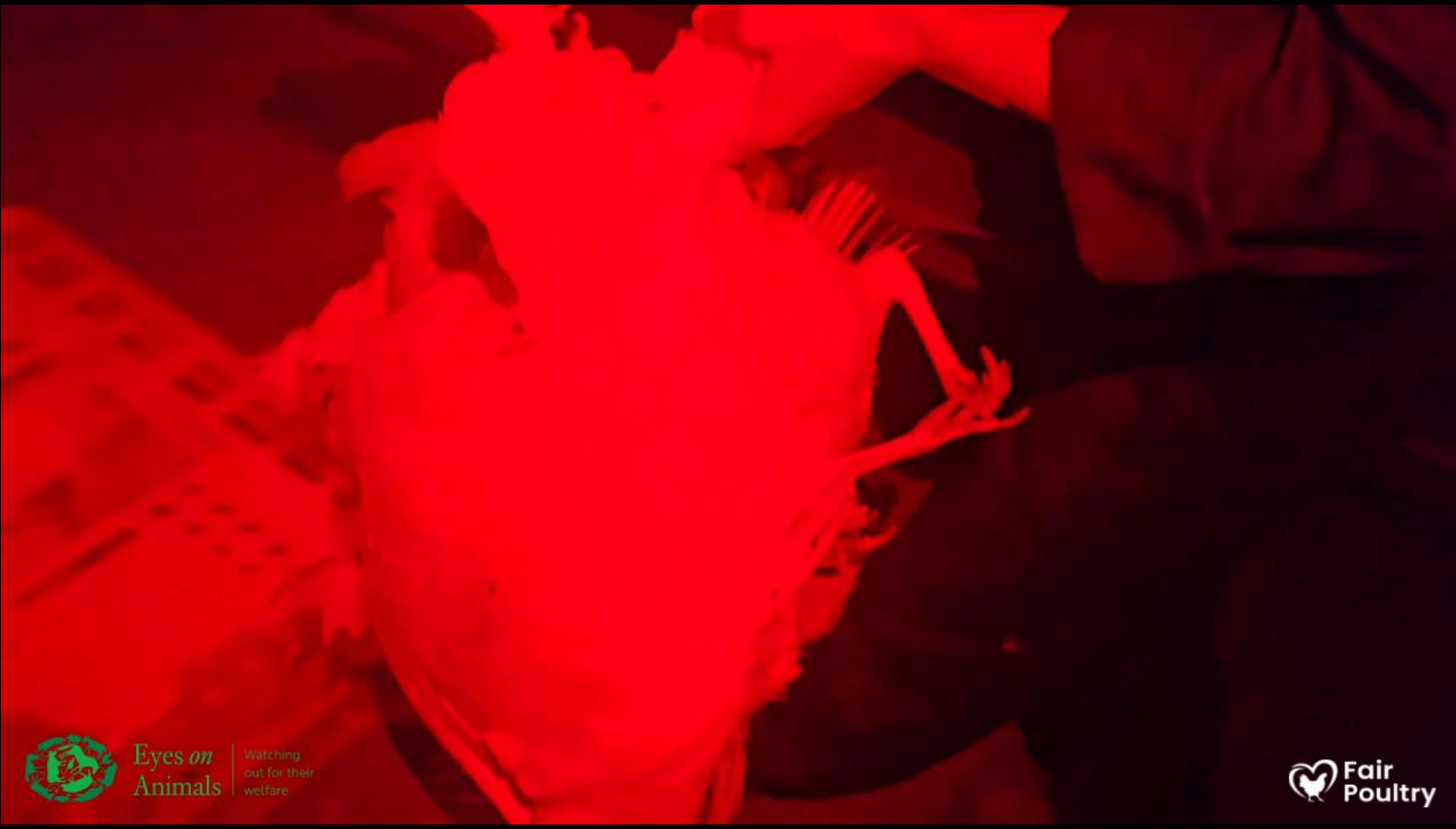

© Eyes on Animals

Squeezed into small crate openings



© Eyes on Animals


Eyes on Animals


Eyes on Animals
Watching out for their welfare
Fair Poultry


Falling onto their backs
© Eyes on Animals


Poor design
© Eyes on Animals


PUM



Broilers

- Main causes of injury and fear -

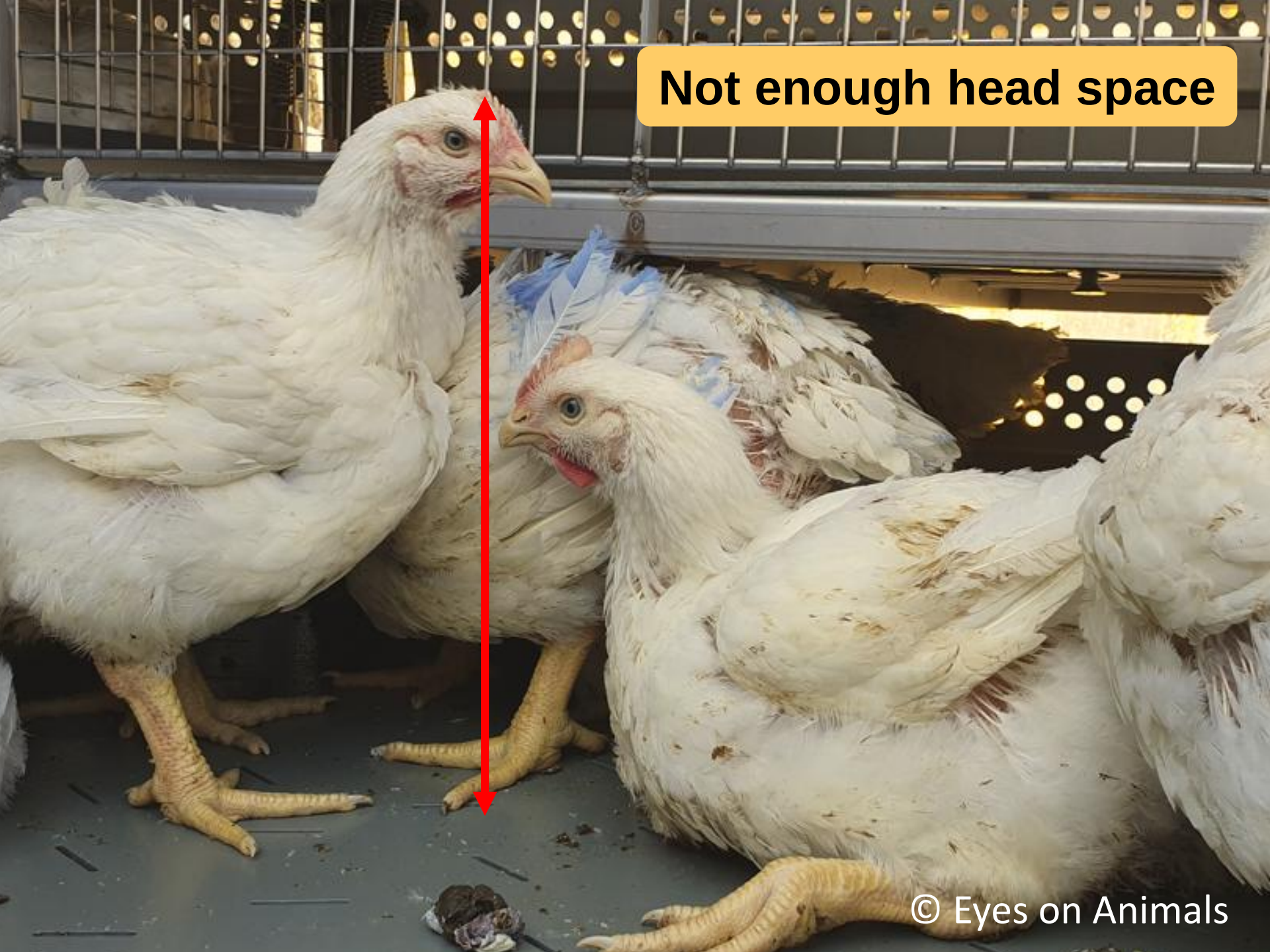


Painfull leg issues



THE LOST EARTHLINGS


© Eyes on Animals


Not enough head space
© Eyes on Animals


© Eyes on Animals


© Eyes on Animals


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© Jo-Anne McArthur


Dead on Arrival



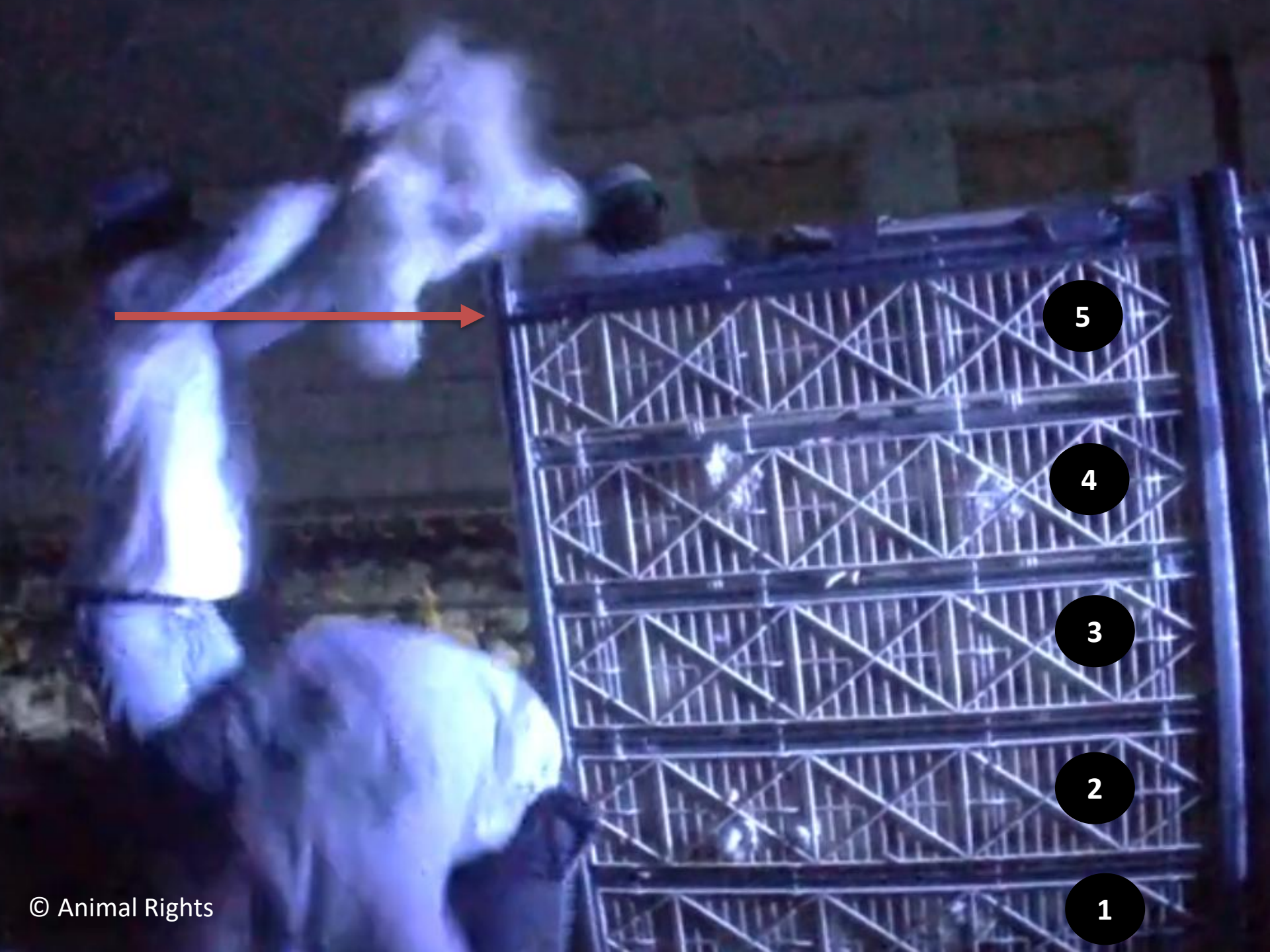
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Nederlandse Voedsel- en Warenautoriteit
Ministerie van Landbouw, Natuur en Voedselkwaliteit

Using containers with 5 drawers instead of 4 causes more injuries. Birds hit the edges of the containers more often.


5
4
3
2
1
© Animal Rights



But why should we catch our birds upright?

What do you hear?



Eyes *on* Animals | Watching out for their welfare

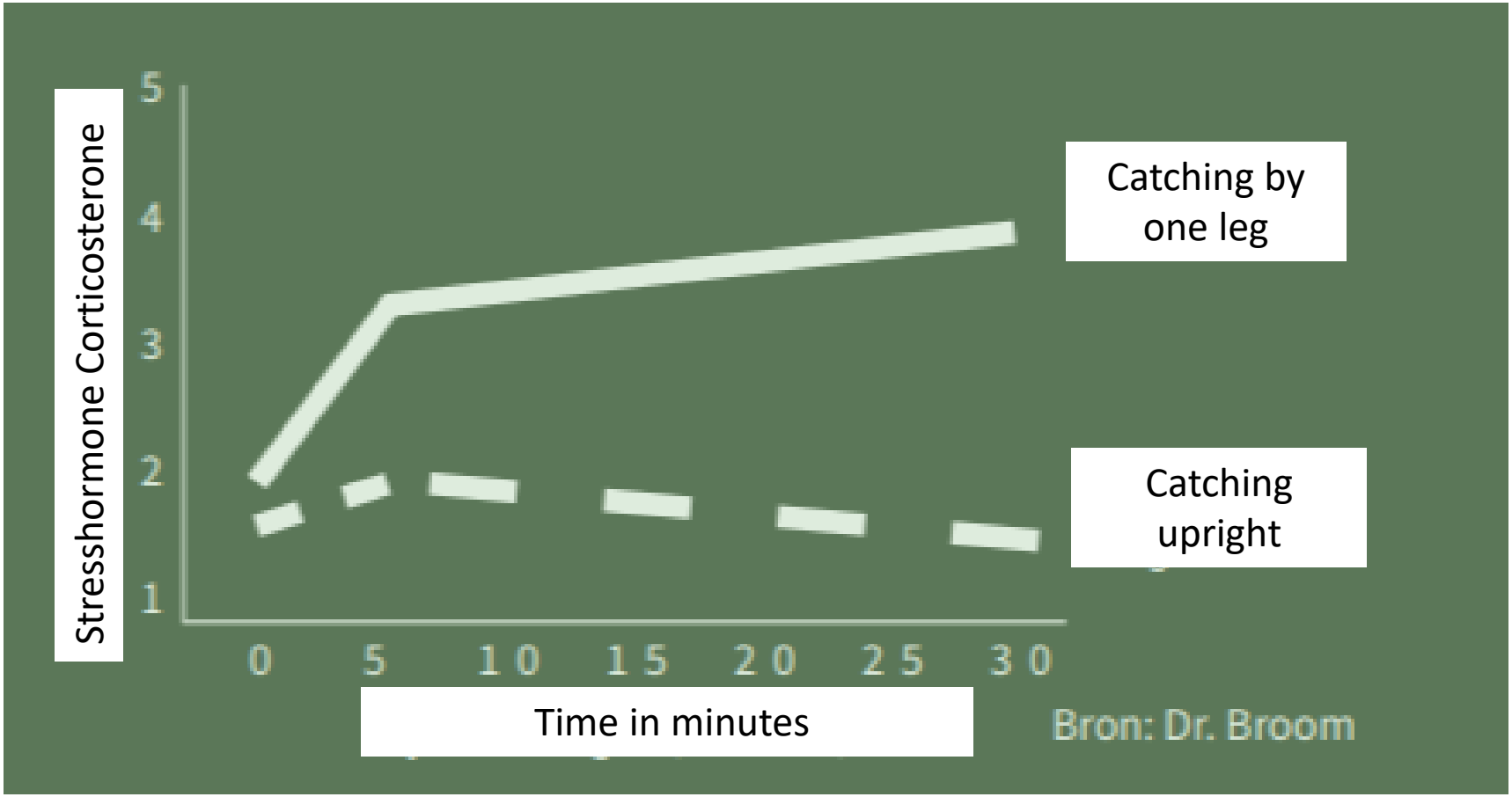
And what do you hear here?



Eyes *on* Animals | Watching out for their welfare

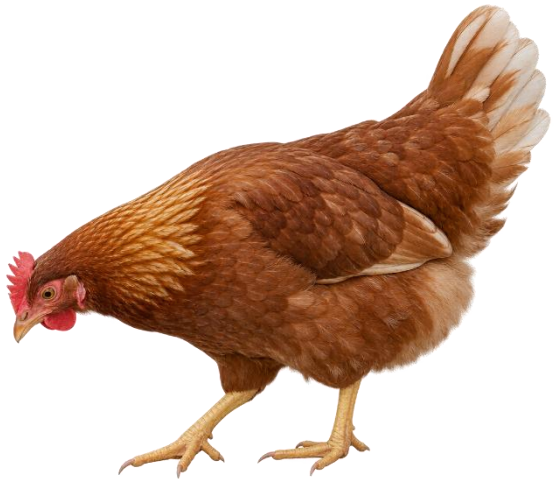


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Upright catching:

- ✓ Shorter handling
- ✓ Reduced wing flapping
- ✓ Less wing bruises

Less weight to carry

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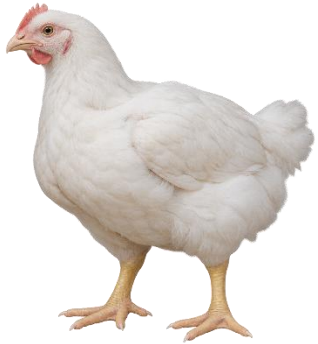
2.5-5 kg

~14 kg

Catchers found upright catching more tiring, but ergonomic assessments showed a lower physical load.



WAGENINGEN
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH



Catching broilers in an upright position results in significantly **fewer injuries** than conventional inverted catching, mechanical catching or patio loading.


Pluimveeservice
Smeding


den Ouden Oirschot
Pluimveeservicebedrijf


Jekal
Pluimveeservice






W. POTS
Pluimveevangbedrijf &
Stallenreiniging B.V.


hay presión de
tiempo


VAN DEN BROEK
PLUIMVEESERVICE


V-Power Diesel


homeil


© Eyes on Animals

KIPSTER

GELUKS VOGEL .bio

Biologisch-dynamisch pluimveebedrijf
Boerveenshof

Hoeve Borteldonk

De EEMWEIDE Boerderij



demeter

HERENBOEREN
SAMEN DUURZAAM VOEDSEL PRODUCEREN

GROENGILDE
BIODYNAMISCHE EIEREN EN PRODUCTEN

Dennenhoeve
Biologisch Dynamisch

ALLEBEI

De Wassende Maan

Upright catching of laying hens

- Techniques, benefits and challenges -





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Eyes on Animals | © Jack Tummers

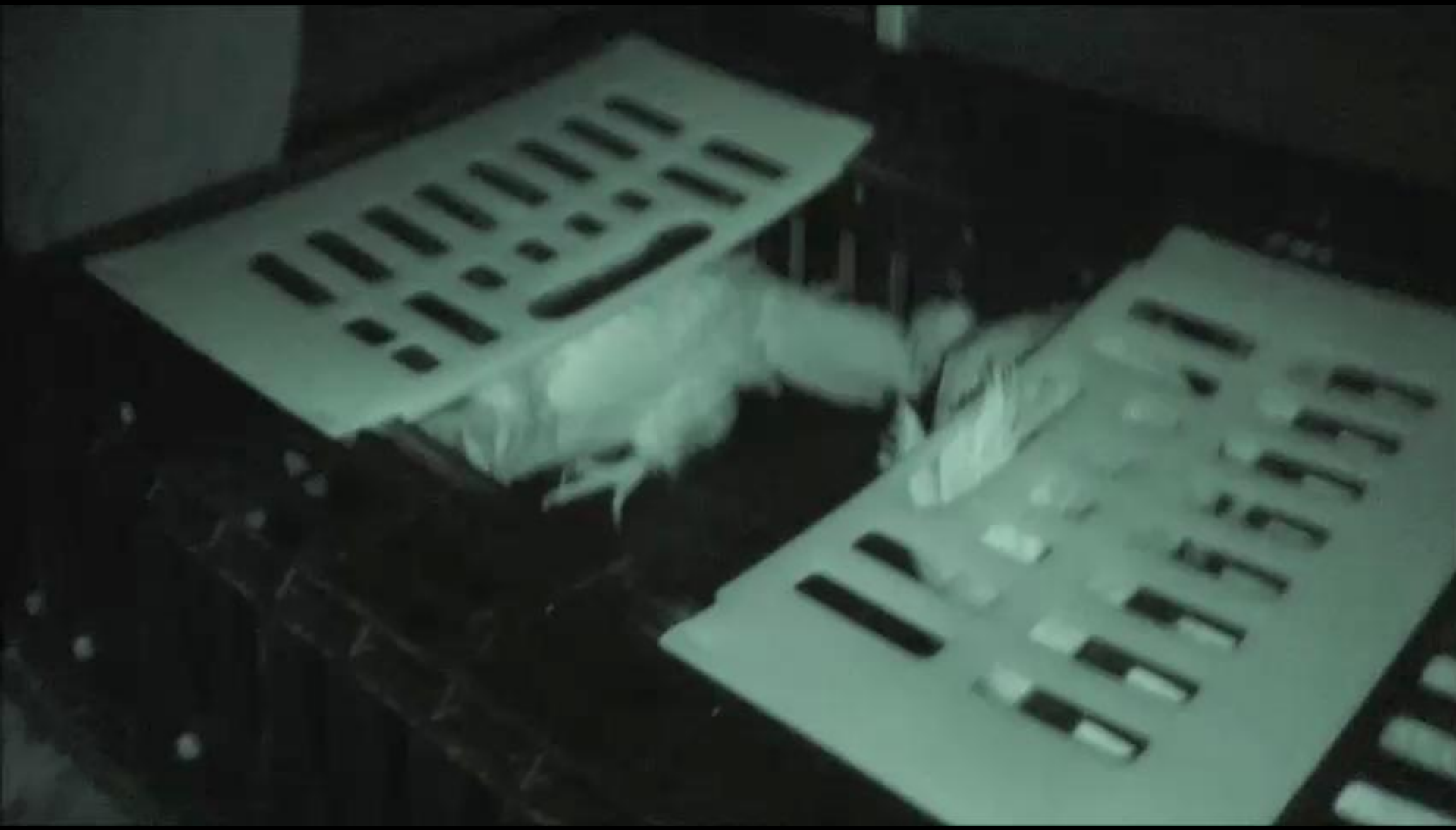

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Tall aviary systems: 3 or more people are needed
© Eyes on Animals


Flat-deck systems: Easier access and fewer people needed
© Eyes on Animals



© Eyes on Animals

Upright catching and loading of broilers

Techniques, benefits and challenges




DEUTSCHER TIERSCHUTZBUND
Eyes on Animals
Watching out for their welfare





© Eyes on Animals


But… what are the costs?



1,5-2 times longer



By using more catchers, total catching time does <u>not</u> have to increase





Per egg carton: half a cent *(≈ €0.0005 per egg)*

Per kg meat: + €0.012



ILVO
Flanders Research Institute for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food


KIPSTER
25.000 laying hens
12.500 a night



Catching injuries also reduce the value of broilers and cause substantial economic losses.










European Commission

Lifting by the legs is prohibited

- Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 -

1.8 It shall be prohibited to:

(d) **lift or drag** the animals by head, ears, horns, **legs**, tail or fleece, or handle them in such a way as to cause them unnecessary pain or suffering;

de Rechtspraak

Ban on lifting birds by the legs will be enforced



WAKKER DIER

Nederlandse Voedsel- en Warenautoriteit
Ministerie van Landbouw, Natuur en Voedselkwaliteit

High demand for catching machines



Fewer people needed for machine catching



These people can be used to manually catch laying hens

BIG CHALLENGE: TRAINING OPERATORS

Theory + Practice



BELT SPEED MUST BE SET AT A LIMIT



POOR CONTAINER DESIGN → MORE INJURIES



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Current proposal

Poultry may be carried by their legs if:

1. **Both legs** are held, **maximum 3 birds** per hand

2. **Breasts are supported** by a leg or, in case of cages, a breast slide.


1. Both legs
Advantage: it reduces some of the pain and stress
animalia


Conventional method:
three legs per hand


Proposed method:
six legs per hand!
Painful squeezing?


What about broiler breeders with even thicker legs?
Eyes on Animals
Watching out for their welfare



© Eyes on Animals

animalia

Norwegian Meat and Poultry Research Center, 2018

“Catching the broilers UPRIGHT was faster than getting a grip of both legs of the animals, even though more birds could be collected in one catch with the two-leg method.”

2. Support of breast

How are you going to support birds by your leg and walk at the same time?





How this would look like with three birds per time

What about all the birds that need to be carried outside?



© Eyes on Animals


© Fair Poultry
© Eyes on Animals

Upright catching is already common practice in Brazil and Colombia



Brazil



Colombia



Thailand



CHAVEEVAN GROUP

Switzerland



1995

Recommendation concerning Domestic Fowl (gallus gallus)

adopted by the Standing Committee of the European Convention for the Protection of Animals kept for Farming Purposes (T-AP) on 28 November 1995 at its 30th meeting

Article 17 (4)

Birds should preferably **not be carried hanging head downwards** and in any case they shall be held by both legs.

They shall be held carefully to avoid damage to their legs and care shall be taken to avoid heads and wings hitting solid objects.

31 years later.

It’s time to put this recommendation into practice.

Please use your voice to ensure animal welfare moves forward, not backwards.



madelaine@eyesonanimals.com
0031 646207017

Presentations of Member States:
Calculation of usable area in laying hen facilities

M. Correia and L. Maciel- PT



Co-funded by
the European Union

REPÚBLICA PORTUGUESA
AGRICULTURA E MAR

Alternative systems for laying hens

Calculation of usable area

Maria Correia
Luís Maciel



dgav
Direção Geral de Alimentação e Veterinária



03 Legal Framework

06 Big Dutchman

10 Chore Time

13 DGAV Procedure

15 Conclusion



Legal Framework

COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 1999/74/EC
of 19 July 1999
laying down minimum standards for the protection of laying hens

Article 2

2.

(d) '**usable area**' means: an area at least 30 cm wide with a floor slope not exceeding 14 %, with headroom of at least 45 cm. Nesting areas shall not be regarded as usable areas..



COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 1999/74/EC
of 19 July 1999
laying down minimum standards for the protection of laying hens

CHAPTER I

Provisions applicable to alternative systems

Article 4

1. (d) adequate **perches**, without sharp edges and providing at least 15 cm per hen. Perches must not be mounted above the litter and the horizontal distance between perches must be at least 30 cm and the horizontal distance between the perch and the wall must be at least 20 cm;

4. The stocking density must not exceed nine laying hens per m2 usable área

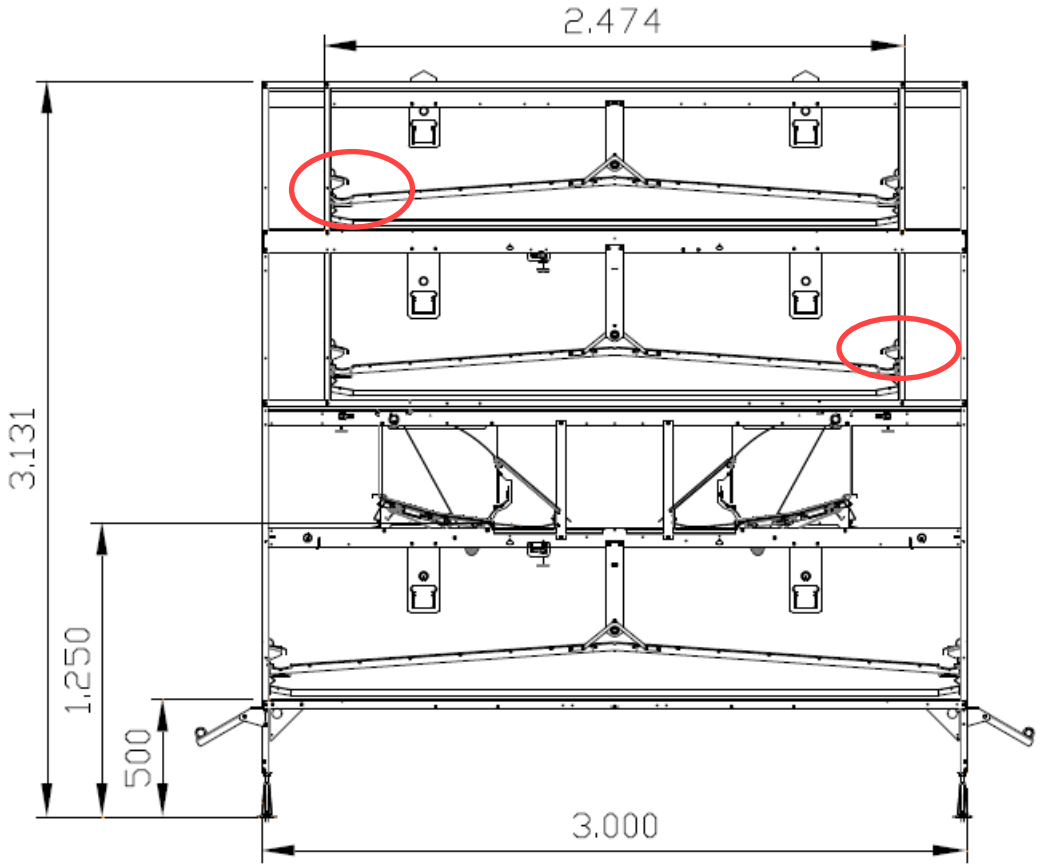
U.A. IS USUALLY THE LIMITING FACTOR



Big Dutchman

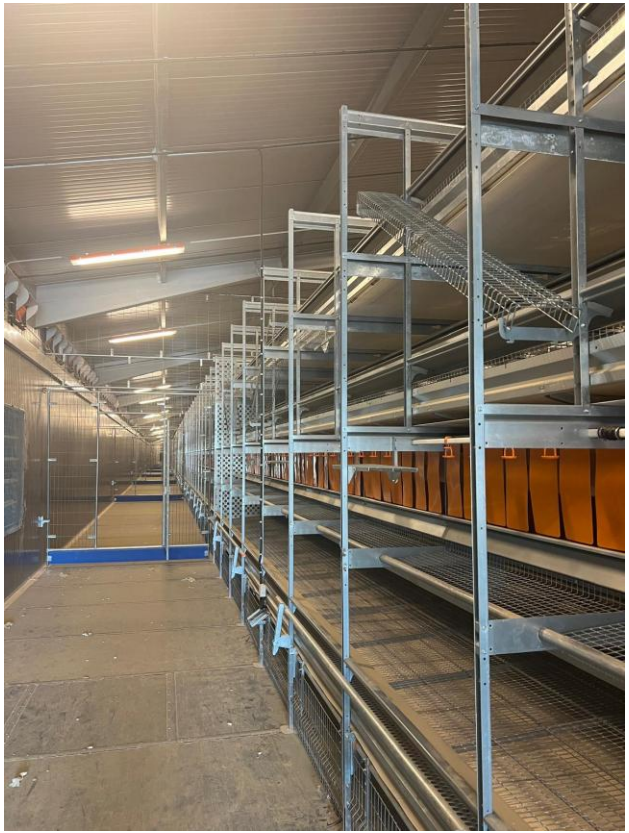
Natura Step XL 30-N-24-24

Perches



Big Dutchman





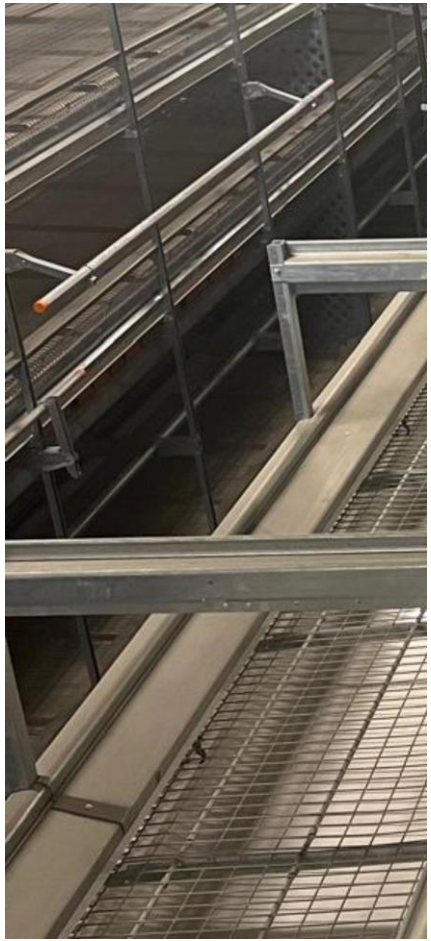
Big Dutchman





Big Dutchman

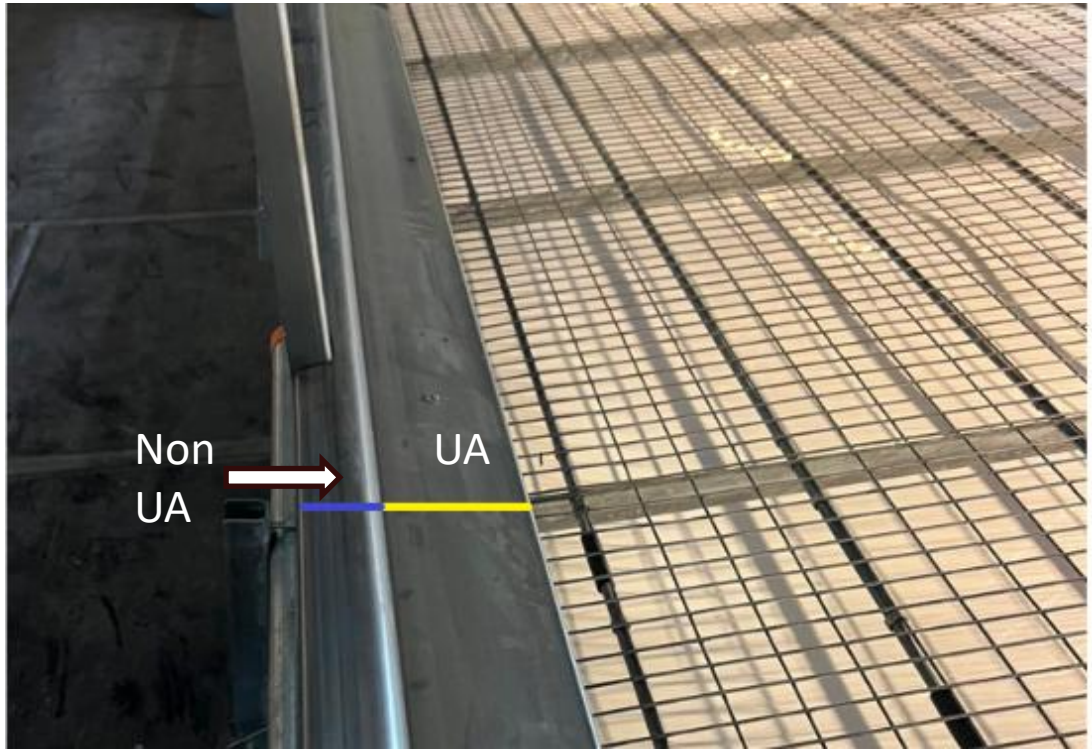




DGAV - Procedure

PERCH

The highest longitudinal metal structure at the end of the system – which we refer to as a 'perch' – is not counted towards the U.A.



DGAV - Procedure

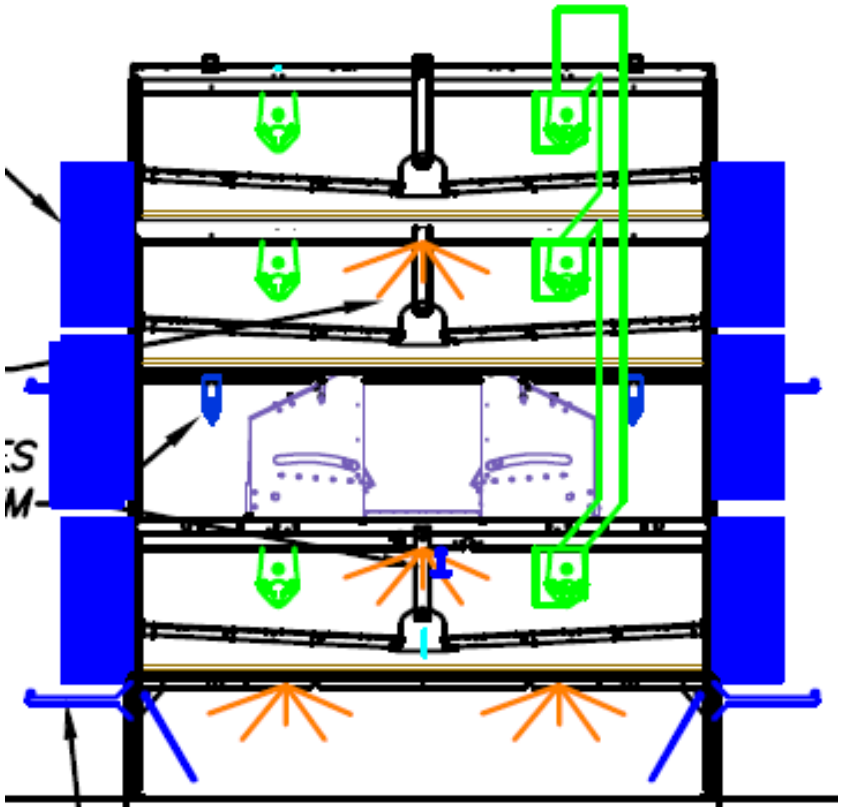




Chore Time

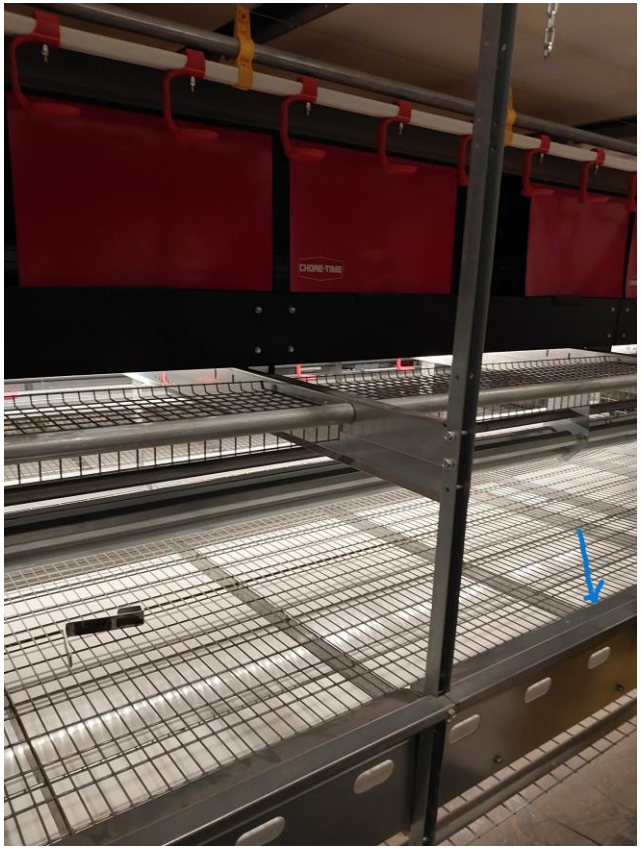
Perches

Egg tray

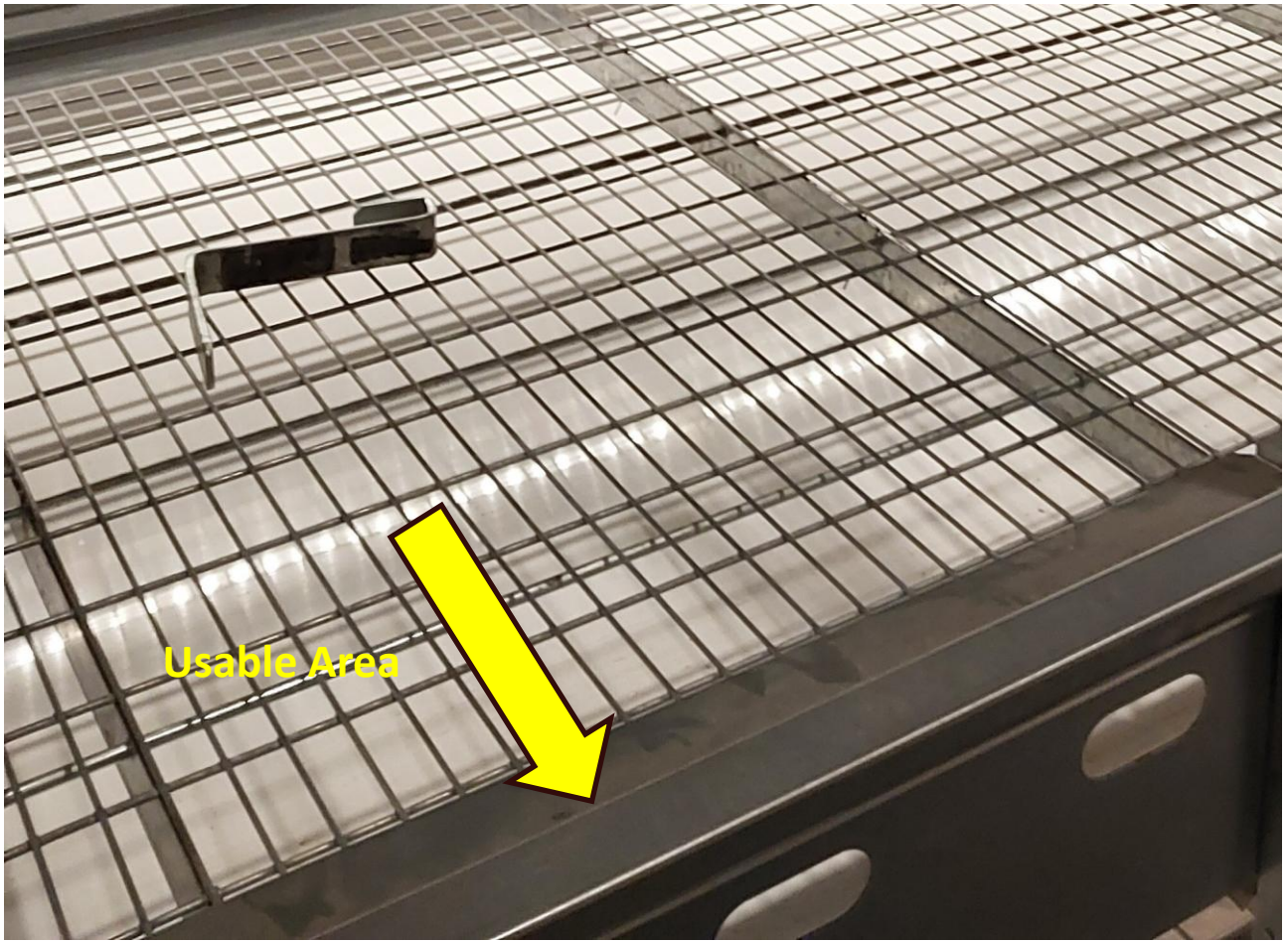


Chore Time

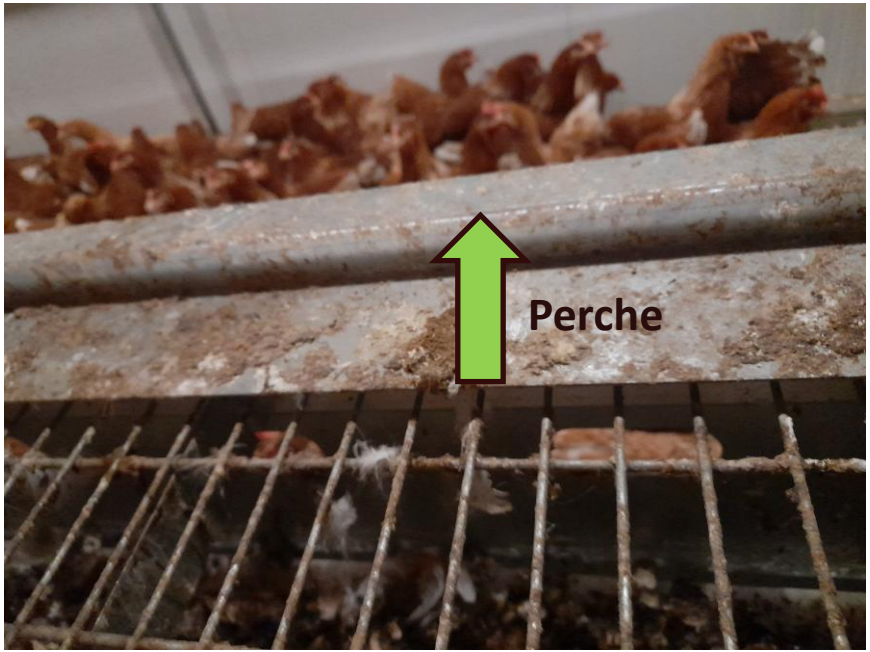




Chore Time



Chore Time





DGAV - Procedure

EGG TRAY

We do not count the egg tray as usable area



In systems with perches in the slat area, the netting is considered a usable surface ?

We consider the surface under the perches usable area



Questions

- How other MS measure the useable surface on this type of systems?
- Is the surface under or above the perch considered useabel surface?
- Is a perch also a useable surface and if so in which conditions?

Conclusion



- **Most systems are sold in various European countries**
- **The company selling the system believes that there are differing interpretations across the various Member States. According to the company, there are Member States that count the space below and above the perches as usable area.**
- **The legislation contains some areas that may be subject to different interpretations depending on the technician carrying out the assessment- The requirements are broad and don’t access specific situations**

Conclusion



- **We believe it is important to have standardised criteria at European level:**
  - **Enhancing the credibility of the competent authorities that legislate and enforce European standards**
  - **Greater fairness by establishing the same standards and requirements across the different Member States**
  - **Greater transparency in the application of EU legislation**
  - **Greater security and confidence for technicians, manufacturers and equipment suppliers**

Its importante to discuss this questions - New Commission proposal regarding the requirements of animal welfare on laying hens

REPÚBLICA PORTUGUESA
AGRICULTURA E MAR

Thank You

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dgav
Direção Geral de Alimentação e Veterinária



EURCAW-Poultry-SFA highlights since last meeting part 2



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EURCAW-Poultry-SFA highlights since last meeting part 2

- Good Practices Fact sheets:
  - Thermal management to avoid heat stress during transport (Anja Riber)
  - On-farm hatching to improve broiler welfare from the start (Maryse Guinebretiere)
  - Elevated platforms in broiler chicken barns (Maryse Guinebretiere)

- Animal-Based Indicators for Assessing Welfare Implications Related to Growth Rate in Broilers (Guidance, Anja Riber)

- Factsheet: Use of enrichment in broilers (Leonardo Vinco James)

Good Practices Fact sheets:



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Good practice factsheet: Thermal management to avoid heat stress during transport

- Relatively few slaughterhouses in the EU can accommodate end-of-lay laying hens, broiler breeders and layer breeders => long-distance transports.
- EC 1/2005: maximum of 12 h journey time, if no water access.
  - The 12 h only concerns the journey, so excludes catching, loading and lairage time.
- In total, end-of-lay birds may be water deprived considerably longer than 12 h.
- During the loading, journey and lairage time the birds are kept at high stocking densities in crates that are stacked densely
  - increased risk of heat stress, especially during warm seasons, and when the vehicle is parked or moving slowly.



Good practice factsheet: Thermal management to avoid heat stress during transport

Different management strategies and features of the vehicle can be applied to prevent and mitigate the risk of birds under transport experiencing heat stress.

When to apply measures to prevent or mitigate heat stress

- Prior to transport: Evaluation of weather conditions at the farm of origin, along the planned route, and at the slaughterhouse location.

- Temperature sensors installed inside the vehicle, warning the driver
  - Sensors should be placed in multiple positions
  - A general rule of thumb is that drivers should pay attention when temperatures are above 20 °C (alarm).

- Observation of bird behaviour at loading and during breaks to identify indications of heat stress:
  - Panting, i.e., breathing with short, quick breaths with an open beak.
  - Bird vocalization, e.g.
    - Response to whistling sound
      - Low pitch alarm call = normal response
      - Silence = birds are experiencing heat stress



©Dreamstime

Good practice factsheet: Thermal management to avoid heat stress during transport

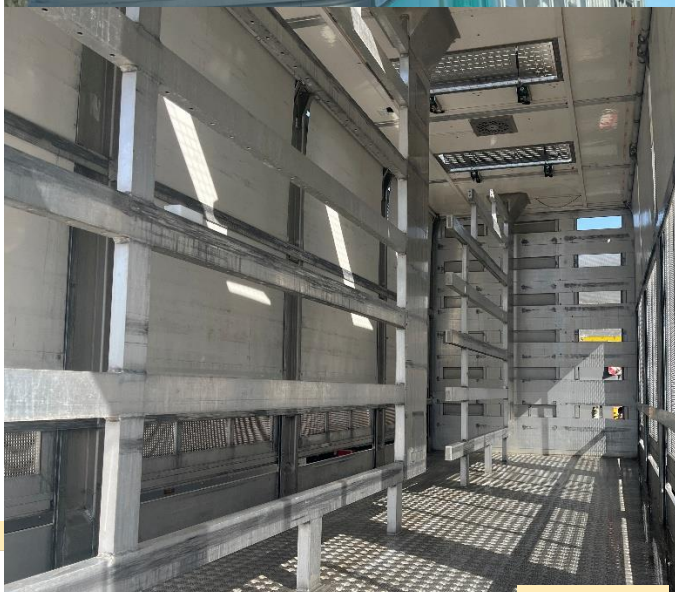
Measures to initiate during planning

- Coordination of catching, transport and slaughter schedules => minimising waiting times before departure and during lairage.
- If hot periods cannot be avoided, fewer birds should be placed per crate to allow for more air circulation between the birds.
  - It is standard practice to reduce the number of birds per crate by one to two birds.
- Load fewer crates by leaving out the top layer of each crate stack.









Measures that can be used anytime during transport

Increased airflow

- Adjustable side curtains
  - Ideally, opening from the top downwards
- Liftable roofs
- Ventilation openings located at vehicle front
- Ventilation systems installed in the vehicle
  - Positive-pressure ventilation by drawing air into the vehicle.
  - Exhaust fans in the roof =>negative-pressure ventilation by expelling air from the vehicle.

Reduce heat absorption from solar radiation

- Passive radiative cooling paint on vehicle roof =>reflects incoming sunlight – cools to temperatures below the ambient air temperature.

Measures to apply only when the vehicle is in a parked position

- Parking the vehicle in a shaded area
- Orienting the vehicle towards a location with greater air movement
- Opening of the vehicle sides (only at the slaughterhouse premises)
- Roof openings
- External ventilators or fans at the slaughterhouse premises (parking area, lairage)
- Sprinkler system in the lairage at the slaughterhouse

- Perforated hose on the vehicle roof to cool it with water
  - Emergency measure, requires a location with water supply.









@ANIVET

Good practice factsheet: Thermal management to avoid heat stress during transport

Education of drivers

- Drivers should receive training on:
  - Assessment of bird welfare and thermal status based on behavioural indicators
  - Transport planning strategies to reduce the risk of heat stress
  - Appropriate use of vehicle features and ventilation systems



Emergency

- A contingency plan should be in place to address emergencies during transport, describing:
  - Potential emergency scenarios
  - Actions required in each case
  - Relevant contact persons or authorities

Good practice factsheet: On-farm hatching to improve broiler welfare from the start

Context In commercial hatcheries, chicks hatch in incubators without access to water or feed for 24–48 hours, causing stress.

On-farm hatching allows chicks to hatch directly in the barn, with immediate access to light, water, and feed. This method avoids stress from handling, transport, and unloading.

Key benefits

- Early development of digestive, immune, and thermoregulatory systems (Malchow et al., 2025)
- Improved initial growth and more robust, healthier birds (Boothe et al., 2024; Akram et al., 2025)
- Reduced need for antibiotics due to lower contamination risk (Jerab et al., 2023)
- On-farm hatching avoids stress from handling, transport, and unloading. Chicks remain in the same environment, limiting exposure to external pathogens.



Anses

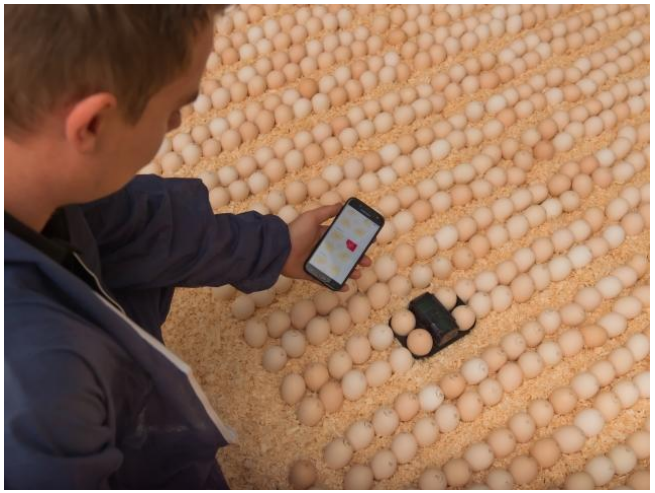
Good practice factsheet: On-farm hatching to improve broiler welfare from the start

Implementation example: A simple system places pre-incubated eggs directly on the litter, requiring no major barn modifications.
Non-hatch rates are low (1–5%), and the farmer's workload is similar to conventional rearing, except for vaccination and unhatched egg management, now handled by the farmer.



©HFHC / NestBorn®

An egg placing machine places the incubated eggs directly in the litter bed at the farm. The capacity is 60,000 hatching eggs per hour.



©HFHC / NestBorn®

Sensors to track the three-day hatching process 24/7 and in real time.

Good practice factsheet: On-farm hatching to improve broiler welfare from the start

- Procedure
  - Building preparation (Day -3): cleaning, disinfection, laying 3–5 cm of litter, floor temperature 26–28°C, ambient temperature 33.5–34°C.
  - Arrival of eggs (embryonic day 18.5): eggs placed on litter, egg temperature maintained at 36–38°C.
  - Use of wireless sensors for real-time monitoring of egg and barn conditions
- Hatching timeline:
  - Day 20: first chicks hatch.
  - Day 21: peak hatching, immediate access to feed and water.
  - Days 22–23: last chicks hatch, unhatched eggs (<2–3%) are collected and removed.
- Key considerations
  - Requires technical skills and good management.
  - Farmer is responsible for vaccination and disposal of unhatched eggs.
  - Higher production costs, but compensated by better chick health and performance.

On-farm hatching aligns with animal welfare improvement, reduced sanitary risks, and compliance with European requirements, supported by recent scientific data and field experience.



Anses

Good practice factsheet: Elevated platforms in broiler chicken barns

- Welfare challenge
  - Modern broilers grow rapidly and become increasingly inactive with age.
  - Reduced mobility is associated with: leg disorders and lameness, tibial dyschondroplasia, footpad dermatitis, hock burns.
  - Conventional floor housing offers limited opportunities for species-specific behaviours such as perching.
- Elevated platforms provide broilers with accessible raised resting areas and opportunities to express natural behaviour.

=> Providing elevated platforms is a practical environmental enrichment measure that supports both behavioural needs and physical health in broiler production.



Good practice factsheet: Elevated platforms in broiler chicken barns

- Scientific evidence indicates that elevated platforms:
  - Promote natural resting and perching-related behaviour
  - Increase locomotor activity and use of the environment
  - Improve resting quality by reducing disturbances from active flock mates
  - Diversify the housing environment and create sheltered areas underneath platforms
  - Reduce the prevalence and severity of: lameness, tibial dyschondroplasia, footpad dermatitis, hock burns.

Elevated platforms contribute to improved welfare outcomes while enhancing environmental complexity within broiler houses.



Materlap



Anses

Good practice factsheet: Elevated platforms in broiler chicken barns

- Practical Recommendations for Implementation
  - Platforms should be available before chick placement.
  - Birds show motivation to use platforms from the first week of life.
  - Access should be possible throughout the production cycle.
- Design Considerations
  - Provide ramps with a maximum slope of 25°.
  - Common practice: platform area ≥ 1% of total house floor area, approximately 0.3 m² per 1,000 chickens.
  - Plastic slatted platforms are commonly used.
- Operational aspects
  - Platforms represent a one-time investment.
  - Winch systems and transport carts can facilitate handling and cleaning.

Further research is still needed to define the optimal platform area and design per bird.



Materlap



Michard-aviculture

Good practice factsheet

EU Member States use the Good Practices Factsheets for various purposes:

- For the preparation/updating of national guidelines.
- Used as support during animal welfare inspections.
- Distributed to
  - animal welfare inspectors,
  - stakeholders (e.g., the Egg and Broiler Associations),
  - farmers (usually after inspections to show examples of good practices).
- Introduced at training sessions.

- Used by university teachers during the teaching of veterinary and animal science students.

Good practice factsheet

- Concrete examples of good practices may inspire poultry and rabbit producers in the European Union to take up similar practices or implement related initiatives.
- Do you have examples of good practices?
- Do you know animal welfare inspectors that are progressive/particularly interested in animal welfare and willing to be contacted/assist with identifying good practices?
- Do you know of animal welfare inspectors whose inspections may be considered a good practice, because they do something extra?

Animal welfare inspectors that are willing to collaborate with us are very valuable

Open discussion



Break

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Animal-Based Indicators for Assessing Welfare Implications Related to Growth Rate in Broilers (Guidance)

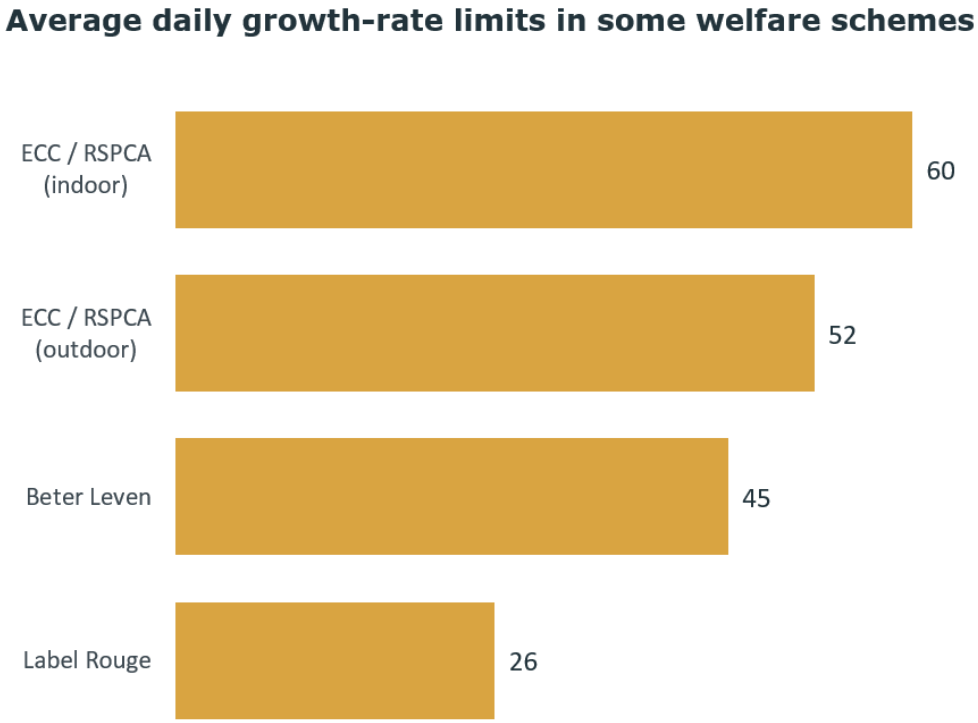
Anja Riber – EURCAW-Poultry-SFA



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Animal-Based Indicators for Assessing Welfare Implications Related to Growth Rate in Broilers

- Intensive genetic selection for rapid growth, breast yield, and feed efficiency has created welfare trade-offs in broilers – namely impaired mobility
- There is currently no EU legislative limit on broiler growth rate.
- Growth rate is often included in broiler welfare-labelling schemes



There is a need to synthesize and evaluate animal-based indicators (ABIs) for broiler welfare related to potential impacts of growth rate

Animal-Based Indicators for Assessing Welfare Implications Related to Growth Rate in Broilers

- Conducted review of peer-reviewed literature on ABIs compared between broilers with different growth rates
- Focused on indicators feasible for on-farm inspection
  - Excluded indicators requiring slaughter, post-mortem examination, or laboratory analysis
- For each identified potential indicator:
  - **Description** – what the ABI measures
  - **Relationship of ABI with growth rate** – strength and consistency of scientific evidence
  - **Recording method** – how is the ABI recorded on-farm and/or in the scientific studies
  - **Suitability** – is the ABI specific to growth rate, feasible, and relevant for on-farm inspection

ABIs for welfare assessment related to broiler growth rate

Access the guidance online

Animal-based indicator	Priority	Strength	Key limitation
Walking ability	**PRIMARY**	Strong, consistent across breeds & systems	Requires trained observers if using visual gait scoring
Immobility	**PRIMARY**	Strong link; more feasible than automated activity level	Does not distinguish between physical ability and behavioural motivation
Mortality	**SUPPORTING**	Routinely recorded "iceberg" signal	Retrospective; influenced by housing and management
Leg straightness	**SUPPORTING**	Reflects skeletal development (early life indicator)	Requires trained observers
Footpad dermatitis	**SUPPORTING**	Feasible and widely used; evidence of associated pain	Influenced by litter & housing; can be challenging to see on farm due to dirt/litter
Hock burn, cleanliness, skin lesions, QBA, positive behaviour	**CONTEXTUAL**	Add useful welfare context related to health, behaviour, and affective state	Strongly influenced by environment

Walking ability

- Refers to the broiler's **capacity to engage in smooth, fluid locomotion** (RSPCA, 2017)
- Recorded using visual gait scoring or the latency-to-lie test
- Strongest and most consistent evidence related to growth rate, widely recognized as major welfare concern in broiler chickens
- Walking ability is **worse in faster-growing breeds** at the same body weight
- Impaired walking **linked to pain, restricted feeding and drinking**
- **Reduced opportunities to perform** positive and comfort behaviours
- **Highly relevant and feasible** ABI for assessing welfare consequences of broiler growth rate



Fig. 1: Gait scoring performed with the use of a catching pen. *Source: ANIVET*

Table 1: Gait scoring according to the Welfare Quality® assessment protocol (Welfare Quality®, 2009).

Score	Criteria
0	Normal, dexterous and agile
1	Slight abnormality, but difficult to define
2	Definite and identifiable abnormality
3	Obvious abnormality, affects ability to move
4	Severe abnormality, only takes a few steps
5	Incapable of walking



Fig. 2: Latency-to-lie test using a box. The test has come to an end, as the broiler is sitting down. *Source: ANIVET*

EURCAW-Poultry-SFA. (2024). Assessing walking ability in broilers on farm. Zenodo. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14008495

Activity Level & Immobility

Complementary mobility indicators

Activity Level

- The extent and pattern of voluntary movement displayed by broilers including standing, walking, or other forms of locomotion.
- Recorded using behavioural observations or precision technology
- Voluntary movement combines both physical ability to move with behavioural motivation
- Faster growing birds display less voluntary movement
- Not currently feasible for large scale welfare assessment – future potential

Immobility

- Recorded by counting number of birds standing or birds that will not move e.g., during transect walks
- Faster growing broilers spend less time standing and have greater immobility
- Valuable when paired with walking ability to distinguish physical ability from behavioural motivation to move
- More feasible indicator but should be complemented by other indicators

Mortality

- Number of birds found dead and/or culled
- Early (7 day) and total mortality have been reported higher in faster growing breeds
- Some studies found opposite pattern – large influence of other factors unrelated to growth rate (e.g., housing and management)
- Mortality alone is a limited ABI in this context - must be used with other ABIs when assessing welfare impacts of growth rate
- Provides valuable complementary information for future flocks when used with other ABIs – can be "iceberg indicator" for broader welfare compromise

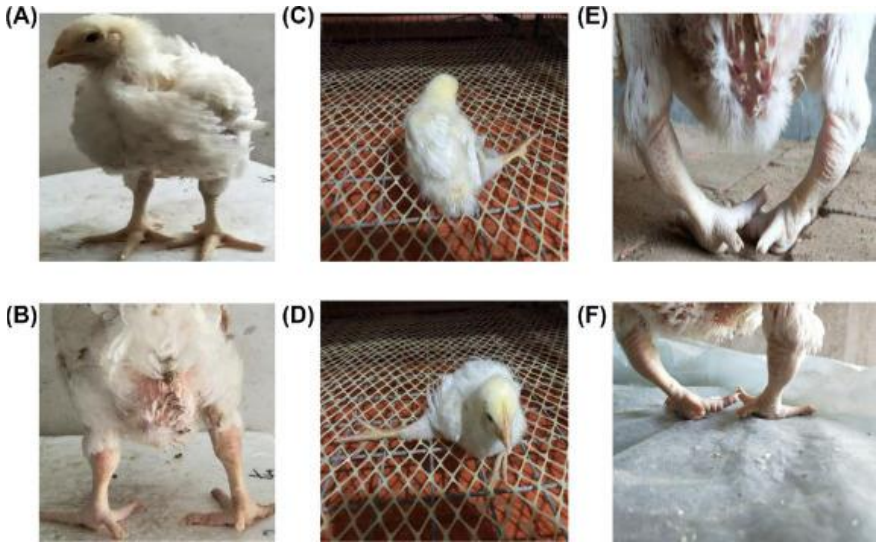
Leg straightness

- Valgus-varus deformity (VVD) refers to outward or inward angulation of the legs
- Linked to rapid weight gain during development and inadequate nutrition
- Higher incidence of VVD in faster growing broilers
- Can result in impaired standing or locomotion or secondary leg injuries
- Can provide useful information on skeletal development and structural integrity related to growth rate

4. Leg straightness (angular leg deviations)[4]

Measure	Absent (No)	Present (Yes)
Angle – in	Legs straight	Inward bow at inter-tarsal joint so that the two legs meet >22°
Angle – out	Legs straight	Outward twist at inter-tarsal joint with =30° between the legs
Twist	Legs straight	Twisted metatarsus
Rotation	Legs straight, pads facing away from handler	Rotation of the tibia shaft so that pads face each other >15°

© RSPCA BBWAP, 2017



© Yaping et al., 2019

Footpad dermatitis

- Refers to the incidence and severity of lesions on the footpads
- Assessed on-farm by visual inspection and scoring of footpads
- Can also be assessed at slaughter by automated inspection for retrospective insight
- Higher incidence of footpad dermatitis in faster growing broilers at equal body weight and stocking density
- Highly influenced by environmental conditions and time spent on the litter
- Recommended ABI for assessing consequences of growth rate due to association with mobility and litter quality – but should be interpreted carefully with other indicators due to strong environmental influence



EURCAW-Poultry-SFA. (2022). Foot Pad dermatitis (FPD) in Broiler Chicken. Zenodo. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7427121

Potential supplementary indicators

- Other ABIs demonstrate some relationship with growth rate that may provide valuable context alongside more specific indicators

Positive & preferred behaviours

Play, running, and perching are often reduced in faster growing broilers, but findings conflict across studies and settings.

Cleanliness

Reflects litter contact time; usually worse in faster growing broilers but strongly influenced by stocking density and litter management.

Qualitative Behaviour Assessment

Captures overall affective state; fast-growing flocks trend more negative near slaughter (e.g., "flat," "stressed"), but few studies and observer-dependent.

Skin lesions

More common in faster growing broilers, but also driven by activity level and environmental complexity

ABIs for welfare assessment related to broiler growth rate

Animal-based indicator	Priority	Strength	Key limitation
Walking ability	**PRIMARY**	Strong, consistent across breeds & systems	Requires trained observers if using visual gait scoring
Immobility	**PRIMARY**	Strong link; more feasible than automated activity level	Does not distinguish between physical ability and behavioural motivation
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Hock burn, cleanliness, skin lesions, QBA, positive behaviour	**CONTEXTUAL**	Add useful welfare context related to health, behaviour, and affective state	Strongly influenced by environment

Recommendations for Assessment

- **Ensure observer consistency**
  - Consider objective assessment methods where possible (i.e., the latency-to-lie test versus visual gait scoring)
  - Joint training exercises to learn visual scoring systems
  - Multiple observers assess the same birds until a satisfactory (i.e., 80%) level of agreement in scores is reached
  - Regular re-training is recommended to ensure the reliability of scoring over time
- **Conduct assessments at comparable conditions**
  - Assess flocks at similar body weight and under similar husbandry conditions where possible
  - Consider time of day effects
  - Welfare assessments close to slaughter can be the most informative

Animal-Based Indicators for Assessing Welfare Implications Related to Growth Rate in Broilers



Factsheet: Use of enrichment in broilers

Leonardo Vinco James– EURCAW-Poultry-SFA



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the European Union

Why is it important?

Broilers retain natural behaviours of the Red Jungle Fowl:

- Exploration
- Foraging
- Dust bathing
- Perching/resting on elevated structures

Selection for rapid growth and intensive housing limit the expression of these behaviours by reducing mobility and environmental complexity

Result: Reduced opportunities for natural behaviour negatively affect welfare.

Practical Enrichment Solutions

Potentially effective environmental enrichments for broiler chickens include:

- elevated resting structures,
- Panels / barriers,
- straw bales
- covered verandas
- outdoor ranges

(A. Riber et al 2018)



The aim of this factsheet is to provide practical support for the assessment of environmental enrichment in broiler housing

Practical Enrichment Solutions

Perches and platforms

- satisfy motivation for elevated rest
- platforms are generally preferred over perches
- ramps ≤ 25° inclination improve access and use
- No definitive evidence on optimal sizing



Panels and barriers

- increase environmental complexity
- influence the spatial distribution and behaviour of broilers,
- provide quieter and safer resting areas,
- Barriers can be perchable.



Straw bales

- can provide an elevated resting area offer shelter,
- Increase exploratory, foraging, and dust-bathing behaviours
- physical characteristics may influence their use
- No definitive evidence on optimal sizing
- biosecurity risk

Practical Enrichment Solutions

Covered veranda

Accessible outdoor area attached to the poultry house.

- Encourages exploration, foraging, and dust bathing.
- Provides additional space and environmental choice.



Outdoor range

- Supports natural behaviours and exposure to sunlight.
- Should include vegetation and shelter structures.
- Easy access and good design are essential for effective use.



Enrichment assessment: presence

Count enrichment types

- No Enrichment
- ≤ 3 types = limited enrichment
- ≥ 3 types = good diversity

Assess indoor and outdoor area

Availability of environmental enrichments

[Adapted from Welfare Quality® 2019– Laying hens]

Check the area **inside** and **outside** the house to assess the presence of environmental enrichments.

The following are considered enrichments:

- manipulable materials;
- straw bales;
- panels;
- elevated structures;
- other elements that increase environmental complexity.

The amount of enrichment refers to the number of different **types of enrichment** present: for example, 10 straw bales count as one type of enrichment; similarly, 10 platforms also count as one type of enrichment.

	no enrichment available
	fewer than 3 types of enrichment
	3 or more types of enrichment

Enrichment assessment: use

Observe related behaviors

- Non of the behaviors observed
- Up to 10% observed birds perform behaviors
- ≥ 10%observed birds performing behaviors indicates active use

Use of enrichments *[Adapted from Welfare Quality® 2019– Laying hens]*

Assess whether the animals use the environmental enrichments by observing the occurrence of the following behaviours:

- **Use of elevated structures for resting**: birds resting on platforms, perches, bales, or other raised structures.
- **Resting near structural elements**: birds resting close to panels, barriers, or straw bales.
- **Dust bathing**: a sequence of behaviours in which a bird, while lying down, shows vertical wing shaking, head rubbing, bill-raking, and scratching with one leg.
- **Preening**: moving the beak through or over the plumage.

	None of these behaviours observed
	Up to 10% of the observed animals perform one or more of these behaviours
	More than 10% of the observed animals perform one or more of these behaviours

Complex environments

Assessment of complex environments

Covered veranda

Assess the **use** of the **covered veranda** *[Adapted from Welfare Quality® 2019– Laying hens]*

Estimate the percentage of veranda occupied by the birds.

	No birds occupy the covered veranda
	Less than 50% of the covered veranda is occupied by the birds
	Between 50% and 100% of the covered veranda is occupied by the birds



outdoor ranges

- Assess the use of the outdoor area, indirectly assess whether the area is being used by evaluating its condition check for:
- presence of droppings,
- destruction of vegetation cover,
- evidence of dust-bathing sites.

	No access to range or no visual effect on the range (= no broiler droppings and plant cover destruction)
	minor effect on the free range or limited to the vicinity of the house (=broiler droppings, destruction of plant cover around the hen house up to 7 m away from entrances to the free range)
	Obvious effect on the range (=broiler droppings, destruction of plant cover found around the house and more than 7 m away from entrances to the free range, natural dust-baths are present)

Gap of Knowledge

- Indications for the provision of enrichments in terms of quantity per number of birds and for the assessment of enrichment use in broiler farms differ among different sources indicating a clear gap of knowledge in this area.

- The EURCAW-Poultry centre adapted selected criteria from the Welfare Quality® protocol to provide some practical indications for assessing the adequacy of enrichments provided.

Use of enrichment in broilers



Spanish Roadshows feedback

M. Camiña Montero, I. Clares Moral- ES

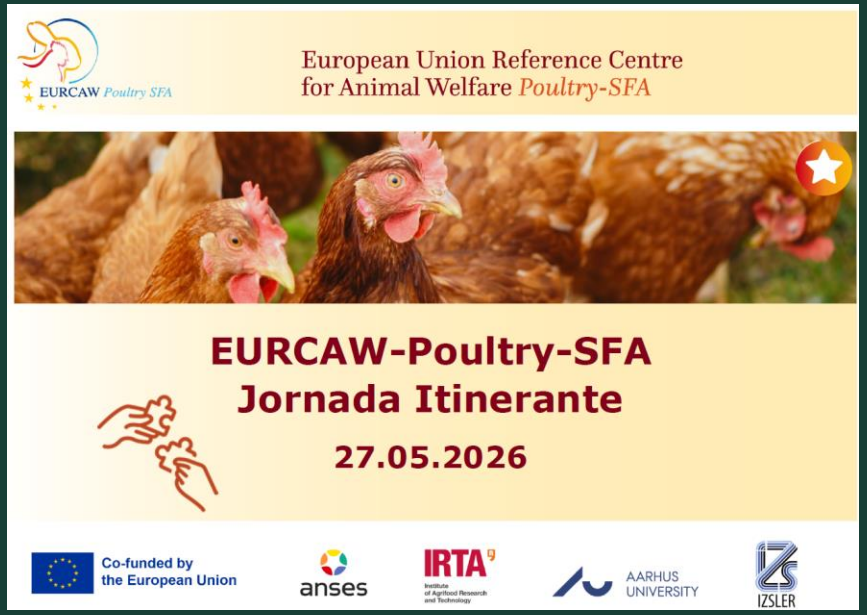


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Seventh EURCAW-Poultry-SFA & EU Member State Competent Authorities network meeting

EURCAW-Poultry-SFA · 27 May 2026

Madrid, Spain.



GOBIERNO DE ESPAÑA
MINISTERIO DE AGRICULTURA, PESCA Y ALIMENTACIÓN

MINISTERIO DE DERECHOS SOCIALES, CONSUMO Y AGENDA 2030

The day agenda

Seven agenda points, moving from context and legislation to practical application.



1	Welcome and introduction to EURCAW	09:30
2	Legal framework	09:45
3	Turkey behaviour and welfare	10:00
4	EURCAW activities: on farm	11:00
5	EURCAW activities: slaughterhouse	11:45
6	Main points from the EFSA opinion	12:30
7	Practical cases	15:00

Participants

The opening introduced the EU Reference Centres for Animal Welfare and the role of EURCAW-Poultry-SFA.

- EURCAW-Poultry-SFA team
- Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAPA)
- Spanish Agency for Food Safety and Nutrition (AESAN)
- Competent Authorities of Autonomous Communities (Agriculture and Public Health)



®EURCAW-poultry-SFA

01 Welcome and introduction to EURCAW-Poultry-SFA

The opening introduced the EU Reference Centres for Animal Welfare and the role of EURCAW-Poultry-SFA.

- Mandate under the Official Controls Regulation
- Support to the European Commission and Member States
- Scientific and technical assistance
- Factsheets, reviews, training, webinars, videos and translated resources



02

Introduction to the legal framework

This section placed turkey welfare within the European and Spanish regulatory context.

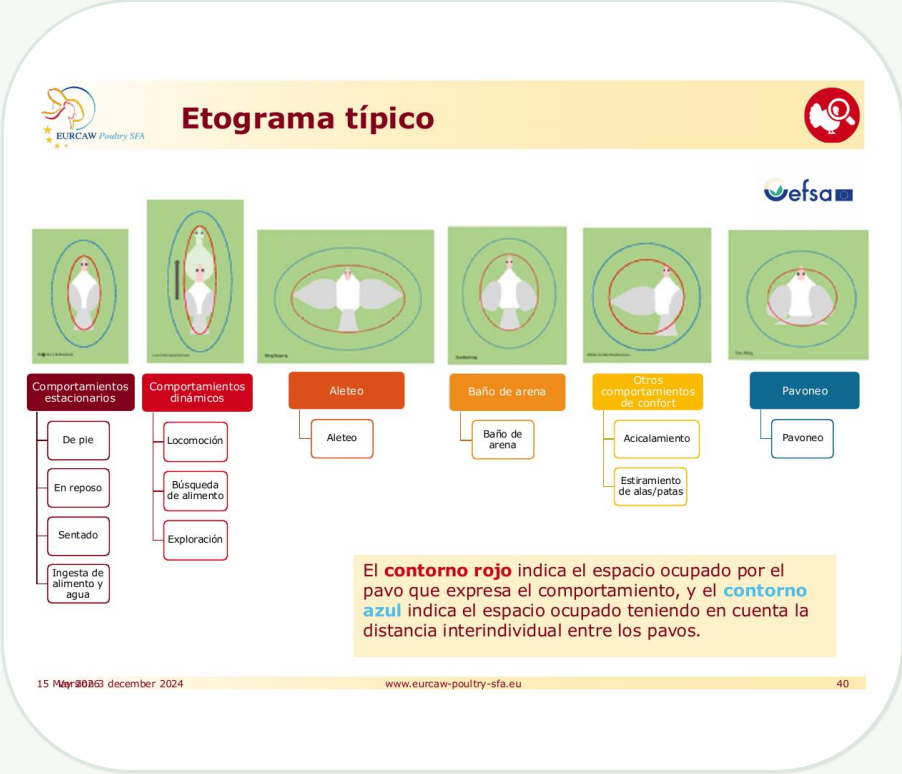
- EU animal-welfare legislation
- Spanish national requirements
- Minimum conditions on farms
- Requirements during transport
- Protection at the time of killing



03 Turkey behaviour and welfare

The session reviewed the biological and behavioural needs of turkeys and their relevance for welfare.

- Domestication and physiological characteristics
- Light perception and thermal comfort
- Exploratory, comfort and social behaviours
- Litter quality and resting behaviour
- Environmental enrichment: materials, perches, barriers and verandas



1
5
6

04

EURCAW activities related to turkeys: on farm

The farm section connected EURCAW resources with welfare assessment in commercial conditions.

- Legal framework, reviews, courses and technical factsheets
- Welfare indicators (Animal resource, management)
- Good feeding and appropriate housing
- Litter, hospital pens and recovery areas
- Health, locomotion, lesions and appropriate behaviour



05

EURCAW activities related to turkeys: at the slaughterhouse

The slaughterhouse section covered stunning, welfare indicators and emergency killing.

- Questions to EURCAW and technical resources
- Water-bath and controlled-atmosphere stunning
- Assessment of consciousness before bleeding
- Recommended observation points and indicators (ABI)
- Emergency killing methods and decision-support tools



06

Main points from the EFSA opinion on turkeys

The EFSA section summarised the scientific assessment of key welfare consequences and recommendations.

- Legal framework
- Scope, methodology and categories of turkeys
- Mutilations and associated welfare consequences
- Lighting conditions and available space
- Litter and environmental enrichment
- Genetic selection and indicators collected at slaughter



07

Practical cases

The afternoon brought the earlier topics together through practical discussion and application.

- Observation of animals and their environment
- Identification of relevant welfare indicators
- Interpretation in relation to legal requirements
- Discussion of possible responses and priorities
- Use of EURCAW materials as supporting resources



00

Summary

The programme linked institutional context, science, legislation and practical welfare assessment.

- **From the role of EURCAW and the legal framework, through turkey behaviour and welfare assessment on farm and at slaughter, to EFSA findings and practical case discussions.**
- **Very interesting presentations and debate around the practical cases**
- **We gathered a very positive feedback from the competent authorities**
- **The PDF document with the presentations, provided by EURCAW-Poultry-SFA was delivered to the Autonomous Communities officials**



Thank you

Spanish Roadshows feedback



Open discussion
Depopulation in case of Avian Influenza: a need to assess welfare implication?

Virginie Michel – EURCAW-Poultry-SFA



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Introduction

Why is it important?

- **Complex field conditions**
- **Exceptional and time-critical circumstances**
- **Official veterinarians have a key role**
- **Significant welfare challenges.**
- **Need for practical guidance**

- **EURCAW role:** Provide scientific and practical support to Competent Authorities and official veterinarians to improve animal welfare during emergency depopulation

What has EURCAW-Poultry-SFA done so far?

- **Reviewed available scientific evidence and practical experience**
  - **10 Surveys**
  - **3 Workshops**
- **3 Reports produced**
- **1 Decision tree**
- **1 Webinar: online guide for the selection of a method**

From guidance development to field validation

- In **2025**, EURCAW-Poultry-SFA invited EU Member States to **test three depopulation protocols under field conditions** and provide feedback on their validity and feasibility.
- Only **5 EU Member States** provided feedback
- The amount of field-based feedback remains limited, and the protocols have **not yet been sufficiently tested** across different real-life situations.

How can we continue this work together?

1. **SVOs complete the protocol**
   - SVOs complete the EURCAW protocol during depopulation operations (in case of avian AI outbreaks or end of life depopulation).
   - Data and feedback are sent to EURCAW.
   - EURCAW analyses the data and identifies areas for improvement.

2. **EURCAW field visits + structured validation**
   - EURCAW members visit and assess several real depopulation operations.
   - Direct discussion with SVOs and field operators.
   - Results used to validate and refine the protocols and guidance.

3. **Other options?**

Is it a topic you are interested in?

Should EURCAW continue the work on this topic?

Should we add this topic to our next work programme?

How to validate our welfare assessment tool with your help?

Open discussion on "Depopulation in case of Avian Influenza"



Survey introduction + open discussion on Competent Authorities' future needs

Emilie Nehlig, Virginie Michel

–

EURCAW-Poultry-SFA



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Competent Authorities future needs

Survey to be sent to all Competent Authority National Contact Point:

This survey aims to collect the EU Member States' scientific and technical needs and suggestions for improvement.
This will allow the Centre to better be of assistance whenever possible.

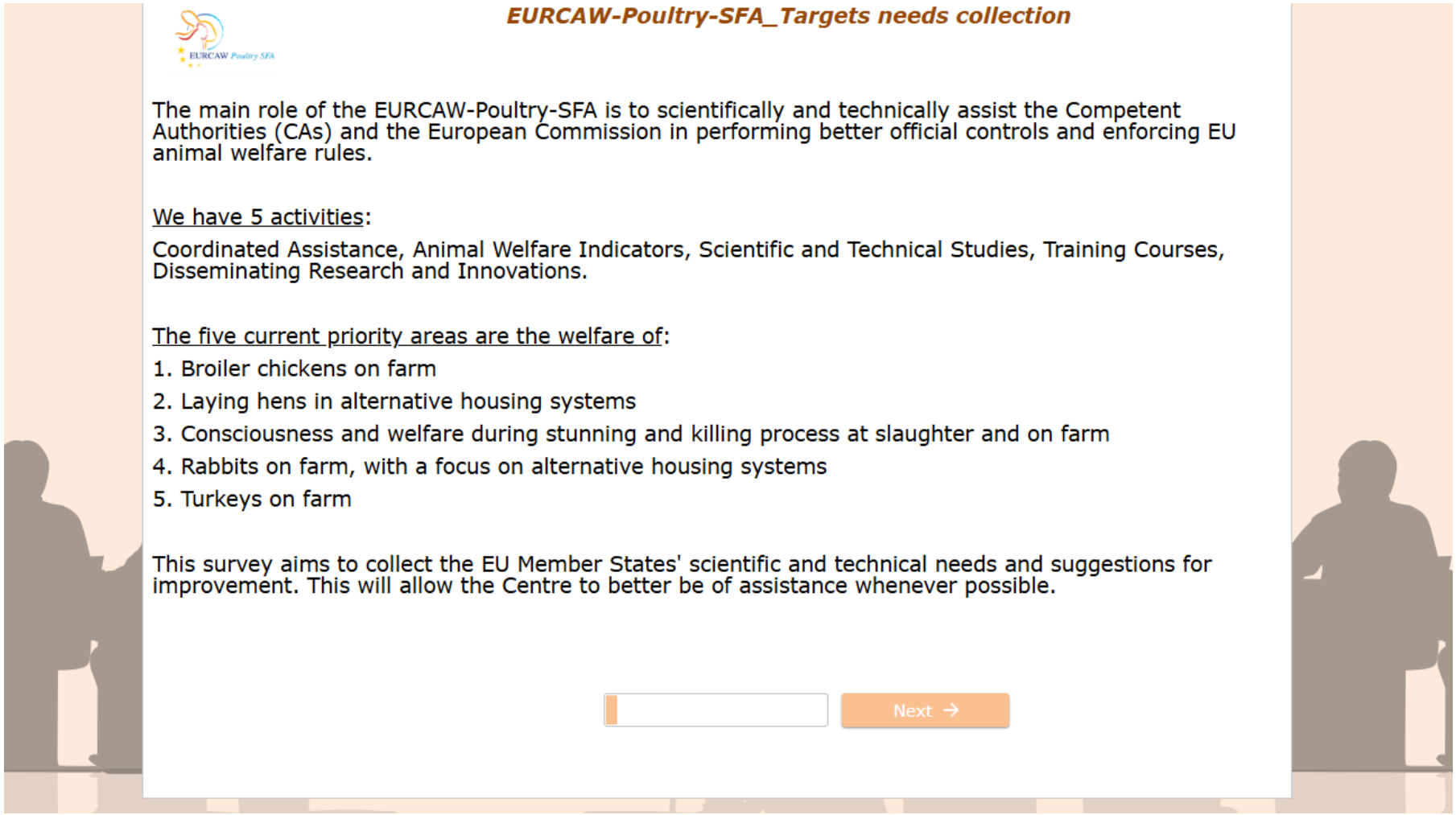
Questions are asked regarding the Centre's activities such as:

- Coordinated assistance and networking,
- Animal Welfare Indicators and Scientific and Technical Studies,
- Training Courses,
- Disseminating Research and Innovations.

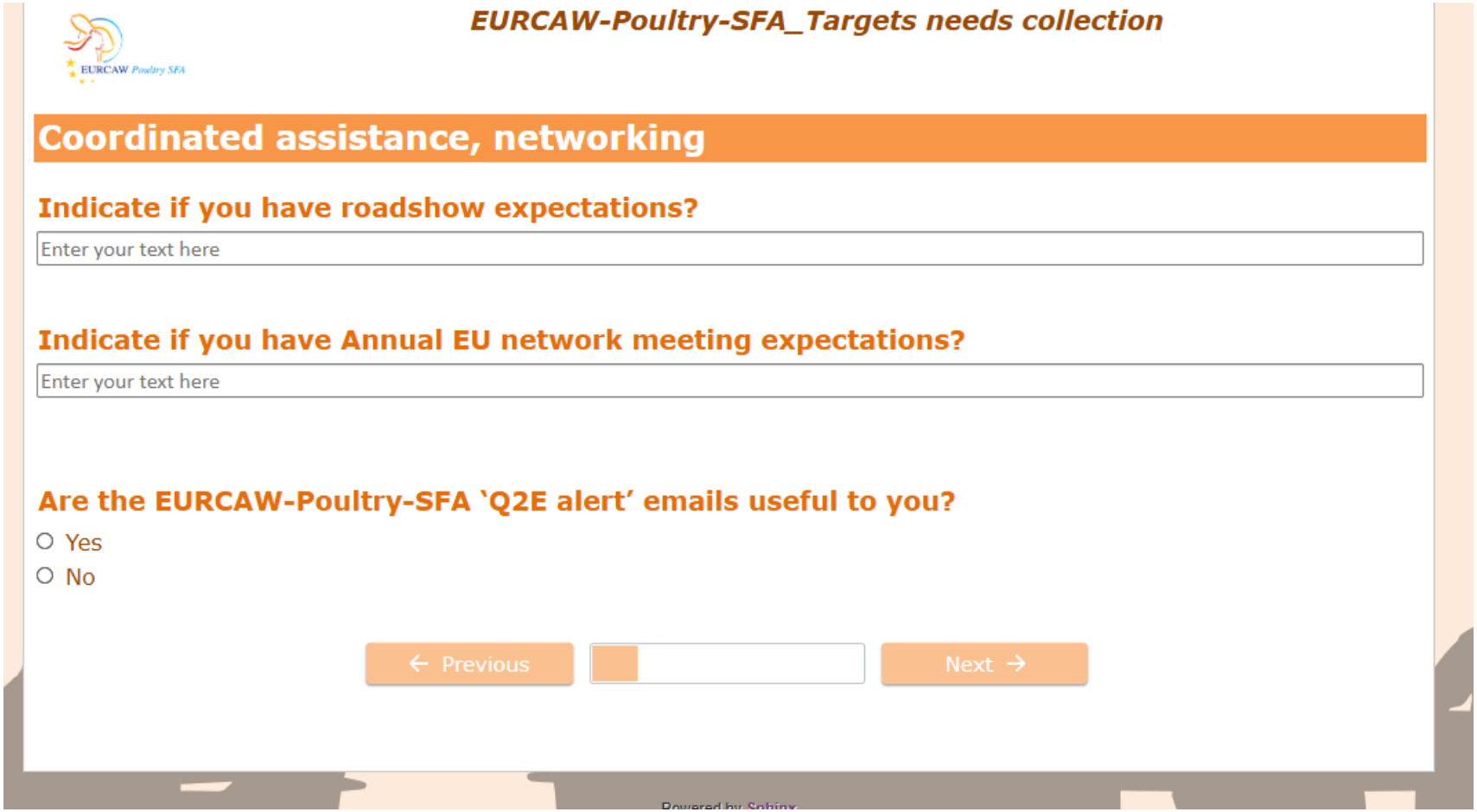
The survey will be sent on October 1rst 2026 per email and 6 weeks delay will begiven to EU MSs to answer.

The PDF will be provided in order to respondents to exchange with colleagues prior answering.

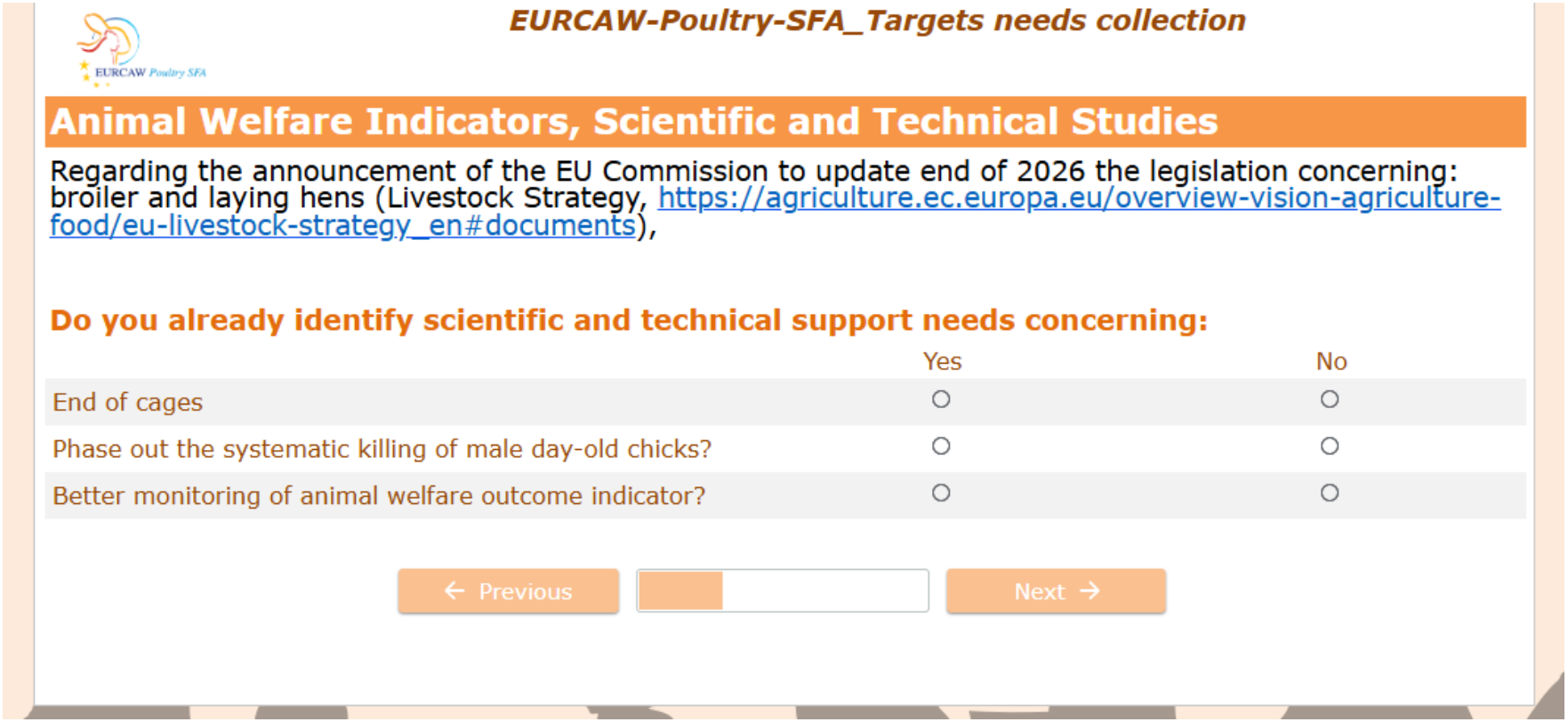
Competent Authorities future needs



Competent Authorities future needs



Competent Authorities future needs



EURCAW-Poultry-SFA_Targets needs collection

Animal Welfare Indicators, Scientific and Technical Studies

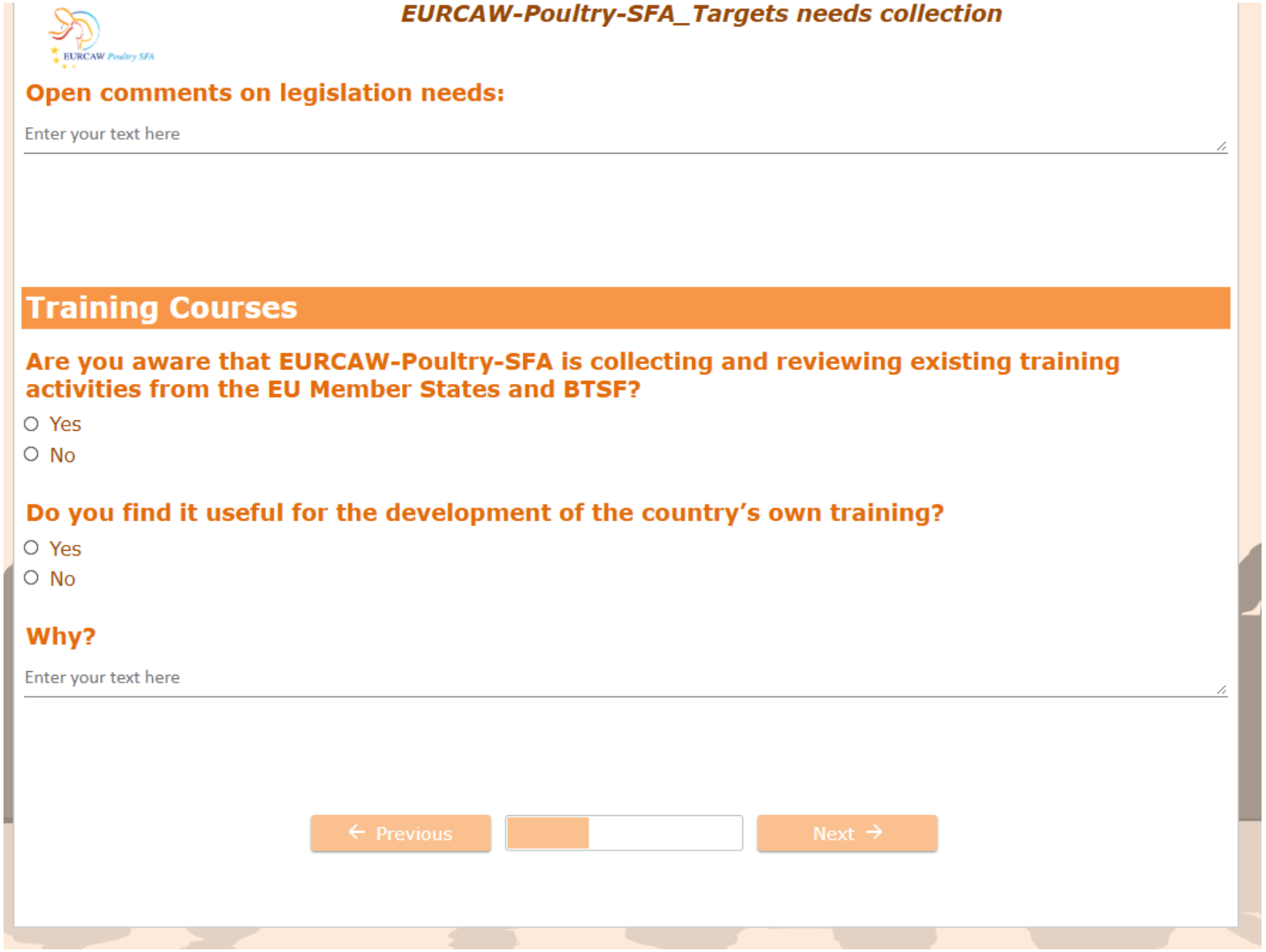
Regarding the announcement of the EU Commission to update end of 2026 the legislation concerning: broiler and laying hens (Livestock Strategy, https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/overview-vision-agriculture-food/eu-livestock-strategy_en#documents),

Do you already identify scientific and technical support needs concerning:

	Yes	No
End of cages	○	○
Phase out the systematic killing of male day-old chicks?	○	○
Better monitoring of animal welfare outcome indicator?	○	○

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Competent Authorities future needs



Competent Authorities future needs

EURCAW-Poultry-SFA_Targets needs collection

Disseminating Research and Innovations

What is your country needs regarding the dissemination of the EURCAW-Poultry-SFA produced knowledge?

Enter your text here

Are you reading the EURCAW-Poultry-SFA Newsletters?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Do you find them useful?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Why?

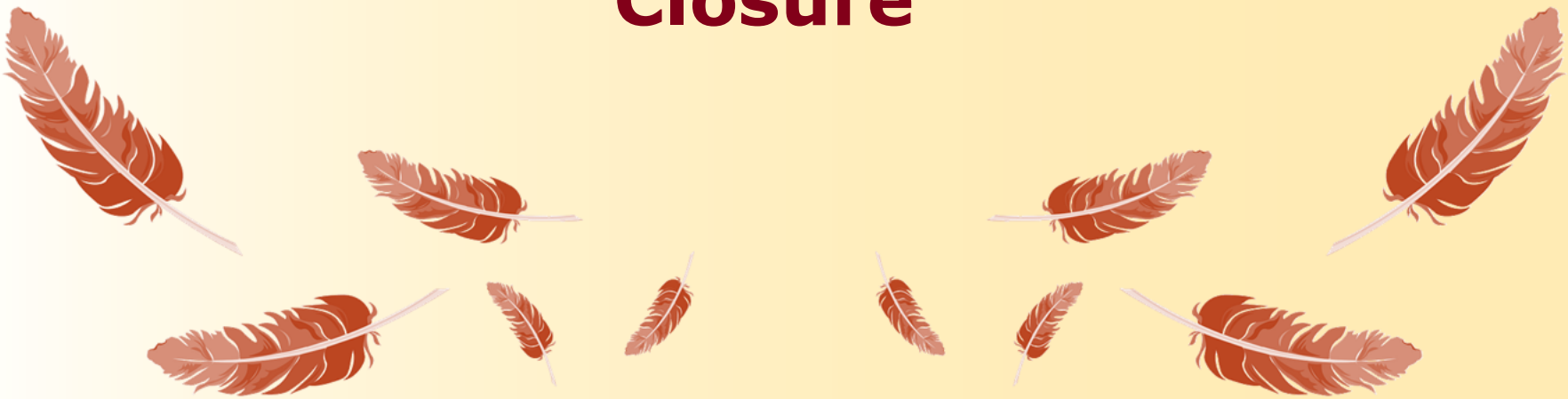
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Competent Authorities future needs

Open discussion on needs:

Closure



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Thank you for your attention

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