

KAT guide for laying establishments

- Rearing requirements -



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Version: 01.06.2006



Preamble

EEC - European Egg Consortium is an enterprise whose purpose is the inspection, monitoring and tracing of foods, particularly eggs and egg products and products produced from them, across all production and sales stages.

In order to implement this, EEC is commissioned by inspection organisations, incl. the "Association for Controlled Alternative Animal Husbandry (KAT)" for eggs from organic, floor and free-range rearing and the "Egg Quality Union (GGE)" for eggs from other rearing systems.

Participants in these organisations are companies whose business purpose is the production and marketing of chicken eggs and products made from them.

Rearing requirements for floor and free-range reared laying hens

The minimum requirements set out in the marketing standards for eggs (Regulations 1907/90/EEC and 2295/03/EC), Directive 1999/74/EC and registration Directive 2002/4/EC in the version in force at the time, as well as the strictest national requirements with regard to the rearing of laying hens apply.

The KAT management should be informed immediately if there is a suspicion or supposition that a product is not suitable for trading in accordance with the laws in force at the time and/or does not meet the requirement criteria.

Stamping at the laying establishment site is obligatory.

Laying hen feed may only be acquired from KAT-inspected mixed feed manufacturers or agricultural on-farm mixers. On-farm mixers must also register with KAT and meet the requirements set out in the guidelines.

Young hens must be given a salmonella vaccination in the eighteenth week of life at the latest, but at minimum 10 days before stocking at the laying establishment. Eggs, or excrement or blood, must be examined for salmonella on a quarterly basis. Examination results must be presented for each separate henhouse (no pool samples).



The licensing of organic and free range farms requires an obligatory dioxin analysis on initial inspection. In-house analysis results are accepted to the extent that the tests were carried out in accordance with scientifically or officially recognised procedures and that the KAT Office or inspector has access to them at the time of the inspection.

If non-public water supplies are used, they must be tested for microbiological and chemical quality every two years

In new buildings (from 1.1.2005), dry locks (changing of shoes, top coats, overalls) in the vestibules of henhouses are recommended. The areas can be separated by means of a low wall or a bench as long as the material can be fully hygienically and easily cleaned.

Laying establishments must keep visitor lists.

Egg deliveries must be entered in the online database weekly by Wednesday midnight of the following week; the KAT Office must be informed in writing of the current feedstuffs supplier. KAT must be informed accordingly if there are any changes. Each establishment is responsible for the confidential treatment of its access data and, correspondingly, for the content of all entered data

Laying hens must be accustomed to their subsequent form of rearing from when they are chicks, if necessary with a free range area, since this is the only way to ensure that the animals make full use of their rearing environment.

If the laying establishment has official approval for two forms of rearing, it must document at which times it engages in free-range or floor rearing. The change between forms of rearing must be notified to the office at least two weeks in advance.

Animal health / drugs

The object of inspection of the "Animal health/drugs" criterion is records of the purchase and destination of drugs as well as their storage in the establishment. KAT recommends that farmers should additionally conclude a care agreement with their vet.

The farm manager is obliged to keep a register of the use of drugs in addition to the usage and transfer records; it is the farm manager's responsibility to do so.

The formal completeness of the register will be inspected. The register must provide information on the date, number, identity and location of the birds treated, drug designation,



waiting time and user. Traceability to the drug use and transfer records must be possible through the register.

In addition, free-range and floor reared goods may only be displayed with the KAT symbol if they meet the requirements listed below:

Floor rearing

Floor rearing is deemed to exist in laying hen establishments meeting the following conditions:

- a) The animals can use the whole area of the henhouse at all times to a maximum of three levels; separation into large groups is possible. A level is deemed to be any accessible area counted as usable area.
- b) The animals have unrestricted access to a scratching area at all times; brief closures during the acclimatisation phase (2 – 3 weeks from the start of the laying period) are permitted.

Hen stocking rate

The hen stocking rate is a maximum of 9 chickens/m² usable area (accessible area); 6 chickens/m² of floor area is recommended, with an approx. 15% increase in space for hens weighing over 2 kg. A maximum of 6,000 hens may be kept per henhouse unit. In multi-floor systems the overall stocking rate must not exceed a total of 18 hens per m² floor area.

The **usable area** is deemed to be areas whose ground characteristics correspond to the requirements of a scratching area and excrement level and which have a clear height of at least 45 cm and a width of at least 30 cm. The ground must slope no more than 14 %. No more than three levels are permitted above one another. The levels must be arranged such that no excrement can drop from a higher to a lower level. As of 1 January 2007, additional levels from which excrement can drop to the level below will no longer be accepted in accordance with Directive 1999/74. Levels below are, for example, the henhouse floor or scratching area, the excrement pit slats and the aviary level with excrement conveyor. System-related installations with a max. width of 40 cm are exempted.

Additionally attached usable areas are no longer accepted for new facilities after 1 June 2005. Old facilities are protected until 31 December 2006.



Nest areas and raised perches are not part of the usable area. If racks with feedstuff and waterline and at least two bars arranged above one another and at least 5 cm wide are used, an additional floor area corresponding to the footprint of the racks may be added.

The **droppings level** is deemed to be that part of the henhouse equipped with a perforated floor. It must be assured that there can be no injuries to the claws and the balls of the feet.

Grid floor: approx. 2.5 x 5 cm width with a thickness of at least 2 mm. The grids must be fixed such that there can be no "hanging through".

The **scratching area** is deemed to be that part of the henhouse with a flat firm floor, the whole of which is covered with material to be manipulated by the chickens. The area must always be covered with litter. The scratching surface must not be raised. The **size** must be at least 1/3 of the henhouse floor area and each hen must have 250 cm² available with the maximum number of birds per square metre not exceeding 40 hens.

A **conservatory** directly connected to the henhouse and easily accessible by all birds without restriction, with roofing and firm ground may be added to the usable area for calculating the stocking rate if the hens have unrestricted access daily during the whole of the light phase. If the conservatory is calculated as usable area, it is also added to the henhouse width. The conservatory should be significantly lighter than the henhouse interior and be protected against the weather such that its use is also assured during periods of inclement weather (e.g. through the attachment of shades). The **pop-holes** must be at least 35 cm high and 40 cm wide and be distributed evenly across the whole length of the external wall. For 1,000 chickens there must be 2 metres of openings if the conservatory is part of the usable area. There should be drinking troughs in the conservatory.

Perches

The total length of the perches must be calculated such that all birds can sit on them at the same time, with at least 15 cm per hen; 25 cm are recommended. They must be such that the health of the balls of the feet is not affected. There must be at least 20 - 25 cm free space above the perches if the perches can be reached without flying. Otherwise at least 40 cm are required. The distance from the wall must be at least 20 cm, the distance between two perches 30 cm.

With floor rearing systems without the possibility of raised roosting for the birds, the perches must be attached at a height of at least 25 cm above the dropping pit grid.



Perches may not be attached above the litter area. There must be no cracks at the connection points.

Integrated perches above the droppings pit must have a height of at least 2 cm (applies for new facilities from 1.1.2005). Ground level perches are deducted from the usable area if they are declared as such. If floor elements, e.g. slatted coverings for the wire lattice floors or similar, are suitable as perches in terms of their material, they may comprise up to 50 % of the proportion of perches.

Nests

Single nests (1 nest/7 hens) or group nests (120 hens/m²) may be used which provide unrestricted access to the birds daily during the laying phase. Single nests must have a size of at least 35 cm x 25 cm. The floor of the nest must consist of deformable material or artificial grass mats.

Nest systems should be chosen which do not leave the roll-away traces typical for battery rearing.

Feed and drink facilities

If long troughs are used for feeding, each hen must have an edge length of at least 10 cm; if round troughs are used, a length of 4 cm.

With round drinking bowls an edge length of at least 1 cm per hen should be provided; with nipple or cup drinking bowls there must be two drinking bowls for up to 10 laying hens and an additional drinking bowl for each additional 10 laying hens.

Natural lighting

The incidence of natural day light is obligatory for new buildings (taken into use after 13 March 2002). The light openings must correspond to at least 3 percent of the ground area and assure a uniform distribution of light. Window strips with dimming possibilities in the roof area are recommended. In the case of new buildings after 1 June 2005, the depth of the building must not exceed 12 m if there are side windows. Direct sunlight should be avoided. The **uniform lighting** of the henhouse in the activity area of the birds should be assured. Laying nests, perches and resting zones should be installed in the darker area.



Artificial lighting

The light phase should be 16 hours/day at maximum with at least 20 lux in the bird area. An unbroken dark phase of at least eight hours must be provided with a light intensity of less than 0.5 lux. The dark phase should always be preceded by a dusk phase.

Henhouse environment

The ammonia content as guiding value for harmful gas pollution should be less than 10 ppm, a permanent excess of 20 ppm is prohibited. Measurements will be taken at the bird level in the litter and droppings pit areas.

Free-range rearing

Definition

The free-range outer area must be in direct proximity of the henhouse and directly accessible to the chickens.

New henhouses (taken into use after 30.06.2004) must not exceed a maximum width of 15 m if openings to the outer area are only provided on one longitudinal side. This also applies if there is merely a conservatory on the second side without access to the free-range area. For old buildings not meeting these conditions there is a transitional period to 31.12.2006.

Use

The outer area must have daily unrestricted access no later than 6 hours after start of the light phase in the henhouse, recommended is an outrun-time of 8 hours. Exceptions will be tolerated when temperatures are permanently below 0°C or there is solid snow cover. Rotating usage is recommended to avoid the risk of parasite infection.

Size of outer areas

4 m²/bird unrestricted outer area with a radius of 150 m to the next opening of the henhouse. An increase in distance of up to 350 m to the next opening of the henhouse is permitted if there are at least 4 shelter opportunities/ha and drinking bowls distributed uniformly across the whole outer area.



Cold scratching area (conservatory) obligatory

For new buildings after 1 June 2006, a cold scratching area (conservatory) with a size of 50 % of the henhouse interior space, which can be used by the birds without restriction (bird area in henhouse), is obligatory.

Old buildings without a cold scratching area must retrofit such an area with a minimum size of 20 % of the henhouse floor space (as defined above) within a transitional period to 1 January 2008.

Old buildings already having a cold scratching area are subject to right of continuance.

The whole of the cold scratching area can be included as usable area, the statutory requirements must be observed; 9 or 18 birds – depending on number of levels in the henhouse – can be kept per square metre of usable area.

Additional areas installed in the conservatory are not included in the usable area.

Nest areas, seating bars and feed conveyor belts in the conservatory are not included in the usable area either and are deducted from the scratching surface so that they cannot be used for calculating stocking. Only facilities in the interior of the henhouse are included.

The conservatory must be designed such that wild birds cannot gain access (e.g. by using fine-mesh wire/netting)

Equipment

The statutory requirements apply. In addition, drinking facilities protected against contamination should be set up if the outer area is longer than 150 m (1 round bowl for 2500 birds). Operation is not advisable during frost.

Openings

There must be at least 2 m of opening available for 1,000 birds. If there is a conservatory between the henhouse and the outer area, the length of the opening from the henhouse into the conservatory must also be 2 m for 1,000 hens. For rearing establishments in use before 13 March 2002 a transitional period applies until 31.12.2005. Approvals for exceptions from the relevant authorities are accepted. The openings must be evenly distributed across the whole henhouse area and be easily accessible by all hens without obstacles. The openings must be on flat ground and may not be mounted above one another.

Minimum widths in outer area

The minimum width for the outer area, irrespective of whether there is another building opposite, must be at least as wide as the total length of the openings available in the relevant wall (2 m for 1,000 hens).



Fencing of the outer area

A 1.25 m high outer fence around the outer area near the henhouse is recommended, which in other areas should be at least 1.0 m high and of such a nature that mixing of the flocks is not possible.

Henhouse equipment

The conditions set out in the requirements for floor rearing apply to henhouse equipment for outdoor rearing.

Documentation

The period of use of the outer area must be documented daily. Equally, the reasons must be noted in the event that access to the outer area could not be granted.

Ecological production

The minimum requirements set out in Regulation 1804/1999 of the Council for the inclusion of animal production in the area of application of Regulation 2092/91/EEC on ecological agriculture in the version in force at the time apply.

As far as KAT is concerned, the requirements in accordance with the marketing standards (Regulations 1907/90/EEC and 2295/03/EC) for free-range rearing must be met.

Free-range rearing is obligatory for eggs from ecological production.

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The complete separation of the production units, with henhouses for the production of ecological eggs and conventional eggs (alternative or cage), must be assured.