

## **Morrisons: Fresh Chicken: health and welfare standards**

At Morrisons, we are committed to better chicken welfare across the whole life cycle of the birds which come to us. Our bespoke welfare standards take us along the journey of the Better Chicken Commitment, but on a wider path from when the bird hatches right until the end of its life. Welfare on farm also extends to the people who look after the livestock under their care.

As British farming's biggest fresh food customer, and the UK's only farm to fork integrated retailer, we are used to considering the lifelong welfare of livestock in detail. Using our experience we have worked with our supply base for fresh chicken to develop a bespoke standard which will be administered by third party auditors alongside the Red Tractor farm audit. This enables us to have excellent insight into farm practice from independent auditors, without adding to on-farm audit costs and time.

Our sourcing standards for chicken develop from the Five Freedoms<sup>1</sup> and cover:

1. Nutrition: providing enough water and food, with a balanced and varied diet
2. Environment: a stimulus rich, safe and comfortable physical environment
3. Health: healthy, fit and uninjured birds
4. Behaviour: able to express rewarding behaviours
5. Mental state: positive engagement, which includes the ability to explore, forage, interact with other animals in play behaviour and group care

These provisions are all underpinned by excellent stockmanship standards.

## **Measures we've adopted that align to the Better Chicken Commitment**

### **Growing birds**

Keeping birds healthy and raised to high standards of welfare means measuring and monitoring the outcomes of the birds, as well as ensuring that they have the space, environment and materials around them to be able to express natural behaviours.

### **Lighting:**

- We will provide sufficient natural light that also recognises the birds' need for dark and light spaces as part of their development. Windows will be of a size equivalent to at least 3% of floor area, which on all but the dullest of days will result in at least 50 lux light intensity. Provision of high light intensity using artificial lighting is detrimental to the birds' welfare. It is worth noting that to simulate a natural environment, birds need dark spaces as well as light areas, they evolved in a jungle environment, with dappled, not direct sunlight. Naturally, chickens move between light and dark areas to eat and rest. Critically, this has the additional benefit of maintaining leg health and developing more robust chickens, as the birds move round the shed to achieve different physical needs.

---

<sup>1</sup> Moving beyond the "Five Freedoms" by Updating the "Five Provisions" and Introducing Aligned "Animal Welfare Aims", David J. Mellor, Animals 2016 Oct; 6(10): 59.

### **Environmental enrichment materials**

- **Morrisons' standard:** the Better Chicken Commitment rightly recognises that the right environmental enrichment is a key welfare benefit to birds. In line with the BCC recommendation, birds in our supply chain already must have access to at least two metres of usable perch space, and two pecking substrates / 1000 birds.
- We have been champions of environmental enrichment for a long time and have just published the results of a 12 month study in conjunction with one of our suppliers to assess which environmental enrichment materials give most benefit to the birds and why. Read our report [here](#). Work will continue on this important topic.

### **End of life**

- **Morrisons' standard:** in line with the Better Chicken Commitment, we require that all abattoirs must use controlled atmospheric stunning using inert gas or multi-phase systems, or effective electrical stunning without live inversion.
- **Morrisons' standard:** additionally, stunning and slaughter effectiveness must be monitored at all times and will be reported annually as part of our Farm Animal Health and Welfare report.

### **Stocking density and breeds which express higher welfare behaviours:**

- **NEW at Morrisons:** from March 2020, we will run a commercial trial on birds grown to the full Better Chicken Commitment standard. We anticipate offering this as a whole bird buying option at first, giving customers the ability to buy the birds grown to this standard at a more affordable price. Ongoing customer insight work will take place throughout the trial period, as will detailed work in the farm production chain, including in staff training and bird management.
- **Stocking density:** measurements reported through our annual Farm Animal Health and Welfare report already show that our suppliers grow chicken to an average of 35.89kg/m<sup>2</sup>. It is worth noting that at the moment, birds in our supply chain only exceed 30kg/m<sup>2</sup> for around 8 days of their life, and when they are at their most robust.

### **Measures we're adopting that go beyond the Better Chicken Commitment**

#### **Hatching: Barn Born and Raised**

We believe that in any livestock farming system the biggest influence on animal welfare is the stockperson in whose overall care the livestock are in. So, good welfare can be achieved in all well-managed approved systems.

**NEW:** we are the first retailer in the UK to have 50% of its chicken come from birds hatched straight into the houses in which they are reared.

- 'In-house hatching' allows the birds immediate access to feed and water which is not the case in traditional hatcheries, where birds utilise the yolk to provide nutrition and hydration.
- The barn born system also means that the birds hatch in the building that they continue to be raised in, so there is no handling and transport of chicks.
- **NEW stretch standard for Morrisons:** by 2026, we intend 100% of our fresh chicken to come from birds raised to this in-house hatching standard

### Health challenges and antibiotic use

- **Morrisons' standard:** as part of an overall health and welfare plan, we expect birds to receive no more than 10mg/PCU (c. 6mg/kg) as an average within our supply chain. (The RUMA standard targets 25mg/kg of use by 2021).
- **Morrisons' standard:** leg strength and health: birds in every flock in our supply chain is monitored for leg strength and health, the results of which are collated and reported, so we build a picture of every flock coming into our supply.
- **NEW stretch standard for Morrisons:** The World Health Organisation, The World Animal Health Organisation (OIE) and The European Surveillance Programme of Veterinary Antibiotics have all confirmed that ionophores have no impact to human health. However, we consider a broad move toward rearing birds with reduced usage of these products is the right approach. We will trial whether the use of ionophores can be reduced with no negative impact on bird welfare. The outcome will be monitored and an informed approach decided by 2025 following on-farm trials.
- **NEW at Morrisons:** from April 2020, we will start to measure, collate and report positive welfare indicators for all chicken supplied to Morrisons at a farm level. These go beyond the typical reported measures of mortality rates and health issues into observations of social interaction and behavior trends.

### Use of technology

- When used in conjunction with good stockmanship, technology improves the welfare of livestock by continually monitoring the environment in which birds are housed.
- All farms must have automated temperature, humidity and ammonia sensors.
- By the end of 2021, we require all farms supplying Morrisons with fresh chicken to have CCTV inside and outside the sheds, or to be able to evidence that they can provide a similar level of round-the-clock monitoring. This enables objective assessment of bird behaviour and welfare when not interrupted by human activity.

### Staff training and stockmanship

The decisions and behaviour of humans have the potential to compromise but also to enhance animal welfare.

- We insist on excellent systems and standards of husbandry from farmers who are committed and really care about the birds they look after. This keeps health and welfare standards high, and mortality rates to as low a level as possible. All stock persons must be able to demonstrate engagement with, knowledge of and high standards of care for the birds they look after.
- **NEW at Morrisons:** By 2022, we will require all staff on the farms supplying us to have L2 Work-based Diploma in Agriculture (Poultry Production) or equivalent and a British Poultry Training (BPT) approved Poultry Welfare short course. All farm managers must have followed a BPT approved Advanced Poultry Health and Welfare course.

### **Catching best practice**

- **NEW at Morrisons:** All farms must use catching teams or staff who are trained and annually updated to Poultry Welfare (catching) Short Course standards approved by the Humane Slaughter Association.
- All contracted third party catching teams must only be sourced from labour providers holding a valid GLAA licence.
- We will also trial the use of Bodycams by catching teams from 2020.

### **Transport**

- **NEW at Morrisons** Transport of birds to site must be under four hours. We will report on the transport times of birds including % delivered under 1, 2 and 4 hours.
- All vehicles transporting live birds will be fitted with trackers and monitors to ensure the welfare and safe keeping of live animals.
- All wagon drivers must also be trained to a recognised certificate in bird welfare.

### **Worker welfare**

- Research shows that how well staff are looked after has a direct correlation with the welfare of the livestock under their care.
- **NEW at Morrisons:** all farms must display the ETI base code and details of the Morrisons “Tell Us” worker grievance hotline.
- All farms must comply with the requirements of the Morrisons Ethical Trading Code [Morrisons Ethical Trading Code](#)
- All farms must have a structured health and safety policy with specific risks and mitigations associated with the farm on which they work.
- If caravan accommodation is provided for workers, this must comply with Fresh Produce Consortium guidance for temporary accommodation: [FPC Accommodation Guidance](#)
- Through Morrisons sponsorship of Stronger Together and the Responsible Recruitment Toolkit, all farmers can access free training on tackling modern slavery and eliminating recruitment fees.

### **Environmental Impact**

- Throughout 2020, we will be assessing the environmental impact of our agriculture supply chain (from greenhouse gas emissions to responsible commodity use). These elements will also inform our continued development of policy relating to chicken health and welfare.