

**Animal Welfare Standards:
A Comparison of Industry Guidelines and Independent Labels**

Practice	Industry Guideline (Individual industry trade associations) ¹	American Humane Certified (American Humane Association) ²	Certified Humane Program (Humane Farm Animal Care) ³	Animal Welfare Approved (A Greener World) ⁴	Global Animal Partnership 5-Step Animal Welfare Rating Program (GAP) ⁵	Certified Organic (USDA Agricultural Marketing Service) ⁶
RUMINANTS (BEEF CATTLE, DAIRY CATTLE, SHEEP)						
Use of growth hormones	<p>Beef Cattle: Growth promotants, including ractopamine, are allowed</p> <p>Dairy Cattle and Sheep: Growth hormones are allowed</p>	<p>Beef Cattle: Growth hormones /promoters prohibited (M7)</p> <p>Dairy Cattle: Growth hormones /promoters prohibited (M8)</p> <p>Sheep: Growth hormones /promoters prohibited (M8)</p>	<p>Cattle and Sheep: Growth hormones/promoters prohibited for dairy and beef cattle and sheep (FW4)</p>	<p>Cattle and Sheep: Growth hormones or the use of any substance promoting weight gain are prohibited (3.1.3)</p>	<p>Cattle and Sheep: Growth hormones are prohibited for beef cattle (3.1.2), dairy cattle (3.5.1) and sheep (1.2.1) at all Steps</p>	<p>Cattle and Sheep: Growth hormones prohibited for dairy and beef cattle and for sheep (§ 205.238(c)(3))</p>
Pain relief for castration	<p>Beef Cattle: Recommended that it be performed under 3 months (p. 45); mentions seeking guidance for pain relief especially for older animals but not required (p. 45)</p> <p>Dairy Cattle: Should occur at the youngest age possible; pain relief is required (p. 46)</p> <p>Sheep: Recommended be performed as early as possible; pain relief may be required if performed after 6 weeks (p. 26)</p>	<p>Cattle: For dairy (M54) and beef cattle (M48), castration must be performed at earliest age possible through application of band; if this is not possible other methods are allowed under anesthesia; after 2 months castration must be performed surgically by vet with pain relief</p> <p>Sheep: Must be performed at earliest age possible; pain relief is required only for certain methods up to 2 months of age; after 2 months castration must be performed surgically by vet with pain relief (M56)</p>	<p>Cattle: For beef and dairy cattle, rubber ring may be used up to 7 days of age without pain relief and other banding methods may be used between 7 days and 6 months of age using pain relief; surgical castration, emasculator, or spermatic cord crush may be used up to 6 months with pain management; after 6 months, must be performed surgically by vet using pain relief (H10)</p> <p>Sheep: Castration may be performed between 24 hours and 7 days of age; pain relief is recommended (H14(a)(1))</p>	<p>Cattle: For beef and dairy cattle, castration may be performed using rubber ring up to 7 days old and using scalpel or burdizzo up to 2 months old; anesthetic and/or analgesia recommended (4.7)</p> <p>Sheep: Castration may only occur when uncontrolled breeding cannot be prevented by any other management (4.7.1); it may not be performed after 7 days of age; pain relief recommended, but not required (4.7.5)</p>	<p>Beef Cattle: Ideally, castration should occur prior to 7 days of age; may be performed up to 6 months for Step 1, and 3 months of age for Steps 2 – 4; no pain relief required; prohibited for Steps 5 – 5+ (5.5.1); castration by a vet may be done outside these age ranges if pain relief is used</p> <p>Dairy Cattle: Rubber rings may be used before 7 days, surgical knife or emasculator may be used before 42 days (4.9.2) for all steps; local anesthetic and NSAID must be used for pain relief for Steps 1 & 2 (4.9.3); a sedative must also be used in addition to a local anesthetic, and NSAID for pain relief for Steps 3 – 5+ (4.9.4)</p> <p>Sheep: May be performed up to 8 weeks for Steps 1 & 4 (2.6.1); pain relief required outside specified age range (2.6.4); castration prohibited for Steps 5 – 5+ (2.6.2)</p>	<p>Cattle and Sheep: To be performed as needed to promote welfare and in a manner that minimizes pain and stress (§ 205.238(a)(5)); pain relief not required</p>

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Pain relief for dehorning or disbudding	<p>Beef Cattle: Recommended be performed while horn development is still at the horn bud stage; mentions seeking guidance for pain relief especially for older animals but not required (p. 45)</p> <p>Dairy Cattle: Recommended be performed under 8 weeks and pain management is required; after 8 weeks should be performed by vet as a “surgical procedure” (p. 68)</p> <p>Sheep: Not specified</p>	<p>Cattle: Approved disbudding methods, for dairy (M54) and beef cattle (M48), include cautery paste up to 7 days old and hot iron with pain relief up to 30 days old; after 30 days must be done by vet with pain relief</p> <p>Sheep: Not recommended. If necessary for medical reason, must be performed by vet using appropriate analgesia and lambs must be given NSAID treatment for post-procedure pain management (M56)</p>	<p>Cattle: Approved disbudding methods include cautery paste up to 7 days old (beef and dairy) & hot iron at around 2 months of age (beef) or during first 3 weeks (dairy); horn removal may be conducted between 2 and 6 months (beef); all require pain relief; after 6 months must not be done routinely and must be performed by vet using pain relief (dairy: H13, beef: H10)</p> <p>Sheep: Managers must be able to demonstrate their proficiency in procedures that have the potential to cause discomfort (such as dehorning) (M8)</p>	<p>Cattle: Dehorning is prohibited (4.8.2); disbudding allowed up to 2 months of age using hot iron cauterization and must be preceded and followed with anesthetic (4.8.6); caustic paste can be used if under 7 days old; choosing polled breeds is recommended (4.8.7)</p> <p>Sheep: Dehorning/disbudding prohibited (4.8.2)</p>	<p>Beef Cattle: Disbudding must be performed before 6 weeks of age for Steps 1 – 4, pain relief required for use of hot iron; disbudding prohibited for Steps 5 – 5+ (5.6.1); dehorning prohibited at all Steps (5.6.4)</p> <p>Dairy Cattle: Caustic paste may be used before 5 days old or hot iron before 30 days old for Steps 1 – 4 (4.7.2); local anesthetic and NSAID must be used for Steps 1 & 2 (4.7.3); a sedative, local anesthetic and NSAID must be used for Steps 3 & 4 (4.7.4); disbudding prohibited for Steps 5 & 5+ (4.7.5); dehorning prohibited at all Steps (4.7.6)</p> <p>Sheep: Dehorning/disbudding prohibited at all Steps (2.8.1, 2.8.2)</p>	<p>Cattle and Sheep: To be performed as needed to promote welfare and in a manner that minimizes pain and stress (§ 205.238(a)(5)); pain relief not explicitly required</p>
Tail docking	<p>Beef Cattle: Tail docking is not recommended (p. 45)</p> <p>Dairy Cattle: Prohibited (p. 47-48)</p> <p>Sheep: Recommended that docking be performed as early as possible; pain relief may be required if performed after 6 weeks of age; ultra-short docking discouraged (p. 25)</p>	<p>Dairy Cattle: Prohibited (M54)</p> <p>Beef Cattle: Not specified</p> <p>Sheep: Must not be performed unless there is a high risk of suffering due to fly strike; must be done after 24 hours of age and before 14 days old (M56)</p>	<p>Cattle: Prohibited for dairy (H13) and beef cattle (H10)</p> <p>Sheep: Prohibited unless there is high risk of suffering due to fly strike; If necessary, must be done between 24 hours and 14 days old using a rubber ring or docking iron (H14)</p>	<p>Cattle and Sheep: Prohibited (4.8.1)</p>	<p>Beef Cattle: Not specified</p> <p>Dairy Cattle: Prohibited at all Steps (4.10.2)</p> <p>Sheep: Must be performed before 8 weeks of age for Steps 1 & 4 (2.9.2); pain relief required outside specified age range (2.9.6); tail docking prohibited for Steps 5 & 5+ (2.9.4)</p>	<p>Cattle and Sheep: To be performed as needed to promote welfare and in a manner that minimizes pain and stress (§ 205.238(a)(5)); pain relief not explicitly required</p>
Branding of cattle	<p>Beef Cattle: Branding permitted and recommended on hip area; branding of face or jaw not recommended (p. 53)</p> <p>Dairy Cattle: Branding should be done at earliest age possible with pain management; other methods of ID should be used if possible (p. 47)</p>	<p>Beef and Dairy: Brands are prohibited (M32, M39)</p>	<p>Beef and Dairy: Face branding prohibited (dairy: 15, beef: M18); brands not prohibited, but noted that while hot and freeze branding are both painful procedures, freeze branding may be less painful (dairy: M16, beef: M19)</p>	<p>Beef and Dairy: Freeze branding permitted (4.9.1.3); hot branding prohibited (4.9.5)</p>	<p>Beef Cattle: Branding prohibited at Steps 5 – 5+ (5.4.1); face branding prohibited at all Steps (5.4.2); freeze branding recommended over hot branding due to pain</p> <p>Dairy Cattle: Hot iron and freeze branding prohibited at all Steps (4.4.4)</p>	<p>Not specified</p>

Practice	Industry Guideline	American Humane	Certified Humane	Animal Welfare Approved	GAP	Certified Organic
Bedding for dairy cows	Adequate (clean, dry, and deep) bedding is recommended (p. 35)	Adequate clean bedding with a minimum depth of 3 inches and cow mattresses are required (E18)	Lying area must be well-drained/maintained, dry, comfortable, and free from contamination of feces and urine; bedding that is 3 inches deep or cow mattresses designed for dairies must be provided (E17)	In housing, bedding must be available to all animals at all times and must be clean, dry, mold-free and replenished as needed; bedding must not cause discomfort/harm to the animals (8.4)	Cows must always have access to a lying area that is dry and well bedded for all Steps (8.5.2)	Clean, dry bedding required (§ 205.239(a)(3))
Tethering of dairy cows in tie-stalls or stanchions	Tie stalls and stanchions permitted; stall dimensions and tiestall chain length should be set to maximize cow comfort and lying area use and allow for normal rising and lying movements (p. 37)	Tethering and stanchions are prohibited (except in particular circumstances and for no longer than 4 hours) (M32)	Tie stalls and stanchions are prohibited (E25)	Tie stalls are permitted only during milking and/or feeding immediately before or after milking (8.2.1)	Tie stalls prohibited beginning January 2027 for Step 1, until then cows must be untied and provided access to exercise area for at least 2 hours per day (8.5.5, 8.5.6); tie stalls prohibited for Steps 2 – 5+ (8.5.7); stanchion stalls prohibited for all Steps (8.5.12)	Not specified [Tie-stalls and stanchions are not prohibited] (§ 205.239(c)(4))
Isolation of dairy calves	No restriction on isolation of dairy calves	Isolation of dairy calves permitted for first 8 weeks (M26); under 8 weeks, individual calf houses may be used, but they must be arranged so that calves may see and hear other calves; no standards on outdoor areas (E25)	Hutches or individual pens may be used up to 8 weeks of age, hutches or pens must be arranged so that calves may see and hear other calves in neighboring units, outdoor area required; calves may not be tethered (E45)	Artificially reared calves may be kept in individual pens for up to 28 days but must have sight and sound of other calves (4.5.12, 4.5.13); it is recommended that calves be reared by their mothers or foster mothers (4.4.6, 4.5.1)	Calves may only be kept in individual pens or hutches until 14 days for Step 1 (8.3.1); calves must be kept in same sex pairs or small groups by 2 days of age for Steps 2 – 4 (8.3.2); calves must have visual contact with other calves for Steps 1 – 4 (8.3.3)	Dairy calves may be individually housed up to 6 months of age, after which they must be on pasture during the grazing season (§ 205.239(c)(2))
Dairy cow/calf separation	Not specified	Not specified, but calves must not be weaned before five weeks of age (M25)	Not specified, but calves must not be weaned before five weeks of age (FW15)	Recommended to allow calves to remain with mothers until weaning occurs naturally (4.6.1); if separation occurs, a two-stage separation process is recommended (4.6.5.1); after separation calves must be in a pen adjacent to their mother or completely out of sight and hearing range (4.6.6) Dairy calves must not be weaned from milk before they are six weeks of age (4.6.10)	Calves must have physical contact with their dam for at least 6 hours after birth for Step 1 (4.6.6); calves must must have physical contact with their dam for at least 12 hours after birth for Steps 2 – 4 (4.6.7); calves must stay with their dam or be fostered onto a nurse cow until weaning for Steps 5 & 5+ (4.6.8)	Not specified

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Confinement of beef cattle and sheep to feedlots	Beef Cattle: Feedlots permitted. Sheep: Feedlots allowed (p. 15)	Beef Cattle: Feedlots permitted; windbreaks (E40) and heat abatement are required (E39); if cattle show signs of heat stress, immediate action must be taken to provide relief (E39); mud must be managed (E41) Sheep: No standards for sheep used for meat	Beef Cattle: Feedlots permitted; windbreaks (E16) and sunshades and water systems (E17) required in some instances; dry resting areas should be provided and mud must be managed (E18) Sheep: Not specified	Confinement to feedlots is prohibited (6.1.5)	Beef Cattle: Feedlots permitted (for up to 1/3 of the animal's life) for Steps 1 – 2 (7.1.2) Sheep: Feedlots allowed for up to 70 days of the animal's life at Step 1 (4.1.7)	Feedlots may be used for finish feeding of ruminants; finishing period shall not exceed 1/5 of animal's life or 120 days, whichever is shorter (§ 205.239(d))
Access to pasture	Beef Cattle: Access to the outdoors and to pasture not required Dairy cattle: Access to the outdoors or pasture not required Sheep: Access to the outdoors and to pasture not required	Beef Cattle: Access to pasture not specified Dairy Cattle: Access to pasture or outdoors not required (E19) Sheep: Daily, voluntary access to pasture or turnout/exercise lots required for four hours minimum when weather and climactic conditions are suitable (E23)	Cattle: Access to pasture only required under optional, grass-fed systems for dairy (FW27) and beef cattle (FW25) Sheep: Access to pasture/an outside exercise area during the grass-growing season is required (FW8)	Continuous outdoor pasture access is required for all animals (7.0.1)	Beef Cattle: Must spend at least 2/3 of their lives on range or pasture for Steps 1 – 2; must spend at least 3/4 of their lives on range/pasture for Step 4; must live continuously on range/pasture for Step 5 & 5+(7.1.1) Dairy Cattle: Outdoor access not required for Step 1; access to outdoors, but not pasture required for Steps 2 & 3; must spend at least 120 days per year on pasture for Steps 4 & 5 and 200 for Step 5+ (9.6.3/.4) Sheep: Must have unrestricted daily access to pasture when welfare would not otherwise be adversely affected for Steps 1 & 4 (4.1.1); must have unrestricted access to pasture at all times (except during extreme weather events) for Steps 5 & 5+ (4.1.4)	All ruminants must have daily access to pasture during the grazing season (including in the finishing period) (§ 205.239(a)(1) and (2), § 205.239(d))
Maximum length of transport	Beef Cattle: Stress is to be minimized during transport (no exact time limits given) (p. 71) Dairy Cattle: No time limits; (p. 91) Sheep: Rest stops should be given for transport of 48 hours or more (or sheep should be allowed space to lie down) (p. 12)	Cattle: Transport is to be accomplished in the shortest time possible (no time limits given) (T8) Sheep: No time limits	Cattle: Transport must not exceed 8 hours (T7) Sheep: Transport must not exceed 8 hours (T2)	Cattle and Sheep: Transport must not exceed 8 hours (13.1.8)	Beef Cattle: Limit is 25 hours for Step 1, 16 hours for Steps 2 – 4, and 8 hours for Step 5; transport prohibited for Step 5+ (10.4.1) Dairy Cattle: Limit is 8 hours for Steps 1 –4 and 2 hours for Steps 5 & 5+ (11.6.1/.2) Sheep: Limit is 18 hours for Steps 1, 4, and 5 (6.6.1); transport prohibited for Step 5+ (6.6.2)	Animals must go no longer than 28 consecutive hours before being unloaded for food, water, and rest (federal 28 Hour Law, 49 U.S. Code § 80502)

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PIGS						
Manually applied blunt force trauma as euthanasia method for piglets	Appropriate for piglets up to 12 lbs (p. 23)	Acceptable euthanasia procedures are those listed in AVMA euthanasia guidelines (M51) [manually applied blunt force trauma not prohibited]	Acceptable methods are those listed in National Pork Board's euthanasia guide (H(10)(a)) [blunt force trauma not prohibited for pigs up to 12 lbs]	Prohibited on piglets heavier than 12 pounds (5.5kg); method only acceptable if other preferred methods are unavailable (3.3.2.5)	Prohibited at all Steps (1.4.8)	Not specified
Pain relief for castration	Surgical castration should be performed early, such that no open wounds remain at time of weaning; if performed after weaning, pain relief should be used (p. 24)	Permitted under 7 days of age without pain relief; for older animals, pain relief and vet supervision are required (M47)	Permitted under 7 days of age without pain relief; older pigs may be castrated for veterinary reasons and pain relief is required (H9(a)(4))	Piglets may be castrated up to 7 days of age; pain relief recommended but not required (4.7.9)	For Steps 1 – 4, piglets may be castrated on or before 10 days of age, pain relief strongly encouraged (2.4.1); for Steps 5 – 5+, castration is prohibited (2.4.2)	Physical alterations to be performed as needed to promote welfare and in a manner that minimizes pain and stress (§ 205.238(a)(5)); pain relief not required
Tail docking	Should be performed early, such that no open wounds remain at time of weaning; pain relief not required or recommended (p. 24)	May be performed through 7 days of age; pain relief should be employed if appropriate options exist (M47)	Tail docking is prohibited except in exceptional circumstances; if recommended by a vet, HFAC must be notified prior (H9(a)(3))	Tail docking is prohibited (4.8.1)	Tail docking is prohibited at all Steps (2.6.1)	Physical alterations to be performed as needed to promote welfare and in a manner that minimizes pain and stress (§ 205.238(a)(5))
Teeth clipping	Not specified	May be performed only where necessary to prevent injury; must be done within the first 24 hours of life or within the first 3 days for weak/sick piglets; only the first third of the tooth may be removed (M47)	Teeth trimming must not be done routinely; request to do procedure must be approved by HFAC; if permitted, it must be done within first 4 hours of life or within 3 days for sick/weak piglets; only first third may be removed; (H9(a)(1))	Teeth clipping of piglets is prohibited (4.8.14)	Teeth clipping piglets is prohibited for all steps (2.7.1); teeth may be modified through grinding or filing if they are causing injury to each other and/or to the sow's udder (2.7.3)	Physical alterations to be performed as needed to promote welfare and in a manner that minimizes pain and stress (§ 205.238(a)(5))

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Minimum age for weaning	Minimum age not specified	Each litter must be weaned no earlier than 21 days (unless vet-approved) (M22)	Piglets must not be weaned before the 4 th week post farrowing, for batch farrowing, the average age should be 28 days or more (FW12)	Pigs must be at least 6 weeks of age at weaning (4.6.15)	Minimum ages are 28 days for Step 1 (2.16.2), 35 days for Step 2 (2.16.3), 42 days for Steps 3 – 4 (2.16.4), and 56 days for Steps 5 – 5+ (2.16.5)	Not specified
Bedding for sows and market pigs	Bedding not required, but recommended when air temperatures approach the lower critical limit (p. 21); if used, must be dry enough not to transfer mud/manure onto animals (p. 25)	Unless kept outdoors in the wintertime (E39), bedding not required for sows or growing pigs; piglets must have access to a warm area, which may include artificial heat and thick, dry bedding (M21)	Bedding required for sows (E23), piglets and growing pigs (E14), both indoors (E11) and in outdoor winter shelters (E32(2))	In housing, clean, dry, mold-free bedding must be available to all animals at all times; bedding must be replenished when needed and must not cause discomfort or harm the animals (8.4)	Pig housing must have bedding that is maintained daily to ensure the base of the pen is covered and provides a dry place for all pigs to lie for all steps (4.1)	Clean, dry bedding required (§ 205.239(a)(3))
Confining sows in crates	Crates allowed for both gestation and farrowing as long as pigs can lay in full lateral recumbency (p. 15)	Farrowing crates must be wide enough and long enough for sows to turn around, lie down without having to rest their heads in the feeders, and lie on their sides (E31)	Crates that prevent sows from turning around and traditional straight, narrow farrowing crates are prohibited (E18) (E23(a),(c))	Gestation and farrowing crates are prohibited (4.2.2, 4.3.18); sows cannot be confined to individual huts more than 24 hours before farrowing date (4.3.19)	Gestation and farrowing crates prohibited at all Steps (2.12.1, 2.12.2)	Routine confinement prohibited; however, animals may be temporarily confined under a variety of conditions (§ 205.239(b))
Indoor air ammonia limit	Must not exceed 25 ppm (need only be measured if pigs show signs of exposure to poor air quality) (p. 22)	Should be less than 10 ppm and must not exceed 25 ppm (M45, E16)	Should be less than 10 ppm and must not exceed 25 ppm (E9)	If ammonia can be smelled (which generally means 5 ppm or higher), farmer must take action to eliminate the source (8.0.22)	Must not exceed 20 ppm for Steps 1 – 4 (4.3.2)	No ammonia limit; general requirement for ventilation and air circulation suitable to the species (§205.239(a)(4)(iii))
Enrichment for pigs confined indoors	Not required or recommended	A variety of at least two different physical enrichment items rotated on a regular schedule (at least weekly), is required (E33)	Suitable materials for rooting and objects for manipulation must be provided (E27)	Pigs may not be regularly confined indoors (7.0.2); Confinement systems, and in-house or field-based pens or cages that restrict the pigs' natural behaviors, are prohibited. (7.2.5)	Indoor environmental enrichments required for all pigs at Steps 2 – 4 (4.10.1); enrichments must be provided in outdoor areas for Step 3 (5.3.1); for Step 4, enrichments must be provided in outdoor areas when pigs are removed from pasture (5.3.2)	All animals must be provided conditions which allow for exercise, freedom of movement, and reduction of stress appropriate to the species (§ 205.238(a)(4)); enrichment not explicitly required

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Access to outdoors	Access to outdoors or pasture not required or recommended	Access to the outdoors and to pasture not required or recommended	Access to outdoors and to pasture not required or recommended	Continuous access to pasture required except when their welfare would otherwise be negatively affected (7.5.1)	Continuous access to outdoors required for pigs over 2 weeks of age at Step 3 and higher (5.5.1, 5.5.2); for Steps 5 – 5+, pigs must live continuously on pasture (5.5.3)	All animals must have yearround access to the outdoors (§ 205.239(a)(1)); vegetation not required
Maximum transport	No time limit specified	Transport is to be accomplished in the shortest time possible, no specific time limit given (T8)	Transport must not exceed 8 hours (T11(c))	Transport must not exceed 8 hours (13.1.8)	Transport must not exceed 16 hours for Steps 1 – 5 (7.6.1); transport prohibited for Step 5+ (7.6.2)	Animals must go no longer than 28 consecutive hours before being unloaded for food, water, and rest (federal 28 Hour Law, 49 U.S. Code § 80502)
BIRDS (EGG-LAYING HENS, MEAT CHICKENS, MEAT TURKEYS)						
Growth rate of meat birds limited	Meat chickens: Diets must be formulated, produced, and fed to prevent all signs of nutritional deficiency and to promote good health and normal maintenance and growth; limiting growth not explicitly required or recommended (C2) Turkeys: Limiting growth not required or recommended	Limiting growth not required or recommended	For meat birds, feeding regimes must be controlled to avoid problems with rapid growth (FW3)	Meat Chickens: Average rate of growth must not exceed 40 grams per day (2.2.5) Turkeys: Average rate of growth must not exceed 68 grams for females and 86.2 grams for males per day (2.2.7)	Meat Chickens: Average daily growth rate must not exceed 68 grams for Steps 1 – 3 (1.2.1), 50 grams at Step 4 (1.2.2), 45 grams at Step 5 (1.2.3), and 35 grams at Step 5+ (1.2.4) Turkeys: Average daily growth rate must not exceed 159 grams for males and 97 grams for females at Steps 1 – 2 (1.2.1), 136 grams for males and 87 grams for females at Steps 3 – 4 (1.2.2), 98 grams for males and 59 grams for females at Step 5 (1.2.3), and 65 grams for males and 38 grams for females at Step 5+ (1.2.4)	Limiting growth not required or recommended
Beak trimming of hens	Two methods are allowed: day-old infrared treatment at the hatchery and hot-blade trimming at 10 days old or younger (p. 10 cage-free guidelines; p. 9 cage housing guidelines)	Debeaking is prohibited; beak trimming may be done within first 24 hours at hatchery using infrared laser equipment, or within first 10 days on-site; beaks should only be tipped when possible, otherwise no more the 1/3 of beak should be trimmed (M39)	Debeaking is prohibited; beak trimming may be performed at 10 days of age or younger and may only remove tip of upper mandible (H6)	Debeaking and beak trimming prohibited (5.4.1.1)	Day-old infrared treatment removing no more than 1/3 of the beak may be performed at the hatchery for Steps 1 – 3 (2.4.2); beak trimming prohibited for Steps 4 – 5+ (2.4.4)	To be performed as needed to promote welfare and in a manner that minimizes pain and stress (§ 205.238(a)(5)); pain relief not explicitly required

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Natural light/dark cycles	<p>Hens: During molt, light should be reduced to no fewer than 8 hours (p. 10 cage housing guidelines); lighting period must be no fewer than 8 hours and no greater than 18 continuous hours in closed barns; light must be lowered gradually (p. 27 cage-free guidelines)</p> <p>Meat Chickens: Minimum of 4 hours of darkness per 24-hour period (need not be continuous) (C5)</p> <p>Turkeys: Minimum of 4 hours of darkness/reduced light daily (6.3)</p>	<p>Hens: Minimum of 8 hours of continuous light daily; minimum of 6 hours of continuous darkness (M14)</p> <p>Meat Chickens: Minimum of 8 hours of continuous light daily; minimum of 4 hours of continuous darkness (M11)</p> <p>Turkeys: Minimum of 8 hours of continuous light daily; minimum of 6 hours of darkness (M14)</p>	<p>Hens: Minimum of 8 hours of continuous light daily; minimum of 6 hours of continuous darkness (E15)</p> <p>Meat Chickens: Minimum of 8 hours of continuous light daily; minimum of 6 hours of continuous darkness (E15)</p> <p>Turkeys: Minimum of 8 hours of continuous light daily; minimum of 8 hours of continuous darkness (E14)</p>	<p>All Birds: Birds must not be subjected to dim and/or continuous lighting or kept in permanent darkness (8.0.8); artificial light is permitted as long as it does not exceed 16 hours per day (8.0.11)</p>	<p>Hens: Minimum of 6 hours continuous darkness daily for Steps 1 – 2 (4.7.3), 8 hours for Steps 3 – 5+ (4.7.4); natural light required year round for Steps 4 – 5+ (4.7.2)</p> <p>Meat Chickens: Minimum of 6 hours of continuous darkness, 8 hours of continuous light daily for Steps 1 – 2, 8 hours of both for Steps 3 – 4, 8 hours of darkness for Steps 5 – 5+ (4.5.6 – 4.5.8)</p> <p>Turkeys: Minimum 6 hours of continuous darkness daily for Steps 1 – 2 (4.5.3), 8 hours for Steps 3 – 5+ (4.5.4)</p>	Light/dark periods not specified; all animals must have year-round access to direct sunlight (§ 205.239(a)(1))
Indoor air ammonia limit	<p>Hens: Level should be less than 10 ppm and not exceed 25 ppm (p. 26 cage-free guidelines, p. 20 cage housing guidelines)</p> <p>Meat Chickens: Level should not exceed 25 ppm (C3)</p> <p>Turkeys: Level should not exceed 25 ppm (5.3)</p>	<p>All Birds: Level should be less than 10 ppm and must not exceed 25 ppm (M34 hens, M38 meat birds)</p>	<p>All Birds: Level should be less than 10 ppm and must not exceed 25 ppm (E23 hens, E22 meat chickens, E21 turkeys)</p>	<p>All Birds: If ammonia can be smelled (which generally means 5 ppm or higher), farmers must take action to eliminate the source (8.0.22)</p>	<p>Hens: Level must not exceed 20 ppm at all Steps (4.6.2)</p> <p>Meat chickens: Level must not exceed 20 ppm at all Steps (4.4.2)</p> <p>Turkeys: Level must not exceed 15 ppm at all Steps (4.4.2)</p>	No ammonia limit for birds; general requirement for ventilation and air circulation suitable to the species (§ 205.239(a)(4)(ii))
Confining hens in cages	<p>Hens may be housed in conventional or “enriched colony” cages (p. 19). UEP has an additional set of guidelines for cage-free housing.</p>	<p>Cages are prohibited (E1)</p>	<p>Cages are prohibited (Part 3)</p>	<p>Cages are prohibited (7.3.8)</p>	<p>Cages are prohibited at all Steps (4.1.1)</p>	Routine confinement prohibited; temporary confinement allowed under some conditions (§ 205.239(b))
Minimum space per bird	<p>Hens: Minimum of 67-86 sq inches per caged hen (p. 19 cage housing guidelines), 1.0-1.5 sq ft per cage-free hen (p. 21 cage-free guidelines)</p> <p>Meat Chickens: Maximum stocking density ranges from 6.5-9.0 lbs/sq ft depending on weight category (C5)</p> <p>Turkeys: Must be free to roam throughout the growing area; no space allowances specified (6.4)</p>	<p>Hens: Minimum of 1.0-1.5 sq ft per bird required, depending on the housing type (E20)</p> <p>Meat Chickens: Density must not exceed 7 lbs/sq ft (E18)</p> <p>Turkeys: No specific space requirement; space is considered adequate if the following 4 outcome criteria are met: gait, litter, ammonia, and clean environment (E17)</p>	<p>Hens: Minimum of 1.0-1.5 sq ft per bird depending on the housing type (E19)</p> <p>Meat Chickens: Density must not exceed 6 lbs/sq ft (E20)</p> <p>Turkeys: Density must not exceed 7.5 lbs/sq ft (E18)</p>	<p>Hens: Minimum of 1.8 sq ft per bird indoors, with additional 4 sq ft when excluded from pasture (8.1.3)</p> <p>Meat Chickens: Minimum of 0.67 sq ft indoors, with additional 2 sq ft when excluded from pasture (8.1.3)</p> <p>Turkeys: Minimum of 5 sq ft indoors, with additional 11 sq ft when excluded from pasture (8.1.3)</p>	<p>Hens: Minimum of 1.5 sq ft per bird at Steps 1 – 2 (4.3.2)</p> <p>Meat Chickens: Density not to exceed 6 lbs/sq ft for Steps 1 – 3, and 5.5 lbs/sq ft for Steps 4 – 5+ (4.6)</p> <p>Turkeys: Density not to exceed 10 lbs/sq ft for Step 1, 7.5 lbs/sq ft for Step 2, 6.5 lbs/sq ft for Step 3, and 6 lbs/sq ft for Steps 4 – 5+ (4.6.1)</p>	No minimum space requirements for birds

Practice	Industry Guideline	American Humane	Certified Humane	Animal Welfare Approved	GAP	Certified Organic
Enrichment for meat birds confined indoors	Environmental enrichment not required or recommended for meat chickens or turkeys	Environmental enrichment strongly encouraged but not required for meat chickens (E21) and turkeys (E20)	Meat chickens (E27) and turkeys (E26) housed indoors must be kept active by provision of environmental enrichments	Birds may not be regularly confined indoors (2.2.2)	Meat Chickens: Indoor enrichment required for Steps 1 – 4 (4.8.2); 2 different forms of enrichment required for Steps 2 – 4 (4.8.4) Turkeys: Indoor enrichment required for Steps 2 – 4 (4.8.2); 2 different forms of enrichment required for Steps 3 – 4 (4.8.7)	All animals must be provided conditions which allow for exercise, freedom of movement, and reduction of stress appropriate to the species (§ 205.238(a)(4)); enrichment not explicitly required
Perches provided	Hens: Perches required in cage-free housing; a minimum of 6 in. of elevated perch space per hen is required (access to perches or elevated structures required by 4 weeks of age) (p. 18, p. 23) Meat Chickens & Turkeys: Perches not required or recommended	Hens: Perches required for hens and pullets; a minimum of 6 in. of perch space is required (E26, M21) Meat Chickens: Perches not required but may be used (E21) Turkeys: Perches not required but may be used (E20)	Hens: Perches required before 4 weeks of age; minimum of 3 in. of perch space required for pullets and 6 in. for hens (E27) Meat Chickens: Perches not required but may be used as a form of enrichment (E27) Turkeys: Perches not required but may be used as a form of enrichment (E26)	Hens: Once in lay, must have access to perches; minimum of 7 in. of perch space per bird is required (8.7.1) Meat Chickens & Turkeys: Must have access to raised areas from 4 weeks of age but perches not specifically required (5.3.7)	Hens: Aerial perches required for hens at all Steps; minimum of 5 in. of perch space per bird is required (4.8.1) Meat Chickens: Perches required by 4 weeks of age for Steps 5 – 5+ (4.7.1) Turkeys: Perches required by 7 weeks of age for Steps 5 – 5+ (4.7.1)	Perches not required or recommended
Access to outdoors	Access to outdoors not required for hens, meat chickens, or turkeys (no separate standards for “free range/pasture” birds)	Access to outdoors not required for cage-free hens or meat birds (AHC has separate standards for “free range & pasture” hens, and standards for outdoor areas for meat birds when outdoor access is provided)	Access to outdoors not required for hens or meat birds (CH has specific standards for “free range” and “pasture raised”)	Continuous access to pasture required for all birds from 4 weeks of age (7.0.3)	Hens: For Steps 3 – 5+, birds over 24 weeks of age must have access to pasture for at least 6 daylight hours per day (5.1.4) Meat Chickens: Continuous outdoor access required from 4 weeks of age for Steps 3 – 5+ (5.1.1 – 5.1.3) Turkeys: Continuous outdoor access required for all birds from 7 weeks of age for Steps 3 – 5+ (5.1.1, – 5.1.3)	All animals must have year-round access to the outdoors (§ 205.239(a)(1)); (however, USDA allows enclosed “porches” to qualify as a form of outdoor access for birds); vegetation not required
Maximum length of transport	Hens: No time limit specified Meat Chickens: Time from catching to slaughter should not exceed 12 hours; additional documentation is required, including total time elapsed, reasoning and corrective actions implemented, if time exceeds 12 hours (E5) Turkeys: No time limit specified	Hens: Transport is to be accomplished in the shortest time possible (T8) Meat Chickens: Time between arrival at the broiler farm to unloading at the plant must not exceed 12 hours (T18) Turkeys: Transport is to be accomplished in the shortest time possible (T15)	Hens: Transport must be kept to a minimum; time between loading and unloading must be less than 10 hours (Part 7) Meat Chickens: Time between loading and unloading must be less than 10 hours (T18) Turkeys: Time between loading and end of unloading must be less than 10 hours (T16)	All Birds: Transport to slaughter must not exceed 4 hours (13.3.5)	Hens: Transport is prohibited at Step 5+ (7.2.4) Meat Chickens: Transport not to exceed 6 hours for Steps 1 – 5 (7.4.1); prohibited at Step 5+ (7.4.2) Turkeys: Transport must not exceed 8 hours for Steps 1 – 3, 4 hours for Steps 4 – 5, and prohibited at Step 5+ (7.4)	No limit specified for hens or meat chickens and turkeys

¹ Beef cattle: Beef Quality Assurance, National Manual (no date), Cattle Care & Handling Guidelines, 2019; dairy cattle: National Dairy FARM Program, Animal Care Reference Manual, 2020; sheep: American Sheep Industry Association, Sheep Care Guide, 2017; pigs: National Pork Board, Common Swine Industry Audit, 2023; egg-laying hens: United Egg Producers, Animal Husbandry Guidelines for U.S. Egg-Laying Flocks (Guidelines for Cage Housing), 2017 & 2024 Cage-Free Housing Animal Welfare Guidelines for U.S. Egg-Laying Flcoks; meat chickens: National Chicken Council, Broiler Welfare Guidelines and Audit Checklist, 2022; meat turkeys: National Turkey Federation, Animal Care Guidelines, 2016.

² Standards for each species available at <https://www.americanhumane.org/humane-heartland/>.

³ Standards for each species available at www.certifiedhumane.org.

⁴ Standards for each species available at agreenerworld.org.

⁵ Standards for each species available at www.globalanimalpartnership.org.

⁶ Based on animal welfare regulations enforced by USDA-AMS and codified at 7 CFR Part 205.

Animal Welfare Institute, August 2024