

# Standards and Guidelines for Poultry



## What's it all about?

The welfare of poultry in Australia is currently supported by a Model Code of Practice, which tells farmers the standard of care required and their obligations under state and territory laws.

Recognising that a consistent approach is needed across Australia, industry and government are working together to develop and implement a new set of Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Poultry (S&G). Once completed, it is intended to be used by state and territory governments to develop nationally consistent legislation.

## Who's managing it?

Development of the S&G is being project managed by Animal Health Australia and is based on collective input from industry, government, scientists and animal welfare groups considered against the following decision making principles:

- desirable for livestock welfare
- feasible for industry and government to implement
- important for the livestock-welfare regulatory framework
- likely to achieve the intended outcome

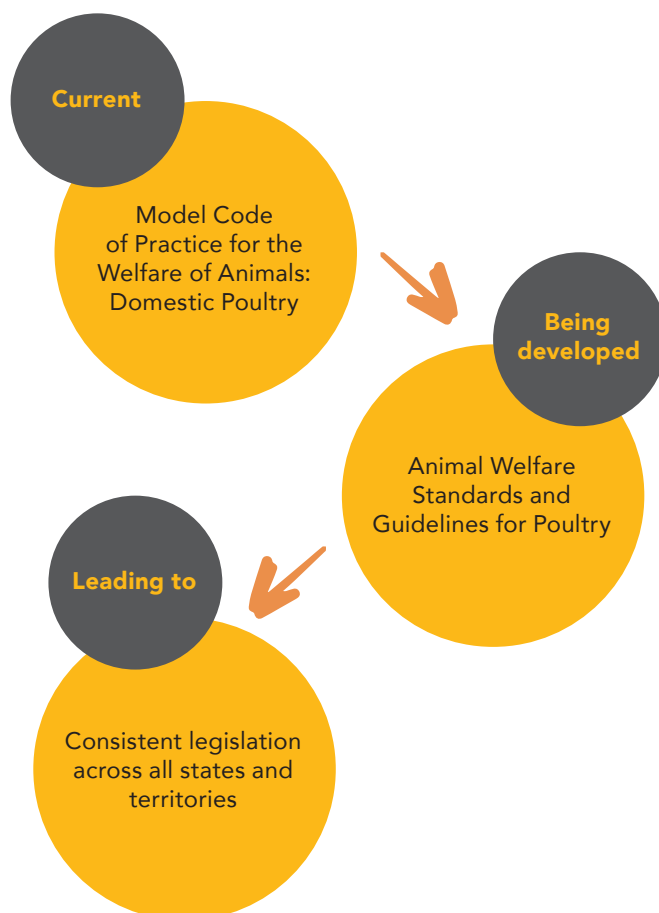
## When will it happen?

The S&G is currently being developed. The public consultation period is expected to open in November and run for 90 days.

## What's the difference between a standard and a guideline?

Standards will be the legal requirements for welfare and will use the word 'must'. They will form the basis of the new legislation developed by state and territory governments.

Guidelines will be the recommended practices to achieve desirable welfare outcomes. They will use the word 'should' and are designed to complement the standards.



## Egg industry

Australian Eggs invests millions of dollars every year in research programs across areas such as animal welfare, biosecurity and food safety so the industry is in a position for ongoing improvement.

## What is animal welfare?

Animal welfare refers to the protection of the health and well-being of animals. It concerns how an animal is coping in its living environment in terms of freedom from hunger and thirst, fear and distress, discomfort, pain injury or disease, and the freedom to express natural behaviours.

## Farmers and animal welfare

Animal welfare is a fundamental part of farming and egg farmers understand the responsibility they have for animals in their care. Animal welfare is also an important aspect of competition: for an egg farmer to be successful their hens must be highly productive and this is not possible if the hens are suffering from illness or stress.

## Caring for hens

Caring for hens is complex and involves trade-offs between different aspects of animal welfare that may conflict. For example, increased freedom to exhibit natural behaviours can expose hens to greater risks in outdoor environments. While egg farmers use three main systems to manage animal welfare – cage, barn and free range - research has found the biggest factor influencing welfare is how the hen is cared for.

## Egg farming systems

There are welfare advantages and disadvantages to each egg farming system. This illustration shows the relative differences between each system. Detailed information is on the Australian Eggs website.

Welfare criteria	Cage	Barn (cage free)	Free range
Access to outdoors	↓	↓	↑
Free from predators	↑	↑	↓
Low mortality	↑	↓	↓
Able to express natural behaviours	↓	↑	↑
Free from diseases	↑	↑	↓
Stable pecking order	↑	↓	↓
Bone strength	↓	↑	↑

## Egg Standards of Australia

The egg industry's national quality assurance program, Egg Standards of Australia, provides a comprehensive set of compliance standards that have been independently reviewed against Australian customer and regulatory requirements. Audits on egg farms are carried out by independent, third party auditors. Egg Standards of Australia is consistent with the current Model Code of Practice for Animal Welfare and will be updated to incorporate the outcome of the S&G process.



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