

# BEAK TRIMMING OR HOT BLADE SCORING SHEETS



## Holding the bird for scoring

Hold the bird firmly without applying any pressure on the throat as this may draw the lower beak backwards giving the appearance the lower beak is shorter than it is. At least two people are required.

## How to select birds for scoring of hot blade trimmed beaks

Select 100 birds at random throughout the shed and assess beak quality to determine the effectiveness of tipping at the nominated times over the life of the flock. The birds to be scored must be representative of the flock. The process for selecting a random (or representative) sample of birds is as follows.

From cages:

- select cages throughout the house
- select cages from the top, middle and lower tiers
- ensure cages are selected from both ends of the house as well as the middle
- score all the birds in the same cages every time beaks are assessed.

From a litter and/or slatted floor shed:

- if you have several sheds with birds of the same age, randomly select one shed for sampling
- divide the shed into 10 sections and randomly select 10 birds from each section
- score birds from different locations such as litter area, slatted area, perches and various levels or tiers
- an alternative for litter or slatted floored sheds is to set up catching pens at the front and back ends and in the middle and randomly select the appropriate number of birds to score
- scoring free range birds is easier before they are given access to the range
- if birds are to be scored on the range, score half of the sample in the shed and half on the range
- sample the birds on the range from various locations
- visually assess the beaks of each bird.

It is preferable to do the scoring in the afternoon after the hens have completed lay for the day.

Scoring of trimmed beaks for beak shape, length and imperfections on the day of trim and 10–14 days after provides information on the skill of the trimming team and any issues with application. Scoring before or at transfer to the laying facilities indicates if beak shape and condition is acceptable. Combine beak scoring with other activities, such as on farm vaccination or body weight checks.

Beak condition deteriorates with age because of how the bird uses its beak. Tears, splitting and chapping develop as the bird interacts with its environment.

## When to score the trimmed beaks

- On the day when trimming is completed.
- At 10–14 days after trimming.
- Before or at transfer of pullets to the layer facilities particularly if purchased as started stock.
- When a bout of pecking occurs or a flock's flightiness increases.
- Towards the end of lay if there are concerns about the beak shape even if pecking is not a problem.

## How to score beaks

1. Select 100 birds randomly from the flock.
2. Hold the bird firmly with the beak in a closed but natural position. Do not apply any pressure on the throat as this may cause the lower beak to withdraw backwards and appear shorter.
- 3a. Match the beak shape of each bird to the closest drawing and place a tally mark (✓ or ✗) against each beak rating scale. Pay attention to the beak length and beak step.
- 3b. Check the beak for imperfections and place a tally mark in the appropriate box.
4. Add the tally marks in each beak score, divide by total beaks rated and work out a percentage score for both beak shape and imperfections.







### Criteria to be applied when scoring beaks after hot blade beak trimming

On day of trim	10–14 days after trimming	At transfer or pecking event or more than four weeks after trimming
<b>Score 3+4 for block or score 4 for step</b>		<b>Score 3+C</b>
<i>Ninety per cent (90%) or more.</i> Ideal beak shape. No imperfections. Correct trim applied.		
Upper beak is either <b>one-half</b> (step) or <b>two-thirds</b> (block) and lower beak is two-thirds of untrimmed length		Upper beak is between <b>one-half</b> and <b>two-thirds</b> (step) or slightly more than <b>two-thirds</b> (block) and lower beak is <b>two-thirds</b> or slightly more of untrimmed length depending on time since trim
Correctly cauterised, no bleeding, imperfections, splitting, tears, chapping or swelling	Wound has healed, no dieback, imperfections, splitting, tears, chapping or swelling, good keratin layer on beak	No imperfections, splitting, tears, chapping or swelling or split or grooved beaks
Correct beak step (if applied) is no more than: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 mm at 7–10 days</li> <li>• 2–3 mm at 10–12 weeks</li> </ul>	Correct beak step (if applied) is no more than: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 mm at 7–10 days</li> <li>• 2–3 mm at 10–12 weeks</li> </ul>	Correct beak step (if applied) is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• less than 2 mm at under 10–12 weeks of age</li> <li>• 2–3 mm at 12–30 weeks of age</li> <li>• 2–4 mm at more than 30 weeks of age</li> </ul>
<b>Score 2+5 for block or score 2+3+5 for step</b>		<b>Score 2+4+B</b>
<i>Nine per cent (9%) or less.</i> Incorrect trim applied. Minor incorrect beak step length if step applied.		
Upper beak is either <b>one-half</b> (step) or <b>two-thirds</b> (block) or slightly more of untrimmed length and lower beak is slightly shorter or longer than <b>two-thirds</b> of untrimmed length		Upper beak is slightly shorter (step) or longer (block) than <b>two-thirds</b> and lower beak is slightly shorter or slightly longer than <b>two-thirds</b> of the untrimmed beak depending on time since trim
Not cauterised adequately, bleeding	Wound has not healed, presence of dieback	
Minor imperfections—splitting, tears, chapping or swelling	Minor imperfections—tears, splitting, chapping or swelling in keratin layer	Minor imperfections—splitting, tears, chapping or swelling in keratin layer. Minor lack of keratin layer on upper beak tip
<b>Score 1+6 for block or step</b>		<b>Score 1+A</b>
<i>One per cent (1%) or less.</i> Unlike required shape. Big difference in upper and lower beak length.		
Upper beak is shorter or much longer than <b>one-half</b> (step) or much longer than <b>two-thirds</b> (block) and lower beak is much shorter or much longer than <b>two-thirds</b> of an untrimmed beak		Upper beak is shorter than <b>one-half</b> (step) or much longer (step and block) than <b>two-thirds</b> and lower beak is much shorter or longer than <b>two-thirds</b> of the untrimmed length
Major imperfections—tears, splitting, chapping or swelling	Major imperfections—tears, splitting, chapping or swelling in keratin layer	Major imperfections—tears, splitting, chapping or swelling, splitting or grooving of upper beak or no keratin layer on tip of upper beak

# BEAK TRIMMING SCORING SHEET: Day of trim and 14 days after trim—BLOCK CUT

\* cage, aviary, barn, free range

Date	Production system*	Shed/flock ID	Hatch date	Flock size at placement in:	Body weight
Farm	Breed	Age trimmed weeks	Age of flock	Brooder	Mortality to date %

TRIMMING SCORES			IMPERFECTION SCORES					
1 <b>XX</b> Too long	2 <b>X</b> Long	3 <b>✓</b> Ideal	4 <b>✓</b> Ideal length	5 <b>X</b> Short	6 <b>XX</b> Too short	Score A <b>XX</b> Major	Score B <b>X</b> Minor	Score C <b>✓</b> None
						Tears, splitting, chapping, swelling	Tears, splitting, chapping, swelling, poorly cauterised wound not healed, keratin flaws	Correctly applied and cauterised, no bleeding, wound healed, good keratin layer


Total _____	Total _____	Total _____	Total _____	Total _____	Total _____	Total _____
Score _____ as %	Score _____ as %	Score _____ as %	Score _____ as %	Score _____ as %	Score _____ as %	Score _____ as %







TOTAL **✓** score **3+4** as % \_\_\_\_\_ TOTAL **X** score **2+5** as % \_\_\_\_\_ TOTAL **XX** score **1+6** as % \_\_\_\_\_  
 Aim for **✓** above 90% **X** less than 9% **XX** less than 1%

# BEAK TRIMMING SCORING SHEET: Day of trim and 14 days after trim—STEP CUT

Date	Production system*	Shed/flock ID	Hatch date	Flock size at placement in:	Body weight
Farm	Breed	Age trimmed weeks	Age of flock	Brooder	Mortality to date %

\* cage, aviary, barn, free range

Ideal step: 1 mm at 7–10 days of age, 2–3 mm at 10–12 weeks of age

TRIMMING SCORES				IMPERFECTION SCORES				
1 <b>XX</b> Too long 	2 <b>X</b> Long 	3 <b>X</b> Long step Top ideal. Bottom long 	4 <b>✓</b> Ideal length Ideal step 	5 <b>X</b> Short 	6 <b>XX</b> Too short 	Score A <b>XX</b> Major Tears, splitting, chapping, swelling	Score B <b>X</b> Minor Tears, splitting, chapping, swelling, bleeding, poorly cauterised wound not healed, keratin flaws	Score C <b>✓</b> None Correctly applied and cauterised, no bleeding, wound healed, good keratin layer


Total _____	Total _____	Total _____	Total _____	Total _____	Total _____	Total _____
Score _____ as %	Score _____ as %	Score _____ as %	Score _____ as %	Score _____ as %	Score _____ as %	Score _____ as %

TOTAL **✓** score 4 as % \_\_\_\_\_ TOTAL **X** score 2+3+5 as % \_\_\_\_\_ TOTAL **XX** score 1+6 as % \_\_\_\_\_  
 Aim for **✓** above 90% **X** less than 9% **XX** less than 1%

# BEAK TRIMMING SCORING SHEET: At transfer to laying shed / feather pecking event

Date	Production system*	Shed/flock ID	Hatch date	Flock size at placement in:	Body weight
Farm	Breed	Age trimmed weeks	Age of flock	Brooder	Mortality to date %

\* cage, aviary, barn, free range

Ideal step: 2-3 mm at 12-30 weeks of age, 2-4 mm at more than 30 weeks of age

TRIMMING SCORES		IMPERFECTION SCORES		
1 <b>XX</b> Long	2 <b>X</b> Long step	3 <b>✓</b> Ideal	4 <b>X</b> Short	A <b>XX</b> Major
Blunt or with step	Long step 5mm or more	Blunt or with ideal/short step	Blunt or with step	Burnt tongue, grooved beak, neuroma/swelling (no keratin)

B <b>X</b> Minor	C <b>✓</b> None
Tears, splitting, chapping or swelling. Minor lack of keratin on upper beak tip	Correct trim applied

Total _____	Total _____	Total _____	Total _____	Total _____
Score _____ as %	Score _____ as %	Score _____ as %	Score _____ as %	Score _____ as %

TOTAL **✓** score **3** as % \_\_\_\_\_    TOTAL **X** score **2+4** as % \_\_\_\_\_    TOTAL **XX** score **1** as % \_\_\_\_\_

Aim for **✓** above 90%    **X** less than 9%    **XX** less than 1%