

Preparing the catching of end-of-lay hens

Farmer

Transport preparation 'What to do?'

- ✓ 72 hours before catching: **book** the catching team and **give** clear guidance and instructions
- ✓ 48 hours before catching: **inform** the transporter of the total number of animals and **order** enough crates / containers / vehicles for all birds, keep in mind climate conditions
- ✓ **Do not fast end-of-lay hens** for more than 12 hours (including transport), and not less than four hours (prior to departure). **Provide water** up to the start of catching

Ready for catching!

How do I check the 'fitness' to travel?

Check the birds before the catching team and the driver arrives. Look out for broken bones, severe difficulties in walking or breathing, or other obvious clinical signs. **Do not load unfit birds**. You are responsible that they are **euthanized humanely** by a trained person, without any delay.



Catching Staff

General guidelines for catching

✓ 'What are good catching conditions?'

1. Prevent smothering at all times
2. Bring crates / containers as close as possible to the birds
3. Use blue light and minimal noise
4. Maintain all loading equipment and check before loading
5. Wear appropriate clothes (e.g. dark coloured, clean overalls, hygiene caps, clean boots)
6. Make sure that your hands are clean and disinfected
7. During catching, always check fitness and act accordingly!

1. The **farmer is responsible** for catching and should be present to oversee the procedure
2. Catch with an **experienced, well trained, well equipped team** of sufficient size. Do all catchers have a certificate of competence? Even better!
3. Check **birds' fitness during catching** and act accordingly!
4. Move **slowly** and **reduce noise**; herd & catch birds gently
5. Do **not overload containers / crates** and close them carefully. Always check and release trapped body parts
6. Load the birds with care in an **upright position**. Put birds lying on their backs upright again

Catching Staff

✓ Fragility of end-of-lay hens

The quality of the bones of the laying hens is influenced by egg production – **end-of-lay hens are fragile**. Poor quality handling of end-of-lay hens during catching and loading can result in injuries, bone fractures and death. Good handling practices **prevent undesirable consequences** and will benefit other aspects of animal production (e.g. meat quality)



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✓ Catching by hand – ‘What are good practices?’

1. **Carefully** catch and carry birds:
 1. Always support end-of-lay hens under the breast / abdominal region
 2. Do not catch / carry end-of-lay hens by the neck or wings
 3. Make sure end-of-lay hens do not hit against objects, like the water system or perches while catching
 4. Make sure end-of-lay hens do not sway or swing, while carrying.
2. Ideally, catch with one hand around **both legs** and use the other hand to **support the breast / abdominal region**, to minimize inversion
3. Catch up to **maximum 3 end-of-lay hens** at a time
4. Make **carrying distance** short. Bring the crates as close as possible to the hens



Even better! Catch end-of-lay hens upright – around wings and chest; max. 2 birds a time



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