



**Ministry of Environment  
and Food of Denmark**  
Danish Veterinary and  
Food Administration

# **Voluntary Initiative on pullets**

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# The voluntary initiative group on pullets

## Background

Council Directive 98/58/EC concerning the protection of animals kept for farming purposes apply to pullets.

- ✓ However, the provisions are general and do not address the complex animal welfare challenges, which may arise during the rearing period of pullets, and which may affect their welfare both during rearing and later in the egg-laying period

On this basis a guide on pullets meant for the production of eggs for human consumption was regarded appropriate – and a voluntary initiative group was established



# The voluntary initiative pullets

## The members

### Member States:

- ❖ Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Sweden

### Business and professional organisations:

- ❖ Association of Poultry Processors and Poultry Trade in the EU,
- ❖ Copa-Cogeca,
- ❖ European Rural Poultry Association, and ISAE

### Civil society organisations:

- ❖ Compassion in World Farming
- ❖ RSPCA

### International Organisations:

- ❖ OIE





# The voluntary initiative pullets

## The guide

### Basis for discussions:

- The discussion paper on best management practice for the welfare of pullets

### The contents of the guide:

- A short description on applicable legislation
- Why a guide should be developed
  - ✓ there is a link between the conditions given to pullets in the rearing period and how they cope with the conditions, they are given in the egg-laying systems
  - ✓ A guide with recommendations on best practice will therefore not only help improve the welfare of the pullets, but also their welfare when they later in life become laying hens.



# The voluntary initiative pullets

## The guide – contents

After the introductory part follows 9 chapters with recommendations (still draft):

### 1. Training of staff

- ✓ The keeper having the daily responsibility for the pullets should have received appropriate training and be competent in the care and handling of pullets.

### 2. Inspection and stockmanship

- ✓ Inspection at least two times daily
- ✓ In-house checks /own control as part of best management practices.
- ✓ Housing should be designed and maintained to prevent injury or distress to the birds whenever it can be avoided.
- ✓ The surfaces of all contact materials and all equipment should be kept satisfactorily clean. When a manual belt removal system is present, it should be run at frequent intervals and preferably at least once a week.
- ✓ After hatching, the chicks should be housed at an appropriate temperature





# The voluntary initiative pullets

## The guide - contents

### 3. Choice of rearing system

- ✓ During the rearing period the pullets should be kept in a system, which matches as far as possible the system, in which they will be kept as laying hens.

### 4. Feeding equipment and feeding

- ✓ Feeding equipment should allow all pullets to eat with minimal competition.
- ✓ The diet should be appropriate for the nutritional needs of the birds and their stage of production, and fed to them in sufficient quantity to maintain them in good health. When deciding on type of feed the effect on e.g. feather pecking in later life should be taken into consideration.



# The voluntary initiative pullets

## The guide - contents

### 5. Drinking equipment

- ✓ Pullets should have continuous access to a sufficient supply of clean water.
- ✓ The height of the drinkers should be adjusted according to the height of the pullets.
- ✓ Drinking equipment should match the drinking equipment that the birds will have access to when they are later kept as laying hens.

### 6. Environment (enrichment, lighting and noise)

- ✓ Birds should be provided with appropriate enrichment to encourage activity and to exhibit their natural behaviours, including foraging.
- ✓ Pullets should have access to friable litter of good quality, such as straw, wood shavings, sand or peat from the time, when they are introduced to the rearing house.
- ✓ Pullets should at the latest after the first 7 days of life have access to raised perches. The design of perches should be such that injuries to the hens are minimised and perch use is maximised.





# The voluntary initiative pullets

## The guide - contents

### 6. Environment (enrichment, lighting and noise) – continued

- ✓ It is recommended that ramps and platforms are provided to assist bird movement in multi-tier systems
- ✓ In light periods the light intensity should be a minimum of 10 lux and should only be reduced temporarily to 5 lux in the case of veterinary advice.
- ✓ After the pullets reach ten days of age there should be a minimum of 8 hours continuous darkness per day.
- ✓ The sound level from the environment should be minimised.

### 7. Stocking density

- ✓ At higher stocking densities the keeper should pay special attention to the amount and quality of the foraging material since this becomes even more needed for the birds to express their natural behaviour and prevent development of abnormal behaviour.





# The voluntary initiative pullets

## The guide - contents

### 8. Air quality and thermal environment

- ✓ Pullet housing should maintain a thermally comfortable environment at all times, and ventilation systems should maintain good air. As a guideline:
  - ✓ the concentration of ammonia (NH<sub>3</sub>) should not exceed 20 ppm measured at the level of the pullets' heads
  - ✓ the concentration of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) should not exceed 3000 ppm measured at the level of the pullets' heads at any time,
  - ✓ the inside temperature and humidity should be appropriate for the age of the birds, and
  - ✓ high concentrations of dust should be avoided

### 9. Beak trimming

- ✓ The phasing out of beak trimming should be pursued. If beak trimming is carried out infrared trimming should be used.



# The voluntary initiative pullets

## The guide - status

- ❖ The voluntary initiative group held its first meeting on 29 October 2018, it has since then held four meetings, and now continues its discussions via e-mail
- ❖ Still some outstanding issues, especially on stocking density
- ❖ The intention is to finalise the guide soon, so that the adoption procedure can be initiated:
  - ✓ Platform members will be consulted and may give comments
  - ✓ Comments will be reviewed and the guide will be revised where appropriate
  - ✓ Hopefully agreement for dissemination at the next Platform meeting







Thank you – questions?