SHOULD THIS BIRD BE LOADED?

A guide for preparing, loading, and transporting poultry
Introduction

Farmers work hard to ensure their animals are properly cared for 365 days of the year. In order to ensure good welfare throughout the birds' life, it is also important to ensure proper care during catching and loading onto trucks leaving the farm, until the birds arrive at the processing plant.

This guide is designed to assist poultry farmers, catching crews, and haulers in making decisions about which birds should be loaded for transportation.

This handbook provides additional details for the information provided within the “Should This Bird be Loaded?” decision tree and poster. Only healthy birds that are fit to withstand the journey to the final destination should be loaded and transported.

This project was possible due to the following partnerships:

- Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs
- Poultry Industry Council
- University of Guelph
- Ontario Farm Animal Council
- Chicken Farmers of Ontario
- Egg Farmers of Ontario
- Turkey Farmers of Ontario
- Ontario Broiler Hatching Egg and Chick Commission
- Association of Ontario Chicken Processors

www.livestockwelfare.com
To order additional copies of any of the Poultry Decision Tree materials, please contact OFAC or Poultry Industry Council.

This guide is intended to assist producers in making ethical and responsible decisions regarding poultry transportation. The authors do not make any representations, warranties or conditions, either express or implied, with respect to any of the information contained in this guide. This information is offered entirely at the risk of the recipient and as the recipient assumes full responsibility, the authors shall not be liable for any claims, damages, or losses of any kind based on any theory of liability arising out of the use of, or reliance upon, the information (including omissions, inaccuracies, typographical errors, and infringement of third party rights).
SHOULD THIS BIRD BE LOADED?
Guidelines for Transporting Poultry

DO NOT LOAD
DO NOT TRANSPORT

- Weak and/or not alert
- Dark red, purple, or black combs or wattles
- Discharge from eyes/nostrils
- Swollen head/neck
- Skin on head or neck is dark red or very pale (Exception: toms can have bright blue skin in this area)
- Bloody and/or prolapsed vents
- Emaciated and weak: very thin, easily felt breastbone (Exception: end-of-lay hens may have pronounced breastbones but if emaciated they must not be loaded)
- Dislocated, broken or exposed bones (including injury due to handling)
- Unable to rise or walk due to physical abnormality or injury

Birds not loaded should be segregated according to on-farm protocol.
Notify farm manager of birds left on the farm before leaving.

CAUTION
Conditions requiring assessment before loading

Environmental
- Wet birds in cool or cold weather
- Heat and/or humidity
- Cold and/or wind chill
- Road closures

Individual Bird
- Minor trauma, wounds or bleeding (including injury due to handling)

Flock
- Diarrhea
- Coughing and sneezing - “snicking”
- If a flock is diagnosed with a disease by a veterinarian or laboratory special provisions for loading may be required.

Assessment and joint decisions should be made by the producer, catching crew, transporter and processing plant when faced with CAUTION conditions.

LOAD & TRANSPORT
HEALTHY BIRDS

Regulations
No person shall load or cause to be loaded... an animal that by reason of infirmity, illness, injury, fatigue or any other cause cannot be transported without undue suffering during the expected journey.
Health of Animals Regulations; Part XII, 138, 2a

DO NOT
- Transport a sick or injured bird
- Load or unload a bird in a way likely to cause injury or suffering
- Crowd birds to such an extent as to cause injury or undue suffering

www.inspection.gc.ca

Violators of the Health of Animals Act:
⇒ Fines up to $10,000
⇒ Increased fines for repeat offenders
⇒ Repeat offenders posted on CFIA website
Guidelines for Dealing with Poultry

**Identification of Sick or Injured Birds**

- **Weak, not alert**
- **Emaciated**
- **Unable to walk**
- **Swollen head**
- **Discoloured comb**
- **Broken leg**
- **Unable to rise/ walk due to physical abnormality** (Do not confuse with fatigue)

**Environmental Considerations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maximum Loading &amp; Transport Densities</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Extreme Heat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broiler Chickens</td>
<td>63 kg/m²</td>
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</tr>
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<td>54 kg/m²</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Factors to Consider**
- Duration of travel (including loading and lairage)
- Weather at load-out, along route and at processing plant
- Time of day of load-out
- Number of birds in the barn
- Ventilation in barn
- Condition of barn (e.g. litter)

**Recommended Code of Practice for the Care & Handling of Farm Animals**

Air temperature in load should be maintained at 5°C to 30°C for all birds, except end-of-lay hens, which should be maintained at 13°C to 30°C.

Recent research (Mitchell and Kettlewell, 2008) recommends for broilers, an upper in load temperature limit of 24°C.
Poultry Welfare

It’s everyone’s responsibility!

Definition

The welfare of a bird includes its physical and mental state. Good welfare implies both fitness and a sense of well-being. All birds must be protected from undue suffering.

Bird welfare starts in the barn and continues through loading, transportation, and slaughter at the processing plant. Everyone who works with birds is responsible for maintaining bird welfare.
What is your responsibility in the *Health of Animals* Regulations?

**DO:**
- Load or transport birds that are free from *infirmity, illness, injury, fatigue or any other cause* which may induce undue suffering during the expected journey.
- Load or unload the birds in a way that prevents injury or undue suffering.
- Load or transport birds using densities which minimize crowding. For more information reference the Transportation Codes of Practice.
- Minimize transport times (less than 36 hours).
- Transport birds in a manner that they are unlikely to suffer due to exposure to the weather or inadequate ventilation.

**Violators may receive Administrative Monetary Penalties (AMPs)**

Notice of violation:
- With warning
- With penalty

$1,300 - $10,000

Up to $15,000 based on the severity of the violation and the history of the offender.

CFIA posts repeat offenders (multiple offenses within 5 years) on their website.

**Did you know?** *CFIA has the authority to inspect birds during loading, and to stop and inspect trucks during transit.*
Identify - Cull - Dispose (ICD)

Producer practices prior to loading.

Load Healthy Birds.
Refer to your On-Farm Animal Care Program for details.

Identify

As part of your daily routine, identify birds that have DO NOT LOAD conditions. Refer to pages 12 - 17 for guidelines.

Cull

Adopting a daily culling program will minimize the number of DO NOT LOAD birds left in the barn after a load-out. This will improve load-out efficiency and eliminate the need to euthanize a large number of birds left on the farm.

Euthanasia must result in a quick death without pain or distress. The method depends on the number and type of birds being culled and it must be performed by competent personnel.
Identify - Cull - Dispose (ICD)

*Producer practices prior to loading.*

**Cull** - Euthanasia results in a quick death without pain or distress.

**Acceptable Euthanasia Methods**
- Blunt force trauma to the head
- Non-penetrating captive bolt
- Cervical dislocation

**For Large Numbers of Birds:**
- CO₂ gas administered at appropriate concentrations
- Other inert gases such as argon

*All euthanasia methods must be performed by competent personnel.*

**Unacceptable Euthanasia Methods**
- Physical trauma not listed under “acceptable methods”
- Suffocation
- Drowning
- Rapid freezing
- Injecting household products or solvents, or chemical irritants
- Maceration for birds older than 72 hours
- Poisons
- Burdizzo/Castration forceps

Reference: “AVMA Guidelines on Euthanasia”

**Dispose**

Refer to provincial regulations for guidelines on disposal.

Should this bird be loaded?
# Handling Guidelines for Catching Crews

Proper handling will minimize injuries during **catching & loading**

## Caged end-of-lay hens

**DO**
- Remove birds from cages using two legs
- Remove only one or two birds from a cage at a time (depending on the size of the cage door)
- Minimize passing of birds between people
- End-of-lay hens are more fragile than other poultry
- Place birds gently and upright in the liner

**DO NOT**
- Carry the birds by the wings or neck
- Load birds with “DO NOT LOAD” conditions
- Swing, throw or drop the birds
- Squeeze the legs

## Turkeys

**DO**
- Minimize passing of birds between people
- Place birds gently and upright in the liner
- Ensure no part of the bird is protruding from the liner before closing the door

**DO NOT**
- Herd birds in a way likely to cause smothering or piling
- Carry the birds by the wings or neck
- Load birds with “DO NOT LOAD” conditions
- Swing, throw, or drop the birds
Proper handling will minimize injuries during catching & loading

Floor birds – chickens

**DO**
- Minimize passing of birds between people
- Place birds upright and gently inside the crates

**DO NOT**
- Herd birds in a way likely to cause smothering or piling
- Carry the birds by the wings or neck
- Load birds with “DO NOT LOAD” conditions
- Swing, throw, or drop the birds

Humane Broiler Catching
For Catching Crews

OMAFRA offers Humane Handling courses for:
- Broilers
- Layers & Pullets
- Turkeys

*These train-the-trainer sessions are offered free of charge. If you are interested please contact the OMAFRA Poultry Specialist.*
Weak and/or not alert
These birds might not run away from you when approached (floor chickens), or might move with the group when being herded (turkeys). They might have their heads on the litter and their feathers fluffed up.

These birds should not be confused with large tom turkeys that become fatigued during herding!
Skin on head or neck is dark red or very pale

Compared to other birds in the flock, these birds will have discoloured faces. They might also show other **DO NOT LOAD** symptoms.

Mature male turkeys (Toms) can have vibrant blue, red, or purple on the face or neck

**WE ARE HEALTHY!**
Swollen head and/or neck
The face or head will be puffy and eyes might be swollen shut. These birds might also have wounds on their heads.

Discharge from eyes and/or nostrils

DO NOT LOAD
Segregate and notify the Farm Manager

Should this bird be loaded?
The area under the tail will have exposed red tissue that appears to stick out. There can also be blood in the area. Prolapsed vents are painful and hens can bleed out and die if the prolapse is pecked or stepped on.

**Bloody and/or prolapsed vents**

The area under the tail will have exposed red tissue that appears to stick out. There can also be blood in the area. Prolapsed vents are painful and hens can bleed out and die if the prolapse is pecked or stepped on.

**Dark red, purple, or black combs and wattles**

Discoloured combs or wattles indicate that a bird is sick. The bird might also be compromised (weak, not alert, and thin).

Look for this in end-of-lay hens and broiler breeders.
A Body Condition Score of 0 reflects an emaciated, very thin and weak bird. The breastbone is very easy to feel. The muscles dip into the breastbone on the side (concave breast muscle). Emaciated birds will be weak and

MUST NOT BE LOADED

These birds do not have the energy reserves to withstand the stress of catching and transportation, and will likely be dead-on-arrival (DOA).

Body Condition Scores of 2 or 3 reflect healthy birds with good muscle tone. LOAD THESE BIRDS!

A Body Condition Score of 1 can reflect a compromised broiler chicken or turkey. Segregate these birds and notify the farm manager.

Thin End-of-lay hens SHOULD NOT be confused with emaciated birds.

End-of-lay hens will be less muscular than broilers or breeders due to their production cycle and genetics. End-of-lay hens may receive a body condition score of 1 and still be loaded. Cautionary measures might be needed (E.g. adjustment of loading densities, tarping).
Dislocated, broken and/or exposed bones

These injuries are painful. Wings might droop on the ground and legs might stick out at odd angles. Legs might also be discoloured with bruises.

**DO NOT LOAD birds with broken and/or exposed bones!**

Dislocated and broken bones are painful during catching and transport due to handling bumps and motion. Broken bones can also limit the birds ability to move around in the crate or liner.

*Birds unable to rise or walk due to physical abnormality or injury should not be confused with turkeys that become fatigued during herding!*

Segregate and notify the Farm Manager
Wet birds cannot maintain their body temperature in cool or cold weather and are more likely to freeze to death during transport (DOAs).

Wet birds that are loaded in cool or cold weather are a significant cause of DOAs and every effort should be taken to ensure the birds are dry when they are loaded and stay dry during transport.

See page 21 for loading and transportation temperature guidelines.

**Wet Birds**

- **DO NOT LOAD** wet birds in cool or cold weather.

- Protect birds from getting wet during loading by using tarps and eaves troughs.

- Use *caution* when loading wet birds in moderate conditions.
Environmental Cautions

Road Closures

- Be aware of road closures prior to loading so that alternative routes or loading times can be established.
- Listen for current updates and look for alternate routes when necessary.

Be Aware of...
1. Snow Storms
2. Weather Conditions & Road Closures
3. Accidents
4. Roll Overs/Crashes
5. Construction
CAUTION
Conditions requiring assessment

Temperature, Humidity and Wind Chill

When determining whether a flock should be loaded during adverse weather conditions a joint decision should be made by the producer, catching company, hauling company, and processing plant prior to load-out.

Have you considered...
- Condition of birds & barn
- Weather & travel conditions
- Duration of travel
- Time of loading
- Tarps on trucks
- Wind chill or humidity

Recommended Code of Practice for Poor Weather Conditions

Air temperature in the load should be maintained between 5°C (43°F) and 30°C (86°F) for all birds, except end-of-lay hens in which the load should be maintained between 13°C (55°F) and 30°C (86°F)

DO NOT LOAD WET BIRDS IN COOL OR COLD WEATHER!

Recent research (Mitchell and Kettlewell, 2008) recommends for broilers, an upper in load temperature limit of 24°C.
Air Temperature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maximum Loading &amp; Transport Guidelines</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Extreme Heat Density</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</table>

Reference: The Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals - Poultry

When transporting birds during extreme temperatures discussions between all stakeholders should occur to assess whether or not birds should be loaded and if the truck can be delayed until better conditions are available.

The above chart provides guidelines regarding stocking densities at different temperatures however these do not consider wind chill or humidity. Additionally, across Canada these temperatures and guidelines might differ due to moisture levels in the air.
The following charts can be used as a guide for deciding how many birds should be loaded per crate.

*The charts are based on the Recommended Codes of Practice, and provide *maximum* bird numbers.*

When deciding to transport, consider: temperature (in load), wind chill, humidity level and precipitation.

Adjust tarps and include strategically placed empty crates to improve air movement and ventilation.

*Should this bird be loaded?*
**Guideline for Loading Broiler Chickens into 44” x 28” Anglia Modules Drawers (0.79m²)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight (kg)</th>
<th>1.75kg</th>
<th>2.00kg</th>
<th>2.25kg</th>
<th>2.50kg</th>
<th>2.80kg</th>
<th>3.50kg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maximum Number of Birds / Drawer</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate (63 kg/m²)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extreme Heat (54 kg/m²)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Guideline for Loading Broiler Chickens into 44” x 47” Linco Module Drawers (1.3m²)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight (kg)</th>
<th>1.75kg</th>
<th>2.00kg</th>
<th>2.25kg</th>
<th>2.50kg</th>
<th>2.80kg</th>
<th>3.50kg</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Maximum Number of Birds / Drawer</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate (63 kg/m²)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme Heat (54 kg/m²)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Guideline for Loading Broiler Chickens into 23" x 34" Chicken Crates (0.50m²)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight (kg)</th>
<th>1.75kg</th>
<th>2.00kg</th>
<th>2.25kg</th>
<th>2.50kg</th>
<th>2.80kg</th>
<th>3.50kg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moderate (63 kg/m²)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme Heat (54 kg/m²)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Guideline for Loading End-of-lay hens into 45" x 16" End-of-lay hen Baskets (0.46m²)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight (kg)</th>
<th>1.50kg</th>
<th>1.70kg</th>
<th>1.80kg</th>
<th>2.00kg</th>
<th>2.50kg</th>
<th>2.70kg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moderate (63 kg/m²)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme Heat (54 kg/m²)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Guideline for Loading Turkeys into 45" x 45" Large Liners (1.32m²)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight (kg)</th>
<th>5.29kg</th>
<th>6.50kg</th>
<th>7.87kg</th>
<th>10.00kg</th>
<th>15.00kg</th>
<th>20.00kg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moderate (98 kg/m²)</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme Heat (83 kg/m²)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Guidelines for Loading Turkeys into 45" x 37" Small Liners (1.09m²)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weights (Kg)</th>
<th>5.29kg</th>
<th>6.50kg</th>
<th>7.87kg</th>
<th>10.00kg</th>
<th>15.00kg</th>
<th>20.00kg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moderate (98 kg/m²)</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extreme Heat (83 kg/m²)</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CAUTION

Conditions requiring assessment

Humidex = “Feels Like” Temperature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Humidity</th>
<th>Temperature 20 C</th>
<th>Temperature 25 C</th>
<th>Temperature 30 C</th>
<th>Temperature 35 C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60%</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>46</td>
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<tr>
<td>70%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>49</td>
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<tr>
<td>75%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85%</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Environment Canada

Temperatures are listed across the top and humidity down the side. The temperature that correlates with each level of humidity combine to make a humidex value (or “feels like” temperature).

For more information:


Conditions requiring assessment

**Individual Bird**
- Cuts and lesions on the skin will vary in severity.
- The size of the injury should be considered, as well as its location and how the bird appears.
- If unsure whether a wound is severe enough to cause undue suffering during transport, speak to a supervisor.

**Be aware...**
If vet or lab diagnosis confirms disease, the flock may be deemed fit for transport despite the condition of the birds. In this case, special transport provisions may need to be considered, such as:
- Density
- Biosecurity
- Handling
- Loading times
- Transport Time
- Weather Conditions

**Identify - Cull - Dispose**
The farm manager should ensure birds are ready to load before crews arrive and euthanize ALL birds that SHOULD NOT BE LOADED

**Flock**
**Diarrhea** can be due to diet or illness. An individual bird with diarrhea is unfit if it also shows symptoms listed under **DO NOT LOAD**. A flock with diarrhea might be wet, and wet birds should not be transported in cold weather.
Definitions

**Compromised Bird**
A bird with reduced capacity to withstand the stress of transportation, due to injury, fatigue, infirmity, poor health, distress, or any other cause *(Adapted from CFIA Compromised Animals Policy)*

**Distress**
An aversive, negative state in which coping and adaptation processes fail to return an organism to a normal physiological and/or psychological state *(Adapted from Carstens and Moberg 2000; Moberg 1987; NRC 1992)*

**Euthanasia**
The humane destruction of an animal accomplished by a method that produces rapid unconsciousness and subsequent death without evidence of pain or distress, or a method that utilizes anaesthesia produced by an agent that causes loss of consciousness and subsequent death. “Euthanasia” originates from the Greek language: *eu* meaning "good" and *thanatos* meaning "death".

**Fatigue**
Extreme tiredness/weakness, typically resulting from mental or physical exertion or illness.
Definitions

**Prolapse**
Also known as “prolapsed oviduct”, “prolapsed vent”, or “blowout”. Occurs when the lower part of the hen's oviduct (egg duct) protrudes through the vent. A prolapse often leads to pecking, meaning the bird can also be injured/bleeding.

**Segregate**
To set apart from the rest or from each other; isolate or divide.

**Suffering**
To submit to or be forced to endure something that causes pain or distress.

**Transportation Time**
The time from when the first bird is loaded to when the last bird is unloaded.

**Welfare**
How an animal is coping with the conditions in which it lives. An animal is in a good state of welfare if (as indicated by scientific evidence) it is healthy, comfortable, well-nourished, safe, able to express innate behaviour, and is not suffering from unpleasant states, such as pain, fear, and distress.
(Source: American Veterinary Medical Association)
References

1. FAWC: Farm Animal Welfare Council. *5 Freedoms*  
   http://www.fawc.org.uk

2. Agriculture and Agri-Food Administrative  
   Monetary Penalties Act 2010  
   *Regulations Amending the Agriculture and Agri-Food Administrative  
   Monetary Penalties Regulations.*  
   http://www.gazette.gc.ca

   *Recommended Code of Practice*  
   for the care and handling of pullets, layers and spent fowl.  
   http://www.nfacc.ca/

4. AVMA Guidelines on Euthanasia  
   http://www.avma.org/issues/animal_welfare/euthanasia.pdf

5. CFIA Health of Animals Regulations  

6. Loading Densities  
   http://www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/chicken-turkeys-and-breeders
Ontario Farm Animal Council (OFAC)
Ontario AgriCentre, Suite 106
100 Stone Road W., Guelph, ON N1G 5L3
Phone: 519-837-1326 www.ofac.org
www.livestockwelfare.com

Poultry Industry Council (PIC)
483 Arkell Road, Guelph, ON
N1H 6H8 Phone: 519-837-0284
www.poultryindustrycouncil.ca

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA)
1 Stone Road West Guelph, ON
N1G 4Y2 Phone: 1-877-424-1300
www.omafra.gov.on.ca
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