

Explanatory note

The current version of the RSPCA welfare standards for pigs that RSPCA Assured scheme members are required to implement is dated November 2016. As part of the on-going process of reviewing the welfare standards, they have now been amended and updated, which includes the addition of a number of new standards and guidance (information boxes).

The review process, which is undertaken in consultation with the farming industry, veterinary profession and welfare research sector, is necessary to ensure that the standards take proper account of the latest scientific research, veterinary knowledge and practical developments, and therefore continue to represent good practice in farm animal care.

These changes will be incorporated into a revised edition of the RSPCA welfare standards for pigs to be issued in March 2021.

All the amendments made to the November 2016 version of the standards are listed below and been labelled as NEW or REVISED.

RSPCA Assured scheme members have three months from the date of this letter to fully implement these changes (i.e. by March 2021) unless otherwise stated by the standard.

RSPCA Farm Animals Department

10/12/2020

Please note:

All standards in the November 2016 edition that are not shown below or are shown but do not have a label next to them remain unchanged in the new edition. Due to the amendment process, some existing standards have been re-ordered and therefore re-numbered.

Food and water

FW 1.11 For ad lib feeding there must be a maximum of:

- a) 6 pigs per feed place – when using a dry feeder with no full head barriers between each feeding place
- b) 10 pigs per feed place – where there are full head barriers
- c) 14 pigs per feed place – where there is the opportunity to mix water with the feed (wet and dry feeders).

REVISED

i A feed place is described as the lateral head space required by a single pig whilst eating.

FW **NEW** Feed places must have a minimum width of:

1.11.1

- a) 15cm for pigs up to 35kg.
- b) 30cm for pigs over 35kg.

NEW

i For circular feed spaces, calculations are to be based on the overall circumference of the feeder.

FW 2.5 **REVISED** Water troughs, bowls and nipples must be:

- a) kept thoroughly clean
- b) managed in a way that ensures they are capable of dispensing water at all times
- c) situated at the correct height to allow all pigs to drink.

Environment

E 4.2 Bedding material must:

- a) be comfortable
- b) be absorbent
- c) provide thermal comfort
- d) not compromise the health or welfare of the pigs.

REVISED

Suitable material includes straw and sawdust, as long as the requirements of E 4.2 are met. It should not contain any harmful materials, such as metal or metal waste.

i Shredded paper, waste plasterboard and/or waste gypsum are not suitable for use as bedding material. The use of waste plasterboard and waste gypsum as animal bedding without an environmental permit is an offence. For more information, please contact the UK Environment Agency. Anaerobic digestion residues (digestates), and compost produced at plants under the Animal By-Product Regulations are not allowed to be used. Recycled rubber, glossy paper, woodchip from wood treated with glue or chemical preservative and used poultry litter are also not permitted to be used, neither is fine sawdust due to the potential for dust to compromise the health of the pigs and stock-keepers.

Bedding material may also be used as the first/under layer for straw (see E 7.1)

NEW



Where straw is used as bedding, consideration should be given to the type of straw used. Straw type can affect how the pigs will use it and the amount of management required. Dry, brittle or rough textured straw can serve as a stronger more absorbent base for a bed whereas softer straw will provide more comfort.

E 7.1

REVISED

To allow and encourage proper expression of rooting, pawing and chewing behaviours, pigs must have access to environmental enrichment materials that are:

- a) effective,
- b) provided at all times, and
- c) provided in sufficient quantities.

REVISED

Suitable environmental enrichment materials, which are free from contaminants, include high quality straw and silages.

Where straw is provided, long straw is preferable to chopped straw as it is more manipulable.



Consideration should also be given to the type of straw used. Different types of straw are better suited to different purposes: Dry, brittle or rough textured straw will make a better enrichment material than it would bedding (but can serve as a stronger more absorbent base for a bed) whereas softer straw may not be as manipulable for enrichment, but provides more comfort as bedding.

More information on suitable enrichment materials, including desirable properties, can be found on the EUWeINet project website: <http://euwelnet.hwinn001.topshare.com/>

NEW

The following definitions describe the different types of outdoor production systems and were developed for the Code of Practice for the Labelling of Pork and Pork Products:

Outdoor bred – Pigs are born outside, in fields where they are kept until weaning.

Outdoor reared – Pigs are born outside in fields, and stay outside in fields/open air pens for approximately half their life (defined as at least 30kg).



Free-range – Pigs are born outside, in fields where they remain outside until they are sent for processing.

For all three, breeding sows are kept outside, in fields on soil with huts/tents/other accommodation available for protection from weather, for their productive life.

Where soil types and climate are a constraint, producers can keep gestating sows in barns, in groups, on deep straw bedding for a maximum of seven weeks at the start of each production cycle. In this situation all other appropriate RSPCA welfare standards are required to be met.

For more detailed information on these definitions, please refer to the Code of Practice for the Labelling of Pork and Pork Products: www.porkprovenance.co.uk

Management

M 1.4 **REVISED** Managers must:

- a) develop and implement contingency plans and preventative measures to help ensure the welfare of the animals can be safeguarded in emergency situations, including fire, flood, interruption of supplies, and in the event of notifiable disease outbreaks and situations resulting in a significant delay in animals being taken to the abattoir, and
- b) provide an emergency action board sited in a prominent position that is visible to all farm staff and emergency services, which must include:
 - i. the procedures to be followed by those discovering an emergency
 - ii. the location of water sources for use by the fire services
 - iii. a map grid reference, GPS coordinates and postcode for location of the unit

NEW



A contingency plan is a course of action designed to help a business respond effectively to a significant future possible event/situation. For each event/situation, the plan includes the potential impacts on the animals and the actions that can be taken to address the issues identified. For example, in the event of an abattoir breakdown that results in the animals having to remain on a unit/farm for longer than planned, contingency plans will detail:

- a) the potential issues caused by this event and the implications to the welfare of the animals, and
- b) the actions that can be taken to safeguard the animals' welfare.

Protection from other animals

M 7.1 **REVISED** A written Wild Animal Control Plan (WACP) must:

- a) be in place, and
- b) implemented on farm.

M 7.2 **NEW** Levels of potentially harmful wild animals (e.g. rodents and birds) must be humanely managed to avoid:

- a) the risk of disease spread to livestock
- b) damage to livestock buildings and the services on which livestock depend
- c) contamination and spoilage of feed.

NEW

In England and Wales, the following legislation applies to the management of wildlife:

- **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981**
 - **Animal Welfare Act 2006**
 - **The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010**
 - **Protection of Badgers Act 1992**
 -  - **Pests Act 1954**
 - **The Spring Traps Approval (England) Order 2012**
 - **The Spring Traps Approval (Wales) Order 2012**
 - **The Small Ground Vermin Traps Order 1958**
 - **Food and Environment Protection Act 1985**
 - **The Control of Pesticides Regulations (COPR) 1986**
 - **Animals (Cruel Poisons) Act 1962**
- Equivalent legislation applies in Scotland and Northern Ireland.**

M 7.3

REVISED


The primary means of protecting the livestock from wild animals, as documented in the WACP, must be by:

- a) physical exclusion methods
- b) the removal of elements in the vicinity that might encourage the presence of wild animals
- c) maintaining units in a clean and tidy condition to minimise the risk of wild animals gaining access to the unit.

NEW

Physical exclusion measures are the most humane and effective methods of providing protection from wild animals.

Measures should only be applied after the area has been checked and cleared of elements that could encourage the presence of wild animals, as applying some measures interfere with rodent behaviour and encourage them to spread to other areas. Humane methods of protecting livestock from other animals include:

- 
- Construction/maintenance of fencing appropriate for excluding the wild animals in question
 - Removal of shelter/cover (e.g. weeds, heaps of rubble, broken equipment etc) in the area surrounding livestock buildings
 - Removal/protection of obvious food sources
 - Maintenance of drains
 - Maintenance/proofing of buildings against wild animals
 - Storing bedding away from animals.
 - In outdoor and/or free-range systems some of these aspects, such as removal of food sources, may not be possible. Some of the methods listed above are intended to remove unnecessary and unintended harbourage sites, as opposed to elements specifically provided for other purposes.

NEW



Rodents are less likely to inhabit an area if there is no cover or food supply. Reduced food availability will also increase the likelihood of rodents consuming bait, where applied. When stores or livestock buildings are empty, the opportunity should be taken to check and maintain spaces and introduce any necessary controls before restocking.

M 7.4

NEW

Where any lethal method of control is being considered, a site survey of the unit must be carried out before applying the control (i.e. bait or traps), identifying:

- a) the type, level and extent of the problem species
- b) any non-target animals likely to be present (including pets and children)
- c) any maintenance and proofing issues.

M 7.5

NEW

Where any lethal method of control is used, its use must have taken into account the results of the site survey (standard M 7.4).

M 7.6

REVISED

The WACP must include provisions that specifically exclude the following methods of control:

- a) snaring
- b) gassing
- c) vertebrate glue traps.

M 7.7

NEW

Long-term baiting must not be used as a routine rodent control measure.

NEW



In relation to M 7.7, site plans should therefore highlight potential high risk areas for wild animal activity (rather than permanent baiting locations).

Long-term baiting should not be necessary if bait or traps are applied effectively.

Long-term baiting can also contribute to bait resistance in rodents.

NEW



The RSPCA is opposed to the use of poisons that cause animal suffering and it is important not to rely solely on the use of rodenticide. The RSPCA is concerned about the welfare of all animals that have the capacity to suffer, and therefore all alternative forms of humane deterrent should be exhausted before resorting to the use of poisons for rodents.

NEW



Any baiting programme should be considered carefully and justified in risk assessments for each location where used. Consideration should be given to using non-toxic baits in order to ascertain the presence of rodents, which may necessitate the use of rodenticide.

M 7.8

NEW

When bait and/or traps are used, records of their use must be kept and:

- a) state the location of the bait/traps
- b) state what bait/traps were used
- c) state the volume/number of bait/traps placed
- d) state the name of the person who placed the bait/trap
- e) be retained for at least two years.

- M 7.9** **NEW** Bait and traps must:
- a) be placed in suitable positions, and
 - b) be sufficiently protected to avoid harming non-target animals.

NEW



Site plans should highlight potential high risk areas for wild animal activity rather than permanent baiting locations.

- M 7.10** **NEW** Bait must be used according to the manufacturer's instructions for:

- a) storage
- b) usage, including areas of use and replenishment
- c) disposal.

- M 7.11** **NEW** Traps must be:

- a) used according to the manufacturer's instructions
- b) maintained in good order
- c) disposed of appropriately if no longer fit for purpose, e.g. have broken
- d) stored safely and securely.

- M 7.12** **NEW** Bait points must:

- a) be monitored regularly, and
- b) records of monitoring be kept including:
 - i) levels of activity at each bait point
 - ii) any missing or disturbed bait
 - iii) the name of the person responsible for monitoring the bait points.

- M 7.13** **NEW** Trap points must:

- a) be monitored at least twice a day, ideally at dawn and dusk, and
- b) records of monitoring be kept including:
 - i) level of activity at each trap
 - ii) any missing or disturbed traps
 - iii) the name of the person responsible for monitoring the traps.

- M 7.14** **NEW** Any injured, sick or dying wild animals found - that have been targeted for control - must be humanely dispatched immediately to prevent further suffering.

NEW



Regular replenishment of bait will help prevent sub-lethal doses, which can result in a build-up of resistance to the active ingredient.

- M 7.15** **NEW** Where bait is used, dead animals must be disposed of safely, in line with the manufacturer's product label.
-

NEW



Safe disposal of wild animals that have died as a result of poisoning reduces the risk of secondary poisoning in non-target species, such as domestic and other wild animals (including birds) that may consume the carcasses.

M 7.16 **NEW** Once treatment has finished, all traps and traces of bait must be:

- a) removed
- b) disposed of according to the manufacturer's instructions.

M 7.17 **NEW** Domestic animals must not have access to the unit, other than farm dogs and cats.

M 7.18 **NEW** Wild animal control methods must be covered by the farm COSHH assessment, where required.

M 7.19 **NEW** Managers must ensure all stock-keepers:

- a) have access to a copy of the Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use, '*UK Code of Best Practice and Guidance for Rodent Control and the Safe Use of Rodenticides*'
- b) are familiar with its content
- c) understand and apply its content.

M 7.20 **NEW** Farm dogs and cats must be:

- a) in a healthy condition
- b) regularly wormed (record to be kept in medicine book or VHWP).

Health

NEW



A contingency plan assists those on farm to be prepared for the precautions and actions that may need to be taken in the event of a notifiable disease outbreak. Contingency plans will demonstrate due consideration is given to the potential welfare issues that could arise should there be a notifiable disease outbreak. This would include:

- the effect of movement restrictions and the potential implications
- meeting the welfare needs of slaughter pigs that can't be moved.

NEW



To ensure carcasses are protected from rodents and other animals they may be kept in locked containers or in containers within locked buildings until disposed of.

H 4.7.1 **NEW** Antibiotic use must be recorded in the electronic Medicine Book for Pigs.

NEW



The electronic Medicine Book for Pigs can be found at [https:// emb-pigs.ahdb.org.uk](https://emb-pigs.ahdb.org.uk)

NEW

Antibiotic Usage

NEW

Antibiotics should only be used when necessary, and always used responsibly.

- i** Prevention is better than cure, and it is the implementation of prevention strategies alongside the adoption of farming practices that prioritise and promote animal welfare that are key to reducing antibiotic use.

For more information on this, please see our information sheet, which can be found at <https://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/farm/onfarm>

H(A) 1.0 **NEW** The use of antibiotics on-farm must be reviewed annually and this review must form part of the VHWP.

NEW

When reviewing the use of antibiotics on-farm, the following should be considered:

- the different classes of antibiotic drug used
- which group(s) of animals were treated and for what condition(s)
- the number of animals treated per occasion
- i** • the total amount of each individual drug within a class that was used (in mg/kg or mg/pcu) per occasion
- a specific section covering all the above for 'Critically Important Antibiotics' (CIAs).

A group of animals refers to animals of a similar/the same age and/or stage of production.

This review is intended to highlight which groups of animals are suffering from particular diseases and therefore aid the development and implementation of targeted prevention strategies.

H(A) 1.1 **NEW** In light of the findings of the antibiotic use review (see standard H(A) 1.0), an action plan must be drawn up aimed at reducing the use of antibiotics on the farm through improvements in animal husbandry.

H 5.1 Any injured, ailing or distressed pig must:

- a) be segregated if necessary (see H 5.3)
- b) be treated without delay
- c) if necessary, veterinary advice must be sought when needed
- d) if necessary, such animals must be humanely killed.

- i** An ailing or distressed pig may need to be segregated if remaining with other animals may lead to additional welfare problems e.g. if the pig is unable to compete for food.

NEW


- i** When referring to treating a pig without delay, there is an expectation that a pig will not suffer unnecessarily. Therefore, some types of drugs (i.e. pain relief) should be on farm in order to minimise the time where suffering could occur.

H 7.4 Tail docking is not permitted except in exceptional circumstances, and even then, only the minimum amount of tail necessary may be removed. Requests for permission to tail dock must be submitted in writing to the RSPCA Farm Animals Department by the producer in conjunction with the unit's veterinary surgeon. This must include:

- a) the reasons for the request being made
- b) an indication of the severity (numbers involved, frequency of outbreaks) of tail biting on the unit
- c) the proposed method of docking (including equipment to be used)
- d) information on the other action taken to alleviate the problem through means other than docking, including the date the action was taken
- e) an indication of the amount of tail to be left intact and reasons for this (see H 7.7).

REVISED


Copies of the tail docking request form can be downloaded from the website (<https://science.rspca.org.uk/sciencegroup/faranimals/standards/pigs>) alongside guidance on completing permission requests.

 Failure to provide all the information listed in H 7.4 may result in permission not being granted and/or a delay in a decision being made.

The RSPCA will consider the information presented and may visit the unit

NEW

Requests for permission should be sent directly to the RSPCA Farm Animals Department.

 Requests may be sent by email to farm-animals@rspca.org.uk or by post to Farm Animals Department, RSPCA, Wilberforce Way, Southwater, West Sussex, RH13 9RS.


Permissions sent to RSPCA Assured or other addresses may not be received and responses will be delayed.

H 7.4.1 **NEW** If the procedure is permitted, tail docking must be carried out in the first 48 hours of life, except in the case of weak/sick piglets, or if iron injections are given, then this can be extended to within 3 days of birth.

H 7.5 If tail biting does occur:

- a) immediate action must be taken to alleviate the problem through means other than docking, including consideration of the issues outlined in the information box below H 7.6
- b) the VHWP (see H 1.1) must also be modified at this time to identify action intended to alleviate tail, flank or ear biting
- c) these actions must be regularly reviewed with the intention of eliminating the need to continue tail docking.

Other measures that should be considered if an outbreak of tail biting occurs include:

- **
- **removal of the biter(s) if these can be identified**
 - **removal and treatment of the bitten pig(s) see H 5.1**
 - **the addition of chewable objects**
 - **the addition of more enrichment material, more frequently.**

Such action may help to stop the cycle of behaviour and stop the outbreak.

NEW



Producers are encouraged to use the WebHAT tool developed by AHDB to assess the potential tail biting risk factors for their unit. This should be done at least annually to review potential new risks and progress on pre-existing risk factors

H 7.6 **REVISED** Producers must be able to demonstrate to RSPCA Assured assessors and RSPCA Farm Animals Department staff:

- a) that they have a valid permission letter from the RSPCA Farm Animals Department to tail dock
- b) the reason for the request, in terms of the severity of the tail biting issue on the finishing unit(s) (H 7.4a)
- c) the actions taken to alleviate the problem through means other than tail docking (H 7.4d).

Slaughter/killing

S 1.1.1 **NEW** Contingency plans and suitable backup systems must be in place to:

- a) deal with occasions where unavoidable delays may occur, such as a mechanical breakdown, and it is not possible to process the pigs as planned
- b) ensure the continued killing of animals in the event of an emergency that threatens the ongoing use of the main system, such as a disruption to the supply of gas in the case of gas killing systems.

S 1.4 **REVISED** Managers must:

- a) develop and implement a training programme for all staff involved in handling live pigs and slaughtering pigs
- b) ensure that all staff are trained and competent to carry out their duties
- c) ensure that the following operations are only carried out by persons holding a certificate of competence for such operations:
 - (i) handling and care of animals in the lairage
 - (ii) restraint of animals during stunning or killing
 - (iii) stunning of animals
 - (iv) assessment of effectiveness of stunning
 - (v) shackling or hoisting of live animals
 - (vi) bleeding of live animals.

S 1.4.1 Certificates of competence must be attained through the completion of approved training programmes/courses.

S 1.5 **NEW** When developing the staff training programme (S 1.4) the following areas must be included, as appropriate:

- a) pig welfare
- b) pig behaviour
- c) handling and movement of pigs
- d) lairage, including lairage conditions and care of pigs during lairage
- e) restraint of pigs
- f) slaughter/killing method(s), including emergency back-up methods
- g) assessment of an effective stun/kill
- h) bleeding.

NEW



In relation to S 1.5, The Humane Slaughter Association 'Humane Slaughter – Taking Responsibility' training package can be used to help inform the content of training programme

S 1.6

REVISED An AWO must:

- a) be present on the site at all times while slaughter is being carried out.
- b) ensure that reserve equipment is serviced according to the service schedule
- c) make frequent and thorough checks throughout the day to ensure that animals are being effectively stunned and are insensible throughout the slaughter operation.
- d) record the temperature in the lairage during start up checks.

S(TV) 1.1

REVISED A functional CCTV system must be installed and operational to monitor animals undergoing the following processes at the abattoir (as applicable):

- a) unloading from vehicles into the lairage
- b) lairaging, including the movement of animals out of the lairage towards the stun point
- c) stunning, including animals approaching the stun area
- d) shackling, including the shackling of animals following gas killing
- e) sticking
- f) entering a Controlled Atmosphere System (CAS)
- g) induction to unconsciousness in a CAS.

S 3.4

NEW The slaughterhouse must provide a lairage facility which:

- a) is constructed so as to provide shelter from direct sunlight and adverse weather condition
- b) provides animals with a dry lying area, except when misting is taking place
- c) is of adequate size and construction for the number of animals confined there
- d) provides adequate, draught-free ventilation
- e) is thermally comfortable for the pigs (i.e. the pigs are neither overheated nor chilled)
- f) is properly lit to permit animals to be inspected
- g) has drainage facilities for faeces and urine
- h) is able to be thoroughly cleaned between batches of animals
- i) has isolation pens in which sick or injured animals can be isolated and, if necessary, humanely killed, and such pens must be located closely to the unloading area and within easy access of the stunning area
- j) provides easy access to adequate water, which must be available at all times, and to food, if necessary.

S 3.4.1

NEW Misting or spraying of pigs in lairage is not permitted at air temperatures below 5°C.