

Please note: A full version of the 2025 laying hen standards will be shared in the notification letter due to be sent in February 2025 before implementation of the standards in May 2025. We don't anticipate any major changes, however, the below standards could be subject to refinement ahead of 2025.

	Standards wording (from the version we shared in January 2024)	Changes to be incorporated in the May 2025 version
	Environment	
1	<p>Standard E 6.1 Natural daylight within the main laying house must be provided by no later than 1st January 2031.</p>	<p>Natural daylight within the main laying house must be provided by no later than 1st May 2032.</p> <p>An additional year has been added to account for the time taken during the industry discussions and pause project.</p> <p>Case studies will be developed with industry to provide support and examples about managing systems with 3% natural daylight and examples where systems have been changed to meet the requirements of the standard.</p>
	The Range	
2	<p>Standard R 1.11 From [standards publication date], all buildings that are newly approved under the farm assurance scheme applying these standards must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> allow birds to exit the popholes directly onto the main range area have at least one third of the popholes with a minimum distance of 20m directly opposite to the perimeter of the range meet b) with respect to all sides of the shed where popholes are provided. 	<p>We have added some conditions to an information box where buildings that have already committed to meeting the 2017 standards will be exempt from meeting the requirements of standard R1.11. These specific circumstances are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An existing written contract with an egg packer is already in place Planning permission has already been submitted to erect the building(s) Significant capital has been invested into the affected building(s) or its infrastructure
3	<p>Standard R 1.12 Where there are fences within the allocated range area the entire length of the fence must be a minimum height of 45cm from the ground to the bottom of the fence to enable birds to pass under the fence unobstructed.</p>	<p>We have revised the wording in this standard to match the Egg marketing inspectors guidance notes for England and Wales where it states that any fencing or restrictions outside the unit must not inhibit the hens' ability to access the range area.</p>

4	<p>R 2.1 Shade/shelter must:</p> <p>a) be provided at an area of at least 8m² per 1,000 birds</p> <p>b) be available at all times from when the hens first have access to the range</p> <p>c) offer adequate protection from inclement weather and overhead predators</p> <p>d) be available from a distance of no more than 20m from the popholes</p> <p>e) be distributed at a minimum distribution of four shelters per hectare</p> <p>f) be of sound construction, secure and not pose any welfare risks, including injury, to the birds.</p>	<p>These requirements follow the free-range egg marketing regulations. Free-range areas with a distance over 150m to the perimeter fence, shade/shelter must be distributed at a minimum distribution of four shelters per hectare. This is to encourage birds to range further and utilise the whole range. We require suitable shelter distribution in all free-range areas.</p>
5	<p>Standard R 3.6</p> <p>For buildings:</p> <p>a) currently approved by the farm assurance scheme applying these standards, where the base of the pophole is more than 40cm from the house floor (excluding the litter covering) and/or the range ground level (excluding grass height), ramps and/or platforms must be provided along the full length of the pophole for the birds to easily access the pophole.</p> <p>b) that are newly approved under the farm assurance scheme applying these standards, the base of the pophole must not be more than 20cm above either the house floor (excluding the litter covering) or the range ground level (excluding grass height).</p>	<p>Point a) For existing systems the original requirement has been increased by 5cm to 45cm as this has been evidenced at the industry's standard pophole base height. Pophole base heights over 45cm will require platforms or ramps to aid birds access and view of the range.</p> <p>Point b) the original requirements has been increased by 5cm to 25cm (one standard UK building block is 21.5cm).</p> <p>We have added some conditions to an information box where buildings that have already committed to meeting the 2017 standards will be exempt from meeting the requirements of standard R3.6 b). These specific circumstances are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● An existing written contract with an egg packer is already in place ● Planning permission has already been submitted to erect the building(s) ● Significant capital has been invested into the affected building(s) or its infrastructure
6	<p>Standard R 5.1</p> <p>Natural cover must be provided:</p> <p>a) in the form of existing or newly planted trees/shrubs/other canopy forming plants,</p>	<p>An additional year has been added to give members an additional planting season to meet the natural cover requirements.</p>

	<p>b) at an area equal to at least 5% of the total range area (this may include natural cover meeting the requirements of R 2.1)</p> <p>c) at an area equal to at least 20% of the total range area by [standards publication date] 2026.</p>	<p>However, we are aware that in some regions it's difficult to grow trees and shrubs. Members in this situation are encouraged to contact us so we can provide expert advice on alternatives that will work for their specific environment.</p> <p>We will also provide members with examples of natural cover and help guide them on how to implement the standard. We'll develop these with the help of the producer working group.</p>
Management		
7	<p>Standard M 6.1 A written Wild Animal Control Plan (WACP) must be:</p> <p>a) in place, and b) implemented on farm.</p>	The RSPCA are concerned for all species welfare and include standards for wild animal control in all of the farmed animal species standards.
8	<p>Standard M 6.7 Long-term baiting must not be used as a routine rodent control measure.</p>	We expect the CRRU guidelines to be followed and alternative measures put in place to reduce the need for long term baiting as a routine control method. We are aware that in some cases long term baiting may be required however, this must not be done routinely.
9	<p>Standard M 6.19 Domestic animals must not have access to the unit, other than farm dogs and cats.</p>	This standard will be reworded to clarify that we are referring specifically to the inside of the poultry building.
10	<p>Standard M 6.21 Farm dogs and cats must be:</p> <p>a) in a healthy condition b) regularly wormed (record to be kept in the medicine book or VHWP).</p>	This standard will be reworded to make it clear that this only applies to farm dogs and cats that may be able to enter the areas where the birds will be. The goal of this standard is not to identify unhealthy dogs and cats.
Clarification on information boxes		
11	Information box below M2.5	Information boxes are used in the standards to provide additional information about a standard and to sign post areas that we may

	<p>The RSPCA strongly recommends that all poultry buildings are designed to deliver effective and humane whole house gas killing as a last resort, to prevent the need to use less humane culling methods.</p> <p>The RSPCA will be developing future standards in this area to ensure on-farm mass culling is effective and humane.</p>	<p>be looking at in the future. We include these in the standards so that we can engage with the industry on these matters.</p> <p>If you have any comments or points to discuss on information boxes please get in touch so we can collect your comments.</p>
12	<p>Information box below E 4.1</p> <p>Providing birds with access to verandas (see E 4.1) will reduce the stocking density in the main house and provide more space and additional enrichment.</p> <p>The RSPCA is currently reviewing the stocking density requirement for laying hens. Higher stocking rates can contribute to welfare issues, such as injurious feather pecking and aggression.</p> <p>Housing birds at a lower stocking density is used as a successful management strategy for keeping intact beak flocks and we strongly encourage producers to stock birds at lower rates to provide better welfare outcomes for the birds.</p>	
13	<p>Information box below T 1.20</p> <p>The RSPCA is considering alternative handling methods for end of lay hens at depopulation. Poultry do not have a diaphragm and carrying the birds by the legs can result in respiratory distress (birds having difficulty breathing). The size and design of some poultry housing systems can result in birds being carried by the legs for extended periods of time. When designing new systems, the practical aspects of depopulation should be considered. An upright catching and carrying method has been used successfully under commercial conditions in some European countries. We strongly encourage birds to be carried in an upright position and we are currently examining the feasibility of achieving this.</p>	