

Guidance on the Writing of a Humane Handling Plan for Poultry

Although there are no specific state or federal humane handling and slaughter statutes for poultry, under the PPIA and Agency regulations, live poultry should be treated humanely and in a manner consistent with Good Commercial Practices. The written humane handling plan should describe what you do in your establishment to assure that poultry is treated in such a manner that minimizes excitement, discomfort and accidental injury the entire time that live poultry is held in connection with slaughter.

This guidance consists of questions based on good commercial practices and state and federal regulations, to get you to think about what you do in your establishment. It is not meant to be all inclusive, so if there are other things your establishment does to ensure proper handling of poultry, please include it in your written plan. At a minimum, your plan should address the regulatory requirements highlighted in **yellow**.

Training:

Describe your method for handling of live birds.

How does your method of handling live birds decrease excitement, discomfort or accidental injury?

What type of training program do you have for employees regarding the proper handling of live birds?

Who is in charge of training of employees?

Are all new employees required to be trained prior to handling live birds?

Is there an annual retraining for all current employees who handle live birds?

Do you have a method to monitor the handling of live birds, such as monitoring the numbers of broken/bruised wings and legs, or if birds die from heat exhaustion or freezing? Do you keep records on DOA's for each lot or producer?

Holding of Live Birds:

How long do you withdraw water prior to catch?

How long do you withdraw feed prior to slaughter?

How have you designed and maintained your facility to optimize bird delivery and holding? Describe the holding area and protocols for the holding of live birds prior to slaughter.

How does your method of holding live birds decrease excitement, discomfort or accidental injury?

How do you keep birds comfortable in holding areas?

Describe your holding areas – Are they covered? Are there fans to ensure proper ventilation for the birds? Do you have a designated temperature range at which you will not hold birds?

Is there a program to retrieve loose birds?

What inspections are performed to assure that holding is effective and minimizes animal stress?

Stunning and Processing:

9 CFR 381.65(b) Poultry must be slaughtered in accordance with good commercial practices in a manner that will result in thorough bleeding of the carcasses and ensure that breathing has stopped prior to scalding. Blood from the killing operation must be confined to a relatively small area.

Do you stun birds prior to bleeding/euthanizing? If so, what method do you use? How do you ensure an effective stun?

How do you ensure stunning equipment and/or killing equipment is effective and properly functioning to ensure bleedout is effective? Do you keep a maintenance record?

What is your backup person/procedure when the bleedout is ineffective?

How do you ensure breathing has stopped prior to scalding?

How is blood from the killing operation confined to a relatively small area?

What is your method of euthanizing injured birds that will be condemned? How do you assure that condemned birds are dead, prior to disposal?

Other:

Please describe any additional information that has been incorporated into your humane handling program that was not asked for above.

Explain how humane handling activities are routinely monitored and/or measured to assure compliance with your program and regulations.

Explain how your plant documents internal humane handling activities that are routinely monitored and/or measured. (Preop or operational checksheets, audits, etc.)

Describe any external humane handling audits you have conducted for you.