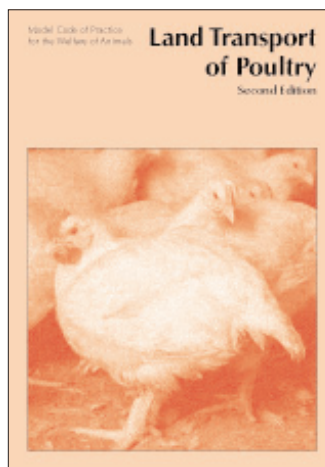


Primary Industries Standing Committee
Model Code of Practice for the
Welfare of Animals
Land Transport of Poultry
Second Edition
PISC Report 91



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Land Transport of Poultry

Second Edition

Model Code of Practice
for the Welfare of Animals

Primary Industries Ministerial Council

PISC Report No. 91

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PRIMARY INDUSTRIES MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

In June 2001 the Australian Commonwealth and State/Territory governments created several new Ministerial Councils from the amalgamation and redirection of the work of several existing Councils.

These changes saw the winding up of the Agriculture and Resource Management Council of Australia and New Zealand (ARMCANZ) and the establishment of a new Council, the Primary Industries Ministerial Council (PIMC). The objective of this new Council is:

‘To develop and promote sustainable, innovative and profitable agriculture, fisheries/aquaculture, food and forestry industries’.

Membership of the Council consists of the Australian Federal, State/Territory and New Zealand Ministers responsible for Primary Industry matters.

The Council is supported by a permanent Standing Committee, the Primary Industries Standing Committee (PISC). Membership of the Standing Committee comprises relevant Departmental Heads/CEOs of Commonwealth/State/Territory and New Zealand agencies.

PREFACE

This Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals has been prepared by the Animal Welfare Working Group (AWWG) within the Primary Industries Ministerial Council (PIMC) system.

Membership of the AWWG comprises representatives from each of the State Departments with responsibility for agriculture, CSIRO, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry – Australia, and other committees within the PIMC system. Extensive consultation has taken place with industry and animal welfare groups in the development of the Code.

This revised edition of the Code is based on the 1998 edition, which was endorsed by the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Resource Management (SCARM).

The Code is intended as a set of guidelines that provide detailed minimum standards for assisting people in understanding the standard of care required to meet their obligations under the laws that operate in Australia's State and Territories.

The following Model Codes of Practice have been endorsed by the PIMC (and its predecessors, the Agriculture and Resource Management Council of Australia and New Zealand and the Australian Agricultural Council).

- Animals at Saleyards* (1991)
- Buffalo, Farmed* (1995)
- Camel, The* (2nd Edition) (2006)
- Cattle* (2nd Edition) (2004)
- Cattle, Land Transport of* (2000)
- Deer, The Farming of* (1991)
- Emus, Husbandry of Captive-Bred* (1999)
- Feral Livestock Animals, Destruction or Capture, Handling and Marketing of* (1991)
- Goat, The* (1991)
- Horses, Land Transport of* (1998)
- Livestock, Air Transport of* (1986)
- Livestock, Rail Transport of* (1983)
- Livestock, Road Transport of* (1983)
- Livestock, Sea Transport of* (1987)
- Livestock at Slaughtering Establishments* (2001)
- Ostriches, Farming of* (2003)
- Pigs* (2nd Edition) (1998)
- Pigs, Land Transport of* (1997)
- Poultry, Domestic* (4th Edition) (2002)
- Poultry, Land Transport of* (1998)

Rabbits, Intensive Husbandry of (1991)

Sheep, The (2nd Edition) (2006)

and by agreement with the National Health and Medical Research Council, CSIRO, the Australian Research Council and the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee:

Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes (1997).

The following Code is based on current knowledge and technology. It will be reviewed in 2010 or earlier to take account of advances in the understanding of animal physiology and behaviour, and technological changes in animal husbandry that offer significant welfare benefits.

INTRODUCTION

This Code of Practice is intended as a guide for people who are involved in transporting domestic poultry and other birds.

The provisions of this Code emphasise the responsibilities of the poultry producer, agent, catching crew and transport personnel. They are intended to encourage considerate treatment of birds so that transport stress and injury are minimised. The general objective is to minimise any adverse effects on birds by ensuring they are transported to their destination as safely as possible.

To prevent birds being without food and water for a total of more than 24 hours (except for day-old chicks) there should be contingency plans for truck or processing plant breakdowns.

For this Code, transport includes the delivery of chicks to farms from the hatchery, and the period from removal of the birds from their living area to other accommodation or to slaughter. Apart from the need to consider the well-being of poultry during the transport process, everyone involved must also be mindful of the road transport regulations that apply in all of the States and Territories.

1 RESPONSIBILITIES

1.1 Employers

- 1.1.1 Employers have an obligation to train employees and contractors in the use of equipment and in the humane care and handling of poultry.

1.2 Owners

- 1.2.1 Owners of poultry operations have a responsibility to provide facilities and equipment that enable bird handling, loading and unloading to take place without causing injury or undue suffering to the birds. Correct building design, accessibility to transport, and location and appropriate design and use of cages and equipment greatly improve the humane handling of poultry. Producers are encouraged to adopt new technology in relation to shed and cage design that improves the well-being of poultry that are transported.
- 1.2.2 Persons organising the transport of poultry must be aware of any requirements for health certification. Approvals and documentation must be completed before the journey. This is particularly important for interstate and export movements and will minimise delays that may adversely affect the well-being of the birds. Further information can be obtained from the local office of the Department of Agriculture or Primary Industry.
- 1.2.3 The owner (or grower in the case of contract growers) or agent is responsible for ensuring that only fit and healthy birds are selected for travel. Sick, injured or weak birds must be rejected. The person in charge of the flock is responsible for assisting in the selection process, and must remove birds that are unfit for transport prior to the arrival of transportation. Humane and effective arrangements should be made by the owner or person in charge of the flock for the handling and care of any birds rejected as unsuitable for loading.
- 1.2.4 The owner/agent of the poultry is also responsible for dealing with any emergencies that are notified by the truck driver/transport company and, with the truck driver/transport company, for the development of contingency plans that minimise any stress or suffering experienced by the birds in such circumstances.
- 1.2.5 The point at which ownership of the birds is transferred from one party to another must be clearly established and agreed, preferably in writing, between the parties before departure. Producers selling end-of-lay hens to processors must clearly establish whether birds are sold off-farm, ie. whether ownership is transferred at the point that the birds are removed from their cages, at the point that the birds leave the farm or at their arrival at the processing plant.

1.3 Drivers

- 1.3.1 The driver of a road vehicle is responsible for the care and welfare of birds during transport unless either an attendant or agent appointed by the owner travels with the consignment.
- 1.3.2 Contingency plans should be made to minimise any delay that could be stressful to birds. The driver must ensure that he/she is provided with the name and telephone number of the owner/agent of the birds in case there are any delays or if any emergency action is required.
- 1.3.3 Truck drivers should drive safely to minimise disturbance to birds.
- 1.3.4 The driver must check that the load is secure and there are no loose birds before departing.
- 1.3.5 Provision for regular inspections during transit must be made depending on the duration of the journey.

1.4 Rail transportation

- 1.4.1 Consignment of poultry by rail may involve a number of different people. It is therefore important for the welfare of birds that there is a clear understanding and acceptance of responsibilities by the owner/agent and railway staff during the various phases of transportation.
- 1.4.2 The owner/agent is responsible for:
 - careful selection, loading and unloading of poultry;
 - dealing with injured birds or other emergencies when notified by the railway authority;
 - providing contact names and phone numbers for the owner, agent and person responsible at the destination.
- 1.4.3 The railway authority is responsible for:
 - providing well-maintained carriages;
 - the conduct of staff;
 - inspecting poultry during transport and either correcting problems or advising the owner/agent if emergency action is required.

2 MINIMISING STRESS

- 2.1 Stress is a cumulative response of an animal to its surroundings and may be increased when birds are subjected to major changes, such as during transportation.
- 2.2 Birds being transported are subject to several stresses including:
 - catching and handling;
 - deprivation of food, water and freedom of normal movement;
 - changes in climatic conditions;
 - unfamiliar surroundings, noises and sensations.
- 2.3 Unnecessary transport of birds must be avoided. Any transport that is required should be carried out safely and in a manner that minimises stress, pain and suffering.
- 2.4 Particular care needs to be taken with end-of-lay hens. They may be vulnerable to injury as their bones may be weak.

3 PRE-TRANSPORT PREPARATION

3.1 Planning and selection of poultry for travel

- 3.1.1 The owner or agent must ensure that only fit and healthy birds are selected for travel. The person in charge of the flock is responsible for assisting in the selection process, and must remove birds that are unfit for transport prior to the arrival of transportation. Sick, injured or weak birds must not be transported and must be appropriately treated or humanely destroyed. This inspection process should be done as soon as practicable prior to transport.
- 3.1.2 Humane and effective arrangements should be made by the owner or agent for the handling and care of any birds rejected as unsuitable for loading.
- 3.1.3 The transport of any poultry must be designed to avoid delays and ensure that a person is present at the place of delivery to take responsibility of the birds.
- 3.1.4 A contingency plan must be developed by all transporters to deal with transportation delays, such as vehicle breakdowns and accidents.

3.2 Water and feed requirements

- 3.2.1 Birds, excluding day-old chicks, should not be held in containers for longer than 24 hours unless they are assured of access to water. When a delay is anticipated and holding time is likely to exceed 24 hours, birds should be released into a shed where they have access to feed and water, or immediate slaughter should be arranged at another slaughterhouse.
- 3.2.2 Birds, excluding day-old chicks, must receive feed during the 24 hours prior to travel. Birds must have access to water prior to loading.
- 3.2.3 The time spent in containers should be calculated from the time the birds are first placed in them, not from when the journey begins.

3.3 Shelter

Every effort should be made to protect birds from the adverse effects of direct sunlight, radiant and reflected heat, wind, rain and hail.

3.4 Cleanliness

Containers in which birds will be transported should be clean and, if necessary, disinfected before poultry are loaded into them.

3.5 Catching conditions

- 3.5.1 Labour requirements. Adequate labour must be provided to ensure that the loading time is not unnecessarily prolonged. It must be recognised that more labour is required for catching birds housed under non-cage systems.
- 3.5.2 If flooding occurs in sheds housing poultry on the floor, dry bedding should be provided, where practical, in order to minimise the problems associated with transporting wet birds.

- 3.5.3 There should be sufficient lighting to permit inspection of the birds during loading, transport and unloading. A torch or other device should be used where light is insufficient for adequate inspection.

3.6 Transport container design

- 3.6.1 Birds may only be carried in properly designed cages or crates. They must not be transported with their legs tied.
- 3.6.2 Cages and crates should be designed, monitored and managed so that birds are not injured when being placed in or taken out. Cage doors should be as large as practical, and not be less than 20 cm wide and 22 cm high. These minimum dimensions also apply to the doors of top-loading crates.
- 3.6.3 There should be no protrusions or sharp edges on the framework. Hinges and latches must not project into the cage.
- 3.6.4 Crates or cages used for the transport of poultry should be of a design that, when properly maintained and managed, prevents escape from or the protrusion of any part of a bird through the crate, such that it could be entrapped or damaged during handling or transport. Cage floors must be rigid or supported to prevent collapse onto structures or crates below.
- 3.6.5 Containers should be ventilated and sufficiently high to allow poultry to sit comfortably during transport. It should be noted that turkeys are prone to injury if allowed to stand in crates. Turkey crates must be appropriately designed to minimise injury.
- 3.6.6 Containers must be fitted with locking systems that prevent escape during transportation.

4 LOADING

Different species of poultry must not be mixed in the same container during travelling.

4.1 Catching and loading

- 4.1.1 Planning the catching and loading procedure well in advance will allow adequate time for birds to be handled quietly in a way that does not cause them injury.
- 4.1.2 All members of catching and transporting crews should be provided with adequate instructions, and be knowledgeable about the basic aspects of animal welfare and bird handling.
- 4.1.3 Containers of live birds must be moved in a horizontal position. If a conveyor is used for loading crates of live birds, the conveyor angle must prevent excessive tilting of containers causing birds to pile up. Containers must not be thrown or purposefully dropped. They should be moved smoothly during loading, transport and unloading.
- 4.1.4 Several mechanical poultry harvesters have been developed and others will be developed in the future. Producers, catchers and transporters should keep themselves informed on this technology and ensure that only devices proven to be humane are used to gather birds. These methods are recommended only when it has been shown they reduce stress and injury to the birds compared to manual catching.

4.2 Loading density of birds

- 4.2.1 The number of birds per container depends on available floor space, body size of the birds and prevailing environmental conditions at time of transport. All birds should be able to rest on the floor at the same time and remain evenly distributed.
- 4.2.2 Weather conditions should be considered when determining load densities for growing and adult birds. Ideally the air temperature in a load of live birds, other than day-old chicks (see 4.6.2), should be maintained at 22–30°C. During hot weather, depending on the humidity and air flow, the number of birds per container may need to be reduced to keep load temperatures and humidity within an acceptable range. On hot days, loading of turkeys should be avoided.
- 4.2.3 The recommended minimum floor space and height to be provided for each category of poultry in cold weather is given in Tables 1 and 2. In hot weather lower stocking densities will be required.

Table 1. Transport container space requirements

Category	Floor space
day-old chicks	435* chicks per m ²
poultry less than 1.0 to 1.6 kg	40 birds per m ²
poultry 1.6 kg to 2.2 kg	36 birds per m ²
poultry 2.2 kg to 3.0 kg	28 birds per m ²
poultry 3.0 kg to 5.0 kg	20 birds per m ²
poultry more than 5.0 kg	100 cm ² per kg

*In cold weather this may be increased to 472/m²

Table 2. Transport container height requirements

Category	Minimum height (cm)
day-old chicks, turkey poults, ducklings	12
broiler chickens	23
starter pullets, ducks, spent hens, meat and layer breeders	25
turkeys	32

4.3 Care for handling caged layer hens

- 4.3.1 Care must be taken in catching, handling and crating birds, so as to avoid injuring them.
- 4.3.2 End-of-lay hens are susceptible to bone breakages, especially when they have to be removed from cages, handed on and placed in transport containers. Therefore, transport containers should be placed as close as possible to the cages, subject to biosecurity requirements.
- 4.3.3 Before collecting the hens, any hindrances from fixtures and fittings, especially sharp edges or protrusions, must be removed from the cages or transport containers.
- 4.3.4 There must be easy access to each cage for the catcher. Hens must be removed from the cage one at a time, and during removal the breast should be supported.
- 4.3.5 For layer hens, it is recommended that one person should remove the bird from the cage and hand it to a second person, in a manner that allows up to four hens to be carried at a time in each hand. These hens must be held by both legs and not by a single leg.
- 4.3.6 For spent hens, using a ‘breast support slide’ is recommended. This is a simple device to smooth the removal of birds from the cage. A breast support slide is easily constructed and can be designed to suit most makes of cages. In work done in Europe, its use has been found to significantly reduce damage to the breast area in tests on several hundred thousand birds. The breast support slide is made of sheet metal, rests in the feed trough and provides a smooth angled surface on which the bird slides out of the cage.

4.4 Care for handling loose-housed poultry

- 4.4.1 Care must be taken in catching birds so as to avoid injuring them, and equivalent standards of care must be applied to handling hens housed in non-cage systems as those applied to caged hens.
- 4.4.2 Catching will be facilitated and the piling of birds in corners avoided if:
 - the light intensity in the pen is reduced;
 - blue bulbs are used. Blue lights provide adequate illumination for humans but not for poultry;
 - birds are quietly corralled with a net or screen at the loading door.
- 4.4.3 Range birds are more easily loaded by moving them in small groups.

4.5 Catching and loading poultry

- 4.5.1 Poultry in general must not be lifted or carried by the head, neck, wings or tail. However, it is acceptable to carry adult geese by the base of both wings and ducks by their necks, as these species may be injured when they are carried by their legs. Any escaped birds must be re-caught and handled humanely.
- 4.5.2 Broiler chickens should be caught in sheds in which the lighting has been reduced, and should be placed in crates in a manner which minimises movement of the chicken and prevents injury and distress. For broiler chickens weighing 2.0 kg and less that are loaded by hand, up to five chickens can be carried in each hand. For chickens weighing more than 2.0 kg, up to three or four chickens should be carried in each hand, depending on their weight.
- 4.5.3 Layer hens should be carried by hand with the head hanging downwards. They must be held by both legs and care taken to prevent flapping wings from hitting solid objects. If layer hens are carried by one leg only, there is a far greater chance of the birds dislocating their hips. For layer hens, it is recommended that one person should remove the bird from the cage and hand it to a second person, in a manner that allows up to five hens to be carried at a time in each hand.
- 4.5.4 The same standards of care in handling should apply to hens housed in non-cage systems. Where possible, food troughs, drinkers and moveable perches should be removed from the catching area before catching starts. Where there is no suitable access by the road vehicle to free-range units, alternative transport to the road vehicle must be provided. In addition, it is recognised that more labour may be required for catching birds housed under non-cage systems and adequate labour should be supplied in order not to prolong loading time.
- 4.5.5 Geese, ducks, turkeys and other large birds may be herded towards the loading area and even into the container or vehicle.
- 4.5.6 There should be sufficient lighting to permit inspection of the birds during loading, carriage and unloading.
- 4.5.7 Containers must be kept in an upright position and lifted and placed in position with care. They must not be dropped or thrown.
- 4.5.8 Containers must be securely attached to the transport vehicles to prevent containers moving or falling off the vehicle and to prevent distress or injury to the birds.
- 4.5.9 Care must be taken to ensure that all poultry are placed carefully into crates or carrying containers. Any escaped birds must be re-caught and handled humanely.
- 4.5.10 Before moving, drivers must check and ensure that the doors of all containers are closed and secure and there are no protruding limbs or escaped birds.

4.6 Transporting day-old chickens

- 4.6.1 Day-old chickens should be healthy and vigorous. They should be placed in suitably ventilated boxes without overcrowding.
- 4.6.2 The conditions and environment under which day-old chicks are being transported should be regularly monitored. They should not be transported when ambient temperature is outside a range of 22–30°C, but ideally the temperature should be between 23 and 24°C.

- 4.6.3 Care should be taken to ensure adequate ventilation of the boxes, particularly when they are stacked.
- 4.6.4 Birds should be protected from direct sunlight and cold draughts.
- 4.6.5 Packing materials used inside boxes should be new, clean, dry and non-toxic. The floor space provided for day-old chickens during transportation should not be less than 21–25 cm² (suggestion 23 cm²/bird or 435 chicks/m²) per bird. More space should be allowed for turkey poults and goslings and less for quail chicks.
- 4.6.6 Internal dividers in boxes for freighting day-old birds should be secured to the floor of the boxes or the floors of the boxes should be rigid enough to prevent entrapment of parts of the bird on movement of the box.
- 4.6.7 Each consignment should be clearly identified with the date and time of dispatch and written instructions provided, regarding holding conditions and contact person, marked clearly for the attention of those responsible for transportation.
- 4.6.8 Every attempt must be made to avoid chilling or overheating, and any delays in transport must be minimised. The consignment should leave as soon as possible after hatching, and should be placed in a shed with feed and water within 60 hours of hatching.
- 4.6.9 Chicks should be placed in a brooding environment immediately after delivery.
- 4.6.10 Records of chickens found dead on arrival must be collected and maintained.

4.7 Transporting pigeons

- 4.7.1 Transport containers for squabs must have a maximum height of 15 cm and must provide a minimum floor space of 200 cm²/bird.
- 4.7.2 Adult pigeons require a minimum floor space of 450 cm²/bird during transport.

5 TRANSPORT CONDITIONS

5.1 Shelter

- 5.1.1 Birds being transported may be affected by wind-chill if they become wet. Birds both at the front and the back of the vehicle must be protected from the extremes of the weather while being transported.
- 5.1.2 Temperature between the top and bottom and front and back can differ significantly and transporters must be aware of this when considering the well-being of the birds being transported.
- 5.1.3 Suitable covers must be used to protect birds in containers from wind and rain, and from excessively hot or cold conditions. However, transporters must be aware of the need to ensure that the birds do not suffer from a lack of ventilation if the trucks are covered. Shade is necessary in hot weather when transport vehicles are stationary.

5.2 Ventilation

- 5.2.1 The air circulation in transport units should:
 - provide enough fresh air for the birds;
 - remove smells and gases;
 - control temperature and humidity.
- 5.2.2 The supply of fresh air in enclosed vehicles must be checked regularly and adjusted as necessary.
- 5.2.3 Birds must not be carried or held in the boot of a car. Birds must not be held inside an enclosed vehicle in conditions when the temperature may exceed 33°C.
- 5.2.4 Containers must be stacked in a way which facilitates good ventilation. Insufficient spacing can prevent heat loss and interfere with the circulation of air through and between containers.
- 5.2.5 Birds must not be exposed to conditions of excessive draughts.
- 5.2.6 The air temperature in a load of live poultry, other than day-old chicks, should ideally be maintained between 10–30°C. During hot weather, depending on the humidity and the air flow, the number of birds per container may need to be reduced to keep load temperatures within the acceptable range. In still, hot, humid conditions, particular consideration must be given to the way in which containers are stacked so that air circulation between and through the containers is maintained.
- 5.2.7 When the temperature of the load in transit (or once loaded) exceeds 30°C the vehicle should not be left stationary for more than 45 minutes. Regardless of the environment temperature, whenever facilities are not available for protection from the weather, birds in transit or awaiting unloading for slaughter should not be required to sit in a parked vehicle for more than two hours.
- 5.2.8 Poultry should not be transported during the hottest part of the day on very hot days and particularly during periods of high humidity.

5.3 In-transit inspections

- 5.3.1 Inspections of birds should be conducted by either the driver or attendant within 30 minutes of the start of a journey and after that at regular intervals depending on the road and weather conditions. For day-old chicks the conditions to which the chicks are subjected should be monitored regularly.
- 5.3.2 Birds found injured, distressed or with a limb protruding must be given immediate assistance or humanely slaughtered.

5.4 Duration of travel and rest stops

Rest stops are usually undesirable when transporting poultry. Travel, including the catching and unloading of poultry, must be completed within 24 hours for all classes of poultry other than day-old chicks, unless there is access to food and water for all the birds.

6 UNLOADING

6.1 General requirements

- 6.1.1 Similar requirements to those listed under 'Loading' apply to unloading, but birds will be tired and more stressed after a journey and so require more care.
- 6.1.2 Birds must be given access to water when unloaded unless they are to be slaughtered within 24 hours of being removed from access to water.
- 6.1.3 Where poultry are sold at saleyards they should be unloaded without delay and placed in pens or cages with access to feed and water.
- 6.1.4 Poultry must not be held at saleyards for more than 24 hours.
- 6.1.5 Injured birds unloaded from containers should be slaughtered immediately.
- 6.1.6 Containers must be unloaded with care. Any birds which escape should be re-caught and handled humanely.
- 6.1.7 Birds for slaughter should be slaughtered as soon as possible.
- 6.1.8 Birds must not be left at their point of destination unless an authorised person takes charge of them. It is the responsibility of the person taking delivery of the birds to ensure that the birds are housed safely.

7 HUMANE SLAUGHTER OF POULTRY

Poultry must be slaughtered humanely. This includes handling in a way that causes minimal stress to the bird and avoids bruising or other injury. Overall handling should be minimised.

Acceptable slaughter methods are:

- rapidly rendering the bird unconscious without stress followed by bleeding out;
- rapid decapitation by a trained and skilled operator;
- cervical dislocation by a trained and skilled operator.

Humane slaughter of poultry is outlined in the *Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals – Livestock at Slaughtering Establishments*.