

Free Range Farmers Association Inc.

Incorporated in Victoria – IAN A0038832E

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Victoria based registering and accrediting organisation for poultry farmers practising genuine extensive Free-Range Egg and Poultry Farming to best welfare and sustainability standards.

STANDARDS – EGG PRODUCTION

Rev 12 – 2013

In extension to the *Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals – Domestic Poultry - Rev 4 and AG1143*

Preface – This document defines the FRFA Inc. Vic accreditation requirements in extension to the National *Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals – Domestic Poultry* and the Victorian Ag Note issued as AG1143 www.dpi.vic.gov.au.

Definition: Free Range: Birds kept or produced in natural conditions, having access for their natural behavioural requirements, either being run in an open range situation of an appropriately fenced and managed area.

Part A – HOUSING – in extension to the above listed Welfare Codes.

1. Hens must have permanent access to weatherproof housing with either slatted, mesh or deep litter floors and contain sufficient perches to enable normal roosting for all birds.
2. Stocking density in housing shall not exceed 15 kgs per square metre of usable area.
3. The minimum acceptable number of perches or minimum allotted perching space will be that which is sufficient to allow all birds housed in a particular house to comfortably perch in that house.
4. Maximum flock size per house shall not exceed 1000 hens.
5. Clean dry nesting boxes and hen friendly safe access must be provided. Nesting to allow for 20% of laying hens to nest at any one time.
6. For easy access for hens and utilisation of acreage around the shed, it is recommended that housing be kept to a minimum size.

Part B – FEEDING & DRINKERS – in extension to the above listed Welfare Codes.

1. In accordance with the Code of Practice for the Welfare of Domestic Poultry, adequate drinking and feeding facilities containing clean fresh drinking water and feed must be available at all times.
2. The use of growth promotants, hormones and artificial colourings is not permitted, however naturally derived pigments may be used.
3. The feeding of unprocessed animal residue is not allowed.
4. Clean dry feed comprising natural products, grains, grain feeds, heat-treated meat by-products and natural sources of vitamins and minerals may only be used.

Part C – FREE RANGE RUN.

1. The maximum stocking rate is 750 hens per hectare (300 per acre)
2. Hens must have unrestricted access to 'free range' runs during the daylight hours.

3. The area where the hens are permitted to range should have adequate natural ground cover. If vegetation disappears under adverse seasonal conditions then alternative natural food sources and range should be implemented until ground cover can be re-established.
4. Adequate shade and wind protection must be provided.
5. It is recommended for utilisation of acreage around the shed that housing be kept to a minimum size.

PART D – HUSBANDRY PRACTICES.

1. Antibiotics are not allowed except under veterinary supervision. Eggs from treated birds must be withdrawn from sale. Records must be maintained of all treatment programs.
2. All bird mutilation practices are unnecessary and are prohibited (Beak trimming, toe clipping etc)
3. Withholding feed and water to induce moulting is not permitted.
4. Reasonable precautions must be taken to protect hens from predators at all times.
5. Proper practices must be in place to ensure that under extreme temperature conditions the hens have access to cool drinking water and other “keep cool” types of environmental relief (eg. Wet-downs, misters, sprays etc).
6. Artificial lighting to extend normal daylight hours beyond 16 hours in a day is not permitted.

PART E – GENERAL REQUIREMENTS.

1. Free range egg producers buying point of lay pullets should purchase stock from recognised farms that practice ground rearing and perching habits. Age dated vaccination certificates are required at delivery.
2. Housing management and bird husbandry must be to a high standard to avoid hen stress and poor egg quality.
3. New egg cartons must only be used and labelled with *Labelling Standards* markings which require producer or packager identification, content weights, egg production method and best before date.
4. Audit trail records are necessary for all eggs stored on farm and sold. Where accredited eggs are sent to other farms or packing stations for processing the producer shall ensure a record system where the sequential numbered accreditation labels reconcile with the quantity of eggs sent in each shipment. Egg substitution is an offence under the Free Range Farmers Association Inc. Statement of Purposes. This association does not allow unpackaged hen eggs produced by other systems including non-accredited members to be brought onto or held at its accredited farms. Independent non-member packing stations will be subject to inspection.
5. All farmers must be able to demonstrate egg storage and transport compliant temperature and hygiene provisions to the *Shell Egg Code* and requisite *Food Safety Victoria* provisions.
6. *Australian Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals – Domestic Fowl*, encourages alternative systems and innovative house designs which do not compromise hen welfare. Within the free-range concept this Association will accept such variations where independent skilled inspection comments the variation to be acceptable.