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Republic of Latvia

Cabinet

Regulation No. 102

Adopted 4 March 2003

## **Welfare Requirements of Laying Hens**

*Issued pursuant to Section 10, Clause 1 of the Animal Protection Law*

### **I. General Provisions**

1. These Regulations prescribe the welfare requirements for keeping laying hens (hens of *Gallus gallus* species, which have reached laying age and the eggs of which are intended for human consumption).
2. These Regulations shall apply to keepers of laying hens who have more than 350 hens, except keepers of breeding laying hens.
3. An owner of an undertaking shall assign a person who is responsible for compliance with welfare requirements in the undertaking (company).
4. Eggs for human consumption shall be acquired in an undertaking (company) in which laying hens are kept, which complies with the requirements of these Regulations and is registered with the Food and Veterinary Service.
5. The Food and Veterinary Service shall control observance of the requirements of these Regulations.

### **II. Requirements for Keeping of Laying Hens**

6. The following types of keeping shall be utilised in holdings of laying hens:
  - 6.1. deep litter;
  - 6.2. unenriched cages; and
  - 6.3. enriched cages.
7. Laying hens shall be provided with a possibility to take in feed and drinking water appropriate to the physiological needs or the species, except cases if it is necessary to provide medical treatment to the laying hens or take preventative measures.

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8. In a holding of laying hens the following shall be provided appropriately to the physiological needs of the species:

- 8.1. temperature;
- 8.2. air humidity; and
- 8.3. ventilation which supplies fresh air, prevents accumulation of water vapour and gases harmful to the health of laying hens.

9. It is prohibited to mutilate laying hens, except for cases, if it is necessary to perform beak trimming of chicken reared as laying hens. An appropriately trained worker shall perform the beak trimming of chickens by the age of ten days.

10. A person working with laying hens shall inspect the laying hens and equipment of the holding not less frequently than once a day. The defects discovered during inspections must be rectified immediately.

11. If health or behavioural problems are determined for laying hens, their keeping conditions shall be evaluated first. If the health or behavioural problems result from deficiencies in keeping conditions which may not be eliminated immediately, it shall be performed after taking the laying hens out of the holding.

12. Ill laying hens in accordance with the instructions of a practising veterinarian shall be treated, isolated or slaughtered.

13. Dead laying hens shall be removed from the holding every day.

14. The keeper of laying hens shall clean, wash and disinfect premises, equipment and utensils of the holding.

### **III. Requirements for Holdings of Laying Hens and General Requirements for Cages**

15. Holdings which are equipped with artificial ventilation equipment shall also be equipped with an alarm system that signals operational disturbances of the ventilation equipment.

16. The holding shall be equipped with lighting that provides a possibility:

- 16.1. for laying hens to see one another and to see the surroundings;
- 16.2. for laying hens to maintain a physiologic level of activity; and
- 16.3. to inspect the holding and laying hens.

17. If the holding has natural light, even lighting shall be provided throughout the holding.

18. If the holding has artificial lighting, the following shall be ensured:

- 18.1. a lighting regime in accordance with a 24-hour cycle;
- 18.2. an uninterrupted period of darkness for not less than eight hours a day; and
- 18.3. gradual dimming of lighting so the laying hens may find a place for rest appropriate thereto.

19. Litter in the holding shall be any friable material enabling the laying hens to satisfy their natural needs. Litter shall be dry, harmless to the health of laying hens, liquid and gas absorbing.

20. Water that conforms to the mandatory harmlessness requirements for potable water prescribed by regulatory enactments shall be utilised in the holding of laying hens.

21. Floors of cages shall be constructed so that laying hens may concurrently support forward-facing claws of both feet.

22. Each cage shall have a claw-shortening device.

23. When keeping laying hens in enriched cages or deep litter they shall be provided with a usable area which complies with the following conditions:

23.1. the width is at least 30 cm;

23.2. the height is at least 45 cm; and

23.3. a floor slope not exceeding 14%.

24. The area of a nest (a separate place for egg laying) shall not be included in the usable area of the cage.

25. Cages shall be constructed so as to prevent laying hens from injury and escaping.

26. The construction of the cage door shall be such that laying hens can be removed without suffering.

27. If in holdings, battery cages are placed on several levels, an appropriate device or equipment shall be provided so as to ease inspection of laying hens and removal thereof from cages.

28. Minimum noise level shall be ensured in the holding, as well as sudden occurring of noise shall be prevented. Ventilation, feeding and other equipment shall be constructed, placed, operated and their technical maintenance shall be performed so as not to cause noise or its level is as low as possible.

#### **IV. Requirements for Keeping Laying Hens in Deep Litter**

29. The density of laying hens shall not exceed nine laying hens per a square meter of the usable area.

30. The litter area in the holding shall be not less than one third of the floor area and each laying hen shall be provided with litter in the area of least 250 cm<sup>2</sup>.

31. The individual or group nest shall be arranged for egg laying providing not less than one individual nest for seven laying hens or not less than a square meter of nest space per 120 laying hens, if group nests are arranged. The wire mesh floor shall not be considered as a nest.

32. Taking into account the construction of the feeding system each laying hen shall be provided with 10 cm of the length of a linear feeder or respectively 4 cm of the area of a circular feeder;

33. Taking into account the construction of the drinking facilities each laying hen shall be provided with 2.5 cm of the length of a continuous drinking trough or respectively 1 cm of the area of a circular drinking troughs.

34. If for drinking:

34.1. nipple drinkers or cups are utilised, there shall be at least one nipple drinker or cup per 10 laying hens; and

34.2. drinking facilities connected to the water supply are utilised, two nipple drinkers or two cups shall be available to each laying hen.

35. Laying hens shall be provided with perches complying with the following requirements:

35.1. a perch shall be rounded;

35.2. a perch shall not be located above the litter;

35.3. the distance between perches shall not be less than 30 cm; and

35.4. the distance between the wall and a perch shall not be less than 20 cm.

36. Each laying hen shall be provided with 15 cm of the perch.

37. If in conformity with the type of keeping, laying hens move freely in the holding between different levels then:

37.1. no more than four levels shall be arranged;

37.2. the height between the levels shall be at least 45 cm;

37.3. all hens shall have free access to feeding and drinking facilities;

37.4. it shall be ensured that droppings of the laying hens do not fall on the levels below.

38. If laying hens have a possibility to access open runs outside the holding:

38.1. latched doors at least 35 cm high and at least 40 cm wide shall be arranged along the entire length from the holding to an open run, but the total width of the doors shall be at least 2 m per 1000 hens;

38.2.

an appropriate area and covering of an open run shall be provided in order not to restrict the freedom of movement of laying hens; and 38.3. an open run shall be equipped with a shelter to protect laying hens from precipitation and predatory birds, as well as, if necessary, drinking troughs shall be installed.

## **V. Requirements for Keeping of Laying Hens in Unenriched Cages**

39. A cage complying with the requirements specified in this Chapter is an unenriched cage.

40. An area not less than 55 cm<sup>2</sup> shall be provided in a cage for each laying hen. The area of a cage shall be determined by measuring the horizontal plane of the cage which is used by laying hens without restrictions.

41. Not less than 10 cm of the feeder length shall be provided for each laying hen in the cage.

42. If for drinking:

42.1. continuous drinking troughs are utilised not less than 10 cm of the length of the continuous drinking trough shall be provided for each laying hen; and

42.2. drinking facilities connected to the water supply are utilised, not less than two nipple drinkers or two cups shall be provided in each cage.

43. Floor slope in a cage shall not exceed 14% or 8 degrees if wire mesh has been used for floor installation. If the wire mesh has not been used for installation of the floor, the floor slope may exceed 14% or 8 degrees.

44. Height of the cage:

44.1. at least 65% of the cage area is 40 cm; and

44.2. in other part of the cage – not less than 35 cm.

## **VI. Requirements for Keeping of Laying Hens in Enriched Cages**

45. A cage complying with the requirements specified in this Chapter is an enriched cage.

46. In the cage each laying hen shall be provided with:

46.1. area not less than 750 cm<sup>2</sup> from which 600 cm<sup>2</sup> shall be a freely usable area;

46.2. at least 12 cm from the length of the feeder;

46.3. a nest;

46.4. litter; and

46.5. a perch at least 15 cm long.

47. The height of a cage shall not be less than 20 cm except the usable area and total area of the cage shall not be less than 2000 cm<sup>2</sup>.

48. If nipple drinkers or cups are utilised for drinking of laying hens, two nipple drinkers or cups shall be available to each laying hen.

49. When placing cages in the holding it shall be provided that a space between rows of cages shall not be less than 90 cm, but a space between the cage floor and the floor of the holding shall not be less than 35 cm.

## **VII. Closing Provisions**

50. If holdings have been constructed or reconstructed by the day of coming into force of these Regulations, requirements specified in Chapter VI of these Regulations regarding the keeping of laying hens in deep litter shall come into force on 1 January 2007.

51. In holdings that have been constructed or reconstructed by the day of coming into force of these Regulations the density of laying hens may not exceed 12 laying hens per a square meter.

52. It is permitted to utilise unenriched cages installed by the day of coming into force of these Regulations and referred to in Chapter V of these Regulations until 31 December 2011. After the coming into force of these Regulations unenriched cages shall not be installed in holdings of laying hens.

53. Paragraphs 40 and 44 of these Regulations shall come into force with special Cabinet regulations.

54. Up to the day of coming into force of Paragraphs 40 and 44 when keeping laying hens in unenriched cages:

54.1. an area not less than 450 cm<sup>2</sup> shall be provided for each laying hen;

54.2. it shall be provided that the height of a cage:

54.2.1. at least 65% of the cage area is from 32 to 37 cm; and

54.2.2. in other part of the cage – is not less than 30 cm.

55. These Regulations shall come into force on 1 May 2003.

### **Informative Reference to European Union Directives**

Legal norms arising from the directives 99/74/EEC have been included in these Regulations.

Prime Minister

E. Repše

Minister for Agriculture

M. Roze