

# JERSEY CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE WELFARE OF

## DUCKS

### THE CODE

The Code of recommendations for the welfare of ducks is intended to encourage all those responsible for looking after these birds to adopt the highest standards of husbandry. It takes account of five basic needs, known as the "Five Freedoms".

#### The Five Freedoms are:

##### 1. FREEDOM FROM HUNGER AND THIRST

- by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour;

##### 2. FREEDOM FROM DISCOMFORT

- by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area;

##### 3. FREEDOM FROM PAIN, INJURY OR DISEASE

- by prevention or by rapid diagnosis and treatment;

##### 4. FREEDOM TO EXPRESS NORMAL BEHAVIOUR

- by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animals' own kind;

##### 5. FREEDOM FROM FEAR AND DISTRESS

- by ensuring conditions and treatment to avoid mental suffering.

The Code identifies good stockmanship as a key factor in animal welfare and this Code is an essential tool for everyone concerned with looking after ducks. All persons involved with the rearing and production of ducks should read it carefully and to bear its recommendations in mind at all times.

This Code covers ducks of the Pekin / Mallard types and does not apply to Muscovies.

### INTRODUCTION

1. The welfare of ducks can be safeguarded under a variety of management systems. The system employed should be appropriate to the health and behavioural and physiological needs of the ducks. This, together with facilities available and the skill of the stockkeeper, will determine the number of birds kept at any one time, and the way in which they are grouped.

2. Consideration should be given to the question of animal welfare before installing more complex or elaborate equipment than has previously been used. In general the greater the restriction imposed on the bird and the greater the complexity of the system or of the degree of control which is exercised over temperature, air flow or food supply, the less the bird is able to use its instinctive behaviour to modify the effect of unfavourable conditions and the greater the chance of suffering if mechanical or electrical failures occur. Thus systems involving a high degree of control over the

environment should only be installed when conscientious staff skilled in both animal husbandry and the use of the equipment will always be available.

3. Large flocks can be managed successfully, but in general the larger the size of unit the greater the degree of skill and conscientiousness needed to safeguard welfare. The size of a unit should not be increased nor should a unit be set up unless it is reasonably certain that the stockkeeper in charge will be able to safeguard the welfare of the individual bird.

4. All stockkeepers should know the normal behaviour of ducks, watch closely for signs of distress or disease and, where necessary, take prompt remedial action.

5. The good stockkeeper will know the signs which indicate good health in ducks. He should be able to recognise impending trouble in its earliest stages and may often be able to identify the cause and put matters right immediately. If the cause is not obvious or if the stockkeeper's immediate action is not effective, veterinary or other expert advice should be obtained as soon as possible.

6. Important indications of health are alertness, clear bright eyes, good posture, vigorous movements if unduly disturbed, active feeding and drinking, normal feathering, clean and healthy skin, shanks and feet. Attention should be paid to any departure from the normal.

7. The early signs of ill-health may include changes in feed and water intake, in preening, in general activity, and diarrhoea (although ducks normally have watery faeces), inco-ordination and drooping of the eyelids. In laying birds there may also be a drop in egg-production, and changes in egg quality such as shell defects.

8. Ailing birds, and any birds suffering from injury such as open wounds, or fractures or from prolapse of the vent should be segregated and treated or, if necessary, be humanely killed without delay.

## **HOUSING**

9. Advice on welfare aspects should be sought when new buildings are to be constructed or existing buildings modified.

10. Ventilation, heating, lighting, feeding, watering and all other equipment should be designed, sited and installed so as to avoid risk of injuring birds.

11. All floors, particularly slatted or metal mesh ones, should be designed, fitted and maintained so as to avoid injury or distress to the birds. Remedial action should be taken if either of these occurs.

12. Nest boxes and roosting areas should not be so high above floor level that birds have difficulty or risk injury in using them.

13. Adequate litter should be provided on solid floors and in nest boxes.

14. Accommodation should be designed and maintained so as to minimise discomfort, distress or injury to the birds.

15. The type and arrangements of accommodation should allow for efficient working and for each bird to be properly inspected.

16. Accommodation should be of sufficient height to allow standing birds free movement of the head and neck.

17. The front and sides of raised pens for ducklings should be kept properly adjusted so that birds have access to feed and water but cannot escape and fall to the floor.

### **Ventilation and temperature**

18. Ventilation rates and house conditions should at all times be adequate to provide sufficient fresh air for the ducks. In particular, accumulations of ammonia, hydrogen sulphide, carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide and dust should be avoided.

19. Excessive heat loss or gain in buildings should be avoided.

20. Care should be taken to protect confined birds from draughts in cold conditions.

21. Ducks should not be exposed to strong direct sunlight or hot surroundings long enough to cause heat stress as indicated by prolonged panting.

22. Young ducklings should not be subjected to conditions which cause either panting due to overheating or prolonged huddling and feather-ruffling due to under-heating. After about one to two weeks birds can tolerate a fairly wide range of temperatures, but every effort should be made to avoid creating conditions which will lead to chilling, huddling and subsequent smothering.

23. All accommodation should be so designed that even when fully stocked its ventilation is adequate to protect the birds from overheating under any weather conditions that can reasonably be foreseen.

### **Stocking rates**

24 Irrespective of the type of enclosure or system of management used, all ducks should have sufficient room to be able to move about freely and to spread their wings at will.

25. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that birds kept under any system can be prone to stress, injury and disease if management and husbandry are not of a high standard. Within the present limits of scientific knowledge it is not possible to relate stocking rate to welfare in any simple manner. Stocking rate is only one aspect of a complex situation involving such things as breed, strain and type of bird, group size, temperature, ventilation, lighting and quality of housing. The observance of any particular rate cannot, by itself, ensure the welfare of the birds.

26. The following figures are a guide to the minimum available floor area per bird which is acceptable in most circumstances:

#### **(a) DUCKLINGS**

<b>SYSTEM</b>	<b>MAXIMUM STOCKING RATES</b>	<b>QUALIFICATIONS</b>
On slatted, perforated or metal mesh floors:		
Day-old to 10 days	50 ducklings per m <sup>2</sup>	Floor area to include any area occupied by feeding and watering equipment
10 days to 3 weeks	25 ducklings per m <sup>2</sup>	
3 weeks to 8 weeks	8 ducklings per m <sup>2</sup>	

<b>SYSTEM</b>	<b>MAXIMUM STOCKING RATES</b>	<b>QUALIFICATIONS</b>
On solid floors (littered):		
Day-old to 10 days	36 ducklings per m <sup>2</sup>	Floor area to include any slatted, perforated or metal mesh area and any area occupied by feeding and watering equipment
10 days to 3 weeks	14 ducklings per m <sup>2</sup>	
3 weeks to 8 weeks	7 ducklings per m <sup>2</sup>	
In grass runs:		
3 weeks to 8 weeks	2,500 ducklings per hectare	In well-grassed runs this stocking rate could be increased to a maximum of 5,000 ducklings per hectare

**1 hectare = 5.56 verges**

### **(b) BREEDING DUCKS**

<b>SYSTEM</b>	<b>MAXIMUM STOCKING RATES</b>	<b>QUALIFICATIONS</b>
On slatted, perforated or metal mesh floors	5 ducks per m <sup>2</sup>	Floor area to include any area occupied by feeding and watering equipment and nest boxes
On solid floors (littered)	3 ducks per m <sup>2</sup>	
In grass runs associated with housing on floors	4,000 ducks per hectare	

27. If disease or vice becomes evident, expert qualified advice should be sought to deal with the problem. Stocking and ventilation rates should also be checked and variations in stocking and ventilation should be considered in order to minimise the likelihood of recurrence of the problem

### **MANAGEMENT**

28. Frequent inspection of the stock is essential because the condition and reactions of the birds are the main guides to their welfare. An inspection must be made at least daily in addition to the looking-over which birds receive during routine management work. Injured or dead birds should be removed promptly, as should individual sick birds.

29. It is desirable to establish a regular work routine. Care should be taken not to frighten the birds with sudden unaccustomed movement or noise, but without placing too much emphasis on quietness.

30. Adequate control measures should be taken to protect the birds from disturbance by rodents and other animals.
31. Mouldy litter should not be used. There should be frequent checks to ensure that litter does not become excessively wet or dry, or infested with mites or other harmful organisms.
32. Premises and equipment should be regularly cleansed. Thorough disinfection should be carried out at suitable times (for example, before restocking) to reduce the danger of continuing infection.
33. Vaccinations, injections and similar procedures should be undertaken by competent, trained operators. Care should be taken to avoid injury and unnecessary disturbance of the ducks.
34. A programme to control vermin, without endangering the birds, should be in place.

### **Bill trimming**

35. Bill trimming should be carried out only when it is clear that more suffering would be caused in the flock if it were not done. It should be done by a skilled operator or under his supervision. If practised, only the rim at the front of the upper bill should be removed and before the birds leave the brooder or the rearing accommodation. Normally it need be done only once in the lifetime of the stock.

### **Dewinging**

36. Dewinging, pinioning, notching or tendon severing or other operations which involve mutilation of wing tissues, are prohibited. When it is necessary to prevent flying the flight feathers of one wing may be clipped.

### **Feed and water**

37. Birds should have easy access to adequate fresh feed each day, and have fresh water at all times. Care should be taken at any change of system to ensure that the birds find the feed and water points. Consideration should be given to the provision of water troughs which are deep enough to allow the ducks to get their heads completely under water.

38. Whatever feeding and drinking system is used sufficient trough space for feeding and drinking should be provided to prevent undue competition for feed or water. As a guide the minimum trough space per 100 ducks should be:

Age	Feeding Space	Drinking space
Day-old chicks to 8 weeks	0.5 m	0.5 m
8 weeks and over	0.6 m	0.6 m

39. Stale or contaminated feed or water should not be allowed to accumulate and should be replaced immediately. Efforts should be made to minimise the risk of drinking water freezing.

## **EMERGENCIES/FIRE PREVENTION**

40. In the design of new buildings, or alterations of existing ones, there should be provision for livestock to be released and evacuated quickly in the case of an emergency. Materials used in construction should have sufficient fire resistance and adequate doors and other escape routes should be provided to enable an emergency procedure to be followed in the event of a fire. To reduce the risk to stock from fire and smoke, where possible the storage of straw should be separate to stock accommodation.

41. There is usually some warning of interruptions in the supply of feedingstuffs and, so far as possible, arrangements should be made to lay in adequate stocks of feed or water to offset the worst of such a contingency.

## **TRANSPORT AND HANDLING OF STOCK ON THE PREMISES**

42. The proper handling of ducks requires skill and it should be undertaken only by competent persons who have been appropriately trained. It should be carried out quietly and confidently, exercising care to avoid unnecessary struggling which could bruise or otherwise injure the ducks. Day-old and young ducklings should be picked up bodily in the palm of the hand. It may be necessary to catch older ducks by the neck and they should be supported either by taking the weight of the bird by a hand placed under its body, or by holding the bird with a hand on either side of its body with the wings in the closed position. Birds should never be carried by the legs.

43. Care must be taken in catching ducks to avoid creating panic and subsequent injury to or smothering of the birds.

### **Day-old ducklings**

44. Ducklings for despatch should be healthy and vigorous, and should be placed in suitably ventilated boxes without overcrowding. Care should be taken to ensure adequate ventilation of the boxes, particularly when they are stacked, and to protect the ducklings from direct sunlight and cold draughts.

45. Packing materials used inside boxes should be dry and free from moulds.

46. Ducklings should be transferred to the brooders as soon as possible.

### **Growing and adult birds**

47. The design, size and state of repair of any container used to carry ducks should allow them to be put in, conveyed and taken out injury. Care should also be taken when crates are loaded on to vehicles and in their transportation and unloading. Adequate ventilation for the birds is essential at all times.

48. Birds should be protected from bad weather and from excessively hot or cold conditions. They should not be allowed to become distressed (as indicated by prolonged panting) by being left in containers exposed to strong direct sunlight.

## **ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS: RANGE BIRDS**

### **Management**

49. Enclosed range areas should be used in rotation, and flocks should be moved before the land becomes contaminated with organisms that can cause or carry

disease to an extent which could seriously prejudice the health of the birds. The time taken for land to become heavily contaminated depends on the type of land and the density of stocking. Portable houses should be moved regularly to avoid continuously muddy conditions. Drinking facilities should be moved every one or two days to avoid the immediate vicinity becoming contaminated.

50. Shade and shelter from extreme weather conditions should always be available. Windbreaks should be provided on exposed land. Water sprinklers may be useful in very hot weather.

### **Housing**

51. When birds are transferred to range houses, precautions should be taken to avoid crowding and suffocation, particularly during the first few nights. Cannibalism is a danger under this system and birds should not be confined for too long during hours of daylight or subjected to direct sunlight during confinement.

### **Feed and Water**

52. Feed and water should never be allowed to remain in a stale or contaminated condition. In freezing conditions, particular attention should be given to the provision of water.

## **LEGISLATION**

53. The following legislation is of relevance:

- Animal Welfare (Jersey) Law 2004
- Animal Health (Jersey) Law 2016
- Veterinary Surgeons (Jersey) Law 1999
- Community Provisions (Welfare of Animals during Transport) (Jersey) Regulations 2013

**08/02 AWC (31/01/07) (legislation amended 19/10/17)**