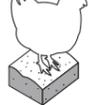


AUSTRALIAN MEAT CHICKEN HOUSING SYSTEMS

	INDOOR STOCKING DENSITY Max. number of birds per m ² when ready for processing (based on 2.89kg bird at 45 days)	INDEPENDENT AUDITING TO ANIMAL WELFARE STANDARDS	PERCHES	LITTER (INDOORS)	LIGHTING (INDOORS)	MANIPULABLE MATERIAL PROVISION	OPENINGS TO OUTDOOR RANGE	QUALITY OF OUTDOOR RANGE	GIVEN GROWTH HORMONES OR ANTIBIOTICS	
<p>CONVENTIONAL</p> <p>INDOOR ENVIRONMENT: Large shed where birds are free to move around. Ventilation systems differ between sheds. Minimal requirements for air quality, lighting or litter quality.</p> <p>OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENT: N/A</p> <p>BEHAVIOUR EXPRESSION: Limited ability to express natural behaviours due to lack of space and enrichment.</p>	 10 Naturally ventilated sheds: (28kg/m ²)	 14 Mechanically and tunnel ventilated sheds: (40kg/m ²)	-	Not legally required.	 Floor substrate may consist of litter.	 No minimum light or dark period, and no minimum light intensity (lux).	Not legally required.	N/A	N/A	 No growth hormones. Therapeutic use of antibiotics permitted. Prophylactic (e.g. coccidiostats) use of antibiotics permitted.
<p>FREE RANGE</p> <p>INDOOR ENVIRONMENT: Large shed where birds are free to move around. Ventilation systems differ between sheds. Minimal requirements for air quality, lighting or litter quality. Pop holes for access to outdoor range.</p> <p>OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENT: No minimum standards for what is required on the range including overhead cover or shelter. Birds should have access to range once fully feathered and if weather conditions allow.</p> <p>BEHAVIOUR EXPRESSION: Limited ability to express natural behaviours due to lack of enrichment and suitable outdoor range area.</p>	 10 Naturally ventilated sheds: (28kg/m ²)	 14 Mechanically and tunnel ventilated sheds: (40kg/m ²)	-	Not legally required.	 Floor substrate may consist of litter.	 No minimum light or dark period, and no minimum light intensity (lux).	Not legally required.	 Min 35cm high and 40cm wide with 2m per 1000 birds.	 Access to shaded areas, no legal definition on coverage.	 No growth hormones. Therapeutic use of antibiotics permitted. Prophylactic (e.g. coccidiostats) use of antibiotics permitted.
<p>RSPCA APPROVED: INDOOR SYSTEMS</p> <p>INDOOR ENVIRONMENT: Large shed where birds are free to move around, perch, and dustbathe. Birds have access to good quality litter and pecking objects. Good lighting periods to encourage activity and allow rest.</p> <p>OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENT: N/A</p> <p>BEHAVIOUR EXPRESSION: Living in an enriched environment that encourages flapping, dustbathing, ground foraging and perching.</p>	 10 Naturally ventilated sheds: (28kg/m ²)	 12 Mechanically and tunnel ventilated sheds: (34kg/m ²), from January 2023 mechanically ventilated sheds will reduce to 11 birds (32kg/m ²).	 Assessed 2-4 times a year.	 2.7m per 1000 birds from 7 days of age.	 Dry, friable litter managed and maintained at a depth of 50mm.	 Continuous minimum light period of 8 hours, at 20 lux average intensity. Continuous minimum dark period of 4 hours. With a minimum of 6 hours total darkness.	 Pecking objects provided from 7 days of age.	N/A	N/A	 No growth hormones. Antimicrobial stewardship plan required. Therapeutic use of antibiotics permitted under veterinary advice. Prophylactic (e.g. coccidiostats) use of antibiotics permitted.
<p>RSPCA APPROVED: OUTDOOR SYSTEMS</p> <p>INDOOR ENVIRONMENT: Large shed where birds are free to move around, perch, and dustbathe. Birds have access to good quality litter and pecking objects. Good lighting periods to encourage activity and allow rest. Pop holes for access to outdoor range.</p> <p>OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENT: Outdoor area that encourages foraging, exploration and socialisation. Minimum requirements for shade/shelter and vegetation.</p> <p>BEHAVIOUR EXPRESSION: Living in an enriched environment that encourages flapping, dustbathing, ground foraging and perching. Encouraged to explore and forage outdoors.</p>	 10 Naturally ventilated sheds: (28kg/m ²)	 12 Mechanically and tunnel ventilated sheds: (34kg/m ²), from January 2023 mechanically ventilated sheds will reduce to 11 birds (32kg/m ²).	 Assessed 2-4 times a year.	 2.7m per 1000 birds from 7 days of age.	 Dry, friable litter managed and maintained at a depth of 50mm.	 Continuous minimum light period of 8 hours, at 20 lux average intensity. Continuous minimum dark period of 4 hours. With a minimum of 6 hours total darkness.	 Pecking objects provided from 7 days of age.	 30% of the length of the shed on each side, or 50% on one side. Minimum requirements for the design, number and positioning of openings.	 Palatable vegetation. 8m ² overhead shade per 1000 birds. From July 2020, 12m ² overhead shade per 1000 birds.	 No growth hormones. Antimicrobial stewardship plan required. Therapeutic use of antibiotics permitted under veterinary advice. Prophylactic (e.g. coccidiostats) use of antibiotics permitted.

AUSTRALIAN MEAT CHICKEN HOUSING SYSTEMS

Disclaimer:

The information provided in this table is intended to give a general overview, based on the *Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals: Domestic Poultry 4th edition* and *RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme Standards for Meat Chickens*. Specific housing and management practices will vary between farms and what may be required under various certification schemes.



Litter:

Bedding, or litter, has a number of important functions, such as absorbing moisture from the birds' droppings and from the environment, providing a comfortable surface for the birds to rest, and assisting with comfort and insulation. When kept in a good condition and of sufficient depth, litter can enrich the birds' environment by enabling them to perform important natural behaviours such as foraging, scratching, and dust bathing.

For more information: [Why is good litter condition important for meat chicken welfare?](#)



Environmental enrichment:

For meat chickens to experience good welfare, it's important that their environment is stimulating and enriching, and allows them to exhibit their natural behaviours. These behaviours include perching, dust bathing, foraging, ground scratching, and stretching and flapping their wings.

For more information: [What does environmental enrichment look like?](#)



Lighting:

Chickens require a certain amount of light to encourage normal behaviours and improve health. In the absence of natural light, artificial light needs to be provided at an appropriate intensity and duration. Periods of darkness that encourage birds to rest are also essential.

For more information: [Why is access to adequate light important for meat chicken welfare?](#)



Antibiotics:

The Australian meat chicken industry has not used growth hormones for decades. Antibiotics are commonly used to treat bacterial infections in humans and animals. Coccidiostats are also routinely used, especially in poultry production to prevent infections with protozoa including a disease called coccidiosis. Prophylactic use of antibiotics is when they are used preventatively in anticipation of potential sickness. Therapeutic use of antibiotics is when they are used to treat an animal that is already sick; this is an important aspect of good animal welfare to ensure that animals are healthy.

For more information: [What are antimicrobials and why are they used in livestock systems?](#)



Stocking density:

As meat chickens grow over time from small chicks to larger birds ready for processing, the availability of space around each individual bird reduces. Stocking density refers to the maximum number (or total weight) of birds within a specified space. This is commonly referred to in meat chicken production as XXkg/m², however for the purposes of this graph this has been converted to show the number of birds this equates to. So whilst the maximum number of birds per m² is described, this number of birds is when birds are at their processing (or maximum) weight. Prior to this there will be less birds per m².

The below graph details the hypothetical number of chickens per m² over a 45 days' time period growing to three different maximum stocking densities (28 kg/m², 34 kg/m², and 40 kg/m²). To determine this a hypothetical flock size has been determined with the following chick placement numbers: 29,999 chicks in a shed that will grow to 40 kg/m², 25,499 chicks in a shed that will grow to 34 kg/m² and 11,043 chicks that will grow to 28kg/m².

Age (in days)	CHICKENS PER M ²								
	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45
28 kg/m ²	0.35	0.89	1.61	2.68	3.84	5.26	6.47	7.93	9.70
34 kg/m ²	0.43	1.08	1.95	3.25	4.67	6.39	7.85	9.63	11.77
40 kg/m ²	0.42	1.27	2.30	3.83	5.49	7.52	9.24	11.33	13.85