

Transport and Care of Poultry

FACT SHEET – FOR POULTRY AT SALEYARDS

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Having bought poultry from the saleyard or through a private sale you need to ensure that you are prepared and able to provide adequate transport to your property. It is important that you can care for the poultry and provide adequate protection from predators. The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals act 1986 clearly defines your responsibilities for the care and welfare of your Poultry. The Code of Accepted Farming Practice for the Welfare of Poultry provides details on your responsibilities (www.dpi.vic.gov.au/animalwelfare). This brochure provides some basic information regarding your obligations towards your Poultry.

Transporting Poultry:

Poultry being transported are subject to stress. Stress arises from catching and handling, deprivation of food, water and freedom of normal movement, changes in temperature and unfamiliar surroundings, noises and sensations. When selecting poultry for travel, you must ensure that you only select healthy birds to travel. Sick, injured or weak birds should not be transported.

Poultry fit for transport should be carefully loaded in to clean cages or crates. The *minimum* cage and crate dimensions are *20cm wide and 25cm high per bird*. Cages/crates should have ridged floors and be designed to prevent any part of the bird protruding during travel. No sharp edges, or protrusions, hinges or latches should project into the cage. Cages/crates should be well ventilated and of sufficient height to allow birds to stand. Locking mechanisms, to prevent birds from escaping during transportation should be fitted.

Catching and handling birds can be very stressful for the bird and for you. Injury during catching and handling can be quite severe. Each individual bird should be carefully picked up by its legs and due caution given to prevent the wings flapping and hitting solid objects. After picking up the bird, it should be placed immediately into its transport crate/cage. Prior to picking up the bird the door to the cage/crate should be opened and the crate placed nearby ready to take the bird.

Cages/crate should be transported in an upright position protected from the wind, high/low temperatures and inclement weather. Transportation must not exceed 12 hours and birds should be checked regularly during the journey.



Do Not :

- carry poultry by their head, neck, wings or tail
- transport birds in bags
- transport birds with their legs tied
- transport birds in the boot of a car
- mix different species of poultry in a single crate/cage during transport

**Ducks and Geese may be carried, by competent persons, by the neck or by the wings, when the wings are folded back and crossed into position over the back. If you are unsure, please ask advice from you local DPI Animal Health staff member.

Speak to your stock agent if transport is required for your new purchase.

Supervision:

Handling facilities:

It is important to make sure you have adequate facilities to place your poultry in, before you unload them. Unloading should occur as soon as possible upon arrival at your destination. Poultry should be handled with care at the time of unloading in a similar manner that described above. In general, pick birds up by their legs taking care to prevent flapping wings from hitting solid objects. Avoid picking birds up by their wings, neck, head or tail.

Unload poultry into an enclosed pen or cage with direct access to food and water. Poultry purchased at saleyards have often been without food (and possibly water) for more than 12 hours. Cages or pens should have at least some area which is protected from the weather. However, adequate ventilation is also important. If you are concerned about the suitability of your housing facilities please contact your local Department of Primary Industries Animal Health staff for advice.

If you are going to house your laying poultry in cages (similar to those used in a commercial cage laying facility) the minimum space allowance per bird is 550cm² for laying hens.

Please refer to the Code of Accepted Farming Practice for the Welfare of Poultry for more detailed information (www.dpi.vic.gov.au/animalwelfare) about minimum cage sizes.

You must carefully inspect your birds to ensure they have not sustained any injury during transportation and handling.

Feed and water requirements:

Poultry require clean drinking water at all times. It is essential that watering containers be cleaned regularly and an adequate supply must be maintained. Inspection of poultry and their housing facilities should be done at least once each day. Watering containers and feeders designed specifically for poultry are available at your local grain/produce store.

A 'table scrap' diet is generally *not* sufficient to meet the nutritional demands of growing birds or layers. Common deficiencies include calcium (resulting in poor bone growth and rickets), energy (poor growth, weight loss, poor egg production), and vitamin A (poor skin and feathering).

Formulated diets are available for all stages of a hen's life, (starter, grower and layer) and these should be fed in conjunction with table scraps, fruit and vegetables to form a balanced diet. In general, it is recommended that no more

than 10% of the diet contains table scraps. Poultry feeds can be purchased from your local grain/produce store. Please consult your grain store, local veterinarian or Department of Primary Industries staff to determine the most appropriate feed type for your birds.

Assessment of the health of the poultry:

Similar to other species, backyard poultry are susceptible to disease. The Agnote: [Common diseases of backyard poultry](#) outlines a number of common diseases that poultry may suffer from. If you suspect that your birds have one or more of these diseases you *must* contact your local DPI Animal Health Staff member or a veterinarian. Spread of these diseases can cause major damage to Australia's commercial poultry industry.

Diseases of Poultry:

Table 1. Common diseases of Poultry

Common Diseases	Description Refer to Agnote: Common diseases of backyard poultry (found at www.dpi.vic.gov.au/farming , then click on 'Animals & Livestock' and then 'Poultry')
External Parasites	Poultry can carry a large variety of parasites on their bodies. External parasites generally cause mild clinical signs such as feather damage, anaemia and irritation, but they may also carry severe, life threatening diseases such as tick fever. Backyard poultry should be examined regularly, and treated for external parasites every two to three months. Products to treat these diseases can be recommended by your veterinarian.
Internal Parasites	Backyard poultry also carry a wide range of internal parasites. Signs of internal parasitism may include weight loss, pale combs or diarrhoea. Your local veterinarian will be able to look at faeces under the microscope, and advise as to the best treatment.
Marek's Disease	Marek's disease is a viral infection that only affects poultry. The virus is spread from bird to bird in feather dander and dust. It lives in the environment for long periods, and can spread between properties on people's clothes and on shared equipment. Birds are usually infected at a young age, but may not show signs of disease until some months later. Birds may also develop tumours in and on the body. As they grow, these tumours may cause a number of signs including weight loss, diarrhoea, ill thrift, and difficulty breathing. It is preferable to source vaccinated stock.
Leucosis	Avian leucosis is also a viral disease affecting chickens which causes tumours or cancers. These tumours occur in older birds than those affected by Marek's disease, usually more than 6 months old. It causes listlessness and loss of weight and the bird eventually dies.
Respiratory Disease	There are many causes of respiratory disease in poultry. Respiratory signs such as coughing, sneezing and discharge from the eyes and nostrils can be caused by parasites, dust, high ammonia levels, or a variety of bacteria or viruses. If you notice your birds developing these symptoms, please consult your local veterinarian immediately. Some of the respiratory viruses are notifiable or exotic diseases, and must be reported to a Government Veterinarian or an Animal Health Officer if they are suspected.
Coccidiosis	Coccidiosis is one of the more common and costly diseases in poultry. It causes droopiness and paleness of the comb, diarrhoea and occasionally blood in the droppings. The death rate may be quite high, both in chicks and in adults. Keeping litter dry at all times reduces the risk of the spread of the disease. Vaccines are also available, as are a wide selection of drugs (coccidiostats) for prevention and treatment of the disease. If you notice your birds developing these symptoms, please consult your local veterinarian immediately. This is a notifiable diseases, and must be reported to a Government Veterinarian or an Animal Health Officer if it is suspected.

Please remember that poultry require ongoing supervision and maintenance to stay healthy. For further information about the management of a small poultry flock please refer to the Agnote- Poultry Farming on a Small Scale: Contact List, which provides you with a list of poultry specific contacts to help you manage your flock.

For more information about transport and care of poultry, please consult your private veterinarian or local DPI Animal Health staff via DPI Customer Service Centre on 136 186 or visit www.dpi.vic.gov.au/animalwelfare and follow links to 'Animal Welfare' Information Notes.