Macdonald Campus Farm Cattle Complex
Standard Operating Procedure # DC-208

LOADING AND TRANSPORTING BROILERS

1. PURPOSE

Provide instruction on the preparation and loading procedures in order to provide a smooth transition from the barn to the processing plant.

2. RESPONSIBILITY

2.1 Poultry Farm Staff: have an obligation for the care and welfare of the birds they handle.

2.2 Student Volunteers: have an obligation for the care and welfare of the birds they handle.

2.3 Chief Animal Science Technician: is responsible for overseeing animal care on-farm and coordinating with Catchers, Transporters, and Processors to help ensure animal care is maintained as the birds leave the farm.

2.4 Transporter: is responsible for the care of poultry on the truck as birds travel from the Farm to the Processor.

3. MATERIALS

3.1 Fiche d'information sur le troupeau (FIT)
3.2 Plastic bucket
3.3 Loading platform

4. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 The Chief Animal Science Technician must be present to oversee the catching and loading process.

4.2 Crews and transporters must be familiar with and abide by the guidelines established in the Recommended Guidelines for Procurement, Handling and Transportation of Broiler chickens.

4.3 Load or transport birds that are free from infirmity, illness, injury, fatigue, or any other cause, which may induce undue suffering during the expected journey. Refer to SOP PU-502: Health Monitoring

4.4 Load the birds in a way that prevents injury or undue suffering. Refer to Appendix PU-A-3B Handling Guidelines for Catching Crews.

4.5 Load or transport birds using densities that minimize crowding in accordance to the National Farm Animal Council Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals: Transportation and the Poultry Service Association: Poultry Handling and Transportation Manual.

4.6 The time from the barn to the processing plant should be kept as short as possible.

- Transport time should not exceed 36 hours.
- Max. 24 hours without water.
- Max. 28 hours without feed.

4.7 ENVIRONMENTAL CAUTIONS: Load birds only if environmental conditions favor humane transport.

4.7.1 Transport birds in a manner that they are unlikely to suffer due to exposure to the weather or inadequate ventilation.

4.7.2 Air temperature *in the load* should be maintained between13°C (55° F) and 30°C (86° F)

4.7.3 Load birds in the minimum time possible without compromising bird welfare.

4.7.4 DO NOT LOAD wet birds in cool or cold weather. Wet birds cannot maintain their body temperature in cool or cold weather and are more likely to freeze to death during transport.

4.7.5 Protect birds from getting wet during loading by using tarps and eaves troughs.

4.7.6 Extreme Hot/Humid weather:

4.7.6.1 Sufficient ventilation must always be available.

4.7.6.2 Position the truck so that birds are shielded from direct sun.

4.7.6.3 Schedule the transportation at night and in the early morning.

4.7.6.4 Avoid periods of intense traffic congestion.

4.7.6.5 Reduce loading density.

4.7.7 Extreme cold weather

4.7.7.1 DO NOT LOAD wet birds.

4.7.7.2 Avoid loading the birds during the coldest periods of the day or night.

4.7.7.3 Acclimatize housed birds gradually to cooler temperatures prior to catching and loading.

4.7.7.4 Position the truck so that birds are shielded from direct wind.

4.7.7.5 Transport truck openings should be covered to protect animals from cold winds.

4.8 COMMUNICATION:

4.8.1 Chief Animal Science Technician:

4.8.1.1 Contact the Transporter and/or Processor if there is a major delay on the farm.

4.8.1.2 Contact the Transporter and/or Processor If bird or barn conditions do not favor humane transport.

4.8.2 Transporter:

4.8.2.1 Notifies the Chief Animal Science Technician and the Processor if there are any changes or delays to the schedule.

4.8.2.2 Notifies the Chief Animal Science Technician if there are changes to the vehicle or equipment that are different from those planned.

4.8.2.3 Reporting changes in the flock to the Processor. E.g., increased mortality, birds becoming wet, change in actual versus predicted weight for loading density calculations, etc.

4.8.3 Understand the Processor's expectations for:

4.8.3.1 Feed withdrawal.

4.8.3.2 Specialized loading protocols to reduce bird stress (e.g., lowering barn temperature in winter prior to loading to minimize extreme temperature changes)

5. PROCEDURES

5.1 SCHEDULING:

5.1.1 Notify the Processor at least 2 weeks before the departure date:

5.1.1.1 Complete and submit a copy of the "Fiche d'information sur le troupeau" to the Processor.

5.1.1.2 Maintain one copy for the Farm records and reserve one copy for the transport company.

5.1.2 Once the departure date is confirmed, recruit catching crew (~ 12 student volunteers)

5.1.3 Ensure Catchers and Transporters arrive on-time at the farm. Student must arrive at least 30 minutes prior to loading for manipulation and loading instructions by the Chief Animal Science Technician. Instructions include but are not limited to:

5.1.3.1 Basic on-farm biosecurity practices

5.1.3.2 Safety precautions

5.1.3.3 Basic bird behavior during catching.

5.1.3.4 Humane handling

5.1.3.5 Definitions of cull and compromised birds and ensuring these birds are not loaded.

5.1.3.6 Conditions of birds or training of catching environment that can have a negative impact on bird welfare during catching and transport.

5.1.4 Document training of catching crews.

5.2 4 hours before loading:

5.2.1 If temperature is< 13C (55F), gradually start decreasing the temperature of the barn to attain the external temperature.

5.2.2 Reduce the light intensity to reduce stress on birds.

5.3 Withdraw feed according to the Processor's instructions. Water should be available to the birds until time of loading.

5.4 Chief Animal Science Technician and the Transporter evaluates the conditions of birds, weather, and the barn prior to catching, and commence catching only if conditions favor humane transport. If bird or barn conditions do not favor humane transport, contact the Processor.

5.5 TRANSPORTATION VEHICLE:

5.5.1 Ensure easy access of the Transport truck to the loading area of the barn.

5.6 Don the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment as per SOP PC-201: Biosecurity: Broiler Barn.

5.7 Divide the personnel into groups with the following roles:

- Catching
- Hauling
- Loading

5.8 CATCHING:

5.8.1 Remain positioned at the location of the cage.

5.8.2 Remove the bird from the pen using 2 legs. Remove only one bird at a time. (Figure 1)

5.8.3 Observe the animals for any health issues to ensure that unfit animals are not loaded.

5.8.4 Hold a maximum of 2 birds in one hand. (Figure 2)

5.8.5 Gently transfer the birds to the Hauler.

5.8.6 Inform Poultry Unit Technician of any sick or injured birds.

5.9 HAULING:

5.9.1 Receive the bird from the Catcher.

5.9.2 Carry up to 2 birds in each hand and transport to the loading area. (Figure 2)

5.9.3 Gently transfer the birds to the loader.

Figure 1: Correct method for carrying 1 bird.

Figure 2: Correct method for carrying 2 birds

5.10 LOADING:

5.10.1 Remain positioned in the transport truck.

5.10.2 Receive the birds from the Hauler.

5.10.3 Place the birds gently and upright in the transport crate to avoid suffocation.

5.10.4 Observes the animals for any health issues to ensure that unfit animals are not accidentally loaded.

5.10.5 Respect the calculated loading densities per drawer or cage and with consideration to weather and environmental conditions, including ventilation. Refer to Table 1: Environmental Considerations

5.10.6 Close the crate. Bird heads, wings, and legs must not be caught between crate or module drawers. (Figure 3)

Figure 3

5.10.7 Stack the transport crate one on top of the other as per transporter's instructions.

TABLE 1: Environmental Considerations:

Maximum Loading & Transport Densities	Moderate	Extreme Heat
Broiler Chickens	63 kg/m^2	54 kg/m^2
Broiler Breeders	66 kg/m^2	56 kg/m^2
End-of-Lay Hens	63 kg/m^2	54 kg/m^2

Reference: The Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals - Poultry

Factors to Consider

- Duration of travel (including loading and lairage)
- Weather at load-out, along route and at processing plant
- Time of day of load-out
- Number of birds in the barn
- Ventilation in barn
- Condition of barn (e.g. litter)

Recommended Code of Practice for the Care & Handling of Farm Animals

Air temperature **in load** should be maintained at 5°C to 30°C for all birds, except end-of-lay hens, which should be maintained at 13°C to 30°C.

Recent research (Mitchell and Kettlewell, 2008) recommends for broilers, an upper **in load** temperature limit of 24°C.

5.11 Check the area around and under the truck and pick up strays before the vehicle moves.

5.12 Walk through the barn to check for any sick/injured birds or any healthy birds that were missed for transport.

5.12.1 Missed birds are loaded into a transport crate.

5.12.2 Sick/injured birds are euthanized as per SOP PU-520: Euthanasia – Poultry.

5.12.3 Place dead birds in a plastic bucket to be disposed of. See SOP PU-116: Carcass Disposal – Poultry

5.13 Ensure the barn doors are properly closed when loading is complete.

5.14 Clean the Broilers rooms as per SOPs PU-205: Manure Management and PU-204: Sanitation Procedure.

5.15 Documentation:

5.15.1 The transporter acknowledges receipt of the load with the signing of the "Fiche d'information sur le troupeau".

5.15.2 The Processor will send a summary of the delivery confirming the health of the animals prior to processing at the plant.

5.15.3 Retain copies of all documents and ensure records are retained for one year.

5.15.4 Communicate concerns with the Processor, Catching Crew Supervisor, and Transporter to prevent further injury, stress, and/or suffering (i.e., compromised birds, state of repair of equipment, truck, trailer, crates etc.).

6. REFERENCES

Alberta Chicken Industry's Catching & Transportation Manual, August 2015. Retrieved from https://www.chicken.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Catching-Manual-linked-Alberta-Chicken-Industry-Revised-August-2015.pdf

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Poultry Industry Council: Should this bird be loaded? A Guide for preparing, loading and transporting Poultry, 2012. Accessed August 2018. Retrieved from http://www.poultryindustrycouncil.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/DT-Handbook-final.compressed.pdf

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Document Status and Revision History

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