1. PURPOSE

Provide instruction on the preparation and loading procedures 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 birds they handle.
2.2 Student Volunteers: have an obligation for the care and welfare of birds they handle.
2.3 Poultry Unit Technician: is responsible for overseeing animal care on-farm and to coordinate 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 Bon de chargement de volailles vivantes
3.3 Certification des Exportations
3.4 Plastic bucket
3.5 Student Volunteers

4. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 The Poultry Unit 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 Spent Laying Hens (available from the Canadian Poultry and Egg Processors Council).
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 Health Monitoring
4.4 Spent hens must be handled with special care as they are more fragile than young birds.
4.5 Load the birds in a way that prevents injury or undue suffering. Refer to Appendix Handling Guidelines for Catching Crews.
4.6 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.
4.7 The time from the barn to the processing plant should be kept as short as possible. Ideally, transport time should not be longer than 36 hours.
4.8 ENVIRONMENTAL CAUTIONS: Load birds only if environmental condition favor humane transport.
4.8.1 Transport birds in a manner that they are unlikely to suffer due to exposure to the weather or inadequate ventilation.
4.8.2 Air temperature in the load should be maintained between 13°C (55° F) and 30°C (86° F)
4.8.3 Load birds in the minimum time possible without compromising bird welfare.
4.8.4 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.

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

4.8.6 Extreme Hot/Humid weather:
   4.8.6.1 Sufficient ventilation must be available at all times.
   4.8.6.2 Position the truck so that birds are shielded from direct sun.
   4.8.6.3 Schedule the transportation at night and in the early morning.
   4.8.6.4 Avoid periods of intense traffic congestion.
   4.8.6.5 Reduce loading density.

4.8.7 Extreme cold weather
   4.8.7.1 DO NOT LOAD wet birds.
   4.8.7.2 Avoid loading the birds during the coldest periods of the day or night.
   4.8.7.3 Acclimatize housed birds gradually to cooler temperatures prior to catching and loading.
   4.8.7.4 Position the truck so that birds are shielded from direct wind.
   4.8.7.5 Stage the loaded containers in the barn, moving all containers to the truck when all birds have been caught.
   4.8.7.6 Transport truck openings should be covered to protect animals from cold winds.

4.9 COMMUNICATION;

4.9.1 Poultry Unit Technician:
   4.9.1.1 Contact the Transporter and/or Processor if there is a major delay on the farm.
   4.9.1.2 Contact the Transporter and/or Processor if bird or barn conditions do not favor humane transport.

4.9.2 Transporter:
   4.9.2.1 Notifies the Poultry Unit Technician and the Processor if there are any changes or delays to the schedule.
   4.9.2.2 Notifies the Poultry Unit Technician if there are changes to the vehicle or equipment that are different from those planned.
   4.9.2.3 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.

4.9.3 Understand the Processor’s expectations for;
   4.9.3.1 Feed withdrawal.
   4.9.3.2 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 months 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 one 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 Poultry Unit 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 environment that can have a negative impact on bird welfare during catching and transport.

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, if required.

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

5.4 Poultry Unit Staff or Technician evaluates the conditions of birds 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 Transporter and Processor.

**NOTE:**

**THIN END-OF-LAY HENS SHOULD NOT BE CONFUSED WITH EMACIATED BIRDS.**
End-of-lay hens will be less muscular than broilers or breeders due to their production cycle and genetics. End-of-lay hens may receive a body condition score of 1 and still be loaded. Cautionary measures might be needed (E.g. adjustment of loading densities, tarping).

5.5 TRANSPORTATION VEHICLE:
  5.5.1 Ensure easy access of the Transport truck to the loading area of the barn.

5.6 Collect eggs before loading begins. Refer to SOP Egg Collection.
5.7 Don the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment as per SOP PU-301.3 Biosecurity: Layer Barn.
5.8 Divide the personnel into groups with the following roles:
  * Catching
  * Hauling
  * Loading

5.9 CATCHING:
  5.9.1 Remain positioned at the location of the cage.
  5.9.2 Remove the bird from the cage using 2 legs. Remove only one bird at a time. (Figure 1)
  5.9.3 Hold a maximum of 3 birds in one hand. (Figure 2)
5.9.4 Gently transfer to birds to the Hauler.
5.9.5 Leave any sick or injured birds in the cage.

5.10 HAULING:

5.10.1 Receive the bird from the Catcher.
5.10.2 Carry up to 3 birds in each hand and transport to the loading area. (Figure 2)
5.10.3 Gently transfer the birds to the loader.

5.11 LOADING:

5.11.1 Remain positioned in the transport truck.
5.11.2 Receive the birds from the Hauler.
5.11.3 Place the birds gently and upright in the transport crate to avoid suffocation.
5.11.4 Respect the calculated loading densities per drawer or cage.
5.11.5 Close the crate. Bird heads, wings, and legs must not be caught between crate or module drawers. (Figure 3)
5.11.6 Stack the transport crate one on top of the other as per transporter’s instructions.

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

5.13 Walk through the barn to check for any sick/injured birds or any healthy birds that were missed for transport.
5.13.1 Missed birds are loaded into a transport crate.
5.13.2 Sick/injured birds are euthanized as per SOP Euthanasia – Poultry.
5.13.3 Place dead birds in a plastic bucket to be disposed of. See SOP Carcass Disposal – Poultry

5.14 Ensure the barn doors are properly closed when loading is complete.
5.15 Remove the plate at both feed auger motors and run them until the pipe is empty.
5.16 Remove the manure and any eggs that had been laid during the loading.
5.17 Documentation:

5.17.1 Complete the “Certification des Exportations” form:
   5.17.1.1 The number of birds.
   5.17.1.2 Description of the transfer of care.
   5.17.1.3 Document the time that care and control of the birds is transferred to the transporter.

5.17.2 The transporter acknowledges receipt of the load with the signing of the “Fiche d’information sur le troupeau”.

5.17.3 The Processor will send a summary of the delivery “Requisition Volailles Vivantes” confirming the health of the animals upon arrival at the plant.

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

5.17.5 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


Canadian Agri-Food Research Council: Recommended code of Practice for the care and handling of pullets, layers and spent fowl. 2003

Document Status and Revision History

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