

EC egg marketing and animal welfare regulations (EMR14)

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Introduction

This guidance describes the minimum criteria to be met by poultry enterprises marketing 'Eggs from caged hens', 'Free Range eggs' and 'Barn eggs'.

The criteria are set out in The Welfare of Farmed Animals (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2002 and in an annex to Commission Regulation EEC 1651/01. This leaflet should be read with the general explanatory leaflet EMR1.

Also described is the minimum criterion for the production of 'Organic eggs' (Council Regulation (EC) No 1804/1999). This leaflet is not a complete and authoritative statement of law.

If you wish to know more about egg production and The Welfare of Laying hens, you should refer to the regulations above.

Why have minimum criteria been set?

For improved Animal Welfare and to avoid confusion amongst consumers and the trade.

The European community felt it was necessary to establish some controls on the production and marketing of eggs and therefore introduced minimum production criteria for those eggs.

What do the minimum criteria cover?

Only four methods of production terms can be used on packs and eggs:

On packs	On eggs
Eggs from caged hens	Cage
Barn eggs	Barn
Free range eggs	Free range
Organic eggs	Organic

Their use is restricted to eggs produced by enterprises which meet the below criteria.

Eggs from caged hens

All newly built cage systems must be of an enriched type (Note: these are the only cage systems allowed after January 1, 2012), for which the following provisions apply:

Stocking density

- each hen must have at least 750 square centimetres of cage area
- 600 square centimetres of which shall be usable
- the remaining 150 square centimetres must have a height of over 20 centimetres
- no cage shall have a total area of less than 2000 square centimetres

Construction

- 600 square centimetres of cage area must be useable
- the remaining 150 square centimetres must have a height of over 20 centimetres
- no cage shall have a total area of less than 2000 square centimetres

Feeders

- an unrestricted food trough of at least 12 centimetres per hen must be provided

Drinkers

- appropriate to the size of group
- at least two drinkers within reach of each hen

Claw Shorteners

- cages must be fitted with suitable claw shortening devices

Nests

- each cage shall provide a nest

Perching

- at least 15 centimetres of perch space for each hen

Litter

- such that pecking and scratching are possible

Aisle width

- minimum of 90 centimetres between tiers of cages
- at least 35 centimetres between the floor of the building and the bottom tier of cages

Barn eggs

The following shall apply to all barn egg production units that must be equipped so that all laying hens have:

Stocking density

- not greater than nine hens per square metre of usable area

Feeders

- linear feeders providing 10 centimetres per bird or
- circular feeders providing at least four centimetres per bird

Drinkers

- continuous drinking troughs providing 2.5 centimetres per hen or
- circular drinking troughs providing one centimetre per hen or
- line drinkers or cups so that there shall be at least one drinker for every 10 hens

Nests

- at least one nest for every seven hens or

- at least one square metre of group nest space for a maximum of 120 hens

Perching

- at least 15 centimetres of perch space for each hen
- 30 centimetres of horizontal space between perches and
- 20 centimetres between perches and the wall
- perches must not be mounted above the litter

Litter

- 250 square centimetres of litter area per hen
- the litter occupying at least one third of the ground surface

Multi level units

- no more than four levels
- hens can move freely between levels
- the headroom between levels must be at least 45 centimetres
- the drinking and feeding facilities must be distributed in such a way as to provide equal access to all hens
- the levels must be arranged as to prevent dropping falling on the levels below

Free range eggs

In addition to the requirements set out in the Barn eggs section above, free range hens must also have:

Pop holes

- there must be several pop holes giving direct access to the outer area
- each pop hole must be at least 35 centimetres high and 40 centimetres wide
- pop holes must extend along the entire length of the building
- a total opening of two metres must be available per group of 1,000 hens

Range

- continuous daytime access to open air runs, except in the case of temporary restrictions imposed by veterinary authorities.
- mainly covered with vegetation and not used for other purposes except for orchards, woodland and livestock grazing
- not extending beyond a radius of 150 metres from the nearest pop hole of the building; an extension of up to 350 metres from the nearest pop hole of the building is permissible provided that there exists an even distribution of drinking troughs and shelters throughout the entire run, with at least four shelters per hectare
- the maximum stocking density of open-air runs must not be greater than 2,500 hens per hectare of ground available to the hens or one hen per four square metres at all times. However, where at least 10 square metres per hen is available and where rotation is practised and hens are given even access to the whole area over the flock's life, each paddock used must at any time assure at least 2.5 square metres per hen

Organic eggs – Defra

Organic poultry must be reared in open range conditions and cannot be kept in cages. The following conditions apply:

Stocking density

- six hens per square metre
- no more than 3,000 birds per house

Construction

- structures with their own dedicated grazing, air space, ventilation, feed and water

Lighting

- natural light may be supplemented by artificial means to provide a maximum of 16 hours light per day with a continuous nocturnal rest period without artificial light of at least eight hours

Nests

- at least one nest for every eight hens or
- at least 120 square centimetres per bird of group nest space

Perching

- at least 18 centimetres of perch space for each hen

Litter

- at least one third of floor space shall be solid and covered with a litter material such as straw, wood shavings, sand or turf a sufficiently large part of the floor area available to the hens must be available for the collection of bird droppings

Pop holes

- pop-holes of a size adequate for the birds
- a combined length of at least four metres per 100 square metres area of the house available to the birds
- several pop holes giving direct access to the outer area

Range

- access to an open air run whenever the weather conditions permit
- access for at least one third of their life
- mainly covered with vegetation
- the maximum external stocking density is not greater than four square metres in rotation/bird, provided that the limit of 170kg of N/ha/yr is not exceeded
- birds must be provided with protective facilities
- adequate numbers of drinking and feeding troughs

If you wish to produce organic eggs you must be registered with one of the appointed UK organic certification bodies. For further information you can telephone Defra on 0207 238 5605.

Alternatively, you can get a list of UK organic certification bodies and their contact details by going to the Defra website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/organic-certification-list-of-uk-approved-organic-control-bodies>

Records

Producers

Separate records for each production description by site showing:

1. The date of placing, age at placing and number of laying hens.
2. The date of culling and the number of hens culled.
3. Daily egg production.
4. The number and / or weight of eggs sold per day or delivered daily by other means
5. The names and addresses of purchasers. Where a feeding method is indicated in accordance with Article 15 of 557/2007 producers shall record the following information, specifically for each feeding method used (e.g. Corn Fed or Four Grain):
 - i) the quantity and type of feed supplied or mixed on site
 - ii) the date of delivery of feed
6. Where a producer uses different farming methods on a single production site, the information referred to above shall be broken down by hen house.

Records must be kept on farm for at least 12 months after the flock has been disposed of and may be subject to inspection.

Packers

Separate daily records must be kept for each production description detailing:

1. The quantities of ungraded eggs they receive, broken down by producer, giving the name, address and producer code and the laying date or period.
2. After the eggs are graded, the quantities by quality and weight grade.
3. The quantities of graded eggs received coming from other packing centres, including the code of those packing centres and the date of minimum durability.
4. The quantities of ungraded eggs delivered to other packing centres, broken down by producer, including the code of those packing centres and the laying date or period.
5. The number and/or weight of eggs delivered, by quality and weight grade, packing date in the case of Class B eggs or the date of minimum durability in the case of Class A eggs, and by purchaser, with the name and address of the latter.
6. Packing centres shall update their physical stock records each week.
7. Records and files referred to above shall be kept for at least twelve months from the date of their creation.
8. Where Class A eggs and their packs bear an indication of how laying hens are fed, packing centres using such indications shall keep separate records in accordance with the above.

Records must be kept by the packer for at least 12 months after the producer ceases to supply eggs or at least 12 months after the flock has been disposed of and may be subject to inspection.

Stamping

Each egg production facility that meets at least the minimum required criteria will be allocated a production site number on approval (Commission Directive 2002/4/EC). This number will reflect the production type and origin. The number will commence with:

- 0UK for Organic
- 1UK for Free Range
- 2UK for Barn
- 3UK for Cage

Each number will end with the suffix SCO. This number must be marked on all Class A eggs and explained on packaging or on a separate sign at point of sale.

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