



Defra's new Code of Practice for the Welfare of Pigs in England and Red Tractor Standards

Defra's new Code of Practice for the Welfare of Pigs in England came into force on March 1.

The Code is Defra's interpretation of existing welfare legislation and is designed to help pig farmers maintain the standards required to comply with it. While the Code does set out some new recommendations for producers, it is not expected that these will prove to be too onerous.

Welfare codes are statutory and as an owner and keeper of pigs you are required by law to be familiar with, and have access to, the relevant code. If you haven't done so already you are encouraged to familiarise yourself with the updated Code by downloading it [here](#).

It is important to note that some Red Tractor standards may not reflect new elements within the updated Code, and this may be the case for some time. Here are some examples of where the Code gives additional guidance to what's included in the current Red Tractor Pigs Standards.

- Red Tractor standard HF.e requires that housing is lit to allow normal behaviours, rest and effective inspection of stock and also requires "a period of darkness each day". However, the legislation states "Where pigs are kept in an artificially lit building, lighting with an intensity of at least 40 lux must be provided for a minimum period of 8 hours per day". The Code details best practice with regards to checking and recording light levels.
- The new Code outlines additional guidance around documenting incidences of tail biting and actions taken to minimise tail biting and the need for docking.
- It provides additional guidance on acceptable forms and combinations of enrichment. While the current Red Tractor standards clearly state that chains alone are not acceptable, the new Code goes further by suggesting that footballs are also unacceptable, unless used in conjunction with other enrichment. The Code also highlights that any nesting material provided to farrowing sows is in addition to enrichment material.
- The new Code outlines Defra's intention for farrowing crates to no longer be necessary, although currently they are still permitted by law and in the Red Tractor standards. The Code now gives guidance on features of indoor free-farrowing systems, which are currently not covered in our standards.
- The Code suggests that the farm's health and welfare plan should include contingency plans for lengthy spells of hot weather.
- It also outlines recommended minimum flow rates through nipple drinkers for various pig weights.

The current Standards Review will aim to bring Red Tractor standards in line with the new Code, but the new standards won't be implemented until October 2021, after industry consultation. While Red Tractor standards are partly aimed at helping you meet legislation, please remember that ultimately it is your own responsibility to ensure that your farming enterprise is always meeting the requirements of the law.

The Code applies to England only, although devolved administrations are likely to align their new codes as closely as possible to Defra's.