



**Red Tractor
Assurance**

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News, updates and practical advice from your Red Tractor Assurance team // AUGUST 2019

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Red Tractor poultry standards changes

What you need to know about the mid-cycle standards changes which come into effect on 1 October.

Red Tractor reviews the standards across all its sectors on a three-year cycle. This is to ensure that practices on farm keep pace with the best available science and match consumers and customers' expectations of how food is being produced. Occasionally changes need to be made in between the cycles and Red Tractor's Poultry Board has recently agreed a small number of changes to the poultry standards.

● Standards being removed from all poultry standards, including broilers, ducks and turkeys are:

- **AM.b.1** – meaning farms are no longer required to calibrate proportioners
- **HF.j** – meaning Red Tractor no longer requires electrical installations to be tested every five years by a registered electrician.

These standards have been removed because it was felt they fall outside of the scope of Red Tractor.

● The enrichment requirement has been amended in the free range broiler standards such that all perch/platform space accessible by the birds will be counted. Previously the standard required that perches/platforms should be no more than 15cm off the ground. This

change is in recognition of the fact that "leggier" slower-growing breeds are usually able to access higher areas. This will mean that all of the perch space of A-frame perches will be counted, if an assessor can see that all levels are accessible to the birds.

On-farm hatching

From 1 October on-farm hatching will be permitted on Red Tractor broiler chicken farms.

Some farms have been trialling hatching eggs on the grower farm instead of at the hatchery for several months under a derogation from Red Tractor and members of the chicken Technical Advisory Committee had the opportunity to visit one of these farms earlier in the year to see it in practice.

New standards introduced to the broiler scheme will ensure specific requirements are met on farms undertaking on-farm hatching. These include:

- Staff involved with egg handling, monitoring hatching, chick grading and operation of IMD machinery undergo additional task-specific training
- Requirements around egg shell temperature
- Eggs placed for on-farm hatching are



candled at the hatchery first

● Trays used for on-farm hatching are cleaned and disinfected before return to the hatchery

Some standards have also been amended to ensure references to 'chicks' also now make reference to 'eggs' where relevant, and there are also some new and amended standards for Red Tractor broiler hatcheries.

Members must keep their certification body informed of any material changes to their operation that might affect certification. Any farms wishing to do on-farm hatching are therefore required to notify their certification body of their intention.





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Member Rule 41 entitles Red Tractor and a member's certification body to specify 'special conditions of certification' which may include additional assessments over and above the normal routine frequency at the member's cost. Red Tractor has asked that certification bodies conduct an assessment at farms doing on-farm hatching before the third crop of on-farm hatching is started. This may be achieved either by:

- Bringing forward the farm's routine annual audit if your next assessment is due to occur within the next six months, or
- Conducting a pre-arranged spot check at the farm to audit against the on-farm hatching standards (at the member's cost), if your next routine assessment is more than six months away.

Full details of the changes to standards can be accessed [here](#).

CEO comment: compliant poultry farms have nothing to fear



order but one we must achieve if Red Tractor is to remain the industry's leading food and farming assurance scheme.

The tougher inspection regime has been in place in the poultry sector since April. The non-conformances found on farms selected for an unannounced inspection have all been significant issues which risk the reputation of the whole UK poultry industry. We simply cannot allow this to happen, and Red Tractor has taken action.

For those who are compliant, it's business as usual.

The strengthening of Red Tractor's inspection regime was just one element of a strategy I announced last autumn as we bid to become the flagship for British farming at home and abroad.

Other developments included a £1.5m advertising campaign, and new standards to cover a broader range of farming systems.

My vision is for a scheme which consumers demand, customers value, farmers aspire to and government is proud of.

My key message then was the same as it is now. Farms that continue to comply with the required scheme standards will not be affected.

It is only businesses found to have a high number of non-conformances, or serious breaches, which are now subject to unannounced spot checks.

Our goal is for every member to meet every standard every day, which is a tall

"Farms that continue to comply with the required scheme standards will not be affected."

One very simple action our poultry members can take is to read up on the top reasons for a non-conformance to be raised during an audit and take action to avoid them.

A comprehensive list can be found on the Red Tractor website [here](#).

We also have a bank of our previous newsletters which go into more detail on changes I announced, and there is a webinar covering frequently asked questions available at assurance.

[Click here to watch.](#)



Chairman's view: keeping pace with change

As a farm assurance scheme it is Red Tractor's role to ensure that food produced on British farms meets consumers' expectations, and it is clear to me that the way chicken is produced will, in time, have to change.

Major buyers of UK chicken are already giving clear signals about how they will want broilers to be farmed in the future.

Commitments such as the EU broiler ask or Better Chicken Commitment indicate the direction of travel.

The trend is towards slower-grown birds with natural light produced in around twice the time it currently takes for a crop to be ready.

My role is to ensure there is a balance struck over what is right for shoppers and customers, practically achievable for farmers, beneficial for birds and financially viable for businesses in the long term.

With the changes the UK is going

through at the moment it is vital that we have an assurance scheme which continues to speak to customers and consumers about British standards.

For two decades Red Tractor standards have kept pace with consumer attitudes so our members produce a product that the market demands.

There are undoubtedly challenges to come for the poultry industry but Red Tractor will continue to underpin high standards of production and allow farmers to work through those challenges.



Meet your technical manager: Georgina Crayford

George joined Red Tractor in February 2019 and is responsible for the day to day running of the pig and poultry schemes,

working closely alongside the Technical Advisory Committees.

A Nuffield Scholar with a PhD completed at the University of Liverpool on salmonella in pigs, George brings a wealth of experience to the role having previously worked at the National Pig Association and

AHDB Pork.

In her time in the industry she has represented the pig sector on a variety of issues, specialising in pig health and welfare and has played a leading role in the sector's drive to reduce and refine antibiotic use.

Despite growing up in Kent George does not come from a farming background, but that hasn't stopped her becoming passionate about British food, farming and Red Tractor which she believes is vitally important to both the pig and poultry industries.

George said: "During my career I've been closely involved in working on tough issues such as dealing with

animal rights activity and pressure on agriculture's antibiotic use.

"My role involves working with farmers, colleagues and stakeholders to drive positive change from within Red Tractor.

"The poultry sector is relatively new to me, but I've been making sure to get out and about on broiler, duck and turkey farms to improve my knowledge and meet people within the industry.

"Plus, many of the topics I worked on in the pig industry, such as antibiotic use, biosecurity and animal rights activity, are relevant to the poultry sector as well."

Breaches risk our reputation

Several instances of Red Tractor poultry farms breaching standards of bird welfare have been highlighted in the national media in recent months.

Activist activity is likely to increase and exposes which uncover genuine standards breaches on British farms damage the reputation of the entire industry and undermine

Red Tractor in the eyes of consumers, customers and government.

Compliance 365 days a year is essential on all members' farms – the small minority who flout the rules cause serious and far-reaching repercussions.

If you have had, or suspect, activist activity contact Red Tractor as soon as possible.



HOT WEATHER

Animal welfare is one of Red Tractor's top priorities and members are expected to plan and prepare for managing livestock in extreme weather conditions.

Lessons can be learnt from July's heatwave by reviewing heat stress policies. Considerations should include handling of volumes of deadstock over and above what is usually dealt with on farm. What preparations can be made in advance of hot weather to cope better in the event of significant losses? Where and how will the birds be stored? What arrangements will be made for swift collection? These procedures should be documented in the farm's emergency plan as required by standard DP.b.

Preparation key to AI threat

Members are advised to prepare for the threat of avian influenza before the risk increases in the colder months this autumn and winter.

Defra has published a useful document outlining guidance on biosecurity measures to prevent birds becoming sick with diseases like avian influenza. [Click here](#) to read it.

Red Tractor poultry standards require all farms to have an AI contingency plan and that it is reviewed annually and members

are encouraged to check their plan covers all relevant risks and to ensure all staff are aware of biosecurity measures.

Poultry technical manager George Crayford said: "Hope for the best but prepare for the worst. Should your farm become infected or get caught up in a restriction zone, you'll be grateful you took the time to check your contingency plan is fit for purpose."

