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PCO Guidance on Poultry Living Conditions

The NOP regulations at 7CFR 205.239 require that all livestock producers must establish and maintain year-round livestock living conditions that accommodate the health and natural behavior of animals, including access to the outdoors, fresh air, and sunlight.

The following guidelines for poultry living conditions are based on organic industry standards and represent PCO's current policy. It also is consistent with current humane animal welfare standards.

Operators who do not meet these minimum requirements must submit justification in their OSP for their alternative methods to accommodate the health and natural behavior of animals.

I. Indoor space requirements (based on live weight of birds)

- **Layers:** a minimum of 1.5 sq ft of floor space per bird must be provided to allow for natural behavior.
 - In a house with a perching/roosting area over a droppings pit/belt the minimum space can be 1.2 sq ft floor space per hen.
 - In multi-tier systems with feeders and drinkers on overhead perches/platforms, and in which the overhead space provides sufficient space for at least 55% of the hens to perch, a minimum of 1.0 sq ft of floor space per bird must be provided.

Clarification: adequate perching space must be at least 6 inches linear ft per bird. Perching space cannot be added into floor space for purposes of total floor space calculation. Nest boxes cannot be included in floor space calculations, however flat platforms may be included as floor space if available to birds. In Multi-tier systems, perching space is calculated as 6 inches times 55% of total bird number.

- **Broilers:** maximum stocking density is calculated as weight per bird per available indoor floor space, and must not exceed 6lbs /sq ft.
- **Pullets:** for layers up to 18 weeks of age, housing density must not exceed (on a weight basis) the rate allowed for the laying flock.
Clarification: in accordance with current Humane Farm Animal Care standards - for 0-6 weeks of age= 0.5 sq ft/bird, 6-18 weeks = 0.93-0.96 sq ft/bird.
- **Turkeys:** maximum stocking density is calculated as weight per bird per available indoor floor space, and must not exceed 7.5 lbs/sq.ft. This equates to the following space requirements for birds:
 - Up to 15 lbs: 2 sq ft
 - Up to 22.5 lbs: 3 sq ft
 - Up to 30 lbs: 4 sq ft
 - Up to 37.5 lbs: 5 sq ft
- **Ducks:** (all calculations are based on live weight of birds) Indoor housing must provide a minimum of 2.5 sq feet per bird. Litter must be provided and changed often enough to keep it clean and dry.

II. Outdoor space requirements

- **Layers and Broilers:** outdoor access area must be a minimum of 10% of the indoor floor space.
 - For layer houses with multi-tier systems or perching/roosting areas the outdoor space should be calculated as 10% of (1.5 sq. ft X number of birds/house).
- **Turkeys:** outdoor access area must be a minimum of 20% of the indoor floor space.
- **Ducks:** Outside access must provide a space that is a minimum of 10% of the size of the indoor space (0.25 sq ft/bird). It is highly recommended to have access to water for bathing.
- **Other species:** check with the PCO office.