



SPECIALISED BREEDERS AUSTRALIA

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Specialised Breeders Australia (SBA) thanks Animal Health Australia for the opportunity to comment on the proposed draft Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guideline for Poultry.

SBA is the largest supplier of day-old commercial laying hens and point of lay pullets to the Australian egg industry. Annually, over 10 million Hy-Line and Lohmann chicks are hatched from three dedicated layer hatcheries across Australia. SBA also exports day old chicks and hatching eggs to over 10 countries in Asia.

SBA supplies in excess of 20 million fertile, incubated eggs annually to Seqirus for the production of human influenza vaccines.

SBA operates breeder layer farms and hatcheries in Victoria, a breeder layer hatchery in Western Australia, and contract started pullet growing farms in Victoria, NSW, Queensland and WA. Our Sales and Technical teams operate in all States and Territories of Australia.

SBA employs over 140 people across Australia.

SBA is supportive of Option C – adopt the proposed standards as currently drafted, which would replace the Model Code of Practice in the base case.

Consistent national animal welfare legislation is essential to provide certainty for business. With operations in four states, and technical specialists providing management, husbandry and veterinary advice in all states and territories, consistency of welfare standards across all jurisdictions is critical.

The area of risk to poultry welfare of the greatest concern for SBA is routine second (hot blade) beak trimming. SBA are of the opinion that routine second beak trims are not required for all laying or breeding flocks, and this treatment should only be permitted under the advisement of an experienced poultry veterinarian based on previous flock history and current farm nutrition and flock management. Poultry veterinarians are best placed to take into account the flock health status, management procedures, nutrition and other factors that influence the need for this treatment, and to assist producers to alter factors within their control to reduce the requirement for this second hot blade beak treatment.

SBA strongly supports the banning of hot blade beak treatment at day of age in hatcheries. Infra-red beak treatment technology is readily available in Australia and results in an even, consistent beak treatment with less pain and fewer negative welfare outcomes than the hot blade alternative when used at day of age.

SBA has additional concerns and comments on the Standards as drafted –

SA6.5 – A person in charge must ensure poultry except for meat chickens, emus, ostriches and quail are exposed to at least 4 hours of continuous darkness within a 24 hour period.

SBA strongly supports the use of intermittent lighting in the first 7 days after hatching – 4 hours lights on followed by 2 hours lights off – before changing to no less than 4 hours lights off every 24 hours at 7 days of age. SBA has shown from implementation of this lighting program significant positive benefits to mortality, weight gain and uniformity. We strongly believe this intermittent



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lighting program in the first 7 days of life should be permitted under this standard as it results in life long improved outcomes for the hens.

SA9.14 – A person must use appropriate tools and methods to trim the beaks of poultry.

SBA believes this should be reworded to incorporate a clear standard for training. As an example – A person must have the relevant knowledge, experience and skills, and use appropriate tools and methods to trim the beaks of poultry.

SB1.5 and SB 3.5 – A person in charge must ensure that after the training period, where hens are housed under artificial light, lighting schedules must provide a minimum of 4 hours continuous darkness in each 24 hour period.

SBA strongly supports the use of midnight feeding (2 hours lights on in the middle of a dark period every 24 hours e.g. 16 hours on, 3 hours off, 2 hours on, 3 hours off) to reduce the impact of high environmental temperatures, particularly in free range situations where environmental conditions cannot be as carefully manipulated as cage and barn systems. Addition of this night time lighting period allows birds an opportunity to eat and drink during the cooler part of the day, which improves liveability and reduces negative behaviours including feather picking.

Mr. Richard Rayner
Chief Executive Officer
Specialised Breeders Australia
14th February 2018