

AUSTRALIAN EGG
CORPORATION LIMITED



Do your cages meet the 1995 and 2001 Standards?

- summary & checklist -

A report funded by
Australian Egg Corporation Limited (AECL)
and prepared by
Geof Runge
Queensland Department of Primary Industries (QDPI)



Disclaimer – The AECL and QDPI strives to keep this information up to date, but cannot guarantee the information provided is accurate or of good quality. This information is provided "as is" with no express or implied warranty. Any mistakes in this information that are brought to our attention will be corrected as soon as possible. AECL and QDPI reserves the right to change this information at any time and without notice. AECL and QDPI accepts no liability for any loss or damage a person suffers because that person has directly or indirectly relied on any information contained in this document.

Introduction

In August 2000, ARMCANZ (Agriculture and Resource Management Council of Australia and New Zealand) made decisions on layer cage housing which were incorporated into the Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals – Domestic Poultry 4th Edition (2001) (hereafter referred to as the 4th edition of the Code).

This document contains a checklist, along with supporting information contained in the Appendices, to help egg producers to determine if their layer cages comply with these new standards and to determine the number of hens that can be housed in their cages. The information in this document is based on the intent of the 4th edition of the Code. This Code can be purchased or downloaded from CSIRO Publishing at www.publish.csiro.au. (In the search box type in 'poultry welfare' and click on 'go'). There is ambiguity as to whether the 1995 Standard referred to in 4th edition of the Code applies to pre 1 January 1995 cages. Actual interpretation will depend on the wording of any legislation that may be introduced into each State and Territory.

In essence, the 2001 Standard encompasses the previous 1995 Standard (the Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals – Domestic Poultry 3rd Edition, 1995) while increasing the space allowance for hens in cages. The 2001 Standard also establishes an economic life for cages of 20 years from the date the cages were commissioned. Cages commissioned prior to 1 January 2001 have until 1 January 2008 to meet the 1995 standards and may be stocked with a minimum space allowance per bird of 450 cm² (3 or more fowls (< 2.4kg) per cage) for 20 years from the date they were commissioned or until 1 January 2008, whichever is the later. Cages commissioned after 1 January 2001 must immediately comply with the 1995 standards and must be stocked at 550 cm².

These decisions have been endorsed by each State and Territory Government and are the basis to achieve improved hen welfare outcomes in Australia. Each State and Territory will need to implement any legislation which they consider supports key elements of the Code. As at May 2005, Queensland has done this by amending its Animal Care and Protection Regulations. Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory likewise have legislation in place, with other States yet to follow suit.

Egg producers will need to check with the relevant State/Territory Animal Welfare Unit/Bureau for clarification of how the 4th edition of the Code will be interpreted and applied in the applicable State or Territory. Contact details are provided in the appendix of this document.

This document is divided into the following sections:

1. Checklist:
 - 1.1. Do your cages meet the 1995 and 2001 Standards?
 - 1.2. Cage floor area and number of hens stocked per cage (as part of the 2001 Standard)
2. Appendices:
 - 2.1. The sections of the 4th edition of the Code applying to cages:
 - 2.2. Application of the Standards
 - 2.3. Cage modification
 - 2.4. Explanatory diagrams for cage dimensions and floor support wires
 - 2.5. Contact details for state government representatives

It is recommended that you check all your cages including any purchased since January 2001. There are instances where new cages may not meet the 1995 Standard.

Further information on cage modification is available from the AECL web page www.aecl.org in the report titled "Modifying egg production systems to meet changing consumer needs."

1. CHECKLIST

1.1. Do your cages meet the 1995 and 2001 Standards?

	<i>Question</i>	*	<i>Cage A</i>	<i>Cage B</i>	<i>Cage C</i>	<i>Cage D</i>	<i>Cage E</i>
a	What is the width of the cage front? (cm or inches)	A					
b ¹	What is the cage depth? (cm or inches)	B					
c	Is the height at the cage front 40cm or more?	C	yes / no	yes / no	yes / no	yes / no	yes / no
d	Multiply the cage depth (b) by 65%. This is the distance from the cage front to the point towards the cage back that marks the extent of 65% of the cage floor area. (cm or inches)	H					
e	Is the cage height at the distance in (d) above greater or equal to 40cm or 15.75 inches?	J	yes / no	yes / no	yes / no	yes / no	yes / no
f ¹	If the cage is fitted with a baffle, how far does it extend into the cage? (cm or inches)	E					
g	Is the height at the back of the cage equal to or more than 35cm or 13.75 inches?	D	yes / no	yes / no	yes / no	yes / no	yes / no
h	Is the floor slope equal to or less than 8 degrees? This is equivalent to 14mm fall in 100mm or 1.7" fall in 12" of cage depth.		yes / no	yes / no	yes / no	yes / no	yes / no
i	Is the cage door opening the full width of the cage front or at least 50cm or 19.7 inches?	G	yes / no	yes / no	yes / no	yes / no	yes / no
j	Is the cage door opening the full height of the cage front above the feed trough?	F	yes / no	yes / no	yes / no	yes / no	yes / no
k ²	Is the distance between the widest spaced cage floor support wires within the cage area equal to or less than 5.1cm or 2 inches?	K	yes / no	yes / no	yes / no	yes / no	yes / no
l	Are the hens in tiered cages protected from the excreta from the hens above? That is, are there manure belts or deflectors present? Are they effective? Are the manure deflectors or manure belts in good condition and working properly?		yes / no	yes / no	yes / no	yes / no	yes / no
m	Is there 10cm or 3.9" or more of feed trough per hen?		yes / no	yes / no	yes / no	yes / no	yes / no

continued next page...

	<i>Question</i>	*	<i>Cage A</i>	<i>Cage B</i>	<i>Cage C</i>	<i>Cage D</i>	<i>Cage E</i>
n	Is there 10cm or 3.9" or more of water trough per hen or two or more nipples within reach of each cage?		yes / no	yes / no	yes / no	yes / no	yes / no
o	Do the cages meet the 1995 Standard? An answer of "no" to any question above indicates a cage that does not meet the Standard.		yes / no	yes / no	yes / no	yes / no	yes / no
p	If the answer was "no" in (o) above, can the cages be economically modified or repaired to meet the 1995 Standard?		yes / no	yes / no	yes / no	yes / no	yes / no

* This column designates the cage dimension as illustrated in section 2.4 titled "explanatory diagrams for cage dimensions and floor support wires."

¹ Baffles – The industry guideline suggests that if the baffle extends more than 10cm into the cage, reduce the cage depth by the amount greater than 10cm before calculating floor area and number of hens able to be stocked per cage.

² Cage floor support wires – The industry guideline is that the cage floor support wires should be no more than 5.2cm or 2" apart.

Note that for questions (l), (m) and (n), manure deflectors can be added or repaired, number of birds per cage reduced to meet the feed space requirement or the drinking system replaced to ensure that these cages comply with the new standards.

1.2. What is the cage floor area and number of hens able to be stocked per cage and in the cage facility? (as part of the 2001 Standard)?

	<i>Question</i>	*	<i>Cage A</i>	<i>Cage B</i>	<i>Cage C</i>	<i>Cage D</i>	<i>Cage E</i>
q ¹	What is the cage floor area? – multiply (a) x (b) cm ² . If the baffle extends more than 10cm into the cage, reduce the cage depth by the depth of protrusion more than 10cm.						
r ³	If the cages are pre 1 January 2001 cages, how many hens can be housed per cage at 450cm ² per hen?						
s ³	If the cages are post 1 January 2001 cages, how many hens can be housed per cage at 550cm ² per hen?						
t	How many cages are of this size?						
u	What is the maximum number of hens that the cages can hold? – multiply (q) or (r) by the number of cages (s).						

³ A minimum of 450cm² per hen for pre 1 January 2001 cages and 550cm² per hen for post 1 January 2001 cages meeting the 1995 Code. For questions on stocking density for less than three birds per cage or for heavier birds see Tables 1 and 2 in the Appendices for more detail.

2. APPENDICES

2.1. THE SECTIONS OF THE 4TH EDITION OF THE CODE APPLYING TO CAGES

2.1.1 Commissioning of cages

Commissioning of cages is defined as the point when the contract to purchase or lease is signed.

2.1.2 The 1995 Standard

This describes what is referred to as the 1995 Standard in the 4th edition of the Code. Note that the intent of the 2001 Standard is that these requirements will apply to all cages on 1 January 2008 irrespective of when they were commissioned.

Floor construction

The floor must be constructed to provide support for each forward pointing toe. See the section Application of the Standards for guidance on how to apply this requirement to cages.

Floor slope

The slope of the floor should not exceed 8 degrees. This is equivalent to 14mm fall in 100mm of cage depth or 1.7" fall in 12".

Multi tiered cages

Multi tiered cages must be arranged so that:

- birds in the lower tiers are protected from excreta from above, and
- all birds are fully visible for regular inspection and individual birds can be easily removed from cages as required.

Feed space

There must be not less than 10cm or 3.9" of feed trough per bird.

Drinkers

There must be not less than 10cm 3.9" water trough per bird or no less than two nipple or cup drinkers provided within reach of each cage.

Cage height

Birds must be able to stand at normal height in cages. Cages must be at least higher than the maximum height of the birds standing normally. The height of all cages must be at least 40cm or 15.75" over 65 percent of the cage floor area and not less than 35cm or 13.75" at any point.

Cage front

The design and size of cage openings must be such that birds can be placed in them or removed from them without causing them injury or unnecessary suffering. Cages must have doors the full height and width of the cage front. Since 1995, larger cages have been introduced and their doors must open either to the full width or to a width of 50cm or 19.7".

2.1.3 The 2001 Standard

This section describes what is referred to as the 2001 Standard in the 4th edition of the Code. As of 1 January 2001, the 1995 Standard and the stocking density for post 1 January cages applies to post 1 January 2001 cages and becomes the 2001 Standard.

Stocking Density

Cages for laying hens, irrespective of their level of compliance with any design and construction standard, may be used only if they also comply with requirements for stocking density current at the time.

For all cages commissioned after 1 January 2001 a minimum of 550cm² must be provided per hen for three or more hens per cage where hens weigh less than 2.4kg.

At 1 January 2008 for pre 1 January 2001 cages meeting the 1995 Standard or modified to meet the 1995 Standard, a minimum of 450cm² must be provided per hen for three or more hens per cage where hens weigh less than 2.4kg. This stocking density continues for the cage life.

Where a contract to purchase or lease was signed prior to 1 January 2001, to provide a space allowance of less than 550cm² per bird, installation of these cages must have been completed by 30 June 2001, otherwise the stocking density will be 550cm² per bird.

Table 1 For cages commissioned pre 1 January 2001 meeting the 1995 Standard

Type of cage	Minimum cage floor area per bird
3 or more fowls (< 2.4kg) per cage	450cm ²
3 or more fowls (> 2.4 kg) per cage	600cm ²
2 fowls per cage	675cm ²
Single fowl cages	1,000cm ²

Applies from 1 January, 2008

Table 2 For cages commissioned post 1 January 2001 meeting the 1995 Standard

Type of cage	Minimum cage floor area per bird
3 or more fowls (< 2.4kg) per cage	550cm ²
3 or more fowls (> 2.4 kg) per cage	600cm ²
2 fowls per cage	675cm ²
Single fowl cages	1,000cm ²

Applies from date of commissioning of the cages

Floor area

Floor area is measured in the horizontal plane and includes the area under the egg or waste baffle and the area under the drinking nipples and vee-trough for water. See the section "Application of the Standards" for guidance on how to apply this requirement if the baffle protrudes more than 10cm into the cage.

2.1.4 Cage Life Standard

A standard for cage life has been defined in the 4th edition of the code.

Cages meeting the 1995 Standards have a life of 20 years from date of commissioning or until 1 January 2008 whichever is the later, when they must be de-commissioned or modified to meet standards applying at the time.

Cages not meeting all of the 1995 Standards have a life until 1 January 2008 when they must be decommissioned or modified to meet the standards applying at the time. The standard applying is the 2001 Standard.

2.2 APPLICATION OF THE STANDARDS

There are some instances and irregularities in cage design where it will be up to the Animal Welfare Unit/Bureau responsible for animal welfare legislation in the State/Territory as to how the Standards are interpreted and applied. Some of these instances are described below including industry guidelines where applicable.

Cages with top opening doors

For cages with doors in the top of the cage, the door must be the full width of the cage and the depth equivalent to the door height in cages commissioned since 2001 that meet the 2001 Standard. The typical height of the door opening on cages installed since 2001 is at least 22cm.

Sloped backed and 'V' back cages

Where pre 1 January 2001 cages with partly sloped ('V' back) or fully sloped backs meet the 1995 Standard except for cage height requirements, the section of the floor area that actually meets the height requirements be used to estimate the stocking rate. This floor area can be calculated as described below.

- a) Measure the horizontal distance (cm) from the cage front to the point at which the cage top is 40cm above the cage floor. Divide this measurement by 0.65 and multiply by the cage width to give the floor area (cm²) meeting the height requirement.
- b) Measure the horizontal distance (cm) from the cage front to the point at which the cage top or the sloping back is 35cm above the cage floor. Multiply this measurement by the cage width to give the floor area (cm²) meeting the height requirement.
- c) Take the floor area, which ever is the lesser of a) or b) above, and divide this by 450 to give the number of hens that can be housed per cage.

The effect is that the cage can be used at a reduced stocking density. That is, the number of birds that can be stocked in the cage is based on the cage floor area that meets the Standards.

Floor area

The 1995 Standard says that the area under the baffle is included in the cage floor area. However an industry guideline recommends that if the baffle protrudes further than 10cm into the cage area, then the floor area is reduced by the amount of the additional protrusion.

Floor support wires for forward pointing toe

The 1995 Standard says that the floor must be constructed to provide support for each forward pointing toe. The industry has a guideline to assist farmers to apply this part of the Standard to their cage floors. It recommends that the cage floor support wires within the cage area must be no more than 5.1cm or 2" apart. This is considered to be the maximum spacing that will provide support to the forward pointing toe.

Inspection of the birds

In multi-tiered cages particularly, are all the birds fully visible for regular inspection? This is interpreted to mean that an experienced operator is able to sufficiently see each hen in the cage to determine if it is sick or injured and is able to do this without unduly disturbing the hens.

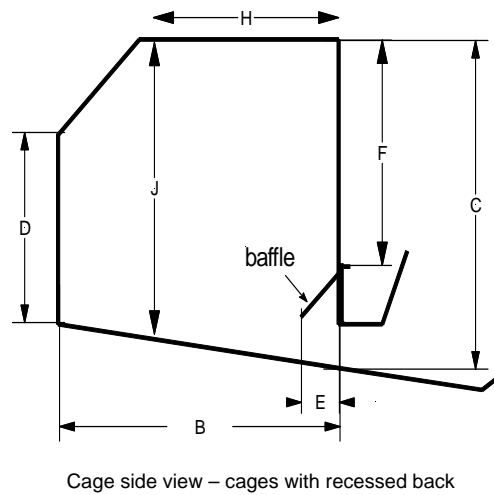
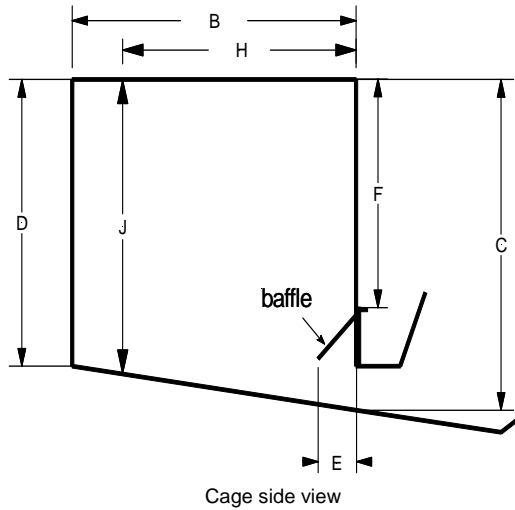
Water and Feed Space

Water space can be corrected by adding more nipples while feed space can be corrected by reducing the number of hens per cage.

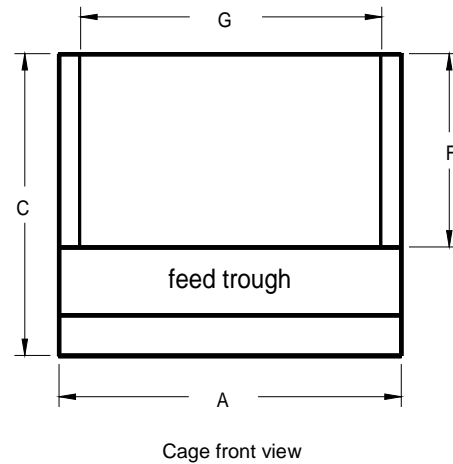
2.3 CAGE MODIFICATION

Most cages have no potential for being modified to meet the 1995 Standard because it is uneconomical, too difficult to do and/or almost the entire cage has to be replaced. A small number of cages have the potential to be modified. These cages require replacement of the cage front with a front with full width doors and may also require the provision of additional drinker space or the fitting or replacement of excreta deflectors to meet the 1995 Standard.

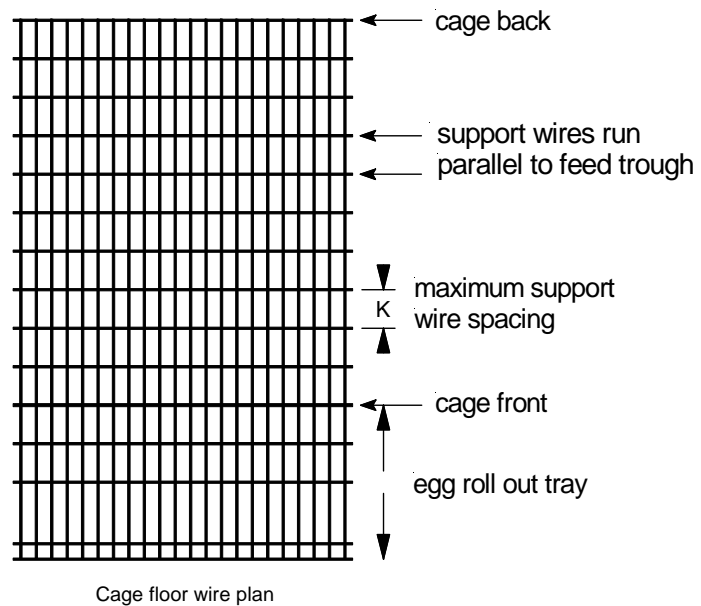
2.4. EXPLANATORY DIAGRAMS FOR CAGE DIMENSIONS AND FLOOR SUPPORT WIRES



- A Cage front width
- B Cage depth
- C Height of cage front (minimum 40cm)
- D Height of cage back (minimum 35cm)
- E Distance the baffle extends into the cage
- F Cage door opening height (full height)
- G Cage door opening width (full width)
- H Distance from cage front to the point where the vertical distance between the cage floor and top is equal to 40cm
- J Point where cage height is equal to 40cm



- K Spacing of the cage floor support wires within the cage area – that is, the wires that run parallel to the feed trough (maximum 5.2cm)



2.5. CONTACT DETAILS FOR STATE GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES

Egg producers unsure of the Model Code of Practice, its implications or compliance should, in the first instance, make contact with their respective state representatives as outlined in the list below.

Victoria

Dr Stephen Tate
Director
Bureau of Animal Welfare
Department of Primary Industries
475-485 Mickleham Road
Attwood, Vic, 3049
Tel: (03) 9217 4200
Fax: (03) 9217 4331
E-mail: animal.welfare@dpi.vic.gov.au

Or

Dr Greg Parkinson
Senior Industry Officer, Poultry
Victorian Institute of Animal Science
Department of Primary Industries
475-485 Mickleham Road
Attwood, Vic, 3049
Tel: (03) 9217 4200
Fax: (03) 9217 4299

New South Wales

Dr Ross Burton
Manager, Animal Welfare
Animal Welfare Unit
NSW Department of Primary Industries
161 Kite Street or Locked Bag 21
Orange, NSW, 2800
Tel: (02) 6391 3324
Fax: (02) 6391 3570
E-mail: ross.burton@agric.nsw.gov.au

Tasmania

Dr Mick Middleton
Manager, Animal Health & Welfare
Department of Primary Industries, Water & Environment
13 St John's Avenue
Newtown, Tas, 7008
Tel: (03) 6233 6882
Fax: (03) 6278 1875
E-mail: mick.middleton@dpiwe.tas.gov.au

South Australia

Dr Deb Kelly
Manager Animal Welfare
Department of Environment & Heritage
Level 2
1 Richmond Road
Keswick, SA, 5035
GPO Box 1047
Adelaide, SA, 5001
Tel: (08) 8124 4801
Fax: (08) 8124 4938
E-mail: kelly.deborah@saugov.sa.gov.au

Western Australia

Dr Michael Paton
Senior Veterinary Officer
Animal Welfare
Agriculture Western Australia
3 Baron-Hay Court
South Perth
Locked Bag 4
Bentley Delivery Centre, WA, 6983
Tel: (08) 9368 3627
Fax: (08) 9367 6248
E-mail: psuijdendorp@agric.wa.gov.au

Northern Territory

Dr Kevin de Witte
Regional Veterinary Officer
NT Department of Business, Industry and Resource Development
Katherine Research Station
Stuart Highway (4 km south of Katherine)
PO Box 1346
KATHERINE NT 0850
Tel: (08) 8973 9758
Fax: (08) 8973 9759
E-mail: kevin.dewitte@nt.gov.au

Australian Capital Territory

Dr Will Andrew
Conservation and Land Management
Environment ACT
O'Connor Depot
Cnr Dryandra St & Belconnen Way
O'Connor, ACT, 2602
PO Box 144
Lyneham, ACT, 2602
Phone: (02) 6207 2357
Fax: (02) 6207 2361
E-mail: will.andrew@act.gov.au