

Council Directive 1999/74/EC of 19 July 1999 laying
down minimum standards for the protection of laying hens

CHAPTER I

Provisions applicable to alternative systems

Article 4

1 Member States shall ensure that from 1 January 2002 all newly built or rebuilt systems of production referred to in this chapter and all such systems of production brought into use for the first time comply at least with the requirements below.

1. All systems must be equipped in such a way that all laying hens have:
 - (a) either linear feeders providing at least 10 cm per bird or circular feeders providing at least 4 cm per bird;
 - (b) either continuous drinking troughs providing 2,5 cm per hen or circular drinking troughs providing 1 cm per hen.

In addition, where nipple drinkers or cups are used, there shall be at least one nipple drinker or cup for every 10 hens. Where drinking points are plumbed in, at least two cups or two nipple drinkers shall be within reach of each hen;
 - (c) at least one nest for every seven hens. If group nests are used, there must be at least 1 m² of nest space for a maximum of 120 hens;
 - (d) adequate perches, without sharp edges and providing at least 15 cm per hen. Perches must not be mounted above the litter and the horizontal distance between perches must be at least 30 cm and the horizontal distance between the perch and the wall must be at least 20 cm;
 - (e) at least 250 cm² of littered area per hen, the litter occupying at least one third of the ground surface.
2. The floors of installations must be constructed so as to support adequately each of the forward-facing claws of each foot.
3. In addition to the provisions laid down in points 1 and 2,
 - (a) if systems of rearing are used where the laying hens can move freely between different levels,
 - (i) there shall be no more than four levels;
 - (ii) the headroom between the levels must be at least 45 cm;
 - (iii) the drinking and feeding facilities must be distributed in such a way as to provide equal access for all hens;
 - (iv) the levels must be so arranged as to prevent droppings falling on the levels below.
 - (b) If laying hens have access to open runs:

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- (i) there must be several popholes giving direct access to the outer area, at least 35 cm high and 40 cm wide and extending along the entire length of the building; in any case, a total opening of 2 m must be available per group of 1 000 hens;
 - (ii) open runs must be:
 - of an area appropriate to the stocking density and to the nature of the ground, in order to prevent any contamination;
 - equipped with shelter from inclement weather and predators and, if necessary, appropriate drinking troughs.
4. The stocking density must not exceed nine laying hens per m² usable area.
- However, where the usable area corresponds to the available ground surface, Member States may, until 31 December 2011, authorise a stocking density of 12 hens per m² of available area for those establishments applying this system on 3 August 1999.
- 2 Member States shall ensure that the minimum requirements laid down in paragraph 1 apply to all alternative systems from 1 January 2007.