

Welfare Potential by Production System for Laying Hens

Level	Example System	Space allowance/ Stocking density	Beak trimming ¹	Enrichment
1 = Bad	Barren battery cage	430cm-550 ² per hen ²	Permitted	None
2	'Enriched cage'	750cm ² per hen	Permitted	Nest box, perch (15cm per hen), scratching area
3 = Better	Indoor barn ³	9 hens/m ²	Permitted	Nest boxes (1 per 7 hens), litter on floor, perches (15cm per hen), scratching areas, may be with or without natural light. ⁴
4 = Best	Free Range	9 hens/m ²	Permitted	Nest boxes (1 per 7 hens), litter on floor, perches (15cm per hen), scratching areas, natural daylight outdoors. Outdoor access for whole of laying period. ⁵ Shade/shelter may or may not be provided. ⁶
	Organic ⁷	6 hens/m ²	Not permitted ⁸	Nest boxes (1 per 7 hens), litter on floor, perches (18cm per hen), scratching areas, natural light outdoors, shade and shelter. ⁹ Outdoor access for whole laying period ¹⁰ , smaller flock size(usually 2000 birds in a house). ¹¹

¹ In the EU, beak trimming must be carried out before 10 days, and in the UK, only the infra-red method is permitted. A ban is due to be reviewed in 2015. RSPCA Freedom Food (UK) permit beak trimming but intend to phase it out over the next 5 years and all producers are required to make progress towards avoiding beak trimming.

² Standard space allowance in a battery cage in the USA (<http://www.uepcertified.com/media/pdf/UEP-Animal-Welfare-Guidelines.pdf>). Battery cages are now banned in the EU.

³ Combi systems are not allowed in any level 3 and 4 systems (Indoor Barn, free Range and Organic)

⁴ Council Directive 1999/74/EC.

⁵ RSPCA Freedom Food (UK) stipulate daytime access to range from 21 weeks of age. 2000 birds/ha = 5m² per hen; restricted to 1000 birds/ha unless additional standards for cover on the range are met. Free range access required for 2 stars Better Leven assurance scheme ([http://betterleven.dierenbescherming.nl/fileupload/20130318legghennen-3-ster-\(rondeel\)-factsheet-consument.pdf](http://betterleven.dierenbescherming.nl/fileupload/20130318legghennen-3-ster-(rondeel)-factsheet-consument.pdf)).

⁶ RSPCA Freedom Food (UK) requires a minimum of 8m² overhead shade/shelter per 1000 birds.

⁷ Requirements vary between organic certification schemes

⁸ Soil Association (UK) permit in exceptional circumstances with written permission from the scheme and recommendation from a vet each time; the management plan must be reviewed to avoid problem in future.

⁹ Depending on requirements of the certification scheme

¹⁰ Soil Association (UK) stipulate pullets have outdoor access from 12 weeks.

¹¹ Council Regulation (EC) No 1804/1999.