

# Press Release

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## Most Comprehensive Guidelines to Date Released for Well-Being of Chickens

*National Chicken Council releases 2014 Animal Welfare Guidelines and Audit Checklist*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – February 10, 2014 – Consumers want to be sure that all animals being raised for food are treated with respect and are properly cared for during their lives. The people and companies involved in raising chickens for food share the public’s concern.

To assist chicken producers and processors in this effort, the National Chicken Council (NCC) in 1999 developed the NCC Animal Welfare Guidelines and Audit Checklist which have been widely adopted by chicken farmers and processors to ensure all U.S. chickens are being properly cared for and treated humanely. Periodically revised, the guidelines cover every phase of a chicken’s life and offer the most up-to-date, science-based recommendations for the proper treatment and humane care of broiler chickens – those chickens raised for meat.

The U.S. national broiler flock is incredibly healthy and is the envy of the world. Mortality and condemnation rates for broilers, the most sensitive indicators of the health and well-being of any flock, are at historical lows.

Building on that success, the [2014 update of the NCC Animal Welfare Guidelines](#) has more substance than ever before and incorporates new parameters to improve bird welfare. The new guidelines include a whistleblower protection, more assistance for training programs for proper handling, more documentation and monitoring of various practices and a more streamlined auditing tool for ease of auditing.

“The chicken industry has come together on a specific set of expectations that will continue to ensure the birds we raise are taken care of with the highest standards starting at hatch,” said NCC President Mike Brown.

The guidelines were updated with assistance from an academic advisory panel consisting of poultry welfare experts and veterinarians from across the United States, including:

- Sarge Bilgili, Ph.D., professor and extension poultry scientist, Auburn University;
- Michael Hulet, Ph.D., associate professor of poultry science, Penn State University;

- Joy Mench , Ph.D., professor of animal science, University of California, Davis;
- Tony Pescatore, Ph.D., professor of poultry production and management, University of Kentucky;
- Yvonne Thaxton, Ph.D., professor and director, Center for Food Animal Well Being, University of Arkansas; and
- Bruce Webster, Ph.D., professor and extension coordinator, Poultry Science Department, University of Georgia.

"We are very pleased with the inclusion of many of the panel's recommendations into this revision," said Dr. Bilgili, who chaired the academic advisory panel. "As a result, the NCC Animal Welfare Program is significantly improved and, more importantly, the continued well-being of broiler chickens will be assured."

The new guidelines also:

- Increase emphasis on corporate commitment;
- Require internal and external auditing for animal welfare;
- Require increased oversight by veterinarians, service technicians and live production managers;
- Provide more details on acceptable euthanasia practices from the hatchery to the processing plant;
- Provide new requirements to make sure the chickens are properly monitored for healthy legs;
- Require stunning procedures to be more effective;
- Change the audit scoring system to emphasize each step on the process from the hatchery to the processing plant; and
- Highlight the implications of non-conformances to the guidelines.

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The [National Chicken Council](#) is a non-profit trade association headquartered in Washington, D.C. that represents chicken producer-processors, the companies that produce and process chickens raised for meat. Member companies of the council account for more than 95 percent of the chicken sold in the United States.

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