

REVISED GOOD CHICKEN AWARD (2018-2021) Q&A

1. Why are you changing the criteria for the Good Chicken Award?

- Our ongoing work with the food industry to investigate supply chain solutions and stimulate the market for higher welfare chicken in the US (predominantly to meet the needs of our Special Recognition winners) has led to a revolution in broiler welfare in the US.
- In November 2016, nine leading NGO's in the US (including Compassion) came together and agreed a unified '[Corporate Ask](#)' to which more than [40 US companies have already made public commitments](#).
- Each NGO works in its usual way to encourage corporate commitments. Compassion largely maintains its solution focused collaborative approach to working with food companies.
- [European NGO's have agreed to develop a similar unified ask of corporates for broiler welfare improvement by 2026](#) and Compassion has agreed to sign up to the ASK. We are therefore amending our Good Chicken Award criteria to align with the ASK, as of September 2017.

2. What are the new requirements and when do companies need to meet this new Good Chicken Award criteria?

You can find the [revised criteria for the Good Chicken Award here](#). We have a 5 year commitment period to achieve the award criteria which includes a requirement to commit to the [2026 European Broiler ASK](#).

The major changes to our award criteria are: no further allowance for the fast growth rate breed with a leg health plan, and additional requirements around humane slaughter, third party auditing and progress reporting. The other change is that the 2026 ASK requires all products in a company's supply to meet the criteria, as opposed to own or significant brand for retailers and manufacturers, respectively, and includes all product categories (fresh, frozen and processed) too.

3. Is it possible to extend the deadline of 2026 to meet this new welfare criteria?

Unfortunately, the timeframes have been agreed by all NGO parties involved in the new European Broiler ASK and therefore we need to adhere to the timelines that have been agreed. We will continue to work closely with you to help you meet this new welfare criteria for broilers.

4. How can we meet the new criteria for effective electrical stunning without live-inversion when there is no commercial system currently available in Europe?

The purpose of this criteria is to remove waterbath electrical stunning systems from commercial practice. The welfare issues of this system have long been recognised and Compassion has tried to gain funding to develop a prototype for head only electrical stunning without live shackling and live inversion. To date, we have been unsuccessful, but aim to re-open discussions with researchers, industry and other interested stakeholders. If you are interested in being involved in these discussions, please contact your Food Business Manager to register your interest.

5. What does this mean for my current Good Chicken Award?

Your Good Chicken Award still stands – we will not alter the criteria for past award winners including our 2017 winners. We will be following up on any outstanding commitments in due course.

6. I have received a Good Chicken Award based on a five-year commitment – what do I do now?

We will continue to track progress against your Good Chicken Award commitment, and for those companies that have exceeded the 5-year commitment period for their conversion to the criteria we will pursue a roadmap with you for completion of this original commitment or formally withdraw your award if this is now unattainable. Where appropriate we will also discuss any opportunity to extend your original commitment to the [2026 European Broiler ASK](#).

7. Can I still promote my Good Chicken Award?

Yes, you can continue to promote your Good Chicken Award as long as it is clear what year the award was presented (i.e. use dated Awards logos) and be transparent about what welfare criteria your award covers.

8. You state that you have been working with other NGO's on this new criteria for broiler chickens. How does this work?

As part of the NGO signatories, Compassion has ONLY agreed on the new criteria for the [2026 European Broiler ASK](#) in terms of advancing broiler welfare. We will continue to engage directly and collaboratively with food companies to encourage company commitments on broiler welfare. As always all company information will remain 100% confidential.

9. Will the tactics of the other NGO's be to contact CEO's directly with threatening letters as has been done in the US?

Although this is not Compassion's approach, it may be that other NGO's will have different tactics in communicating the new 2026 European Broiler ASK and will use a similar approach in Europe as they have done in the US.

2026 European Broiler ASK

By 2026, we will require our suppliers to meet the following requirements for 100% of the [fresh, frozen, and processed] chicken in our supply chain:

1. Comply with all EU animal welfare laws and regulations, regardless of the country of production.
2. Implement a maximum stocking density of 30kg/m² or less. Thinning is discouraged and if practiced must be limited to one thin per flock.
3. Adopt breeds that demonstrate higher welfare outcomes: either the following breeds; Hubbard JA757, 787, 957, or 987, Rambler Ranger, Ranger Classic, and Ranger Gold, or others that meet the criteria of the RSPCA Broiler Breed Welfare Assessment Protocol.
4. Meet improved environmental standards including:
 - At least 50 lux of light, including natural light.
 - At least two metres of usable perch space, and two pecking substrates, per 1,000 birds.
 - On air quality, at least the requirements of Annex 2.3 of the EU broiler directive, regardless of stocking density.
 - No cages or multi-tier systems.
5. Adopt controlled atmospheric stunning using inert gas or multi-phase systems, or effective electrical stunning without live inversion.
6. Demonstrate compliance with the above standards via third-party auditing and annual public reporting on progress towards this commitment.

Common Questions on the new broiler improvement ask

1. Are the components of the broiler improvement ask rooted in science?

Absolutely. Each element reflects the most recent published research in animal welfare science. Below, we have summarised the main scientific findings that ground each aspect of the ask. A comprehensive list of references can be found at the end of this document.

- **Higher welfare breeds:** While genetic selection for fast growth is not the only factor that contributes to poor welfare for broilers, it is well established in the scientific literature that this selective breeding is responsible for most of the welfare issues they experience today. Welfare issues related to fast growth include metabolic problems—resulting in ascites and Sudden Death Syndrome—as well as decreased locomotion, which can cause leg weakness, breast blisters, and skin lesions. Therefore, genetic selection that focuses on higher welfare, rather than just high production, must be prioritised. Studies have found that, regardless of breed or size, broilers possess the same motivation to perform behaviours that are essential to their welfare; however, as chickens become heavier, conventional breeds have a significantly decreased ability to perform these behaviours. Because selection for fast growth is correlated with many of the serious welfare issues mentioned above, studies have shown that breeds with slower growth tend to have better welfare outcomes. For example, at 6-12 weeks of age, slower-growing broilers have been observed to perch, walk, and scratch more than conventional fast growing birds in a controlled study (Bokkers and Koene, 2003). At 3 weeks, slower-growing broilers perched more than 40% of the time, while fast-growing birds perched only 25% of the time. By 6 weeks, perching behaviour in the fast-growing birds decreases to less than 20%, and continues to decline if the birds grow beyond that age. Similarly, at 5 weeks, slower-growing birds were observed to walk about 15% of the time, while fast-growing birds spent less than 5% of their time doing so. At 8 weeks of age, fast-growing broilers may spend as little as 1% of their time walking. Consistent with these and similar findings, we are requesting that businesses that commit to our ask select broiler strains based on their potential for improved welfare outcomes, including the ability to satisfy behavioural needs such as perching, walking, and scratching. Selection of strains will be informed by a rigorous scientific study currently being conducted at the University of Guelph, and by assurance schemes using defined protocols and publishing their results, such as RSPCA Assured in the UK.
- **Stocking density (maximum 30kg/m²):** This requirement is based on extensive research documenting the effects of higher stocking densities on welfare and production outcomes. Among relevant findings, higher stocking densities result in higher daily mortality; a higher incidence of leg problems, contact dermatitis and carcass bruising; more disturbances of birds' resting behaviour; and decreased locomotion and ground pecking (Hall, 2001). Similar studies have reported a decline in body weight, reduction in feed consumption, and increased footpad lesions and skin scratches at densities *above* 30kg/m² (6 lb/sq ft) (Dozier et al, 2005).
- **Enriched environments (including adequate behavioural enrichment, litter, and lighting):** Increasing motivation and exercise opportunities through **enrichment** is important for broiler welfare. Increased exercise improves leg health by strengthening muscle and bones in broilers (Reiter and Bessei, 1998; Bizeray et al., 2002). The addition of enrichment items, such as straw bales, perches, and pecking substrates, has been shown to result in better leg health and increased activity levels (Baillie et al 2012). Poor **litter** management has

been demonstrated to have multiple negative effects on broiler flocks. Litter that is too wet will result in air quality issues, as well as foot pad and hock lesions, due to increased amounts of ammonia (de Jong et al., 2014). High ammonia levels related to poor litter quality can also result in other health and welfare issues, such as eye lesions. Adequate **lighting** conditions are also important for poultry, as vision is the primary sense that allows them to engage with their environment and perform adequate social interactions. Lighting programs for broiler chickens have been identified as a priority issue for both animal welfare scientists and the poultry industry (Thaxton et al, 2016). This is based on scientific findings indicating that light intensity significantly affects broiler activity levels. In one study, broilers reared at 5 lux (0.5 foot-candles) spent more time sleeping and less time preening and foraging (natural behaviors) (Alvino et al, 2009).

- **Controlled atmosphere stunning (CAS):** Controlled atmosphere stunning, when properly executed, offers many welfare advantages compared to electric water-bath stunning and other common industry methods. One of the greatest advantages is that CAS reduces handling of live birds, as crated birds go directly into the controlled atmosphere chamber, and are not shackled before they are stunned. Shackling of conscious birds results in significant increases in stress levels, and may also affect meat quality (Bedanova et al, 2007). Although CAS is included in our improved broiler welfare ask, it currently falls outside the scope of the Global Animal Partnership (GAP) program.

Aren't industry practices rooted in science as well?

A vast majority of the practices and technologies used in industrial agriculture are indeed rooted in scientific knowledge intended to maximise yields and profits, minimise the use of resources, and manage food safety risks. However, the holistic welfare of animals has remained a low priority. Largely, when welfare is considered by industry, the focus lies only on the physical health of animals, rather than on comprehensive welfare, which also includes mental well-being and the satisfaction of behavioural needs.

Why do we advocate for third-party certification?

Third-party animal welfare certification is important because it provides a way to impartially guide *and* enforce best practices for animal welfare.

How does GAP develop their standards?

The Global Animal Partnership (GAP) 5-Step™ Animal Welfare Rating Standards in the US are fully transparent, allowing for public and scientific scrutiny. GAP standards are developed in consultation with animal welfare scientists and multi-stakeholder groups, go through multiple rounds of review, and are open for public comment during the approval process. A unique aspect of the GAP standards is their 5-step, tiered structure, which allows producers to enter the program at the level that best fits with their business. More information on how GAP develops their standards can be found [here](#).

Are there environmental trade-offs related to the higher welfare broiler commitment?

While we acknowledge that higher welfare systems indeed require increased amounts of certain inputs that can result in environmental trade-offs, this type of analysis is a narrow view of sustainability, which neglects the broader social and moral aspects of the equation. A more comprehensive view should simultaneously include considerations of environmental, social, and economic sustainability.

Studies on consumer perception of animal welfare consistently indicate a growing consumer concern. If the industry does not respond accordingly, economic losses are to be expected. Additionally, sustainability analyses that only focus on the increase in inputs (such as land, feed, and water) required in higher welfare systems fail to account for the expected gains of cutting losses related to poor welfare. For example, it is estimated that heat stress, a condition often correlated to high stocking densities, costs the US livestock and poultry industries \$1.7 - 2.4 billion per year (Place and Mitloehner, 2013). In the broiler industry, an increased prevalence of muscle diseases related to fast growth, known as “white striping” and “woody breast,” are estimated to have cost the collective industry up to \$200 million in losses (Gee, 2016).

According to Marian Dawkins (2017), higher welfare systems can actually result in long-term financial benefits from reduced mortality rates, improved health, improved product quality, improved disease resistance, reduced medication, lower risk of zoonoses and foodborne diseases, increased farmer job satisfaction, and consumer response to increased corporate social responsibility.

Recent research on the relationship between higher welfare systems and environmental impact has found areas in which there can be improvements for both animal welfare and environmental outcomes. These areas include: heat stress, lameness, genetics, transport, and nutrition (Place and Mitloehner, 2013). As established by scientific research and public opinion, improving animal welfare is a non-negotiable requirement. To do so in a way that aligns with the broader goals of sustainability is part of the work that follows. As stated in a recent review of animal welfare and economics, “[animal welfare] is likely to be of interest for the long term, as there is a clear correlation between income levels and demand for animal welfare as well as other sustainability concerns” (Grethe, 2017).

Why do we ask for corporate positions to be made publically available?

Transparency is one of the most important components of any animal welfare program, and as such, we believe that this information should be publicly available. According to a recent report from the Center for Food Integrity, 80% of consumers expressed a strong desire to know more about how food is produced and where it comes from.

Transparency around animal welfare policies also paves the way for accountability, both internally and to external stakeholders, such as other companies, NGOs, and investors.

For example, the [Business Benchmark on Farm Animal Welfare](#), an investor-facing report that ranks food companies based on risk management associated with farm animal welfare practices, assesses companies using only publicly-disclosed information. This information provides stakeholders interested in understanding the relative performance of food companies with an independent, impartial, and reliable assessment.

Other resources

Please also refer to our supporting [broiler welfare information sheets](#) and [watch the video](#) which explains the science which driving change for higher welfare broiler production.

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Transparency

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