Animal & Plant Health Agency

Animal and Plant Health Agency
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Our Ref: ATIC1080

{By Email}

18 May 2017

Dear [redacted]

PROVISION OF REQUESTED INFORMATION

Thank you for your clarified request for information about pheasant/gamebird welfare visits, which we received on 27 April 2017. Your request has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The information you requested and our response is detailed below:

"I should be grateful if you would provide the following information under the Freedom of Information Act:

1. The number of inspection visits relating to animal health or welfare conducted by relevant Government Agencies (for example the APHA) to pheasant-breeding premises in England during each of 2014, 2015 and 2016.

2. The proportion of inspection visits relating to animal health or welfare conducted by relevant Government Agencies (for example the APHA) to pheasant-breeding premises in England during each of 2014, 2015 and 2016, as a percentage of the total number of registered pheasant-breeding establishments in England.

3. The number of inspection visits relating to animal health or welfare conducted by relevant Government Agencies (for example the APHA) to pheasant-breeding premises in Wales during each of 2014, 2015 and 2016 (unless such inspections are a devolved matter and do not fall within DEFRA's responsibilities).

4. The proportion of inspection visits relating to animal health or welfare conducted by relevant Government Agencies (for example the APHA) to pheasant-breeding premises in Wales during each of 2014, 2015 and 2016, as a percentage of the total number of registered pheasant-breeding establishments in Wales (unless such inspections are a devolved matter and do not fall within DEFRA's responsibilities).

5. The number of inspection visits relating to animal health or welfare conducted by relevant Government Agencies (for example the APHA) to pheasant rearing and/or shooting establishments in England during each of 2014, 2015 and 2016, including particularly 'rear-and-release' operations and those involved in providing commercial shooting with 'wild' pheasants (strictly 'semi-feral or 'naturalised' pheasants).

6. The number of inspection visits relating to animal health or welfare conducted by relevant Government Agencies (for example the APHA) to pheasant rearing and/or shooting establishments in Wales during each of 2014, 2015 and 2016, including particularly 'rear-and-release' operations as well as those involved in providing commercial shooting with 'wild' pheasants (strictly 'semi-feral or 'naturalised' pheasants).(unless such inspections are a devolved matter and do not fall within DEFRA's responsibilities)

7. The proportion of inspection visits relating to animal health or welfare conducted by relevant Government Agencies (for example the APHA) to pheasant rearing and/or shooting establishments in England during each of 2014, 2015 and 2016, including particularly 'rear-and-release' operations and those involved in providing commercial shooting with 'wild' pheasants (strictly 'semi-feral or 'naturalised' pheasants), .as a percentage of the total number of registered pheasant-rearing and/or shooting operations in England.

8. The proportion of inspection visits relating to animal health or welfare conducted by relevant Government Agencies (for example the APHA) to pheasant rearing and/or shooting establishments in Wales during each of 2014, 2015 and 2016, including particularly 'rear-and-release' operations and those involved in providing commercial shooting with 'wild' pheasants (strictly 'semi-feral or 'naturalised' pheasants), .as a percentage of the total number of registered pheasant-rearing and/or shooting operations in Wales (unless such inspections are a devolved matter and do not fall within DEFRA's responsibilities).

   The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) is an executive agency of the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, and also works on behalf of the Scottish Government and Welsh Government. Our work is to safeguard animal health and welfare for the benefit of people, the environment and the economy.

   In March 2013, the Great Britain Poultry Register was de-commissioned with APHA's SAM database becoming the repository for the recording of poultry data. SAM is APHA's internal database that records owner and animal information.

This SAM data is not a public registry and contains Personal data (collected for a specific purpose), under the conditions stated in the Data Protection Act 1998.

Individuals must register poultry flocks of 50 or more birds that are owned or for which a person is responsible for. Poultry flocks do not have to all be the same species. This applies even if a premise is only stocked for part of the year. If fewer than 50 birds are held, there is no requirement to register. However, voluntary registration is encouraged. In addition, APHA rely upon the poultry keepers to de-register.

APHA can run various reports from SAM which extracts certain information. Any visits made to a pheasant premises by APHA would be to safeguard animal health and welfare for the benefit of people, the environment and the economy. We have run a report to produce all visits made to pheasant premises in England and Wales over the requested period. This report does not specifically identify “pheasant-breeding” or “pheasant rearing” premises.

The pheasant premises that are identified can be filtered for their animal production purpose, which include:

Backyard flock, Egg Laying, Meat, Shooting, Showing and Other.

The only category that falls within your request is ‘shooting’.

Please see below the number of visits in relation to APHA’s work to pheasant shooting premises:

Year	**Number of visits to pheasant shooting premises**	
	England	**Wales**
2014	111	7
2015	69	0
2016	30	0

With regards to the proportion of visits in relation to these registered premises, due to the issues regarding the poultry register there is the potential to have premises registered on SAM that do not, at that time, have pheasants.

Therefore APHA cannot provide any sort of proportion in relation to these visits.

However, we can provide the total number of registered pheasant premises taken at a date within each requested year, but the above caveats do apply:

Year	**Number of registered pheasant premises**	
	England	**Wales**
2014	7226	359
2015	4248	167
2016	4272	190

Calculations can be made from these figures, but they must be used with caution.

9. The number of prosecutions for offences under animal welfare regulations (e.g. the Animal Welfare Act, 2006) pursued by the Government (eg DEFRA) or relevant agencies against pheasant breeding, rearing and/or shooting operations in England for each of years 2014, 2015 and 2016 and details of the nature of these.

10. The number of prosecutions for offences under animal welfare regulations (e.g. the Animal Welfare Act, 2006) pursued by the Government (eg DEFRA) or relevant agencies against pheasant breeding, rearing and/or shooting operations in Wales for each of years 2014, 2015 and 2016 and details of the nature of these.

Following a search of our paper and electronic records, I have established that the information in requests 9 and 10 is not held by APHA. This is because APHA/Defra does not pursue prosecutions for offences under the Animal Welfare Act, 2006, this is done by the Local Authorities.

11. Where the above distinctions do not correspond to details held by DEFRA or its agencies, please provide any statistical information relating to official inspection visits relating to animal health and welfare inspections to gamebird establishments in England for each of years 2014, 2015, and 2016.

12. Where the above distinctions do not correspond to details held by DEFRA or its agencies, please provide any statistical information relating to official inspection visits relating to animal health and welfare to gamebird establishments in Wales for each of years 2014, 2015, and 2016.(unless such inspections are a devolved matter).

    In response to requests 11 and 12, APHA have been able to make the distinction regarding pheasants and have supplied a response above.

13. Any Government policy documents relating to the nature and/or number of inspection visits that are to be conducted on game bird establishments in England, and Wales if appropriate, and the rationale for such inspections."

    Clarity was sought on the time period for this part of your request and you asked for approximately 5 years, eg back to 1 January 2012.

    Please see Appendix 1 which is a document entitled "Welfare of Game Birds Reared for Sport Purposes: WF156" and provides guidance to APHA officers in the welfare considerations for inspecting game birds reared for sporting purposes.

Information disclosed in response to this FOI request is releasable to the public. In keeping with the spirit and effect of the FOIA and the government's Transparency Agenda, this letter and the information disclosed to you may be placed on GOV.UK, together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context. No information identifying you will be placed on the GOV.UK website.

I attach an Annex which explains the copyright that applies to the information being released to you and contact details should you be unhappy with the service you have received.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact the Access to Information Team at the email address below or postal address at the top of this letter.

Yours sincerely

ACCESS TO INFORMATION TEAM
Email: enquiries@apha.gsi.gov.uk

Annex

Copyright
The information supplied to you is Crown copyright, unless otherwise stated, and is protected by the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. You are free to use it for your own purposes, including for the purposes of news reporting. You can find details on the arrangements for re-using Crown copyright information at:

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Complaints
If you are unhappy with the result of your request for information you may request an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this letter.

If you wish to request an internal review, please contact: The Access to Information Team at enquiries@apha.gsi.gov.uk or at the postal address at the top of this letter, who will arrange for an internal review of your case.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Please note that generally the Information Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted APHA's own complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

APPENDIX 1

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Scottish Government
Welsh Government

Animal & Plant Health Agency

Welfare of Game Birds Reared for Sport Purposes

The following document provides guidance in the welfare considerations for inspecting game-birds reared for sporting purposes. For the purpose of this guidance, 'game-birds' refers to the Phasianus colchicus the common Pheasant, and to Alectoris rufa the Red Legged Partridge.

General background
In Scotland the Game Shooting industry generates something in excess of £60 million for the local economy (at 2011 prices). This can vary from rough shooting to highly organised estates shooting at Grouse, Pheasant, Partridge, Ducks and a selection of other bird and ground game.

Within the Game industry, there is a range of activities from Pigeon and Goose shooting which are of totally wild populations, through Grouse and Woodcock which are wild birds but are in managed environments, to shooting at Pheasant and Partridge which nowadays are almost entirely artificially reared and released for shooting purposes. In Great Britain much of the wild environment has been managed to provide cover for Game species to live in, increasingly set-a-side, end riggs in fields, game crops, hedges, coppices and woodlands are managed to provide game and wildlife cover and also attract environmental subsides and support.

The Common Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus colchicus*) and the Red Legged Partridge (*Alectoris rufa*) are not indigenous to GB but have been introduced as a source of food and for sporting purposes. The Pheasant has adapted to the GB countryside and there is a thriving wild population of two to three million birds that are supplemented by the 30 – 35 million Pheasants reared each year for shooting.

For many years Pheasants and Partridges have been artificially reared by gamekeepers to supplement the wild living birds that have survived the shooting season. Though reasonably prolific the Pheasant is not a particularly successful breeder in the wild.

Game-birds are farmed from when they are caught up in mid February until they are placed in the release pens in July – August.

Breeding
Some game farms keep some of their stock each year to provide the breeding stock for the next season, however it is more common for wild survivors to be caught up in the shooting estates. There is normally a ratio of one cock to seven to eight hens. This may be in either small pens for one harem or in larger flock pens of up to 150 pheasants. Over the two month period in the breeding pens each hen will produce between 40 – 50 eggs.

Egg Management
Eggs are usually collected two to three times a day and there should be sufficient nest boxes with fresh clean litter in each pen to allow the hens to lay clean eggs. The eggs can then be cleaned and disinfected. Some keepers will incubate their own eggs in their own incubators. However, many keepers will send eggs to large game companies to incubate. Large game companies will hatch several hundred thousand eggs a year. The incubators should have been cleaned and disinfected prior to the eggs being set. After each set of eggs has hatched the incubator should again be cleaned and disinfected before more eggs are placed in it. From setting to hatching normally takes about 24 – 25 days.

Brooding
The brooding and rearing process takes place over the first six to seven weeks following hatching. The systems employed can range from small scale <100 chicks on temporary sites using movable huts and pens to permanent rearing units capable of holding tens of thousands of birds at one time. These can be permanent houses with concrete, gravel, wire mesh floors or grass runs. Moveable huts and pen systems can be moved to fresh sites for each brood.

Whatever the site, it needs to have been rested and to be scrupulously clean prior to the chicks being placed. The equipment (brooder/ heater, water supply and feeding system) need to have been checked to confirm that they are clean and work correctly. The brooder facility needs to have been preheated prior to the arrival of the chicks which are placed into a temperature of about 37^{o}C (the temperature is lowered to 28^{o}C over several days).

The floor should be covered in a clean dry litter and initially the chicks will have their space limited so they can not stray too far, ideally by having a circular barrier rather than square (corners encourage huddling and smothering). The temperature of the pen can be judged by the activity levels and the positioning of the chicks. If they are huddled under the brooder or IR light it suggests that they are cold, conversely if they are trying to get to the edge of the pen it suggests that they are too hot. The chicks should be evenly spaced throughout the area available to them. Lighting is also important, if the brooding house is totally enclosed artificial light should be supplied, ideally the lighting system should have a timer and dimmer so the light can be dimmed gradually. If there are windows in the brooder house it can be useful to have a red filter in the window so there is no patch of bright light in the brooding area that might encourage the chicks to huddle and smother.

After the first week the starter crumb can gradually be changed by mixing with a starter pellet (mini pellet) which has a lower protein content. It can be useful to put some 1inch weld mesh into the bottom of feed trays at this stage to reduce the scattering of the feed by the chicks scratching. At about two weeks old the chicks can be given access to a small outside run that has good shelter but with constant access to the warmer brooder hut, this run can have a concrete, gravel, wire mesh or grass floor. By putting the feed and water in the outside pen the chicks will be encouraged to leave the warmth and explore their environment. This will start the gradual hardening off process to acclimatise the pheasants to living in the wild. Access from the brooder hut to the outside run should be by an entrance in a corner of the hut and pen as it is considerably easier to move the pheasants through such an opening. As the chicks grow and become acclimatised they can be given access to the rearing pen.

Rearing Pen

The rearing pen should have a natural grass sward, ideally with a fair selection of other plants in it to provide cover, interest, roosting and feed. It is netted to prevent escape and protect against aerial predators. As well as feeding a game pellet which has been gradually introduced to the feed, water from drinking nipples or poultry drinkers, there should be the provision of dust bath areas, objects for perching on. As the pheasants harden off access to the brooder area with its heat can be stopped, leaving the outside sheltered run for protection.

Stress and Vice

Pheasants seem particularly vulnerable to stress, two of the main stressors appear to be poor hygiene and high stocking densities. In the brooder area if the litter is not well managed and becomes wet and soiled it can leave the chicks with dirty feet and wet down and feathers. This can lead to feather plucking and vent pecking, once these vices are established they can be very hard to stop. Victims of plucking or pecking need to be removed immediately to a hospital pen. To stop the vices the pheasant chicks can be fitted with a “C” shaped bit where the open ends fit in the chicks nostrils and the body of the C goes between the upper and lower mandibles. As well as poor hygiene high stocking density can lead to these vices, as a result the bits are often used from three weeks of age till the pheasants are put in the release pens.

In the breeding pens some pheasants can develop the vices of feather plucking, cannibalism or egg eating. These vices are often brought about because of the stress from the high stocking density. One preventative has been to fit plastic spectacles to the pheasant to restrict its forward view. The spectacles are clipped into the nares on the upper beak. The older form that was held in place by a lock that pierced the nasal septum are now banned.

For these vices beak trimming, where perhaps a third of the upper beak is removed by cautery can be used, but it should only be used after all other possible management tools have been exhausted and never as a routine management method.

Release Pens

As the pheasant poults reach six to seven weeks of age they should be well feathered and sufficiently hardened off to be placed in the release pens. (Some shoots prefer to buy their birds at this stage and put them directly into the release pens). The poults should be caught up, checked that they are well grown, appear to be healthy (and if they have bits in their beaks these should be removed). They should be placed in clean disinfected travelling crates for the move to the release pen which may be some distance away.

The Release Pen is normally in a wooded area and may be of several hectares in size, up to 1000 pheasants can be placed per hectare of pen. Normally it will be surrounded by a fence up to 6ft high of a wire mesh that may be dug into the ground (predator prevention). Some pens have the base of the fence cleared of vegetation and an electric wires a foot or so from the fence as an added precaution. Ideally the pen should contain a mixture of habitats – some open ground to feed and sun in, some ground cover and shelter and finally some mature wood to give the pheasants perching and roosting opportunities. Initially feed and water are supplied to the release pens.

As at all stages the feeders and drinkers should have been cleaned and disinfected, then checked that they were in operational order before the poults were placed in the release pens. Water may be piped or supplied by tank to drinkers or nipples. Feed should initially be the same pellets the poults had in the rearing pens but gradually wheat or barley should be mixed in with the pellets until the pheasants are on a grain diet, as at all stages grit needs to be supplied for the pheasants to digest their food.

After six or seven weeks the release pens can be opened – often by lifting the bottom mesh of the fence to give the pheasants more freedom. Gradually the feeders can be moved from the release pens to remoter areas or game crops where they are encouraged to feed and then return to the release pens to roost. Often this will be along potential shooting drives as the pheasants have a strong urge to return to home ground. After the shooting season has finished most keepers will continue to feed their pheasants until the spring and natural food appears, to maintain the semi wild population.

Legislation
For the period where the Pheasants and Partridge are farmed i.e. under human control, they are covered by the Animal Welfare Act 2006 in England and Wales and the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 in Scotland.

When birds are being transported to rearing or release sites the Pheasants and Partridge will also fall under the Welfare of Animals (Transport)(Scotland) Regulations 2006, Welfare of Animals (Transport)(England) Regulations 2006 or The Welfare of Animals (Transport) (Wales) Order 2007.

As the Pheasant and Partridge are raised artificially they can be regarded as a farmed species but they are specifically excluded from the Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations (WoFAR) by being reared for sporting purposes, and as such they are excluded from the Cross Compliance codes.

Any medicinal treatment will be covered by the current Veterinary Medicines Regulations (these regulations are remade each year).

Handling and disposal of dead game birds on farm must be in accordance with subject to the Animal By-Products (Enforcement) Regulations. Similarly while farmed the game birds are subject to any of the specific avian disease control orders or regulations that are in force.

Game-bird Guidance on Key Welfare Standards
General Guidance
Key standards for the assessment of welfare must be applied. Code references are taken from the Gamebirds. Code of Practice for the Welfare of Gamebirds Reared for Sporting Purposes. In this context Gamebirds refers to the *Phasianus colchicus* the common Pheasant, and to *Alectoris rufa* the Red Legged Partridge.

Staffing
1. Sufficient staff numbers must be available with the appropriate ability, knowledge and competence for the system and stocking number in place.

2. Any person who employs or engages individuals to attend the livestock must ensure that the individual:
   (a) Is acquainted with the provisions of all the welfare legislation and relevant welfare code.
   (b) Has a copy and is acquainted with the code whilst attending the livestock.
   (c) Has received instruction and guidance on them.

3. There should be a Contingency/Emergency Plan available, which the staff are familiar with, to contain or deal with emergencies, with a prominent Action board providing details of emergency procedures and contact phone numbers.

4. There should be sufficient staff with the appropriate knowledge, ability and competence to deal with the livestock in the unit.

5. Handling of birds and chick should be kept to a minimum as game-birds are non domestic species.

Inspection
1. Game-birds should be checked at least twice daily during the breeding and rearing period, and at least daily at other times, for signs of disease or injury and to ensure their welfare needs are met.

2. Staff should be sufficiently knowledgeable to recognise normal behaviour and the early signs of abnormal behaviour associated with injury or disease.

3. In indoor units there should be sufficient light to conduct the inspection.

4. Sick, injured or dead birds should be removed promptly.

Record Keeping
1. Records should be kept of the origin of all the stock - eggs, day old chicks, poults and adult game-birds.

2. Hatchability and mortality (at each stage).

3. Destination of any stock sent from the flock.

4. All medicinal treatments - source of the medicine, which birds administered to, when, batch number, expiry date, amount, withdrawal period and who administered the medicine.

5. Animal Transport Certificates - if game-birds transported over 50 miles.

6. Records should be kept for five years in respect of medicines and three years for other matters.

Freedom of movement
1. If confined the birds must have appropriate space. The birds must not be restricted in such a way as to cause unnecessary suffering or injury.

2. If problems occur then consideration should be given to changing stocking levels.

Buildings and accommodation
1. The requirements for housing will vary with the stage in the lifecycle (breeding pens, incubation, rearing and release pens), as will the size of operation from a small private shoot to a commercial organisation setting in excess of 100,000 eggs a year.

2. The requirements for game-bird housing are similar to any other livestock enterprise in that they must be:

(a) Good housing design is essential, with facilities being available for inspection of the game-birds.

(b) Materials must be capable of being cleansed and disinfected, the materials must not be harmful (no sharp edges or protrusions).

(c) The interiors of the buildings should be constructed and maintained in such a way that the game-birds can not harm themselves with sharp edges, protrusions, or in corners.

(d) The floors should be smooth and have an adequate covering/ litter to provide a dry, comfortable, clean lying area for the game-birds.

(e) There must be adequate ventilation, heating and insulation to maintain an appropriate environment for the game-birds at each stage of development. Equipment should be regularly serviced to ensure it works and is safe.

(f) If not in natural lighting, game-birds must have sufficient artificial light to meet their behavioural and physiological needs. There must also be sufficient lighting available to inspect the game-birds.

(g) The litter should be provided and kept in such a manner that it provides a dry comfortable living area.

(h) The possibility of providing enrichment for the game-birds should be considered.

(i) For laying game-birds there should be an adequate number of nesting areas.

(j) As the game-birds develop they will require access to outside runs; these should have sufficient doorways (ideally in corners for easier movements), clean ground, appropriate vegetation, perches, protection against adverse weather, risk to health and from predators.

3. As the game-birds develop they will be moved to Release Pens having been gradually hardened off in the rearing pens.

(a) The release pens can be of a considerable size but should have a maximum stocking rate of about 1000 pheasants/ hectare.

(b) The release pens should be broadly divided into three areas - an open area for feeding and sunbathing, an area of low scrub for cover from predators and weather, finally an area with more mature trees to give roosting opportunities.

(c) Control of vermin (mice, rats, insects) and protection from predators.

Environment
1. Litter and flooring must be kept dry at all times.
2. The buildings temperature, air circulation, dust, humidity and gas concentrations must not be harmful to the birds. Temperatures should be appropriate for the age of the birds.

3. In buildings must not be in continuous light or darkness.

4. Outside areas must have access to a well drained lying area.

5. Adequate ventilation is required (no drafts).

Automatic or Mechanical Equipment
1. Where automatic equipment is used, it should be inspected at least once a day to check that there are no defects. If defects are found they should be remedied immediately or if not steps should be taken to safeguard the game-birds from unnecessary suffering. For critical systems such as water or ventilation there should be an alarm backup in the case of failure. Alarmed systems should be tested regularly.

2. All mechanical or automatic equipment that is essential to their health and wellbeing must be inspected daily with defects being rectified immediately. Alarms should be checked weekly.

3. All equipment (drinkers, feeders, heater, ventilation) should be fit for purpose, correctly installed and with the appropriate alarms.

4. All equipment should be well maintained, cleaned and checked regularly.

Feed, Water and Other Substances
1. All game-birds should be provided with sufficient quantity of fresh drinking water daily.

2. There should be sufficient drinkers and feeders provided to allow for minimal competition for space. Equipment should be designed, constructed, placed and maintained to minimise competition and contamination.

3. All the game-birds should be provided with sufficient quantity and quality of appropriate and wholesome food to maintain good health, satisfy nutritional needs and promote a positive state of wellbeing. This should take into consideration the age, weight, behavioural and physiological needs of the birds. Feed should be provided at intervals appropriate to the physiological needs of the birds.

4. Changes to feeds should be introduced gradually to prevent dietary upsets.

5. A source of insoluble grit should be provided to aid the game-birds digestion.

6. Feeds should be stored in accordance with good practice. All feed receptacles and bins should be regularly cleaned.

Management Devises and Mutilation
1. Game-birds are susceptible to stress, in particular to high stocking densities which can be expressed in the form of vices such as egg eating, feather plucking and cannibalism. Ideally these should be addressed by changing the stocking density or by environmental enrichment. In some cases this approach is not sufficient and other methods have to be considered, in consultation with the flocks veterinarian.

2. Young game-birds of three to seven weeks in the rearing pens may begin feather pecking and or cannibalism which may be controlled by the use of “bits” which go between the beaks and are fitted into the nares. These need to be fitted by an experienced operator and removed before the game-bird is put into the release pens.

3. Spectacles can be fitted to the beak where egg eating or feather pecking are occurring, but any type of spectacle that pierces the nasal septum to hold it in place is illegal.

4. Beak trimming should only be used in game-birds in cases where there is an overwhelming need to protect the game-birds welfare. A maximum of only the distal third of the upper beak.

5. Clipping the outer primary feathers may be used to restrict flight, but trimming the growing blood feathers must be avoided as it would constitute a mutilation.

6. Brailing one wing (fitting a band on a wing to prevent its extension) should only be needed in an open pen and should only be done by an experienced operator. The brail must be removed before the game-bird is placed in the release pen.

Breeding Procedures
1. No breeding procedures likely to cause unnecessary suffering or injury may be used.

Disease Prevention and Treatment
1. Game-bird breeders and rearers should register with a veterinary practice in order to receive assistance with any incidences of welfare or disease and injuries that occur.

2. It is good practice to draw up a flock health and welfare plan with your veterinary advisor. This should be a living document.

3. Biosecurity and good hygiene are essential components of a health plan. All housing and equipment need to be cleansed and disinfected (with an appropriate disinfectant used at the correct dilution) before each use. Staff and visitors need to be kept aware of biosecurity and use appropriate protective clothing. Staff should be aware of the source and potential problems involved with incoming livestock – eggs, day olds, poults or adults to a unit.

4. Ill or injured birds must receive appropriate care without delay, if there is no response a veterinarian should be involved. In cases where euthanasia proves essential, it should be carried out humanely by a trained member of staff.

5. Medicines for treatment should only be used when necessary and when prescribed by a veterinarian. Preventive use of medicines should only be carried out in conjunction with good husbandry practices (not in lieu of good husbandry) on the advice of the flock veterinarian.

Catching and Transportation
1. All personnel involved with catching should be competent in catching and handling to minimise stress to the game-birds.

2. Transportation of game-birds from the unit as a commercial activity falls under the remit of the Welfare of Animals (Transport)(Scotland) Regulations 2006.

3. Game-birds that are unfit must not be transported.

4. Transit time should be kept to a minimum, with a maximum of 12 hours (with the exception of 24 hours for chicks under 72 hours old).

5. Game-birds should be transported in appropriately sized containers which have been cleansed and disinfected, are well ventilated and provide protection from the weather.