**Avian Behaviour**

Chickens, turkeys and other avian species may be raised in small flocks for meat or eggs and may be raised in large flocks using either indoor confinement or full free-range methods.

Behaviour is the way that birds respond to other birds, their environment and people that they encounter in their environment. Understanding bird behaviour and applying that knowledge in the care of the birds, plays an important part in the welfare of the birds and the production efficiency of a poultry farm.

Poultry have excellent vision and hearing but other senses such as smell are poorly developed.

* Chickens have their own ranking system, separate from roosters.
* Every member of the flock soon knows their place.
* Some fighting may ensue during the ranking process to establish the pecking order.
* The dominant hen eats first, and gets to pick where she roosts or lay eggs.
* Chickens gently peck each other’s feathers as a grooming or exploratory behaviour.
* Pecking is also used as a form of communication.
* Nesting is considered a behaviour need in poultry and is displayed when hens search for a covered nest.
* Hens want to feel secluded and hidden.
* Communication within and among flocks of birds takes place mainly via signals.
* Postures such as head up or head down, feathers spread or not spread, are used to signal threat and submission.
* Vocalizations or the sounds that birds make, may indicate food, predators, nesting, mating, submission, distress, fear, contentment.
* Poultry have over 30 vocalizations to signal to the other birds.
* Chickens also have dust bathing habits.
* They scratch out a body-sized depression in the soil and lie in it, and throw soil from the hole into their fluffed-out feathers.

**Handling Avian**

1. Poultry that are stressed by fear, change, climate, or any other concern will be more difficult to handle and pose a greater risk of hurting handlers. Fear and stress quickly communicate through the whole flock.

Catching poultry involves important skills both for the bird’s well being and the handlers’ well being.

* It’s easiest to catch birds in low or blue light.
* Calm birds can be gently moved in a herding movement along the ground.
* Approach the birds in a quiet, confident, easy moving manner that does not raise an alarm. Calm birds will not try to take flight.
* Poultry flying about an enclosure can cause unintentional injury through their panicked flight.
* Use proper lifting techniques.
* Never handle a chicken or turkey by the head, one wing, or one leg. This may injure the bird, cause them to panic and will result in scratching or pecking injuries to the handler.
* Birds older than thirteen weeks should be carried by both legs or both wings
* Turkeys/larger breeds of chicken require more support & should be carried by both legs and 1 wing.
* When moving chicks from the hatching tray, lift each chick gently and place it down.
* Use care when placing birds into cages, and insert each bird headfirst.
* Move crates horizontally and mechanically and make no sudden movements.
* When gathering eggs, pay attention to the behaviour of the roosting hen – she may try to peck as you retrieve the eggs.

**Restraining Chickens**

If you restrain a bird correctly, it can make stunning and killing them more efficient, preventing the bird from suffering. To manually hold and restrain a chicken:

1. First Cover the bird’s wings with your hand. Then Hold their legs and support their breast with your other hand.
2. Then pick the bird up.

If you are using a cone to restrain the chicken, you should first check that the cone is the right size for the bird. Then put the bird in the cone head-down if the bird is conscious, keep chickens in the cone for a maximum of 1 minute, or 2 minutes for turkeys. Cones are sometimes used to humanely butcher chickens. Never try to move a bird by:

* Striking it
* Pressing sensitive body parts
* Lifting or dragging it by its neck/head/wing/tail
* Using an electric shock or sharp instrument or
* Holding its eyes

**Avian Behaviour – DISCUSSION RECORD**

**Agenda:**

* Discuss the different types of avian species on your farm are handled and their behaviour.
* Review control methods of handling birds on your farm.

Comments or safety concerns as a result of the discussion or observed since the last rally?

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Follow-up to concerns raised at previous rally?
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Action Items?
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Near Miss/Incidents/Unsafe Acts/Conditions to Report?

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Topics recommended for future Rallies: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Thank the rally members for their participation.**

**Quiz Answers:** 1. T, 2. T, 3. d, 4. T,

**TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE**

1. Understanding bird behaviour and applying that knowledge in the care of the birds, plays an important part in the welfare of the birds and the production efficiency of a poultry farm.

True or False

2. Poultry that are stressed by fear, change, climate, or any other concern will be more difficult to handle and pose a greater risk of hurting handlers.

True or False

3. Which of the following are best practices when handling birds:

1. Catching them in low or blue light
2. Use care when placing birds into cages, and insert each bird headfirst
3. Use proper lifting techniques
4. All of the Above

4. To manually hold and restrain a chicken: First Cover the bird’s wings with your hand. Then Hold their legs and support their breast with your other hand. Then pick the bird up.

True or False

**Attendance RECORD**

\*This is to acknowledge that I understand and agree to actively participate in the safety meeting.

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