

NSPCA REVIEW OF THE POULTRY INDUSTRY IN SOUTH AFRICA

INTRODUCTION

The National Council of SPCAs (NSPCA) is a non-profit organization that has been protecting our country's animals since 1955. We prevent cruelty, promote kindness and alleviate the suffering of animals. Our objective is to serve and protect ALL animals, to uplift their welfare and to ensure that the protection they have under South African law is upheld and respected. The NSPCA's primary and motivating concern is the prevention of cruelty to all living creatures and the promotion of the humane treatment of animals through leadership, education, and law enforcement.

The NSPCA and all SPCAs in South Africa believe that an animal's well-being should be considered in terms of the Five Freedoms which form a logical and comprehensive framework for the assessment of animal welfare.

FARM ANIMAL WELFARE

Animals in South Africa are farmed for their meat, eggs, hides, fibre, milk, oil and other by-products. Commercial farming usually involves intensive systems which mean confinement in crates, cages, or pens. Animals may not be able to even turn around or lie down comfortably.

The NSPCA's Farm Animal Protection Unit (FAPU) has skilled Inspectors who operate throughout South Africa, reactively and proactively.

The Farm Animal Protection Unit undertakes the monitoring and protection of all farmed animals, including but not limited to sheep, pigs, goats, cattle including dairy cows, alpacas, poultry, ostriches, emus, crocodiles, rabbits, equine, snails, farmed fish and other aquatic species raised for food production, by conducting proactive and reactive inspections.

Pro-active work includes inspections and the taking of appropriate action at facilities where animals are farmed, bred, housed, handled, transported, or slaughtered. These inspections include but are not limited to breeder farms, hatcheries, rearing farms, broiler farms, layer farms, end-of-production facilities such as cull outlets, chicken hawkers, dairy farms, aquaculture facilities, beef and sheep feedlots, piggeries, livestock hawking and vending sites, saleyards and auctions, livestock pounds, rabbitries, alpaca farms, mohair farms, petting and touch farms, farm sanctuaries, agricultural schools/colleges/universities, agricultural shows, crocodile farms, abattoirs (red, poultry, ostrich, crocodile, rabbit), emerging farmers, ostrich farms and hatcheries, duck farms, prison farms, snail farms, rodeos, equine facilities, religious and traditional/ritual slaughter, live export, border posts, weighbridges, camels, and donkey skin trade.

Reactive work includes responding to complaints: – all of which are investigated, and feedback provided to complainants.

The NSPCA has specialised response teams on standby 24/7 to respond to disasters (all natural and man-made). These Inspectors are dispatched to the affected areas at very short notice to assist farmers to locate their animals and take them to places of safety as well as provide humane assistance to dead or dying animals. Reactive work further includes responding to accidents involving vehicles conveying live animals or being delayed due to inclement weather, industrial action, or disruptive protests.

In addition to the abovementioned duties/functions, the NSPCA attends meetings with the various industry stakeholders, including the government, sits on welfare committees and working groups, and provides welfare training to prison officials, agricultural schools, colleges, universities, abattoir personnel, SAPS, Traffic Officials, Stock Theft Units, livestock pounds and emerging farmers. Welfare training is also provided to local SPCAs and other welfare organisations that are authorised to enforce the Animals Protection Act No. 71 of 1962. These SPCAs and Welfare Organisations are then better equipped to conduct proactive and reactive inspections in their areas of jurisdiction.

POULTRY FACILITY INSPECTIONS

From 1 November 2018 to 30 November 2022, the NSPCA and individual SPCAs across South Africa inspected the following facilities in all nine provinces:

1. Hatchery – 47 Inspections
2. Layer Farm – 211 Inspections
3. Cull Outlet – 167 Inspections
4. Chicken Hawker – 1034 Inspections

WELFARE CONCERNS RECORDED

1. High stocking densities in layer cages, cull outlet cages, hawking cages and transportation crates.
2. Broken cages and transportation crates which cause injuries.
3. Inadequate protection from heat, cold and weather at facilities and during transportation.
4. Unacceptable hygiene conditions.
5. Lack of external parasite control.
6. Unsuitable transportation.
7. Selling of compromised end-of-production birds.
8. Lack of humane emergency slaughter equipment and protocols.
9. Illegal slaughter / dull knives.
10. Lack of veterinary/medical attention.
11. Unacceptable handling of poultry.
12. Lack of feed and water.
13. The drop from the sorting carousel for day-old chicks at hatcheries was too high resulting in birds falling onto hard surfaces which could cause injuries.
14. Handling of day-old chicks at hatcheries was unacceptable and birds were thrown during sorting.

15. Macerators are not effective enough to humanely cull unwanted/deformed day-old chicks.

COMPLIANCE AND PROSECUTION

Written warnings were issued and follow-up inspections conducted and where no compliance was achieved, prosecution ensued. The following reference numbers relate to cases involving poultry and poultry facilities and the respective South African Police Services may be contacted for further information.

1. CAS 40/7/2012 – Piet Retief (finalised in September 2021)
2. CAS 22/12/2018 – Koster
3. CAS 245/04/2019 – Kagiso
4. CAS 32/05/2020 – Mooi River

CONCLUSION

Considering animals are farmed for their meat, eggs, hides, feathers, fibre, milk, oil and other by-products, the NSPCA's objectives as stated are to uplift their welfare and to ensure that the protection they have under South African law is upheld and respected.

Proactive and reactive inspections and employment of relevant national legislation are tools to ensure that these objectives remain achievable.

The NSPCA is constitutionally charged to protect all sentient beings within the Republic and has a legal and moral obligation thereof.

Considering the above objectives and responsibilities, the NSPCA strives and endeavours to improve the welfare of all farmed animals under the auspices of the Farm Animal Protection Unit whilst utilizing all available measures, not limited to advocacy, relevant legislation, current regulations, and standards.

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