



Circular 1/2017

15 March 2017

To Organic Poultry Operators

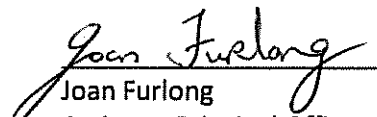
Avian Flu – Implications of continued housing requirement for Organic poultry and egg producers

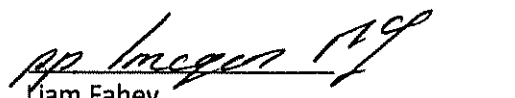
The current restrictions requiring the housing of all poultry as part of the response to the threat of avian flu have been extended until 30 April 2017 (DAFM Press Release of 8 March attached refers). This is beyond the 12 week period within which product can still be categorised as 'free-range'. However, in the case of organic producers, product can still be classified and sold as organic even while these housing restrictions continue, provided that steps are taken to provide for the 'ethological' needs of the poultry (i.e. to facilitate natural behaviour while housed).

In this respect Article 14. 7 of EU Regulation 889/2008 provides as follows:

"Where poultry are kept indoors due to restrictions or obligations imposed on the basis of Community legislation, they shall permanently have access to sufficient quantities of roughage and suitable material in order to meet their ethological needs".

If producers wish to continue to market their product as 'organic' they must ensure that the provisions of this regulation are met in full. By way of illustration, 'sufficient roughage' would be provided by approximately one standard small square bale of straw per 100 birds. The bales should be suspended (using a hay-net for example) for the birds to rummage and peck at, and this will help keep the birds occupied and discourage behaviour such as pecking at companions or, in the case of laying hens, breaking and eating their eggs. Equivalent quantities of loose straw or hay may also be used, again provided this is held securely in a hay-net and suspended. This approach is suggested by way of example and does not preclude other approaches, but in every case sufficient roughage and other material must be provided to facilitate natural behaviour amongst the birds. Behaviour should be monitored daily to ensure that the birds are not distressed while the housing restriction continues, and to ensure that adequate levels of roughage are maintained.


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