

# Animal Care Program

## Start Clean-Stay Clean<sup>®</sup>

### ON-FARM REQUIREMENTS



#### EGG QUALITY ASSURANCE™ CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

Canadian egg farmers have made it easier to identify top-quality eggs. The Egg Quality Assurance™ certification (or EQA™ for short) is an industry-wide initiative that certifies Canadian eggs are produced according to strict food safety and animal welfare standards. Farmers must meet the requirements of the national Animal Care Program and Start Clean-Stay Clean<sup>®</sup> Program to receive and maintain their EQA™ certification.



**Egg  
Quality  
Assurance**

Enclosed is a detailed overview of the programs and their requirements. Should you have any questions about our **Animal Care Program, Start Clean-Stay Clean<sup>®</sup> Program** or Egg Farmers of Canada, please visit [eggfarmers.ca](http://eggfarmers.ca) or email [cpa@eggs.ca](mailto:cpa@eggs.ca).



**EGG FARMERS  
OF CANADA**

# Animal Care

## PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

**OVERVIEW** The health and welfare of our hens is our top priority and a cornerstone of our industry. Like our customers and the Canadians that enjoy our product, we believe in the highest standards in animal care.

All registered Canadian egg farmers take part in a comprehensive national Animal Care Program. The program is administered by Egg Farmers of Canada (EFC) and is based on the recommended *Code of Practice for the care and handling of pullets, layers and spent fowl*, which covers topics such as housing, husbandry practices, handling and barn conditions.

The national Animal Care Program includes a number of steps farmers must take on their farms every day to meet high standards in animal welfare. The program uses enforcement mechanisms when the program requirements are not met. The program is regularly reviewed to ensure the latest science, global welfare knowledge, new technology and production systems and practices are considered, further strengthening already high standards in animal welfare and ensuring customer expectations are met.

### Inspections and third-party audits

The national Animal Care Program includes regular farm audits by a team of trained field inspectors and third-party auditors that ensure hens receive optimal care, and a consistent application of welfare standards across the country. Inspectors perform audits on two thirds of registered egg farms annually, while an independent third-party auditor performs the remaining third of audits across the country. All auditors are PAACO-certified and undergo rigorous training to ensure a fulsome understanding of the program.



# Animal Care Program requirements

Our national Animal Care Program includes 20 critical care requirements, 3 care and 22 general requirements. Each program requirement is assigned a score as part of the Animal Care Program audit.

Farmers must meet all critical care requirements and receive a minimum score of 90% to receive their EQA™ certification. Some examples of the items farmers are required to meet to maintain their certification include:



## Hen care and monitoring

- Daily inspections to ensure the health and wellbeing of hens. Immediate action by trained personnel if a sick or injured bird is identified.
- Access to nutritious feed, with daily records of feed consumption.
- Access to clean water, with daily records of water consumption.
- Ongoing monitoring of hen feather condition and behaviour.
- Minimum space allowance for brown and white birds in conventional housing systems.

## Flock care and oversight

- Sufficient lighting that allows for inspection of the entire flock.
- Written plan for euthanasia of individual birds in the case of injury, with acceptable veterinary-approved method described.
- Robust training for personnel who perform euthanasia.
- Written plan for end-of-lay hens and flock depopulation, including a description of the selected veterinary-approved method and description of process.
- If beak treatment or trimming is performed, it must be done by trained and experienced personnel using acceptable techniques and process.
- Strict adherence to the Handling, Catching and Loading Guidelines by farm personnel and catching service providers.

## Barn environment

- Regular inspections and monitoring of farm equipment (e.g. feeders, drinkers, temperature and ventilation systems and other equipment) that directly affects the hens, and repairs conducted when needed. Records of all inspections are maintained.
- Barn temperature is maintained between 10°C and 27°C.
- Air quality monitored and ammonia concentration levels less than 25 ppm.

## Farm management and policies

- A Farm Animal Welfare Policy outlining a commitment to fostering an environment that upholds animal care principles and requirements, and a zero tolerance approach to all forms of improper behavior. The policy is reviewed and signed annually by the farmer.
- An Employee Code of Conduct outlining the basic requirements for bird wellbeing, expectation for the care and handling of birds, and the immediate steps to report any suspected mistreatment. The policy is reviewed and signed by all farm personnel annually.
- A Visitor Policy and Code of Conduct outlining the expectations of visitors to the farm and a record of the date, time and purpose of the visit.
- An Emergency Plan or a backup generator for emergencies like a natural disaster, fire or power outage is required, including the steps for personnel to follow in the case of an emergency.



# Start Clean-Stay Clean<sup>®</sup>

## PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

**OVERVIEW** We are committed to providing safe, high-quality eggs to Canadians. We work to ensure the eggs delivered to our customers meet our world-class standards for food safety through our national Start Clean-Stay Clean<sup>®</sup> program.

This HACCP-based On-Farm Food Safety Program draws on an internationally accepted approach to prevent, reduce or eliminate food safety hazards. The program identifies all biological, chemical and physical hazards in a production unit, including *Salmonella* Enteritidis and other foodborne pathogens. It provides critical controls and management programs to prevent, reduce or eliminate the hazards and to mitigate the associated risks.

The program was developed with input from leading food safety experts, regulators and farmers. It consists of best management practices and verification procedures in the areas of egg collection and storage, facility hygiene, pest control, biosecurity and record keeping. The program includes regular farm inspections by a team of trained field inspectors and uses enforcement mechanisms when requirements of the program are not met.

The Start Clean-Stay Clean<sup>®</sup> program is reviewed on a semi-annual basis to ensure alignment with the latest scientific information, technical advancements, government regulations and best practices. This constant development strengthens already high food safety standards. The program is acknowledged by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency as being technically sound.



# Start Clean-Stay Clean® program requirements

Our national Start Clean-Stay Clean® program includes 5 critical control elements, and over 100 additional elements that are categorized as major, minor or general based on the risk to food safety.

Each element of the program is assigned a score as part of the Start Clean-Stay Clean® inspection. Farmers must meet the requirements of all critical control elements, undertake a records review and receive a minimum score of 90% to receive their EQA™ certification. Some examples of the items farmers are required to meet to maintain their certification include:



## Facility hygiene

- All-in, all-out program is followed in each laying facility.
- Water lines are purged and flushed on an annual basis.
- Barn floors, walls, ceilings and equipment are frequently cleaned and free from accumulation of dust, water, spilled feed, waste eggs, feathers, manure and cobwebs.
- Hen mortalities are disposed of daily in an appropriate manner and recorded.
- Farmers follow EFC's National *Salmonella* Enteritidis Protocol, which consists of at least two microbiological tests in a production cycle.
- Ongoing pest monitoring and control program, with appropriate records.
- Ongoing monitoring of wild bird and fly activity, with appropriate records.
- Barns are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected after each flock, using approved cleaning agents after each production cycle.

## Refrigerated storage

- Refrigerated storage temperature maintained between 10°C and 13°C.
- Daily minimum and maximum temperatures recorded.
- Cooler humidity is maintained at ≤85%.
- Thermometers are calibrated semi-annually.
- A fan is utilized to facilitate uniform air movement.

## Egg sorting and packing

- Eggs are gathered daily and egg production recorded.
- Excessively dirty and cracked eggs are segregated during collections and disposed of on-farm.
- Absolutely no washing of eggs on-farm.
- Packaging and conveying materials are protected from contaminants such as dust, feathers, water and rodents.



## Outside property and building exterior

- Farmers maintain restricted and unrestricted biosecurity zones around the barn exterior, including displaying no entry signs, separate parking away from the barn and locked doors to prevent entry.
- Only one kind of poultry is maintained at the farm. Strict practices employed for personnel accessing multiple barns on the same property.
- If hens have access to the outdoors, the range is managed in accordance with guidelines. Records maintained.
- All openings in the barn are properly sealed or screened (e.g. doors, windows, air intakes).
- Area within 4.5 meters of the production unit is kept free of debris and vegetation.
- Any stagnant water on the property within 60 meters is eliminated.
- A gravel or asphalt splash pad is placed around the production unit.

## Building interior

- Production unit has visual markings identifying restricted and unrestricted biosecurity zones.
- Air quality is maintained and temperatures recorded daily.
- Hand washing facility or sanitizing lotion available.
- Feed storages are constructed and maintained to prevent contamination of feed by water, wild birds, rodents and insects.
- Chemicals are stored in the production unit in a safe manner.
- Collected eggs on carts or skids stored in the cooler are tagged with farm identification, barn number and date.
- All repair and maintenance equipment is dedicated to the production unit, or disinfected before entering the production unit.

- Personnel and visitors must wear sanitary outer clothing and change footwear before entering the restricted areas of the production unit.
- All farm visitors must sign a log book before entering the production unit.
- Water supply is tested monthly.
- All medications used are logged in the Pharmaceutical Record, including withdrawal period.
- Material on floors, walls and ceiling is durable, smooth and cleanable, and the floor is sufficiently sloped for easy water drainage.
- Laying hen living quarters are separate from egg storage and packaging material storage.

## Records and Letters of Assurance

Farmers must complete a range of daily, weekly and monthly records as well as seek Letters of Assurance from suppliers. Some examples of these records include:

- Cooler Temperature Records
- Egg Production Record
- Pest Control Records
- Water Test record
- Pharmaceutical Record
- Sanitation Records
- SE Environmental Test Records
- Letter of Assurance from feed supplier
- Letter of Assurance from packaging material supplier
- Letter of Assurance from bedding supplier
- Visitors Log



Visit [eggfarmers.ca](http://eggfarmers.ca) and subscribe to our **e-newsletter** to stay informed on all the latest news from Canada's egg farmers.

