

New RSPCA welfare standards for laying hens now available for RSPCA Assured members

The announcement comes after months of dialogue with the laying hen industry

Friday 11 April 2025

RSPCA Assured has today announced the publication of the final iteration of the RSPCA's welfare standards for laying hens, following ongoing engagement with scheme members and the industry.

Last year, RSPCA Assured paused the release of the RSPCA's new standards to its members to allow time to provide additional support to members and find practical solutions to challenges with meeting the standards.

A key point of concern was the new requirement for natural daylight. However, following extensive collaboration with the laying hen industry, the RSPCA has now published the final version of the 2025 standards.

Kelly Grellier, RSPCA Assured's Chief Commercial Officer, said: "A number of amendments have been made to the natural daylight standard to ensure the implementation process ties in with a member's planned refurbishment cycle. This will make implementation of the standard more practical and achievable, whilst still progressing hen welfare.



"The RSPCA always undergoes a thorough consultation process when developing standards, and we've dedicated a lot of additional time over the last year listening to and collaborating with our members and the industry in response to their feedback.

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“Progressing welfare is a team effort and we’re so proud to have such an engaged and dedicated membership to work with. Working together to find solutions gives the greatest chance of achieving this standard, ensuring that all hens experience natural daylight.”

The key amendments to the natural daylight standard are as follows:

- **Either at the time of refurbishment cycle or by 1 January 2035*** (whichever is sooner) free-range members must provide 3% natural daylight to hens. When carrying out planned internal refurbishments, free-range members must include the extension of pop holes or light inlets (i.e. windows) within the current structural framework of the house to meet 3% natural daylight.
- From **1 October 2025**, free-range members building a new house or conducting major structural refurbishments to an existing house, must provide 3% natural daylight through windows. This is in addition to the natural daylight provided through pop holes.
- From **1 October 2025** all free-range hens** must have access to natural daylight through their pop holes during housing orders (e.g. in the event of AI outbreaks). In order to achieve this, producers could put clear material (e.g. acrylic) over pop holes, rather than closing them, when birds need to be housed during the natural daylight period. *If hens are placed before 1st October, members can wait until they depopulate and place the next flock to meet this requirement.*
- From **1 October 2025** any newly built barn houses must provide minimum 3% natural daylight.



The RSPCA and RSPCA Assured's driving priority is to support all members in achieving the standard by 1 January 2035. The vast majority of RSPCA Assured members will be able to achieve the new standard in this time frame. **However, if 3% minimum natural daylight cannot be reasonably and realistically achieved through refurbishment in this time, a five year derogation will be available for members to apply for - providing they can commit to refurbishing to 3% natural daylight by 2040. Any member granted a derogation will be subject to certain conditions.*

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To compensate for the delay in publishing the standards, the general implementation date for the entirety of the laying hen standards will now be **11 July 2025**. This means members can continue to use the current 2017 version until 10 July 2025.

The complete edition of the new RSPCA standards can now be found on the [RSPCA Assured website](#). A brand [new members' hub](#) is also available with useful resources and support in meeting the new standards.

New, potential or existing RSPCA Assured members who are in need of support or advice about meeting the new laying hen standards can [contact](#) RSPCA Assured membership services via the RSPCA Assured website.

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Notes to editors:

- Please find a PDF list of the changes [in full here](#).
- Read further information about natural daylight [here](#).
- Find some useful stats on what the public thinks about higher welfare eggs [here](#).

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