

CASE STUDY

How one poultry producer Stephen Jones stays audit ready

Any egg producer knows how stressful farm audits can be. However, with the right support, good paperwork and stockmanship, a producer can maintain a level of 'audit fitness' that will save time and minimise disruption. Stephen Jones, a mixed farmer in the Welsh borders, shows how with the help of his Humphrey Feeds & Pullets Poultry Specialist Gwenda Wozencroft, staying audit ready avoids nasty surprises.

The challenge of audits

A number of different bodies, such as the Lion Code, APHA and RSPCA, take an interest in the various elements of raising poultry and producing eggs. They each give different amounts of notice and have their own demands; some focus on trading standards, others on bird welfare, hygiene or biosecurity but all want to see a full set of accurate and up to date records as well as the facilities.

Keeping on top of audit preparation

Preparing for, and hosting, audit teams can be time consuming for Stephen, whose main focus needs to be looking after his flock of 16,000 free-range birds. But with the help of Gwenda, he keeps on top of his audit preparation, avoiding paperwork backlogs and making sure his laying sheds are always ready for inspection.

During his first flock, Stephen needed to pass an initial audit from the Lion Code to sign up with his packer, Fairburn Eggs: "In the beginning we needed a lot of advice from Gwenda on audits and it was hard work," said Stephen. "Gwenda makes the process much easier and it takes less of my time now, so I can spend more time with the birds."

Stephen does not relish paperwork; "I'm a routines person; I like to do the same thing every day, and the hens like routine too. But that consistency also makes sure things don't get missed and maintaining audit standards is easier."

Between Stephen's diligence and Gwenda's eye for detail, he has never failed an audit, and that effort is reflected in the results. Stephen's birds have achieved over 330 eggs each for his last two flocks, with low mortality, and as a result he enjoys a good relationship with his packer.

Staying audit fit

To stay audit fit, Stephen, with support from Gwenda, focuses on:

- Walking the sheds routinely
- Keeping on top of paperwork and recording everything
- Keeping information together in a handy binder
- Keeping sheds clean and tidy
- Ensuring that biosecurity is tight

Good practice makes the difference

Finding an approach that allows Stephen to integrate all aspects of poultry farming has a real impact. "Audits are all

about keeping hens happy and productive," he

said. "Looking at audits from this perspective means rather than eating up my time they are a part of making sure my hens are being looked after."

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For Gwenda, it's all part of her job: "I see it as a central part of the service to the customer. As the free-range sector becomes more accountable, the packer, feed and pullet supplier all have an interest in the producer achieving the required standards, and verifying that through the audit process.

Passing your audits is essential if you want to sell your eggs on the market."



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