

FEATHER SCORING GUIDE

FOR CAREGIVERS

Members of the egg farming community have a moral obligation to provide high-quality care for their hens; produce safe, affordable, nutritious eggs; and meet the expectations of customers. Feather scoring is an important welfare practice that helps assess the health and well-being of hens.

Feather scoring includes **examining hens on their head, neck, back and rump area for feather damage.** Consistent monitoring can alleviate potential flock health concerns before they escalate. Plan to feather score **at least three times throughout the life of the flock, including within three months of the end-of-flock, to see development over time.**

Adapted from research by Dr. Alexandra Harlander and team at the University of Guelph, Decina et al. 2019, doi: 10.3390/ani9070436.



Created in collaboration with Egg Farmers of Canada

FEATHER SCORING CRITERIA

SCORE	DESCRIPTION
0 (BEST)	Intact feather cover, little to no wear, single feathers may be missing, no bald patches.
1	Damaged feathers (worn/deformed) or visible bald patches that are smaller than or equal to a quarter.
2 (WORST)	At least one visible bald patch that is larger than a quarter.

FEATHER SCORE REGULARLY

To cause minimal disruption to the birds, perform feather scoring during a typical flock check.

- Allow the birds time to get acclimated to your presence
- To avoid stress, avoid physically handling the birds
- Visually scoring birds allows for quick, easy and reliable assessments

IDENTIFY BIRDS TO SCORE

TO GAIN AN ACCURATE UNDERSTANDING OF FLOCK WELL-BEING:

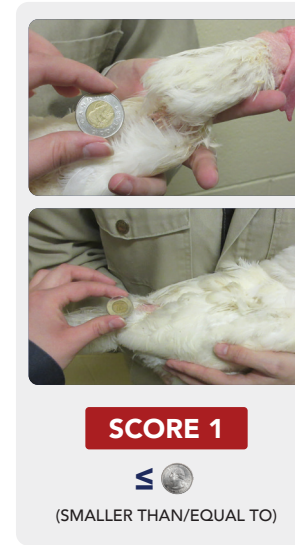
- Assess up to 80 birds*
- Select birds from various places throughout the facility
- Only score birds that can be assessed in all three body regions (neck, back and rump)

ASSESS THE MINIMUM NUMBER OF BIRDS AS INDICATED BY THE TABLE BELOW.

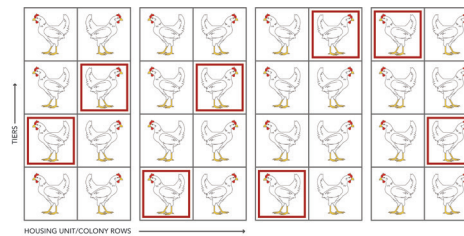
BIRDS IN THE BARN	MINIMUM BIRDS ASSESSED
≤ 8,000	20
≤ 10,000	25
≤ 15,000	30
≤ 20,000	35
≤ 40,000	40
≤ 50,000	45
≤ 65,000	50
≤ 80,000	60
≤ 100,000	80

ESTABLISH A TREATMENT PLAN

Flock scores and comparisons should be maintained to establish a baseline. Consider isolating any unique outliers when feather scoring, including those with tissue damage, and treating or euthanizing them in alignment with your farm's established procedures.

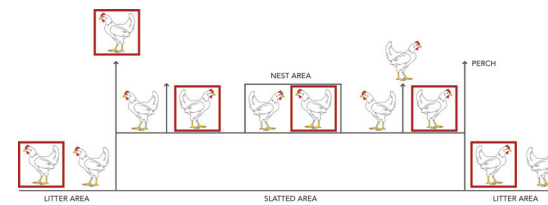


Photographs courtesy of Nienke van Staaveren.



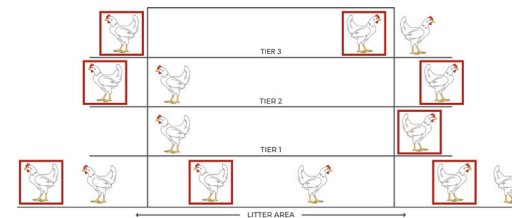
CONVENTIONAL AND ENRICHED COLONY

- Select cages and birds at random, ideally using a random number generator prior to scoring.
- Score a max of 2 birds per cage in conventional.



SINGLE-TIER

- Select birds from different areas of the barn (litter area, slatted area, nest area, perches, and if applicable, outdoor areas).
- Choose birds proportionally based on the number present in each area. If most are in one spot, score at least half from that area.



MULTI-TIER

- Select birds from different areas of the barn (litter area, slatted area, nest area, perches, different tiers, and if applicable, outdoor areas).
- Choose birds proportionally based on the number present in each area. If most are in one spot, score at least half from that area.