

Conditions for Rejection of Poultry at Post Mortem

Emaciation

Post Mortem Disposition



Figure 1: A normal fleshed bird (left) is compared against a feverish emaciated broiler (right) from same flock.

Figure 2: Emaciated broiler, note the clear protrusion of the sternum and concavity of breast muscles.

Figure 3: Normal carcass of a healthy free range layer hen.

Figure 4: Emaciated ducks. Different sizes, bony carcasses.

FSS Responsibilities

Total rejection of carcase and offal.

Recording of the condition

The condition must be recorded under the “Emaciation” entry in the Post Mortem Inspection module of OWS.

Further Information

Definition

Birds of all sizes that have very poor muscle development and little or no fat deposits.

- The condition is characterised by protrusion of the sternum and concavity of the breast muscles.
- The carcass may also show other signs of disease such as dehydration or septicaemia.

Causes

Genetic diversity of the poultry population can lead to the presence of genetically small birds which fall behind the growth of the majority of the flock. As the feeder and drinker system is adjusted to suit the majority, the small birds may become deprived of easy access to feed and water which will lead to poor muscle development.

Larger numbers of emaciated birds can be caused by management, feed inadequacies or by either bacterial or viral disease challenge.

Comments from Inspection Teams

It is important to define the type of bird and the normal expectation of muscle mass. Carcasses should be well fleshed with overtly convex breast muscles dimpling of the muscle at the sternum; whereas spent layers or breeders are expected to have concave breast muscles and a protuberant sternum.

Remarks/Consequences

- Emaciated birds should be uncommon on farms and their presence indicates a management, disease or feeding issue. Affected birds may also show other signs of disease.
- Small emaciated birds may fail to be stunned and are also likely to be missed by the neck cutter.
- Emaciated birds of all sizes should be, and generally are, culled on the farm at the earliest opportunity and as such emaciated birds should be a rare observation in the processing plant.
- It is important to differentiate small well-muscled birds from small emaciated birds.

What is the data on rejects used for?

High incidence of emaciated birds may indicate that a management or feed issue, or disease is involved on the affected farm. The company production team can use this data to investigate potential disease or management problems and also ensure that the farm staff has an appreciation of what is expected of them regarding culling standards on welfare grounds.

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