

Conditions for Rejection of Poultry at Post Mortem

Ante-mortem Rejects (Culls/Runs)



Figure 1: Normal size well fleshed bird surrounded by two well fleshed runted birds from same flock. All three birds passed as fit for human consumption.



Figure 2: Normal size bird compared to a runted bird passed as fit (right) and an abnormal colour/feverish bird (left).

FSS Responsibilities

Post Mortem Disposition

The FBO may decide to cull runt birds at hang on point due to the difficulties involved with online processing.

Note: If such birds are not culled at hang on point, then the carcasses may be passed as fit for human consumption (although it is likely that such birds will be rejected due to conditions arising during the processing such as contamination and machine damage).

Recording of the condition

If the bird is culled at hang on point then the condition must be recorded under ante-mortem rejects (culls/runts). We will record the figures provided by the FBO and the OV should ensure the figures are reliable.

The figures should be recorded in the “Ante-Mortem Rejects – Culls/Runs” entry in the Post Mortem Inspection module of OWS.

Further Information

Definition

In a group of animals, a runt is a member which is smaller and/or weaker. Birds are normally well fleshed but significantly smaller than the average size of the flock.

Remarks/consequences

- Often runts/stunted birds are present within the flock.
- Runting/stunting should be differentiated from general unevenness of flocks, i.e. a gradual variation in size, unevenness is often due to mixtures of chicks from different supply flocks in a single shed/house.
- Runted and stunted birds should be culled on farm at the earliest opportunity.
- Due to their size, these birds may fail to be stunned and are also likely to be missed by the automatic neck cutter.

Causes

There are various factors that can cause runting/stunting. These can be related to husbandry or viral changes. In these cases the performance of the flock will be poor and the farmer will likely review the issues with their vet. None of the potential causes are zoonotic.

Comments from Inspection Teams

It is important to distinguish this condition from small emaciated birds. Due to their small size runts/stunted birds are difficult to process and are likely to fall from the shackles when going through the process or suffering machine damage as the machines are unable to cope with such small birds. Based on this, some FBOs take the decision to cull such birds at the hanging on point.

What is the data on rejects used for?

High incidence can indicate chronic hygiene deficiencies on growing farms or that there are issues with breeder nutrition management or egg hygiene/management on farm or at the hatchery.

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