25th February 2026

Open webinar

Advancing Scientific knowledge on the Welfare of Turkeys on farm: Insights from the EFSA Scientific Opinion

STARTING AT 14:00 (CET)

EUROPEAN FOOD SAFETY AUTHORITY

AGENDA of TODAY's WEBINAR

Webinar: Advancing Scientific knowledge on the Welfare of Turkeys on farm: Insights from the EFSA Scientific Opinion Chair: Yves Van der Stede - EFSA		
14:00-14:05	Welcome and introduction to the event	Frank Verdonck, EFSA Yves Van der Stede, EFSA
14:05-14:15	EFSA scientific support and context of the Scientific Opinion on the welfare of turkeys	Lærke Toft Holm, EC
14:15-14:35	EFSA approach, methodology, and stakeholder engagement for the assessment of the welfare of turkeys	Cristina Rojo Gimeno, EFSA
14:35-15:05	The welfare of turkeys: Outcomes of the Scientific Opinion	Anja Brinch Riber, Aarhus University, Chair of the EFSA Working group on the welfare of turkeys
15:05-15:30	*Coffee break*	
15:30-16:00	Q&A session	Anja Brinch Riber and EFSA staff
16:00-16:05	**Closing remarks**	Yves Van der Stede, EFSA

Context of the EFSA Scientific opinion on the welfare of turkeys

Info Session | Advancing Scientific Knowledge on the Welfare of Turkeys on farm

February 25th 2026

Lærke Edel Toft Holm
Policy Officer
DG SANTE – Animal Welfare Unit

EFSA scientific support

LAPS	2017
Slaughter and killing on farm	2019 - 2025
NHEF	Jul-2024
Transport	Sept-2022
Pigs	Aug-2022
Broilers	Feb-2023
Laying hens	Feb-2023
Calves	Apr-2023
Ducks, geese and quails	May-2023
Dairy cows	May-2023
Sheep and goats slaughter and killing	Jun-2024
Beef cattle	Jul-2025
Fur animals	Jul-2025
Turkeys	Dec-2025
Equidae	on-going

- Update scientific knowledge on the welfare of animals
  - on farm
  - transport
  - slaughter and killing

- Previous work on turkeys

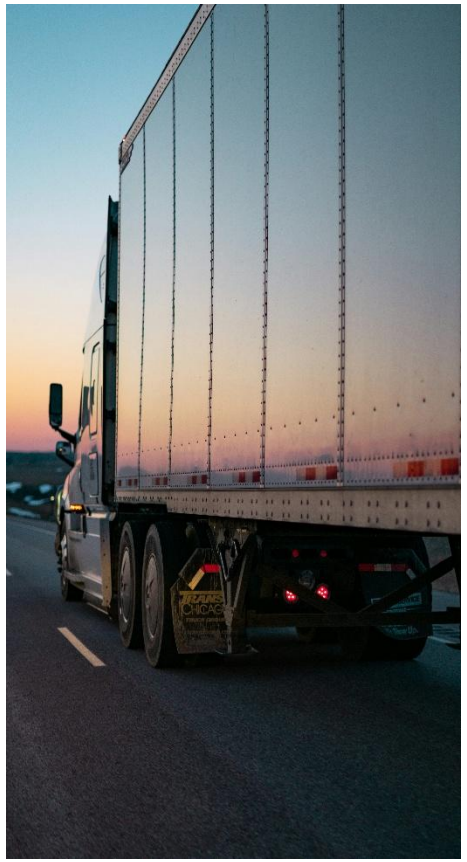
Political context

In 2020, the Commission started a process to update and modernise the EU animal welfare legislation

End 2023, the Commission adopted two proposals

- Transport
- Dogs and cats

Where are we now?



Turkeys in the current EU legislation

- No specific EU animal welfare legislation covering turkeys
- Council Directive 98/58/EC of 20 July 1998

Mandate to EFSA on the welfare of turkeys

Who	• On farm • All ages and stages
What	• Technical report • Scientific opinion
What 2.0	• Terms of reference

Terms of Reference (ToR)

ToR 1

- **Request 1:** Review of most common husbandry systems and current practices for keeping turkeys on farm

ToR 2

- **Request 2:** Assessment of factors and practices

a) welfare consequences of housing conditions
b) risk to welfare of weight and thinning practices
c) breeding practices related factors
d) hatchery conditions
e) mutilations
f) breeding and genetic traits

Terms of Reference (ToR)

ToR 2, Request 3

- Identify the relevant welfare consequences of the housing systems, risk factors and practices in Request 1 and 2 through AB measures

ToR 2, Request 4

- Provide qualitative and quantitative recommendations

ToR 2, Request 5

- Assess and define suitable animal-based indicators collected at the slaughterhouse

Thank you!

25th February 2026

Open webinar

EFSA's approach, methodology, and stakeholder engagement for the assessment of the welfare of turkeys

Cristina Rojo Gimeno,
Scientific Officer, Animal Welfare team,
BIOHAW, EFSA

EUROPEAN FOOD SAFETY AUTHORITY

BACKGROUND, MANDATE AND INTERPRETATION OF TORs

BACKGROUND

Turkey farming in the EU: over **170 million turkeys** were farmed in 2023

Main producing countries in EU:
France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain

EU legal background

The welfare of turkeys kept is regulated by the general animal protection **Directive 98/58/EC**.

Lack of a specific legislation, except the **2001 Council of Europe Recommendation concerning turkeys** (*Meleagris gallopavo spp.*).

NEW

First EFSA opinion on the **welfare** of **turkeys** on farm

Previous EFSA scientific work

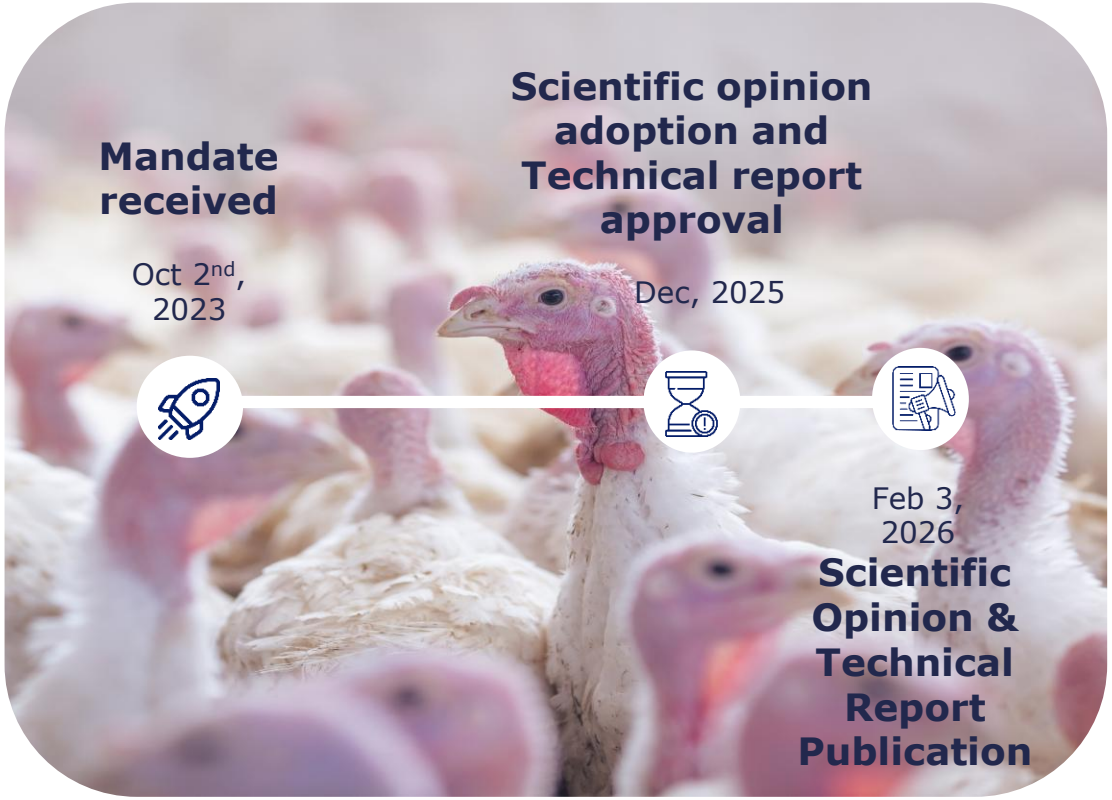
EFSA AHAW Panel 2019 (a and b)

The welfare of poultry at slaughter and on-farm killing

EFSA AHAW Panel 2022

The welfare of domestic birds and rabbits transported in containers

MANDATE AND TIMELINE



Technical Report

ToR1

A review of the most common husbandry systems and current practices for keeping turkeys *Meleagris gallopavo gallopavo* on farm, covering turkeys of all ages (breeding turkeys and turkeys kept for meat production) including hatchery conditions in the EU.

Art. 31

Art. 29

ToR2

The Commission requests EFSA to deliver a scientific opinion for keeping turkeys *Meleagris gallopavo gallopavo* on farm, covering turkeys of all ages (breeding turkeys and turkeys kept for meat production) focusing in particular on several risk factors.

Scientific Opinion

DEFINITION OF THE **TURKEYS' CATEGORIES**

The mandate asks for: *'Turkeys of all ages'* and specifies 'turkeys kept for meat production, turkey breeders and poults'

POULT

A newly-hatched turkey up to 7 days of life, a period during which the bird is unable to thermoregulate

TURKEYS KEPT FOR MEAT PRODUCTION

Are kept until they are slaughtered. The slaughter weight and age depends on sex, country and genotype.

BREEDING TURKEYS

Are kept for reproduction of new generations of fattening and breeding turkeys.

♀ Turkey females = hens

♂ Turkey males = toms

INTERPRETATION OF TORs: **MUTILATIONS**

Mandate asked *EFSA to assess the welfare consequences associated with the mutilations **beak trimming** and other practices (e.g. detoeing and desnooding)*

De-toeing not performed in turkeys in EU MSs (EFSA, 2024, European Commission 2024a,b); **Toe trimming** is instead practised and was assessed.

Mutilations are normally applied in **newly hatched** poults, but they are associated with welfare consequences in **turkeys kept for meat production** and **turkey breeders**

The **biological functions** of the **removed body parts** were assessed in relation to the relevant **welfare consequences**; the ethical dimension of animal integrity fell out of scope of this assessment.

Negative affective states

INTERPRETATION OF TORs: **ABMs AT SLAUGHTER**

Mandate asked to *assess the ABMs that can be collected at the slaughterhouse to monitor the welfare of turkeys on farm*

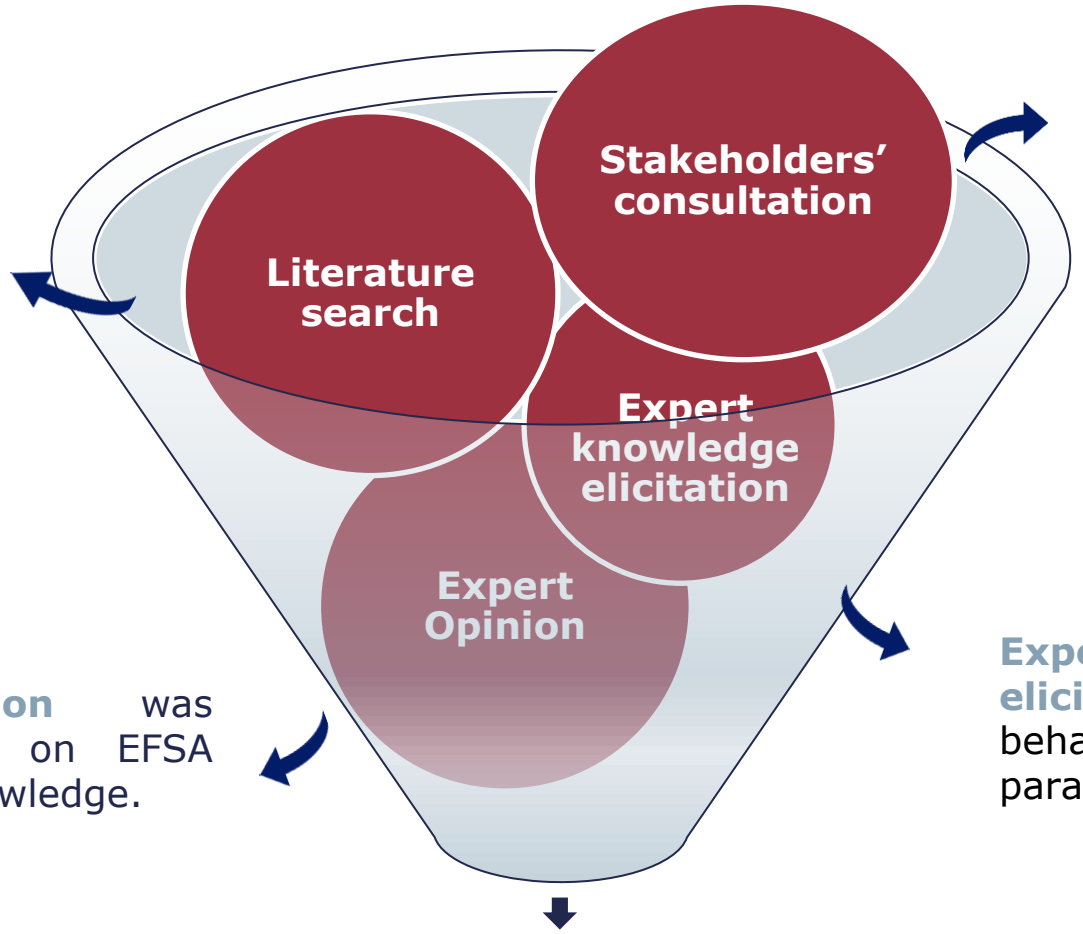
Identified ABMs were considered relevant for **turkeys kept for meat production** and **breeding turkeys**

APPROACH, METHODOLOGY AND EFSA ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

DATA COLLECTION AND METHODOLOGY

Four main **data collection strategies** and **methods** were used to assess the risk factors of the mandate

Identified **publications** with relevant welfare information for turkeys.



Information obtained through a **public call for evidence, ad-hoc technical hearing, fact-finding studies** and **EFSA networks consultations** was revised and appraised by EFSA's experts and staff.

Expert opinion was obtained based on EFSA experts' own knowledge.

Expert knowledge elicitations on the behavioural space model parameters.

WELFARE ASSESSMENT OF TURKEYS

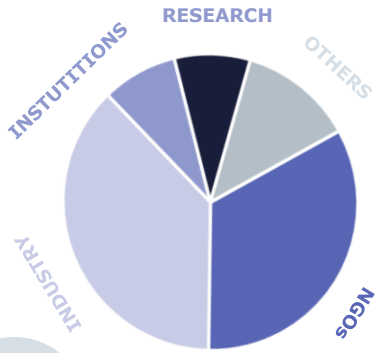
EFSA STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE

1 EFSA Network meeting

May 31st, 2023

2 Stakeholder meeting in Brussels

Nov 8th, 2023



3 Call for evidence

Dec 7th 2023 – Jan 31st, 2024

4 Fact finding mission

Feb 28th– March 13th, 2024

5 EFSA Network meeting

Mar 21st, 2024

6 Ad-hoc technical hearing

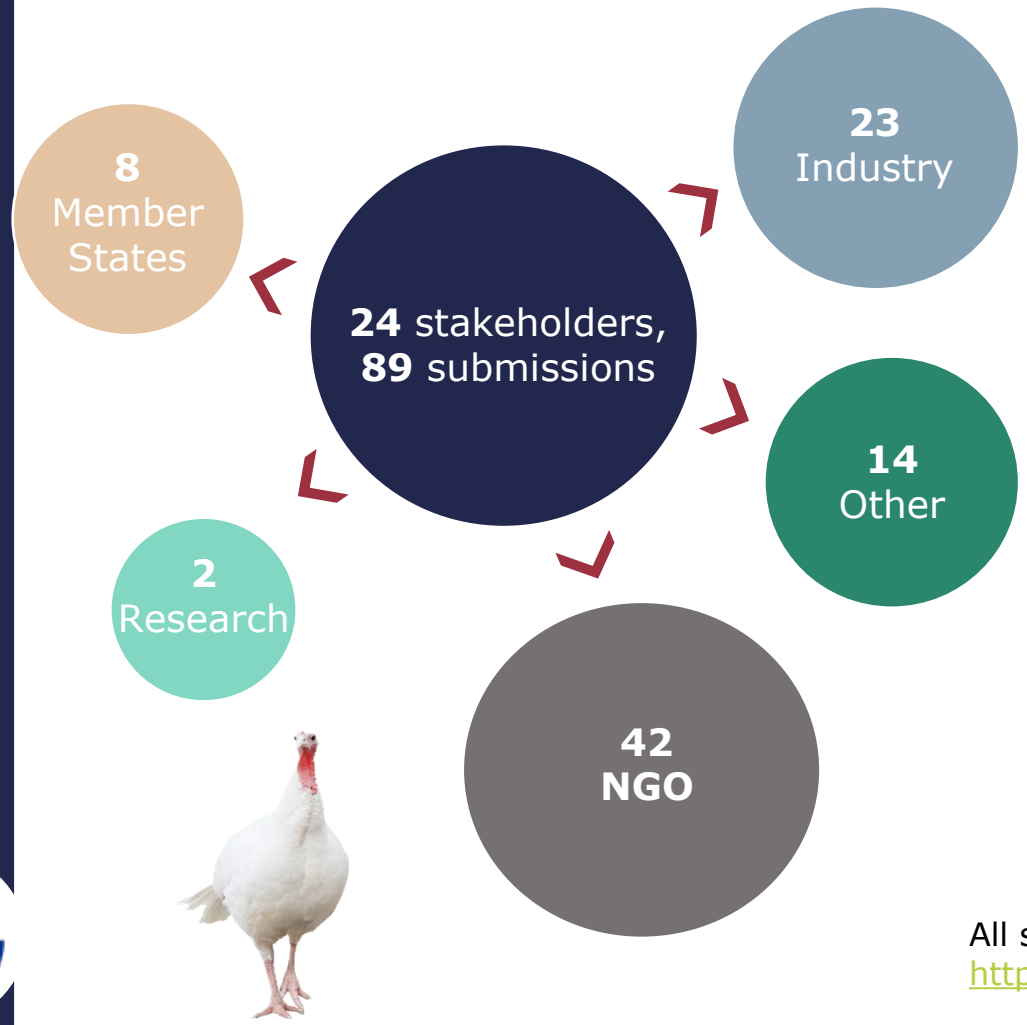
Oct 17th, 2024

7 Public webinar

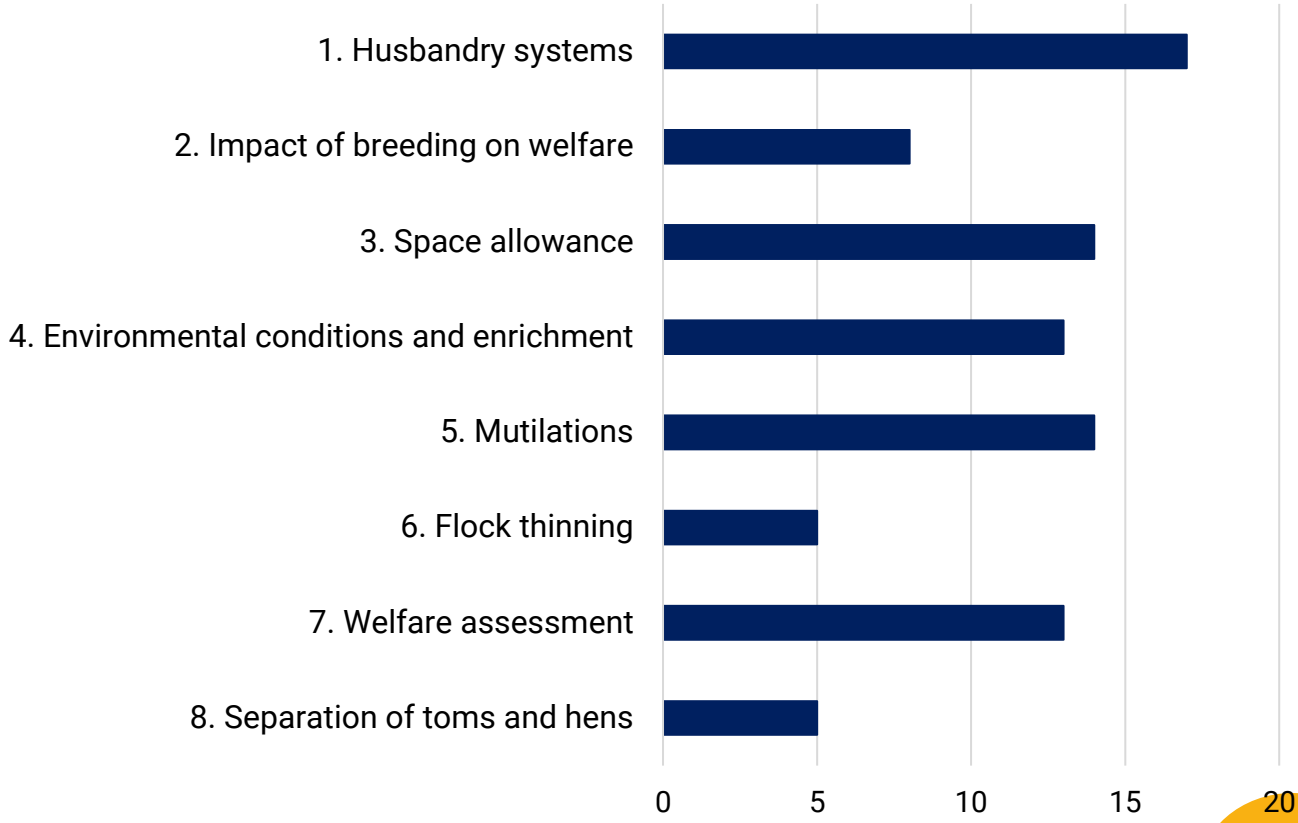
Feb 25th, 2026

PUBLIC CALL FOR EVIDENCE

Number of submissions by type of stakeholder



Number of submissions per topic



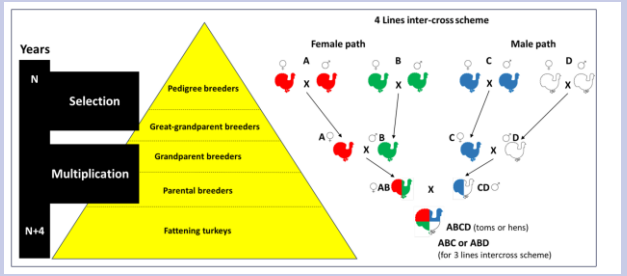
All submissions available at
https://open.efsa.europa.eu/consultations/a0cTk00000024ifIAA

TECHNICAL REPORT

Description of turkey categories

\+

Description of production cycle and duration



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Current used housing systems and practices applied in the EU

SCIENTIFIC OPINION: ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Some scenarios were assessed using expert opinion

Uncertainty was quantified using the EFSA Uncertainty guidance (EFSA Scientific Committee, 2018; EFSA, 2019)

Literature review

Search strings were ran for each factor of the mandate -> **more than 500** references included

Relevant welfare consequences and hazard identification

Out of the 29 applicable welfare consequences (EFSA AHAW Panel, 2022b) for turkeys **19 were selected as relevant**

Expert Opinion

Sources of uncertainty

Expert knowledge elicitation

Parameters of the behavioural space model were obtained from an Expert Knowledge Elicitation

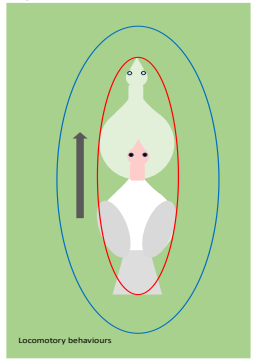
Identification of preventive and mitigation measures

Conclusions and recommendations

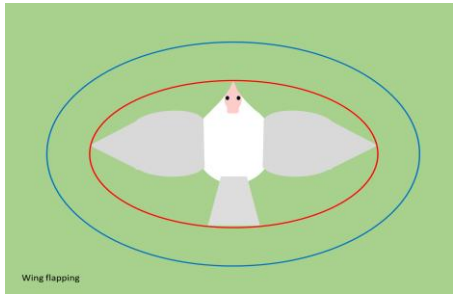
METHODOLOGY: BEHAVIOURAL SPACE MODEL

Six classes of natural behaviours

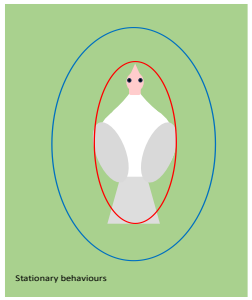
Dynamic behaviours



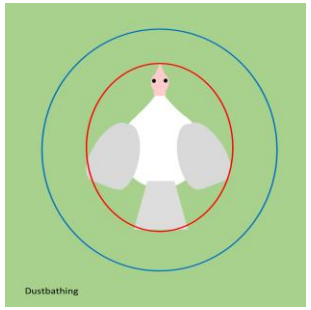
Wing flapping



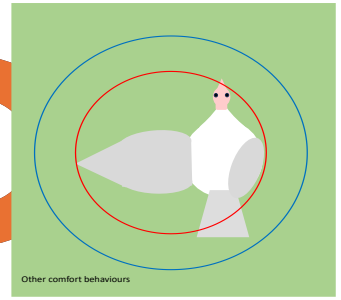
Stationary behaviours



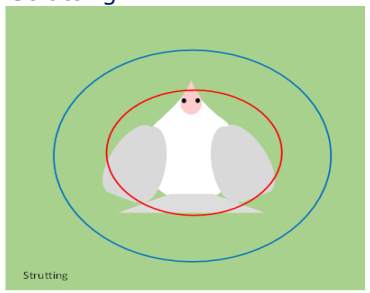
Dustbathing

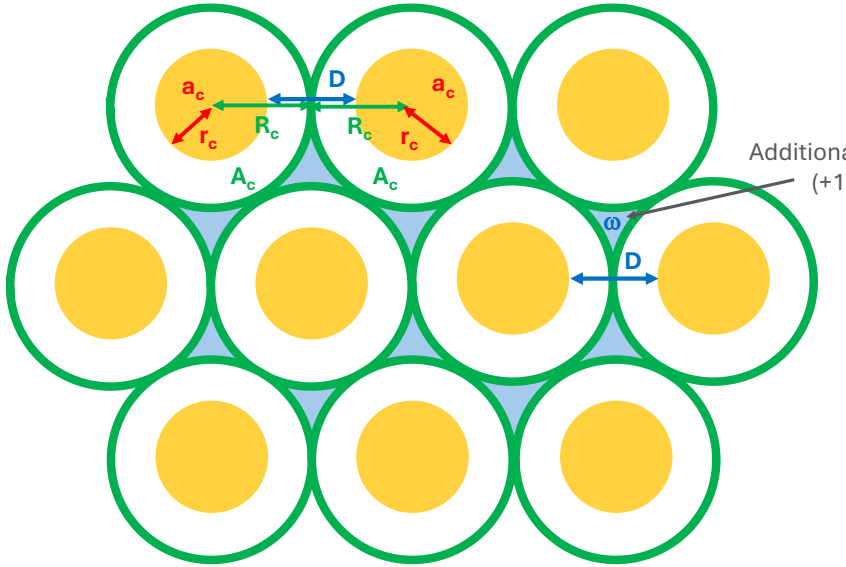


Other comfort behaviours



Strutting





$$A_c = \omega \cdot \pi \cdot \left(\sqrt{\frac{a \cdot F_c}{\pi}} + \frac{D}{2} \right)^2$$

a	Area of the bird
D	Interindividual distance
P_c	Proportion of birds performing the behaviour

Semiformal Expert knowledge elicitation (EFSA Scientific Committee, 2018) for parameters of the behavioural model

25th February 2026

Open webinar

The welfare of turkeys: Outcomes of the Scientific Opinion

Anja Brinch Riber

Chair of the EFSA Working Group on the welfare of Turkeys

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Contained in the Welfare Assessment

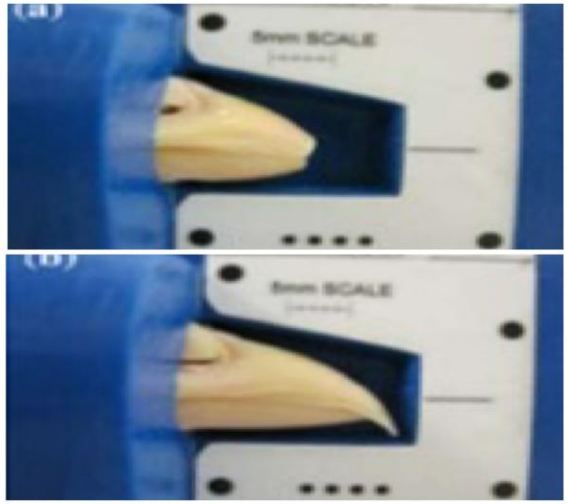
Mutilations	Concentration of ammonia	Lighting conditions	Concentration of carbon dioxide	Space allowance
Effective environmental temperature	Type and condition of litter	Group size	Type and availability of enrichment	Flock thinning and removal of hens
Nest conditions	Artificial insemination	Genetic selection and breeding strategies	Feed restriction	Hatchery conditions

Contained in the Welfare Assessment

Mutilations	Concentration of ammonia	**Lighting conditions**	Concentration of carbon dioxide	**Space allowance**
Effective environmental temperature	**Type and condition of the litter**	Group size	**Type and availability of enrichment**	Flock thinning and removal of hens
Nest conditions	Artificial insemination	**Genetic selection and breeding strategies**	Feed restriction	Hatchery conditions

THE PRACTICE OF MUTILATIONS

The three types of mutilations practiced in the EU



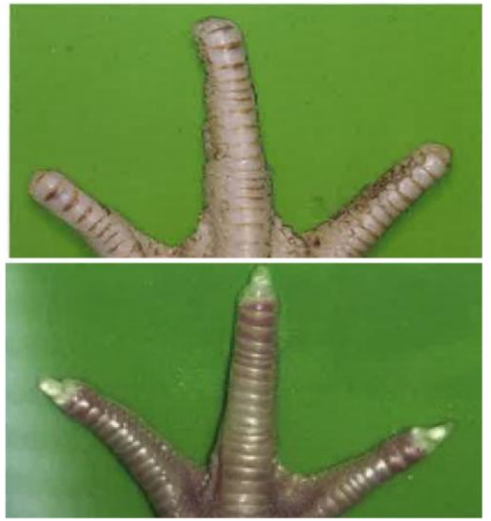
© Struthers et al., 2019

Beak trimming

© Harlander lab

© Joanna Marchewka

Desnooding



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Toe trimming

Mutilations: Welfare consequences

Shared for all mutilations

- Soft tissue lesions and integument damage
- Handling stress

Beak trimming and toe trimming

- Inability to perform exploratory and foraging behaviour
- Inability to perform comfort behaviour
- Prolonged hunger
- Prolonged thirst

Toe trimming

- Locomotory disorders (including lameness)

Desnooding

- Heat stress

Acute and Chronic pain

Mutilations: Conclusions

When kept under current conventional housing conditions:

- Beak trimming effectively reduces the damage caused by injurious pecking.
- Intact toes increase the risk of damage in turkey hens, but not in toms.

For all mutilations, Soft tissue lesions and integument damage inflicted by intact turkeys are prevented if appropriate housing conditions and management practices are in place, including:

- Environmental enrichment
- Strategic genetic selection
- Appropriate lighting conditions
- Adequate space allowance
- Natural blunting or smoothing of the beak/claws

Mutilations: Recommendations

To phase out **beak trimming, desnooding and toe trimming**

Strategies to **prevent injurious pecking and scratches** should be implemented before those practices are phased out and sustained after the phasing out

Collection of knowledge on **good farming practices** from EU MSs where mutilations have been omitted for decades

Until mutilations are phased out, it is recommended to develop practical and effective methods of pain relief during and after the mutilations are performed

LIGHTING CONDITIONS

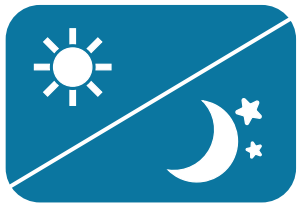
Lighting conditions: Welfare consequences and hazards

Welfare consequences

- Group stress
- Soft tissue lesions and integument damage
- Resting problems
- Locomotory disorders (including lameness)
- Eye disorders
- Sensory under- and/or overstimulation

Identified hazards

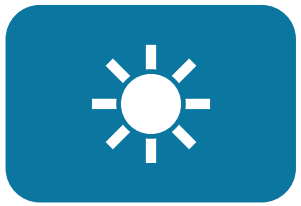
Too low light intensity



Photoperiod

Flickering

UV Absence



Too high light intensity

Lighting conditions: Recommandations

A **minimum light intensity of 10 lux** during the photophase at bird-eye level should be provided

A stable light–dark cycle with age-adjusted dark phases should be maintained to support **circadian rhythms**

Lighting programmes characterised by **step-up and step-down schedules** should be gradual and predictable

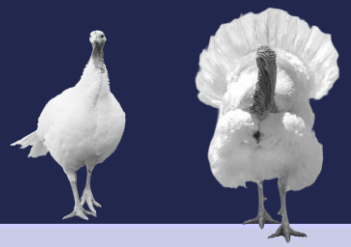
Exposure to daylight or artificial lighting that includes **UV-A wavelengths** should be provided

Avoid perceptible **flicker** for turkeys

Continuous monitoring of injurious pecking, plumage condition and resting behaviour is recommended

SPACE ALLOWANCE

Space allowance: Welfare consequences



Direct
- Restriction of movement
- Resting problems
- Group stress
- Inability to perform comfort behaviour
- Inability to perform exploratory and foraging behaviour

Indirect
- Heat stress
- Soft tissue lesions and integument damage
- Gastroenteric disorders
- Respiratory disorders
- Locomotory disorders (including lameness)

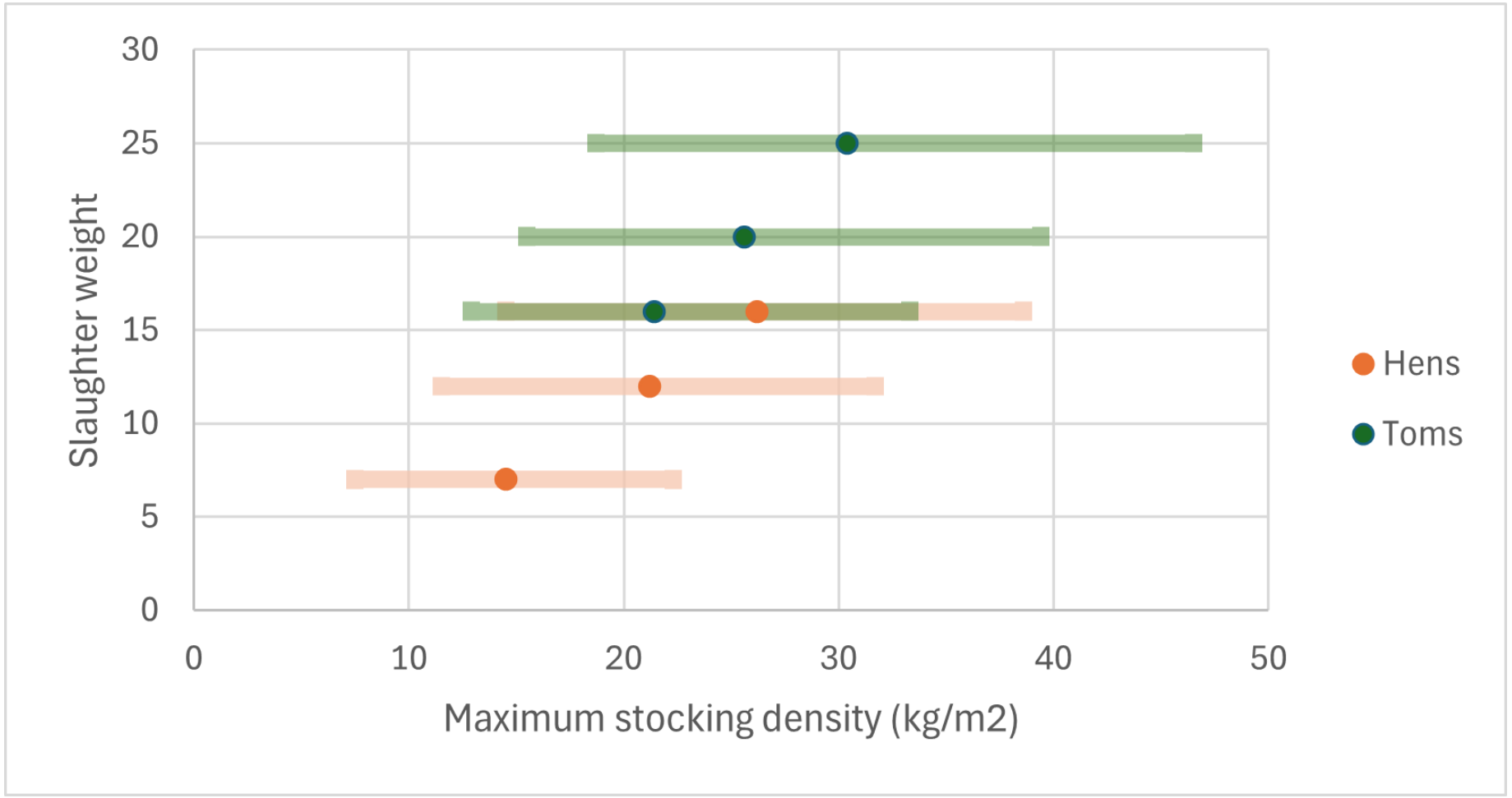
⚠ Identified hazard: Insufficient space allowance

Space allowance: Conclusions

The minimum space allowance required to enable turkeys to **perform their behavioural repertoire without restriction**, while also **preventing or mitigating the linked welfare consequences**:

- Hens: Ranges from 0.49 m^2 per hen at 7 kg target body weight to 0.61 m^2 per hen at 16 kg target body weight
- Toms: Ranges from 0.74 m^2 per tom at 16 kg target body weight to 0.82 m^2 per tom at 25 kg and more target body weight.

Minimum space allowances translated into maximum stocking densities: Recommendations



TYPE AND CONDITION OF THE LITTER

Type and condition of the litter: Welfare consequences

Hazards

- Too high humidity of the litter
- Insufficient quantity of bedding
- Inappropriate type of bedding and floor
- Inadequate management of the litter

Welfare consequences

- Resting problems
- Inability to perform comfort behaviour
- Inability to perform exploratory and foraging behaviour
- Cold stress
- Locomotory disorders (including lameness)
- Soft tissue lesions and integument damage
- Respiratory disorders

Type and condition of the litter: Recommendations

- **Bedding** should be distributed **before arrival of the poults** covering the entire floor
- Maintain **dry litter** conditions (**below 35-40% humidity**)
- Use **chopped straw** and **straw pellets** for their high absorbency and cushioning
- Unchopped straw should be avoided
- **Ventilation** should be **adjusted**
- Visual monitoring (at least daily) of the condition of the litter
- **Litter turning** and partial replacement of wet litter with new bedding

TYPE AND AVAILABILITY OF ENRICHMENT

Type and availability of enrichment: Welfare consequences

Hazards

Inappropriate, insufficient and absence of

- Elevated structures
- Foraging and exploratory material
- Visual barriers
- Dustbaths
- Complex enriched environments with/without covered veranda
- Complex enriched environments with outdoor range

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Welfare consequences

- Cold stress
- Heat stress
- Group stress
- Inability to perform comfort behaviour
- Inability to perform exploratory and foraging behaviour
- Locomotory disorders (including lameness)
- Resting problems
- Sensory understimulation
- Soft tissue lesions and integument damage

Type and availability of enrichment: Conclusions

All categories of turkeys are motivated to use foraging and exploratory material, dustbaths and visual barriers.

Meat and breeder turkeys are motivated to use elevated structures and complex enriched environments with/without covered veranda/outdoor range.

Complex, enriched environments strongly support behavioural needs.

Restricted access to enrichment increases competition and the risk of associated welfare consequences.

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Type and availability of enrichment: Recommendations

Turkeys should be housed in a **complex enriched environment**, incl. enrichment **targeting different motivations**.

- Preferably combined with access to a covered veranda (min. 20% additional space) and/or access to an outdoor range.

Elevated structures (preferably platforms, 0.12 m^2 per 12 kg hen), edible exploratory and foraging materials, visible barriers and dust baths should be available continuously at **multiple locations in the barn**.

Ramps to the elevated structures should be provided for all turkeys to have **easy access**.

First access to

- covered veranda: 5 weeks of age
- outdoor range: 6–9 weeks of age

Ensure **easy transitions** between covered veranda and indoor area.

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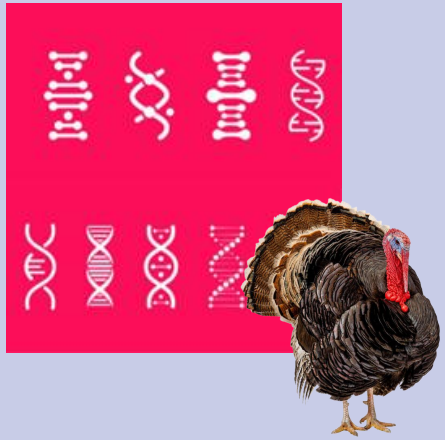
WELFARE ASPECTS OF
GENETIC SELECTION AND
BREEDING STRATEGIES

Genetic selection and breeding strategies: Hazard



Health & welfare

Liveability
Disease resistance
Leg health (footpad lesions, hock burn, angular deformities)
Gait/walking ability
Cardiovascular capacity & function
Cannibalism
Feather pecking
Behaviour
Gut health
Bird physiology
Genetic defects

Reproduction

Egg production
Fertility
Hatchability
Egg quality

Production

Body weight
Carcass yield incl. breast meat yield
Feed conversion ratio
Residual feed intake
Average daily gain
Carcass and meat quality

EFSA stakeholders meeting (2023)- EFFAB (2023); Neeteson et al. (2023); EFSA AHAW Panel (2010)

Production & reproduction traits

Health & welfare traits

Genetic selection for behavioural traits is limited

Hazard

Overemphasising increased productivity without considering relationships with other traits

Genetic selection for welfare: Recommendations

The hazard ‘over-emphasising increased productivity’ should be limited by **increasing the number of welfare traits and their relative weight**, while reducing the relative weight of the production traits in the breeding goal.

There should be **more emphasis on leg health traits**.

Genetic selection and breeding strategies to improve welfare of turkeys should always be considered **in combination with** improvements in **housing and management**.

ABMS COLLECTED AT SLAUGHTER TO MONITOR ON-FARM WELFARE

ABMs collected at slaughter

20 ABMs identified by the NCP EFSA network

Screening of ABMs on 4 criteria by Expert Opinion

13 ABMs passed the first screening

Selection on the basis of Network results and literature search on 4 criteria

6 ABMs selected

1 ante-mortem and 5 post-mortem

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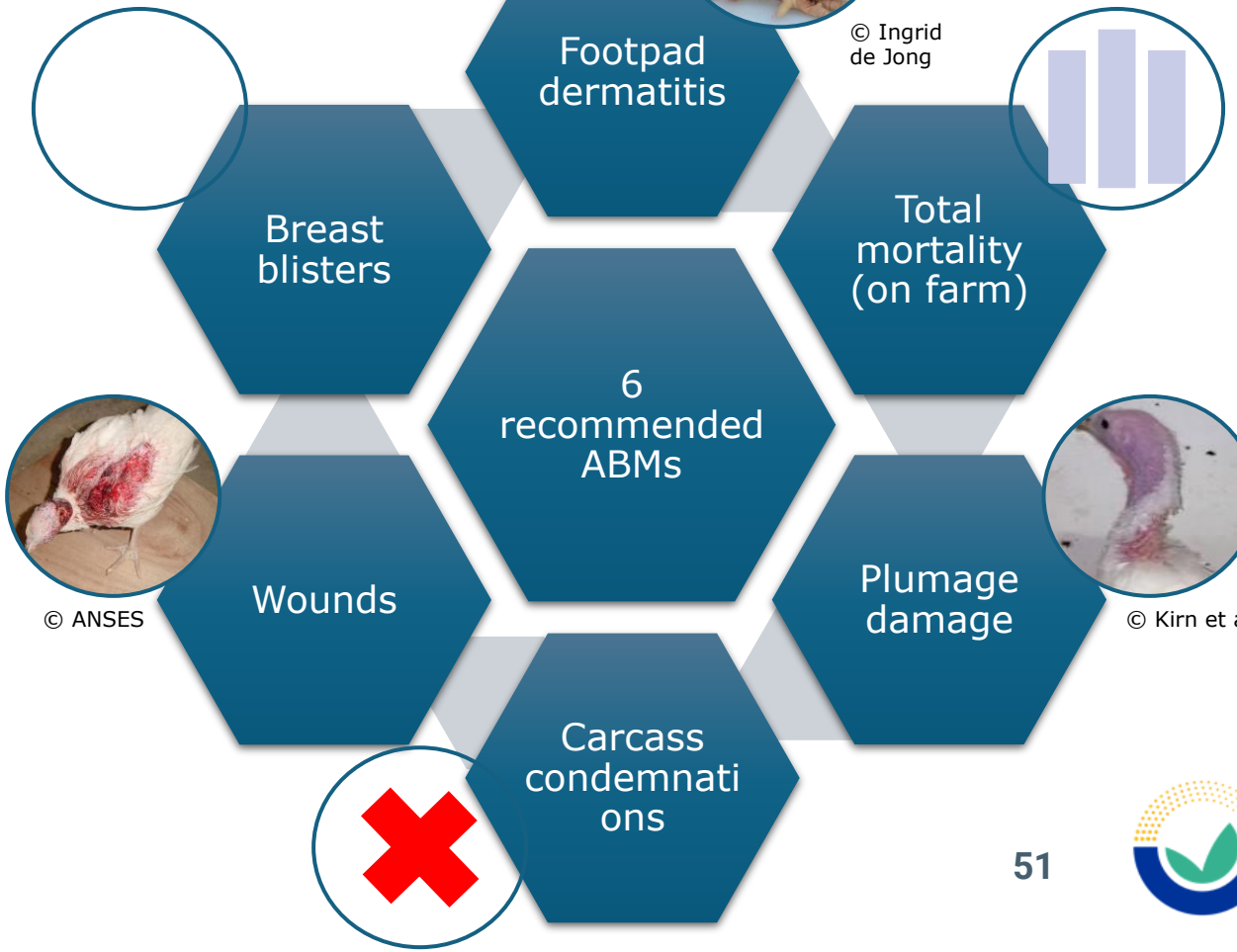
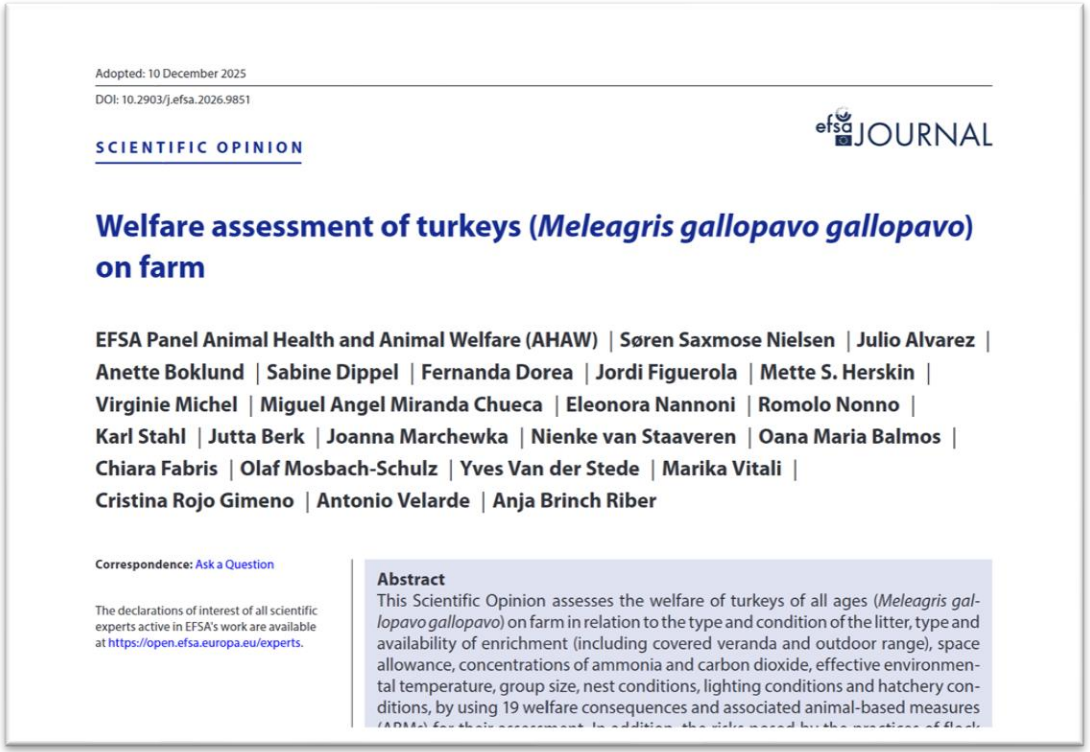


More details in the Scientific Opinion and the Technical Report



Adopted: 10 December 2025

DOI: 10.2903/j.efsa.2026.9851

efsa JOURNAL

SCIENTIFIC OPINION

Welfare assessment of turkeys (*Meleagris gallopavo gallopavo*) on farm

EFSA Panel Animal Health and Animal Welfare (AHAW) | Søren Saxmose Nielsen | Julio Alvarez | Anette Boklund | Sabine Dippel | Fernanda Dorea | Jordi Figuerola | Mette S. Herskin | Virginie Michel | Miguel Angel Miranda Chueca | Eleonora Nannoni | Romolo Nonno | Karl Stahl | Jutta Berk | Joanna Marchewka | Nienke van Staaveren | Oana Maria Balmos | Chiara Fabris | Olaf Mosbach-Schulz | Yves Van der Stede | Marika Vitali | Cristina Rojo Gimeno | Antonio Velarde | Anja Brinch Riber

Correspondence: Ask a Question

The declarations of interest of all scientific experts active in EFSA's work are available at https://open.efsa.europa.eu/experts.

Abstract

This Scientific Opinion assesses the welfare of turkeys of all ages (*Meleagris gallopavo gallopavo*) on farm in relation to the type and condition of the litter, type and availability of enrichment (including covered veranda and outdoor range), space allowance, concentrations of ammonia and carbon dioxide, effective environmental temperature, group size, nest conditions, lighting conditions and hatchery conditions, by using 19 welfare consequences and associated animal-based measures

Technical Report

efsa SUPPORTING PUBLICATIONS

APPROVED: 18 December 2025

doi: 10.2903/sp.efsa.2026.EN-9864

Most common housing systems and practices of keeping turkeys (*Meleagris gallopavo gallopavo*) in the EU

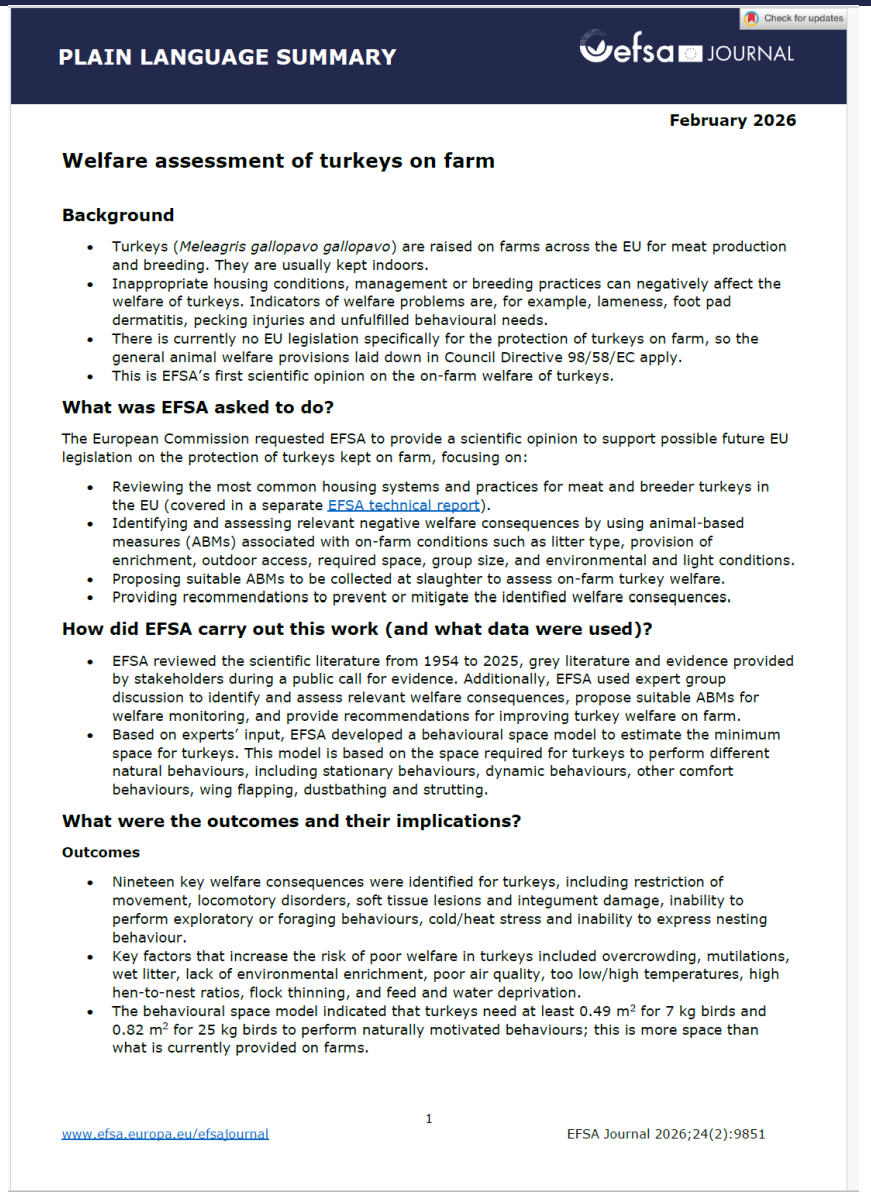
European Food Safety Authority (EFSA),
Jutta Berk, Joanna Marchewka, Virginie Michel, Nienke van Staaveren, Oana Maria Balmoș, Chiara Fabris, Yves Van der Stede, Cristina Rojo Gimeno, Antonio Velarde, Anja Brinch Riber

Abstract

This Technical Report addresses a mandate from the European Commission according to Article 31 of Regulation (European Commission) No 178/2002, which requests a review of the most common husbandry systems and current practices for keeping turkeys (*Meleagris gallopavo gallopavo*) of all ages on farm. The mandate requests a description of litter availability, access to outdoors (including covered veranda), stocking density, the enrichment provided and the light scheme of each housing system, the use of cages and the practices of separation of sexes, mutilations and breeding practices, including artificial insemination. An extensive literature review, a survey amongst stakeholders, a public call for evidence addressed to stakeholders, data from EFSA Networks, reports from the European Commission (fact-finding studies), Eurostat and input from experts in the EFSA working group on the welfare of turkeys were considered. This report provides an overview of the turkey production process and the duration of its various stages. In the European Union the most common housing systems for keeping fattening turkeys are indoor floor systems with and without outdoor access and/or a covered veranda. Turkey breeders are kept in indoor systems. These systems, including hatcheries, are described in this report considering the availability of litter and enrichment, the stocking density and the light scheme applied. In addition, the practices of processing poults in hatcheries, including mutilations, and the practices of flock thinning and separation of sexes in fattening turkey farms, and artificial insemination in turkey breeders are described.

Keywords: artificial insemination, hatcheries, housing systems, poults, turkeys, turkey breeders, stocking density

Further material



Acknowledgements

Working group

Jutta Berk
Joanna Marchewka
Virginie Michel
Nienke van Staaveren
Antonio Velarde
Anja Brinch Riber (Chair)

EFSA staff

Chiara Fabris
Olaf Mosbach-Schulz
Cristina Rojo Gimeno
Marika Vitali
Yves Van der Stede
Oana Maria Balmoş
Giulia Cecchinato
Julia Kondrashova

Contractors

Nedra Abdelli
Alexandra Contreras
Karen Schwean-Lardner
Aranzazu Varvaro
Martina Zappaterra

AHAW Panel members

Julio Álvarez
Annette Boklund
Sabine Dippel
Fernanda Dórea
Jordi Figuerola
Mette Herskin
Virginie Michel
Miguel Ángel Chueca Miranda
Eleonora Nannoni
Søren Nielsen (Chair)
Romolo Nonno
Anja Brinch Riber
Karl Ståhl
Jan Arend Stegeman
Hans-Hermann Thulke
Frank Tuyttens
Christoph Winckler

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- Image providers: ANSES; Jutta Berk (ITT Celle, FLI); Harlander lab; Ingrid de Jong; Kirn, A.I., Hofmann, P., Weindl, P. A., Lambertz, C., Bellof, G., and Schreiter, R., (2025), Effects of dietary energy and essential amino acid reduction on injuries, plumage damage, and plumage pigmentation of female slow- (Auburn) and fast-growing (B.U.T. 6) Turkey strains under organic feeding conditions, Poultry Science, 104(11), https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psj.2025.105797; Joanna Marchewka; Struthers, S., Classen, H. L., Gomis, S., and Schwean-Lardner, K., (2019). The effect of beak tissue sloughing and post-treatment beak shape on the productivity of infrared beak-treated layer pullets and hens. Poultry Science, 98,3637–3646; Turkey signals - Roodbont Publishers

25th February 2026

Open webinar

Advancing Scientific knowledge on the Welfare of Turkeys on farm: Insights from the EFSA Scientific Opinion

Coffee break

Back at 15:30

25th February 2026

Open webinar

Advancing Scientific knowledge on the Welfare of Turkeys on farm: Insights from the EFSA Scientific Opinion

Q&A Session

Anja Brinch Riber, Chair of EFSA Working Group on the Welfare of turkeys
Cristina Rojo Gimeno, Scientific Officer, BIOHAW Unit - EFSA
Chiara Fabris, Scientific Officer, BIOHAW Unit - EFSA

Thank you

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