

Protection of chickens kept for meat production

2005/0099(CNS) - 14/02/2006 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution drafted by Thijs **BERMAN** (PES, NL) and made some amendments to the proposal. The principal amendments are as follows:

- in assessing compliance with requirements set out in Annex I by both low-density and high-density establishments, account shall be taken of the various stages of production, on the one hand, and the various climatic conditions and the methods of keeping chickens, on the other;
- Parliament approved the general rule established by the Commission to limit stocking densities to 30 kg /m² per unit, and added that the maximum stocking density shall be measured as an average of the last three flocks. A margin of two days shall be permitted in the event of an emergency. However, the stocking density for any single flock shall not exceed 32 kilogrammes per liveweight;
- whilst agreeing with the derogation of stocking density not exceeding 38 kilogrammes liveweight Parliament added that the maximum stocking density shall be measured as an average of the last three flocks. A margin of two days shall be permitted in the event of an emergency. However, the stocking density for any single flock shall not exceed 40 kilogrammes per liveweight;
- from 1 January 2013, the stocking density may not exceed 34 kilogrammes liveweight. This maximum stocking density shall be measured as an average of the last three flocks. A margin of two days shall be permitted in the event of an emergency. However, the stocking density for any single flock shall not exceed 36 kilogrammes per liveweight;
- a new sentence states that monitoring shall be extended to all establishments falling within the scope of this Directive. The welfare of chickens shall be monitored even in establishments where lower stocking densities are maintained, because animal welfare is not guaranteed by stocking density alone but is affected by other factors;
- the Commission should report within 6 months, rather than 2 years as proposed, on the possible introduction of a harmonised EU system of labelling chicken meat for consumers, including clear information concerning production standards and the origin of the product. Labels shall, in particular, indicate the chicken stocking density at the holding concerned. Labels shall also specify the animal's age and other parameters which consumers wish to be taken into account;
- a new article states that the Commission shall carry out activities to persuade EU chicken-meat importers to demand the same level of animal welfare standards from their suppliers;
- no later than four years from the date of the adoption of the Directive, the Commission should submit a report on all aspects of health resulting in poor welfare of chicken in broiler and breeding keepings, concerning the loss of genetic diversity in chicken breeding and including a cost-benefit analysis of the use of various breeding strains with regard to animal health, resistance to diseases, necessary use of biocides and veterinary medical products. That report shall be submitted not later than 30 months after the adoption of the directive and shall be accompanied by appropriate legislative proposals, if necessary. Such proposals shall be in keeping with the principle that genetic selection must not restrict, diminish or threaten animal welfare potential. The adverse effects of earlier genetic selection must also be eliminated;
- the report and legislative proposals shall consider both the genetics of broilers and the welfare conditions under which parent stock is raised, and shall consider options such as farming birds of recognised slow-

growing strains, restrictions on weight gain of birds per day, a minimum age for slaughter and the prohibition of the use of broilers from parent stock that have to be restrictively fed;

- two years after the date of adoption of the Directive, the Commission shall conduct an assessment of the impact of its provisions on the welfare of chickens kept for meat production and of its economic impact in each Member State;

- five years after the date of adoption of the Directive, the Commission shall submit an assessment report covering the optimisation of the choice of the welfare parameters for chickens kept for meat production and appropriate welfare measurement techniques, with particular reference to parameters concerning behavioural, metabolic, and skeletal disorders. The implementing method and the cost of welfare measurement techniques shall be covered by this assessment, in the interests of farmers and consumers;

- no more than six months after the publication of the Commission's assessment, it shall, where appropriate, be followed by proposals for amendments to the annexes of the Directive;

- with regard to penalties, a new sentence is added stating that except in clear cases of abandonment or maltreatment, which require immediate action, the penalties shall be progressive;

- various amendments are made to the Annexes, for example, regarding ventilation, heating and cooling systems, and light. Some of the additional welfare criteria should be extended to all holdings, regardless of whether they are operating under the derogation. Thus, all establishments should have to conform to certain rules: non-flickering light of at least 50 lux intensity on a 24-hour rhythm, relative humidity of maximum 70% (when the outside temperature is below 10 degrees), temperature of maximum 3 degrees more than the outside temperature (when this exceeds 30 degrees) and sufficient ventilation. The concentration of NH₃ should not exceed 20 ppm and the concentration of CO₂ should not exceed 3000 ppm measured at the level of the chickens' heads;

- beak-trimming and the castration of male chickens should not be allowed under any circumstances;

- Parliament amended the provisions in the Annex requiring that the stocking density be reduced where deficiencies are detected. It proposed that incidences of deficiencies in a flock should be classified into three groups, depending on the scale of the deficiencies, and that the penalty reduction in stocking density should be one kg/m². Severe deficiencies would lead to repeated reductions;

- the competent authority shall carry out an inspection at least once a year. The cost of these inspections should be borne by the competent authority itself;

- a new recital states that the Commission should vigorously defend the importance of animal welfare during negotiations within the World Trade Organisation (WTO), with a view to securing a world-wide consensus on the matter. A high standard of animal welfare is essential for sustainable farming, and respect for animal welfare should be an established criterion in negotiations on non-trade concerns (NTCs).