

### Shed stocking density

The maximum stocking density for non caged layers or pullets at 16 weeks age is 30 kg (8-10 hens) per m<sup>2</sup> of floor space. Lower densities should be targeted. When planning bird replacements producers must take into account prevailing seasonal conditions. These stocking densities apply to the indoor sheds on free range facilities. Usable floor area may include any slatted or metal mesh area and any area occupied by feeding and watering equipment and nest boxes, on one or more levels provided that:

- each level is easily accessible to the hens;
- headroom between the levels is at least 45 cm;
- all levels are accessible to stock workers to observe and reach birds which are sick or injured;
- feeding and watering facilities are distributed to provide equal and ready access to all hens; and
- levels are sited so as not to foul birds below.

### Perches

Provision of adequate perching space is encouraged for pullets and laying hens and can be provided as linear perches or slatted or wire mesh floors. If perches are provided all birds should have the opportunity to roost if that is their preference.

Available linear perches should allow not less than 15 cm per hen. Perches must be without sharp edges, and must be positioned to minimise fouling of any birds below.

The horizontal distance between the perches should be at least 30 cm but not more than 1 metre, and the horizontal distance between perch and the wall should be at least 20 cm.

Slatted or wire mesh perching areas should provide a minimum of 450 cm<sup>2</sup> per bird.

Roosting areas should be easily accessible and should not be so high above the floor level that birds may be easily injured when ascending or descending.

The housing facilities of free-range hens must be designed to ensure adequate airflow and temperature control at maximum stocking densities when birds cluster or perch at night or during extreme weather conditions.

Adequate feed must be supplied in the feeding systems of free-range sheds taking into account the level of nutrients available in the range area.

### Nests

Laying hens must be provided with at least 1 single bird nest per 7 hens or, for colony (multiple bird) nests, at least 1 m<sup>2</sup> of nest box area per 120 hens.

Nests must provide seclusion from the flock, be designed and have a floor substrate that encourages nesting behaviour.

Nest boxes should be easily accessible and should not be so high above the floor level that birds may be easily injured when ascending or descending.

### Feeders and drinkers

For adult layers the requirement is a maximum of 100 birds per pan feeder, and a minimum of 2 cm per bird of feed trough or flat chain feeder is recommended. Note that both sides of the trough are considered as available for the birds to feed from. (i.e. 1 metre of trough provides 2 metres of feeding space.)

The maximum recommended water space in non cage systems for pullet rearing and adult layers is 120 birds per bell drinker or 20 birds per nipple.

All birds when fully feathered must have ready access through openings to the outdoor range during daylight hours for a minimum of 8 hours per day. The only exception is under adverse weather conditions or serious outbreaks of disease when birds may be kept inside.

Openings should be of a size and number and be evenly distributed to allow easy entry and exit for the birds with no impediments. As a guide, openings should be a minimum 35 cm high and 40 cm wide with 2 metres per 1,000 birds