

VANUATU EGGS

ANIMAL HEALTH & WELFARE

Policy and Procedures - Free-Range Laying Hens

OUR COMMITMENT Vanuatu Eggs protects the physical health, mental wellbeing and natural behaviour of every hen in its care. Deliberate abuse, neglect and avoidable suffering are not tolerated. Welfare comes before production targets, convenience or cost.

Document control	Details
Document status	Draft for formal approval
Policy owner	Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or delegated Animal Health & Welfare / Farm Operations Lead
Technical authority	Company veterinarian or approved veterinary adviser
Approval authority	Board / Owners of Vanuatu Eggs
Effective date	Upon approval
Review cycle	At least annually, and after any serious welfare incident, disease event, audit finding, system change or legal change
Version	1.0 4 August 2026
Applies to	Free-range laying hens, pullets and all personnel, contractors, growers, catchers, transporters, suppliers and visitors who may affect their health or welfare

Approval

Name / title	Signature	Date

Implementation note: Before approval, Vanuatu Eggs should insert its registered legal entity name, farm addresses, flock veterinarian, emergency contacts, approved humane-euthanasia SOP, disease-notification contacts and farm-specific welfare thresholds. Facilities and stocking plans must be verified against actual shed, range, water, power, ventilation and cyclone-response capacity before birds are placed.

1. Purpose and policy statement

This Policy establishes the animal health and welfare standards for Vanuatu Eggs free-range egg production. It converts the Company commitment into practical requirements for flock planning, housing, range access, husbandry, veterinary care, biosecurity, handling, transport, emergencies, reporting, assurance and continuous improvement.

Every person responsible for a bird must take reasonable action to prevent pain, injury, disease, hunger, thirst, heat stress, fear and distress, and must support opportunities for comfort, choice, exploration, foraging, dust bathing, nesting, perching and other normal behaviour. A production, labour, cost or customer target never excuses avoidable suffering.

1. Bird welfare takes priority over egg output, speed, convenience and avoidable cost.
2. Any person may stop or pause an activity when they reasonably believe a bird faces immediate serious harm.
3. Sick, injured, distressed or entrapped birds must receive prompt attention and must not be left to suffer.
4. The Company will use outcome measures, not facilities alone, to judge whether birds are coping and experiencing a good quality of life.
5. Welfare risks must be designed out where practicable and corrected at their source.

WELFARE BEFORE PRODUCTION If a welfare requirement conflicts with an egg-production target, dispatch plan, staffing limit or commercial deadline, personnel must protect the birds, notify the responsible manager and document the decision.

2. Scope

This Policy applies from pre-placement planning and pullet sourcing through the laying cycle, catching, transport, rehoming, end-of-lay removal, humane euthanasia and dead-bird disposal. It covers Company-operated and contracted farms, sheds, verandas, ranges, quarantine or hospital pens, vehicles, equipment, feed and water systems, medicine stores and egg-production areas where decisions can affect bird welfare.

It applies to Board members, owners, managers, employees, veterinarians, animal-health technicians, growers, contractors, labour providers, catching and transport crews, maintenance workers, feed and pullet suppliers, visitors and any other person acting for or on behalf of Vanuatu Eggs.

This Policy is written for laying chickens and pullets. If Vanuatu Eggs later keeps breeders, meat chickens, ducks or another species, species-specific procedures and competency requirements must be approved before placement.

3. Legal and standards framework

Vanuatu Eggs will comply with the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act [CAP 78]. The Act includes birds within its definition of animals and prohibits cruelty, wilful neglect, inadequate food, drink or shelter, failure to provide reasonably required treatment, inhumane slaughter and transport that causes avoidable or unnecessary suffering.¹

The Company will also comply with applicable requirements and directions under Vanuatu biosecurity and animal-health legislation, including the Animal Importation and Quarantine Act [CAP 201] and the Animal Disease (Control) Act [CAP 220], and will cooperate with Biosecurity Vanuatu and the Biosecurity Veterinary Authority.²

This Policy is informed by the World Organisation for Animal Health definition of animal welfare and its internationally recognised Five Freedoms. It also adopts selected higher-practice benchmarks from the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Poultry and poultry farm biosecurity guidance where appropriate to free-range laying hens in Vanuatu. Those Australian materials are reference benchmarks, not statements of Vanuatu law.^{3,4,5}

Where a law, official direction, permit, veterinary instruction, certification scheme, customer specification or another Vanuatu Eggs standard is more protective of birds, the higher standard applies. This Policy does not replace veterinary or legal advice. Vanuatu Eggs is privately owned and independently managed; cooperation with government agencies does not imply government ownership, equity, control, management or partnership.

4. Welfare principles and definitions

Vanuatu Eggs applies the Five Domains approach: nutrition, physical environment, health, behavioural interactions and the resulting mental state. The goal is not only to prevent negative experiences, but also to provide conditions that support comfort, confidence, choice and positive activity.

Term	Meaning
Animal welfare	The physical and mental state of a bird in relation to the conditions in which it lives and dies.
Free-range laying hen	A hen kept for egg production in a non-cage system with meaningful and regular access to a managed outdoor range during appropriate daylight periods, except when temporary confinement is necessary for welfare, health, biosecurity or safety.
Competent person	A person with verified knowledge, skill, experience and conduct for the assigned task, demonstrated through training, supervision and sign-off.
Person in charge	The person with immediate responsibility for a flock, activity, site, journey or shift, including a manager where responsibility is shared.

¹ Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act [CAP 78], ss 1-6, consolidated edition 2006, Biosecurity Vanuatu, <https://biosecurity.gov.vu/images/Legislation/Acts/Prevention-of-Cruelty-to-Animals-Act.pdf>

² Biosecurity Vanuatu, Legislation, including the Animal Importation and Quarantine Act [CAP 201] and Animal Disease (Control) Act [CAP 220], <https://biosecurity.gov.vu/index.php/resources/legislation>

³ Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, National Farm Biosecurity Manual - Poultry Production, May 2009, https://www.agriculture.gov.au/pests-diseases-weeds/protect-animal-plant/bird-owners/poultry_biosecurity_manual

⁴ Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Poultry, July 2022, <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/poultry-standards-guidelines-2022.pdf>

⁵ World Organisation for Animal Health, Animal Welfare, definition and Five Freedoms, <https://www.woah.org/en/what-we-do/animal-health-and-welfare/animal-welfare/>

Term	Meaning
Usable indoor area	Space hens can access and use while standing, turning, walking and performing normal postures; it excludes nest interiors and inaccessible or hazardous areas.
Range	The fenced and managed outdoor area available to hens, including shade, shelter, vegetation, drainage, enrichment, access paths and predator controls.
Welfare outcome measure	A bird-based or resource-based indicator used to judge welfare, such as mortality, injuries, feather cover, body condition, behaviour, range use, litter, air quality, temperature, feed or water intake.
Welfare incident	An event, condition, act or omission that causes or could cause avoidable pain, injury, disease, fear, distress or death.
Humane euthanasia	Rapid killing by an approved method, performed by a trained and authorised person to minimise pain and distress, followed by confirmation of death.
Biosecurity	Measures that prevent or control the introduction and spread of infectious agents, pests and contaminants within or between flocks and sites.
Veterinary adviser	A suitably qualified veterinarian engaged or approved by Vanuatu Eggs to advise on flock health, medicines, welfare, disease response and euthanasia.

5. Animal health and welfare management system

Each site must maintain a farm-specific Animal Health and Welfare Plan approved by the Farm Manager and technical authority before placement. The plan must reflect the actual breed, age, flock size, shed design, range area, water source, feed system, climate, cyclone exposure, electricity, staffing, veterinary access, transport route and disease risks.

6. documented legal, permit, customer and Company requirements;
7. flock and shed capacity calculations, including emergency confinement capacity;
8. daily inspection, monitoring and record requirements;
9. nutrition, vaccination, parasite, biosecurity and medicine programs;
10. heat, cyclone, flood, fire, drought, power, ventilation, water and feed contingency plans;
11. injurious-pecking, predation, pest, range and litter management plans;
12. approved treatment, isolation, humane-euthanasia and dead-bird-disposal procedures;
13. welfare triggers, escalation contacts and after-hours arrangements; and
14. annual objectives and corrective actions based on flock outcomes and audit findings.

6. Roles and responsibilities

Role	Core responsibilities
Board / Owners	Approve this Policy; set welfare expectations; ensure resources; receive material incident, audit and trend reports; oversee independent escalation.
CEO	Overall accountability; appoint competent operational and technical leads; ensure welfare is integrated into investment, production, procurement and crisis decisions.
Technical authority / veterinarian	Approve health, vaccination, medicine, euthanasia and disease-response protocols; investigate abnormal outcomes; advise on stocking, environment and treatment.

Role	Core responsibilities
Farm Operations / Welfare Lead	Maintain the management system; set farm controls; verify training; review welfare indicators; coordinate audits, incidents and corrective actions.
Farm managers / supervisors	Implement the farm plan; conduct or verify inspections; maintain records; act on triggers; control contractors; escalate concerns and protect reporters.
All bird handlers	Handle birds calmly; follow procedures; check birds and equipment; act within competence; stop harmful activity; report concerns and cooperate with reviews.
Procurement / contract managers	Select capable suppliers; include welfare duties and audit rights in contracts; verify pullet, feed, equipment, catching and transport controls.
Contractors / growers / transporters	Meet this Policy and applicable contract requirements; use competent personnel; report incidents immediately; provide records and corrective action.

7. Flock planning, sourcing and placement

15. Birds must be sourced from approved suppliers with documented flock health, vaccination, age, strain, transport and welfare information.
16. The receiving site must be clean, dry, secure, pest-controlled, pre-warmed or cooled as required, and fully operational before arrival.
17. Feed, treated drinking water, lighting, ventilation, alarms, back-up power, litter, nests, perches and range controls must be checked and recorded before placement.
18. Flock size must not exceed the verified capacity of the indoor area, equipment, range, staffing, water reserve, ventilation, emergency systems or legal and customer limits.
19. New flocks must be monitored closely during unloading, the first hours after placement and the acclimatisation period. Weak, injured, dehydrated or distressed birds require immediate attention.
20. Mixing unfamiliar groups, ages or health statuses must be avoided unless risk-assessed and approved.

8. Housing and indoor environment

Vanuatu Eggs laying hens will not be kept in conventional or furnished cages. Indoor housing must allow all hens to stand, turn, walk, stretch, flap, rest, feed, drink, nest and access litter without harmful competition, obstruction or entrapment.

Area	Vanuatu Eggs minimum standard
Indoor density	Maximum 9 adult hens per m ² of usable indoor area for ordinary single-level free-range housing. Any alternative multi-tier calculation requires written veterinary/welfare approval and must never exceed 30 kg/m ² of usable area. Density must be reduced when heat, ventilation, litter, behaviour or flock outcomes indicate.
Nests	From point of lay: at least 1 individual nest per 7 hens, or at least 1 m ² of group nesting area per 120 hens. Nests must be darkened, clean, accessible and free from harmful competition.
Perches / platforms	At least 15 cm of usable perch or platform edge per hen. Structures must be stable, appropriately sized, positioned to limit falls and fouling, and free of sharp edges and traps.

Area	Vanuatu Eggs minimum standard
Litter / substrate	Continuous access to dry, friable substrate suitable for scratching, foraging and dust bathing. Wet, caked, dusty or contaminated litter must be corrected promptly.
Feed and water access	Enough correctly positioned points to avoid harmful competition. Systems must be accessible to smaller or subordinate birds and protected from contamination.
Lighting	Adequate for inspection and normal activity; generally at least 10 lux at bird level during light periods. Provide at least 6 hours total darkness per 24 hours, including at least 4 hours uninterrupted, unless a temporary veterinary or emergency plan requires otherwise.
Air quality	Ventilation must control heat, humidity, dust and noxious gases. Ammonia is to remain below 15 ppm at bird level; any reading at or above 15 ppm or signs of eye irritation or poor air require immediate corrective action.
Equipment safety	Floors, slats, ramps, feeders, drinkers, nests, doors and electrical systems must prevent sharp-edge injury, trapping, falls, leakage, fire and electrocution.

8.1 Tropical heat, humidity and ventilation

Because heat and humidity can rise quickly in Vanuatu, each site must use forecast information, bird behaviour and shed measurements to activate a written heat-action plan. Personnel must not wait for deaths before acting.

21. Monitor temperature, humidity, airflow, water availability and bird behaviour at frequencies appropriate to risk.
22. Treat panting, wing spreading, crowding, lethargy, reduced drinking or feeding, loss of balance and collapse as urgent welfare signs.
23. Increase safe ventilation and air movement, provide cool clean water, reduce disturbance, adjust lighting or range access, and use approved cooling systems without creating wet litter or unsafe humidity.
24. Test alarms, generators and automatic ventilation or cooling systems on a documented schedule.
25. Provide an after-hours response capable of reaching and stabilising birds before conditions become life-threatening.

9. Free-range access and range management

The term free range must describe the birds' real conditions. Hens must have meaningful and regular opportunity to enter, roam, forage and explore an outdoor range during appropriate daylight hours. The system must encourage actual use, not merely provide doors that birds cannot or do not use.

Range element	Minimum control
Access	Provide a daily target of at least 8 hours of outdoor access during daylight once birds are appropriately acclimatised and the range is safe. Record opening and closing times and any restriction.
Outdoor density	Do not exceed 10,000 hens per hectare of range available to the flock at any time. The farm plan must use a lower density where vegetation, drainage, shade, soil, disease, welfare outcomes, certification or customer requirements demand it.

Range element	Minimum control
Openings	Provide safe, distributed openings that permit normal posture and free two-way movement. As a design benchmark, openings should be at least 35 cm high and 40 cm wide, with at least 2 m combined opening width per 1,000 hens.
Shade and shelter	Provide distributed natural or artificial overhead shade and shelter, with at least 8 m ² per 1,000 hens as a minimum planning benchmark, and verify that hens actually use it.
Range quality	Maintain vegetation or other suitable foraging cover, dry resting areas, enrichment, drainage, fencing, safe ramps and access routes. Rotate or rest areas where practical to prevent degradation and parasite build-up.
Predators and wild birds	Use secure fencing, night housing, vegetation design, humane deterrence and monitoring. Minimise congregation of wild birds and protect indoor feed and water from access and contamination.
Night	Hens must be secured indoors before darkness unless a documented alternative provides equal or better predator, weather and biosecurity protection.

The 10,000 hens per hectare ceiling and meaningful-access concept are adopted by Vanuatu Eggs as an internal minimum benchmark informed by Australia's free-range egg information standard; they are not presented as Vanuatu statutory requirements.⁶

9.1 Temporary confinement

Hens may be confined temporarily only when necessary for nest training, treatment, severe weather, cyclone or flood preparation, fire or smoke, a credible predator threat, disease or biosecurity control, range repair, an official direction or another documented significant welfare risk.

26. A competent person must authorise the restriction, record the reason, start time, affected flock and controls, and review the need at least daily.
27. Indoor conditions and density must remain safe for the entire confinement period, with additional litter, enrichment, inspection, ventilation and staffing where required.
28. Access must resume as soon as the risk is controlled. Commercial convenience, staffing shortage or poor range design alone is not a valid reason for prolonged confinement.
29. The Policy Owner must assess any effect on labelling, customer commitments or public claims and ensure communications remain accurate.

10. Feed, water and nutrition

30. Provide continuous access to clean, palatable drinking water and a nutritionally complete diet appropriate to strain, age, production stage, climate and health status.
31. Monitor and record daily water and feed consumption. Investigate unexplained deviations promptly, allowing for weather, age and planned ration changes.
32. Protect feed from moisture, mould, pests, chemicals, wild birds and cross-contamination. Quarantine suspect feed and retain batch traceability.

⁶ Australian Consumer Law (Free Range Egg Labelling) Information Standard 2017, s 7, Federal Register of Legislation, <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Series/F2017L00474> (used as a Company benchmark, not Vanuatu law).

33. Test water quality on a risk-based schedule and treat surface or microbiologically unsafe water before use. Maintain closed storage and distribution where practicable.
34. Inspect drinkers, pressure, flow, leaks, tanks, filters and backup supply every day. Correct blocked, leaking, contaminated or inaccessible points immediately.
35. Maintain a tested alternative water source and on-site emergency capacity based on actual peak consumption, with at least 24 hours of flock drinking needs available or deliverable. Cyclone plans should seek at least 48 hours where practicable.
36. Do not withdraw feed or water to induce moulting. Deliberate fasting-induced moulting is prohibited.

11. Flock health, veterinary care and biosecurity

Every flock must have a written veterinary health plan covering vaccination, parasites, infectious disease, sampling, treatment, medicine use, egg-withdrawal periods, mortality investigation and disease notification. Prevention must be based on good husbandry, hygiene, nutrition and biosecurity, not routine dependence on medicines.

37. Use defined clean and dirty zones, controlled entry, visitor logs, dedicated or disinfected footwear and clothing, hand hygiene and equipment-cleaning procedures.
38. Restrict unauthorised access and contact with other poultry, pigs, wild birds, rodents, dogs, cats and contaminated vehicles, tools, litter or packaging.
39. Apply all-in/all-out principles where practical, separate age or health groups, and clean and disinfect between flocks using verified procedures.
40. Maintain traceability for pullets, feed, water tests, medicines, vaccines, visitors, vehicles, mortality, eggs and bird movements.
41. Report unusual mortality, respiratory or nervous signs, diarrhoea, swollen heads, sudden egg-production or shell-quality change, widespread illness or other suspected notifiable disease immediately to management and the veterinary adviser.
42. Where an emergency or serious disease is suspected, restrict movements, isolate the area, preserve records and samples, and follow Biosecurity Vanuatu or veterinary directions.

12. Daily inspection and welfare monitoring

A competent person must inspect every flock at least twice each day, with additional checks during heat, storms, placement, treatment, equipment failure, confinement, catching or any elevated-risk period. Inspections must occur at bird level and must include walking the whole accessible area at a pace that allows individual problems to be seen.

43. bird distribution, alertness, posture, gait, breathing, vocalisation, feather cover, wounds, pecking, cannibalism, prolapse, parasites, body condition and signs of pain or fear;
44. dead, sick, injured, weak, trapped, smothered, isolated or bullied birds;
45. feed and water access, consumption, leaks, blockages and contamination;
46. temperature, humidity, airflow, ammonia, dust, lighting, litter, nests and perches;
47. range access, use, shade, shelter, drainage, vegetation, fencing, predators, wild birds and hazards;
48. egg-production changes, floor eggs, shell quality and other health indicators; and
49. alarms, automatic controls, backup power, fire equipment and emergency supplies.

Records must show date, time, flock, inspector, observations, counts, measurements, action taken and escalation. A checklist is not complete merely because boxes are ticked; abnormal findings must be investigated and closed out.

12.1 Default internal action triggers

The following are default escalation triggers unless the veterinary adviser approves a more protective flock-specific trigger. They are action points, not acceptable-loss limits.

Indicator	Trigger	Minimum response
Mortality / culls	At least 0.1% of flock in 24 hours, or more than twice the recent 7-day daily average, or any unexplained cluster	Protect birds, preserve evidence, notify Farm Manager and veterinary adviser the same day; consider movement restrictions and disease notification.
Water intake	Unexplained change greater than 10% from weather-adjusted recent pattern, low tank level or pressure/flow failure	Check supply and birds immediately; restore safe access within the shift and escalate unresolved causes.
Feed / egg output	Unexplained feed change or egg-production drop greater than 5%, or marked shell-quality change	Check equipment, feed, heat and flock health; notify manager and obtain veterinary review if not promptly explained.
Heat / air	Panting, wing spreading, crowding, lethargy, collapse, eye irritation, or ammonia at or above 15 ppm	Activate emergency controls immediately and continue monitoring until birds recover and conditions stabilise.
Injury / pecking	Any cannibalism cluster, widespread feather loss, repeated prolapse, predator attack or injury trend	Separate and treat affected birds, control the cause, review enrichment/light/nutrition/density and seek veterinary advice.
Range closure	Closure beyond 24 hours or repeated restriction	Document daily review and extra indoor controls; senior and veterinary review if restriction continues beyond 7 consecutive days.
System failure	Loss of water, ventilation, cooling, alarms, power, secure housing or predator barrier	Treat as urgent; protect birds, use contingency systems and notify the responsible manager immediately.

13. Sick, injured and compromised birds

50. Any sick, injured, weak, trapped, prolapsed, severely feather-pecked, heat-affected or otherwise compromised bird must be attended to at the first reasonable opportunity.

51. Provide treatment, safe isolation with feed and water, or humane euthanasia according to the bird's condition and the approved veterinary protocol. Isolation must not itself cause fear, heat stress, dehydration or harmful social deprivation.
52. Do not return a bird to the flock until it can compete safely and its treatment, withdrawal and identification requirements are controlled.
53. Do not transport a bird that is unfit for the intended journey. If movement would cause undue suffering, treat or euthanise the bird in place.
54. Repeated conditions must trigger a root-cause review of housing, genetics, nutrition, parasites, disease, handling, lighting, density, range and management.

14. Medicines, vaccines and antimicrobial stewardship

55. Use only lawful, approved and correctly stored veterinary medicines and vaccines, under veterinary authorisation where required.
56. Antimicrobials must not be used for growth promotion or as a substitute for poor husbandry, hygiene, stocking, ventilation or biosecurity.
57. Prophylactic or flock treatment must be based on a documented veterinary assessment of risk and need. Critically important antimicrobials require particular justification and oversight.
58. Record product, supplier, batch, expiry, flock, date, reason, diagnosis where available, dose, route, administrator, prescriber, treatment duration and egg or bird withdrawal period.
59. Identify treated birds or flocks and prevent eggs or birds entering sale or supply during the required withdrawal period.
60. Dispose of sharps, containers and unused or expired products safely. Investigate treatment failure and suspected adverse reactions.
61. Vanuatu Eggs does not use hormonal growth-promoting substances in laying hens and does not use cloning or genetic modification of birds. Conventional breeding and selection are not prohibited.

15. Handling, catching and transport

Handling and transport must minimise fear, pain, overheating, injury, smothering and escape. Only competent personnel may plan or conduct catching, loading, transport or unloading.

62. Move calmly, avoid shouting, chasing, striking, kicking or throwing, and use lighting and barriers to reduce panic and crowding.
63. Do not lift or carry hens by the head, neck, one wing, feathers or tail. Whole-body support or an approved poultry-handling method must be used.

- 64. Plan crew size, timing, route, weather, vehicle, crate density, ventilation, journey duration and contingencies before catching starts.
- 65. Crates and vehicles must be clean, secure, well ventilated, free of sharp edges and suitable for the number, size and condition of birds.
- 66. Do not load birds that are unfit. Monitor birds during loading, waiting, travel and unloading, and respond immediately to heat, distress, injury, delay or vehicle failure.
- 67. Minimise total journey time. A journey expected to exceed 8 hours requires written veterinary/welfare risk approval, additional controls and a documented reason.
- 68. Record bird numbers, condition, mortality, weather, times, vehicle, driver, crew, destination and incidents.

16. Husbandry procedures and physical alterations

Physical alterations are not routine management tools. They may be used only where necessary to prevent a greater, evidence-based welfare risk and where the approved procedure, timing, equipment, operator competence, pain control and aftercare minimise harm.

- 69. Routine on-farm beak trimming is prohibited. Vanuatu Eggs must first use genetics, early rearing, nutrition, litter, enrichment, range access, lighting, density, flock grouping and rapid response to prevent injurious pecking.
- 70. If beak treatment is demonstrably necessary, it requires written veterinary and Policy Owner approval. Hatchery infrared treatment within 24 hours of take-off is the preferred method; hot-blade treatment is not permitted except for a serious outbreak under direct veterinary advice and by a skilled operator using maintained equipment.
- 71. Toe trimming, dubbing, pinioning, caponisation, devoicing, blinkers, contact lenses and similar alterations or devices are prohibited unless a veterinarian determines that a lawful procedure is essential for an individual bird's welfare.
- 72. Fasting-induced moulting and routine induced moulting are prohibited.
- 73. Wing or leg bands, if used, must be checked and loosened or removed before they cause constriction or injury.

17. Humane euthanasia and dead-bird management

A bird suffering severe pain, distress, disease or injury that cannot reasonably be treated or has no reasonable prospect of recovery must be humanely euthanised at the first reasonable opportunity. Delaying euthanasia to await a manager, maximise egg output or avoid recording a loss is prohibited.

- 74. Only trained, competent and authorised persons may perform euthanasia using a current veterinarian-approved SOP and maintained equipment.

75. The method must be appropriate to the bird's age, size, condition and number, minimise pain and distress, and comply with law and official direction.
76. Death must be confirmed using the approved SOP before disposal. A second approved method must be applied immediately if there is doubt.
77. Record date, flock, bird number or count, reason, method, operator and any trend requiring investigation.
78. Collect dead birds promptly and store or dispose of them lawfully and biosecurely so they do not attract predators or pests, contaminate feed, water or range, or expose people and birds to disease.
79. Emergency depopulation requires government and veterinary direction where applicable, a documented welfare plan, competent supervision, worker-safety controls, capacity assessment and post-event review.

18. Emergency preparedness and response

Each site must maintain, test and review written response plans for cyclone, extreme heat, flood, drought, fire, smoke, earthquake, disease outbreak, predator incursion, building damage, transport accident, feed or water interruption, power failure, ventilation or alarm failure and staff-access disruption.

Step	Required action
1. Protect life and stop exposure	Move people to safety without abandoning birds where safe action is possible. Stop the harmful activity, restore water, airflow, shelter or security, and use approved contingency equipment.
2. Account and assess	Identify affected sheds and flocks; check birds at ground level; count deaths and injuries; assess heat, air, water, structure, disease and escape risks.
3. Escalate	Notify the Farm Manager, CEO or delegate and veterinary adviser immediately. Contact Biosecurity Vanuatu, emergency services or other authorities where required.
4. Stabilise and treat	Triage compromised birds, provide treatment or euthanasia, control movements, prevent crowding and maintain essential feed, water, ventilation and shelter.
5. Record and preserve evidence	Document times, conditions, readings, actions, decisions, bird impacts, photographs and equipment status. Preserve relevant alarms, logs and samples.
6. Recover and learn	Verify safe systems before normal operations resume, communicate accurate information, investigate root causes and close corrective actions.

19. Reporting, investigation and non-retaliation

Any person who observes or suspects abuse, neglect, disease, avoidable suffering, a serious system failure, falsified welfare records or retaliation must report it immediately to a supervisor, the Policy Owner, the CEO, a Board member/Owner, the veterinary adviser or an appropriate authority. Internal reporting must not delay urgent veterinary, biosecurity or emergency action.

80. Reports may be made verbally or in writing and, where reasonably practicable, confidentially or anonymously.

- 81. A person may bypass the management line if a manager is involved, has not acted or presents a conflict of interest.
- 82. No one may threaten, reduce work, dismiss, intimidate, isolate or otherwise disadvantage a person for raising or supporting a good-faith welfare concern.
- 83. The Company must protect birds immediately, preserve evidence, appoint an impartial competent reviewer, obtain veterinary input, determine root causes and track corrective action.
- 84. An unsubstantiated good-faith report is not misconduct. Knowingly fabricating material information or concealing a serious welfare event may be misconduct and requires a separate fair assessment.
- 85. Serious or deliberate breaches may result in removal from bird-contact duties, retraining, disciplinary action up to termination, contract suspension or termination, and referral to an authority.

20. Training and competency

- 86. All personnel must complete animal-welfare and biosecurity induction before unsupervised access to birds and annual refresher training thereafter.
- 87. Task-specific assessment and written authorisation are required for flock inspection, treatment, vaccination, catching, transport, humane euthanasia, medicine administration and emergency leadership.
- 88. Training must cover normal and abnormal behaviour, pain and distress recognition, heat stress, disease signs, handling, reporting, records, stop-work authority and non-retaliation.
- 89. Competency must be observed in practice and re-verified after an incident, procedure change, extended absence or identified performance gap.
- 90. Visitors must receive proportionate welfare, conduct and biosecurity instructions and remain supervised where required.

21. Suppliers, contractors and transport partners

Contracts that can affect live birds must include applicable animal-welfare, health, biosecurity, training, incident-reporting, record, audit, corrective-action and termination requirements. Price or availability alone must not justify selection of a provider that cannot meet this Policy.

- 91. Conduct risk-based due diligence before appointment and verify licences, competence, equipment, health status and prior incidents.
- 92. Communicate the farm plan and site rules before work starts and supervise higher-risk activities.

93. Require immediate disclosure of incidents, delays, mortality, medicine use, vehicle failure and subcontracting.
94. Audit higher-risk providers and require time-bound corrective action. Suspend bird-contact activities where serious risk remains uncontrolled.

22. Records, auditing and continuous improvement

Accurate records are evidence of care and a tool for early intervention. Records must be legible, attributable, timely, protected from alteration and retained for the period required by law, customer commitment, veterinary direction and Company requirements.

Frequency	Minimum monitoring and assurance
Daily	Mortality/culls; sick and treated birds; feed and water intake; temperature/humidity; ammonia or air-quality checks; litter; egg output; range access/use; predator and equipment checks; actions.
Weekly	Body condition and weight sample where used; feather cover; injuries and pecking; foot and leg condition; nest/perch/litter condition; range vegetation, shade, drainage and fencing; medicine stock.
Per flock / event	Placement condition; vaccination and treatment; laboratory findings; transport; welfare incidents; euthanasia; confinement; emergency tests; corrective actions and outcomes.
Monthly	Trend review against targets and triggers; overdue actions; supplier or contractor issues; training status; water/feed test schedule; preventive maintenance.
At least annually	Formal welfare-system audit; legal and standards review; emergency exercise; veterinary program review; Board/Owner performance report; policy and objective review.

Material welfare results and trends must be reported to the CEO and Board / Owners. Vanuatu Eggs will publish or communicate welfare claims only when supported by accurate records and will correct misleading or outdated claims promptly.

Appendix A - Daily flock health and welfare checklist

Check area	Observation / record
Flock details	Date / shed / flock / age / birds present / inspector / times
Bird condition	Alertness, distribution, gait, breathing, feather cover, body condition, wounds, pecking, prolapse, parasites, fear or distress
Counts	Dead / culled / sick / treated / isolated / escaped / predator losses
Feed and water	Tank level, quality, pressure, flow, leaks, access, feed quantity/quality, consumption and deviations
Environment	Temperature, humidity, airflow, ammonia, dust, lighting, litter, nests, perches and equipment
Range	Open/close times, actual use, shade, shelter, vegetation, drainage, fencing, wild birds, predators and hazards
Production indicators	Egg count, floor eggs, damaged eggs, shell or production change
Systems	Alarms, backup power, ventilation/cooling, fire protection, doors and emergency supplies
Action and escalation	Problem, immediate action, person notified, veterinary advice, work order, due date and close-out

Appendix B - Free-range readiness and closure checklist

Readiness / closure check	Evidence / result
Verified flock number and range area; density within approved limit	
Safe, distributed pop holes and non-slip ramps operational	
Fencing secure; predator and escape risks controlled	
Shade and shelter quantity, distribution and use verified	
Vegetation / enrichment available; no toxic plants or hazardous debris	
Drainage adequate; no stagnant water, excessive mud or erosion	
Wild-bird attraction and contamination controls in place	
Weather, fire, smoke, cyclone and disease risks checked	
Hens acclimatised, fit and able to find indoor feed and water	
Opening and closing times recorded; any restriction authorised	
If closed: reason, start time, indoor controls, daily review and communications documented	

Appendix C - Animal welfare incident and investigation record

Field	Confidential details
Date, time, location and flock	
Reporter and safe contact method	
What happened / observed signs / number of birds affected	
Immediate action to protect birds	
Mortality, injuries, treatment and euthanasia	
Environmental readings / equipment / weather / photos / records	

Field	Confidential details
People, contractor, vehicle, feed, water or medicine involved	
Manager / veterinarian / authority notified and time	
Preliminary cause and movement or biosecurity controls	
Investigator / findings / root causes	
Corrective actions / owner / due date / verification	
Reporter follow-up and non-retaliation check	

Appendix D - Manager first-response checklist

95. Stop the harmful activity and protect birds without creating additional risk to people or the flock.
96. Restore essential water, airflow, shade, shelter, security or equipment and activate the relevant contingency plan.
97. Triage sick and injured birds; obtain veterinary help and arrange treatment or humane euthanasia.
98. Count affected birds, check every relevant area and record conditions, readings, times and actions.
99. Notify the Farm Manager, Policy Owner and veterinary adviser; contact Biosecurity Vanuatu or emergency services where required.
100. Control movements, preserve records and evidence, and prevent unauthorised disposal, cleaning or alteration that could obstruct investigation.
101. Separate any person alleged to have deliberately harmed birds from bird-contact duties pending a fair assessment.
102. Agree action owners and review times, monitor for recurrence and protect the reporter from retaliation.

Appendix E - Personnel acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I have received, read and understood the Vanuatu Eggs Animal Health & Welfare Policy and Procedures for Free-Range Laying Hens. I agree to protect bird welfare, work within my competency, follow approved procedures, stop serious harmful activity, report concerns immediately and cooperate with training, monitoring and investigations.

Field	Details
Full name	
Position / organisation	
Signature	
Date	

Related Vanuatu Eggs policies and procedures

103. Conduct & Ethics Policy;
104. Work Health and Safety Management Plan and Manual;
105. Biosecurity Plan and Farm Entry Procedure;
106. Veterinary Health, Vaccination and Antimicrobial Stewardship Plan;
107. Heat, Cyclone, Fire, Power, Water and Emergency Response Plans;
108. Humane Euthanasia and Emergency Depopulation SOPs;
109. Medicine, Egg Withdrawal and Chemical Management Procedure;
110. Catching, Transport and End-of-Lay Procedure;
111. Feed, Water, Pest, Litter, Range and Dead-Bird Management Procedures;
112. Incident Reporting, Investigation, Whistleblowing and Non-Retaliation Procedures; and
113. Supplier, Contractor and Grower Standards.

Legal and technical review note: This controlled draft reflects publicly available primary sources reviewed on 4 August 2026 and selected comparative poultry-welfare benchmarks. Before formal adoption, Vanuatu legal counsel, the Biosecurity Veterinary Authority where appropriate, and the Company veterinarian should confirm current animal-welfare, disease-notification, medicine, egg-safety, environmental, transport and disposal requirements. Farm-specific thresholds and emergency contacts must be tested before birds are placed.