



SUMMARY OF LION QUALITY CODE OF PRACTICE

The Code of Practice for Lion Quality eggs covers breeding flocks and hatcheries; pullet rearing; laying birds, including both hygiene and animal welfare requirements; on-farm handling of eggs; distribution of eggs from farm; feed; hen disposal; packing centre procedures; advice to retailers, consumers and caterers; environmental policy and enforcement.

The Lion Code of Practice is accredited to the EN 45011 international auditing standard.

Registration and traceability

To guarantee traceability, all breeding farms, hatcheries, rearing and laying farms, feed mills and packing centres involved in the production of Lion Quality eggs must be approved. All Lion Quality hen flocks must be accompanied by a passport certificate and all Lion Quality egg movement has to be fully traceable.

The British Egg Industry Council (BEIC) maintains a 'live' database of all BEIC subscribers. It also maintains a register of inter-traded Lion eggs.

All Lion eggs from caged hens must be marked with the production method and unique farm code. From 31 December 2010, Lion eggs from all systems of production must be marked on farm.

A website – www.lioneggfarms.co.uk – also allows consumers to trace eggs back to the farm from the code on their eggs, which will be launched shortly.

Breeding flock controls

Hygiene controls for breeding flocks and hatcheries include hygiene swabbing of hen houses, regular microbiological monitoring of parent flocks and hatcheries, with slaughter of any flocks positive for salmonella enteritidis or typhimurium, and heat/acid treatment of feed.

Pullet farms/vaccination programme

All birds destined for Lion Quality egg-producing flocks are vaccinated against *Salmonella enteritidis* using an approved vaccine. This entails more than 2 million pullets being vaccinated each month, at a cost of around £4 million per year.

A full hygiene monitoring programme including hygiene swabbing must be completed by pullet rearers before birds are taken onto the farm. Rearing flocks are tested for salmonella and all equipment and vehicles used for transporting pullets to the laying unit must be disinfected. Records of bird movement and salmonella testing must be kept on the passport. There are also controls on wild birds and rodents

Laying birds

The Code sets out detailed hygiene requirements for laying hens, including disinfection of farms between flocks; prevention of cross-infection; salmonella testing; control of wild birds and rodents and detailed record keeping.

Time and temperature controls on-farm

Lion Quality eggs are subject to tighter controls on time and temperature than required by law. Lion Quality eggs must be stored below 20°C in hygienic conditions on the farm. Production records and cleaning schedules must be maintained on site. All Lion Quality eggs must be transported to the packing centre at least twice a week and must be kept at a constant temperature below 20°C.

Controls on egg packs

Free range, barn, organic and caged eggs must each be packed on different colour keyes trays and all eggs must be accompanied by written documentation for proof of identity including age of lay, type of production and farm of origin.

Strict controls on feed

Feed for Lion Quality hens must be produced to the Agricultural Industries Confederation's UFAS (Universal Feed Assurance Scheme) Code of Practice. Feed samples and records of deliveries and usage must be kept and measures taken to prevent on-farm contamination of feed. In addition to the UK legislative ban on ingredients derived from mammalian sources, avian ingredients are also prohibited from feed for Lion flocks. A number of other ingredients are also banned, including the colourant canthaxanthin; the coccidiostat lasalocid; and any raw materials likely to produce taint.

Packing centre hygiene

Written HACCP controls must be in place at Lion Quality egg packing centres and traceability of product and records must be kept at all times. Packing centres must ensure all eggs supplied are from approved producers. Written cleaning schedules and rodent control procedures must be in place. Effective crack and blood detection must be used in the grading of Lion Quality eggs. Full quality records must be held on site for a minimum of two years.

'Best before' date and Lion Quality mark on shell

Lion Quality eggs must carry a 'best before' date on the shell and on the pack. All Lion eggs must be graded with a best-before date of up to 25 days from pack (for in-line operations up to 27 days from pack), subject to such eggs meeting a maximum life of lay + 27 days, making them fresher than required by law. Most Lion Quality eggs are packed within 48 hours of lay. They must also carry the Lion Quality mark on the shell.

Advice to retailers, consumers and caterers

Retail customers must be advised that Lion Quality eggs should be stored at a constant temperature below 20°C, away from heat sources and sunlight. They should be sold in strict rotation. On catering premises and in the home, eggs should be stored, preferably in their packs, in a refrigerator.

Environment policy

All Lion Quality egg subscribers must develop their own environmental policy especially in regard to manure disposal, disposal of dead birds, wastage and environmental impact on the community.

Animal welfare

The Code includes a number of animal welfare requirements which exceed those required by law. These include the banning of induced moulting, additional staff training procedures and procedures for the handling of end-of-lay hens in accordance with the Joint Industry Welfare Guide to the Handling of End of Lay Hens and Breeders. The Code mirrors the RSPCA's Freedom Food standards for free range and barn egg production.

From 1 January 2012, all Lion cage eggs will come from enriched colonies, which offer better welfare standards.

Ban of 'farm' descriptions of cage-produced eggs

Printing on Lion Quality egg boxes containing cage-produced eggs must not describe the eggs as 'farm eggs' or depict hens roaming free or farmyard/ countryside scenes.

Independent auditing

All Lion Quality registered premises are inspected and approved by an independent monitoring agency. BEIC maintains up-to-date lists of Lion Quality packing centres, laying farms, rearing farms, hatcheries, breeding farms and feed mills. On supply of details of these premises to the BEIC, certificates of registration are issued to the premises involved. Each subscriber is responsible for a self-audit of his own and contracted premises every six months. There are also two audits every 18 months, one of which is unannounced, of each Lion Quality egg packing centre by the independent monitoring agency. Every Lion farm is also independently audited, including random unannounced audits. Any critical non-conformance results in immediate suspension from the Lion scheme, pending appropriate remedial action and there are also financial penalties for critical non-conformances at packing centres; lesser non-conformances have to be corrected within 28 days.

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For further information please contact The British Egg Information Service on 020 7052 8899

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