



On Animal Husbandry for Poultry Production

A treatise by Frank R. Reese Jr. and the Board of Good Shepherd Poultry Ranch

I REMEMBER THE DAY MY FATHER built the sign that still hangs over my farm. It says “Good Shepherd Turkey Ranch,” and it’s not just the name of my farm—it’s also a statement of my faith, my philosophy and my approach to farming.

“When tillage begins, other arts follow. The farmers, therefore, are the founders of human civilization.”

Daniel Webster

AT THE HEART OF GOOD SHEPHERD is our unique Mission: We strive to produce historically authentic **Heritage Poultry™**, which are happy and humanely-raised APA Standard Bred birds that conform to the American Poultry Association’s “Standards of Perfection.” Our birds are grown on outdoor range and are treated to the highest possible standards of animal welfare. The selective breeding and natural living conditions at my farms guarantee that Good Shepherd birds are happy, healthy, and raised under optimal conditions. Our 3-point **Heritage Philosophy™** guides us as we maintain the genetics and values that make Good Shepherd Poultry so unique. Our 24-point **Welfare Standards and Guidance** ensure that these same genetics and values are maintained by everyone who works for Good Shepherd. Together, they guarantee that my father’s practice of conscientious and sustainable animal husbandry—what he called being a “Good Shepherd”—will continue far into the future.



Good Shepherd Poultry Ranch's Heritage Philosophy™

Animal Welfare. Good animal husbandry always revolves around the animals' wellbeing, and implies both the farmer's responsibility to care for his animals and the consumers' concern for welfare when selecting a product. Poultry have been domesticated to the point that they must rely on human caretakers; therefore they are under our responsibility of ethical stewardship.

Breed Conservancy. Good Shepherd is dedicated to bringing American Poultry Association Standard Bred poultry back from the brink of extinction and restoring their presence on the family farm. Without our efforts, these birds will become simply a memory. Our goal is to give these magnificent breeds, which are of great value to agriculture, the best possible chance of survival.

Environmental Stewardship. Good Shepherd strives to find a balance between our poultry and the land they occupy. Farm-raised animals can have a profound effect on the ground they range, so we are always improving our methods for providing sustainable free range that does not destroy the surrounding ecosystem.

Good Shepherd Poultry Ranch's Welfare Standards and Guidance

1. Good Shepherd raises only Standard Bred poultry as defined by the American Poultry Association's Standards of Perfection. These are commonly known as "heritage" birds. Details on how Good Shepherd defines "heritage" may be found [here](#) for turkeys and [here](#) for chickens.
2. The board of Good Shepherd determines which breeds are selected for production, and bases its decision on a breed's conformance to Good Shepherd's mission statement. Only pure-bred poultry are used as breeding birds, and all breeding flocks are certified by a licensed American Poultry Association judge to ensure that the flock meets the breed-specific Standards of Perfection. No "commercial" poultry, hybrid poultry, genetically-engineered poultry, or genetically-modified poultry will ever be used on any Good Shepherd farm. Breeding birds are chosen based on proper Standards of conformation, and must possess good back width, strong legs, a balanced body shape, appropriate head size, good walking ability, proper gait, an appropriate body-to-weight ratio, and good overall health. Applying these rigorous criteria consistently is the only way Good Shepherd can guarantee humane production. As stewards of American Poultry Association Standard Bred poultry, we always take into consideration the present and future wellness of the birds we select as breeding birds. Any model that breeds rapid-growing poultry that cannot live past 12 months is neither humane nor sustainable—for both the poultry and the farmer—and has no place on our farms. Thus, Good Shepherd will never produce hybrid or dead-end birds.
3. Our breeding flocks always breed naturally, and artificial insemination will never be used. All breeding flocks are allowed to range freely and are never kept in cages or other confinement systems. All hens and roosters are used on the farms for many years and will not be killed solely because they are getting older. The lifespan of most Standard Bred hens is 10 to 15 years, and that of the Standard Bred rooster is 8 to 10 years. Birds are allowed to die of old age on our breeding farms.
4. All Good Shepherd's farmers will develop and implement a program that ensures proper nutrition, appropriate climatic considerations, vaccinations, disease prevention, bio-security, pasture management, protection from predators and rodents, and appropriate housing. The health records of all breeding flocks will be kept on site and on file with Good Shepherd. Every breeding farm will have a veterinarian familiar with both the birds and the farmers who care for them.
5. Antibiotics may only be used therapeutically in the event of infectious disease. Good Shepherd is to be notified immediately of any disease outbreak. Sick birds are to be seen by a veterinarian to determine the outbreak's nature and any appropriate treatment. The use of vaccines must be approved by Good Shepherd. If it is determined that the flock is contaminated with a communicable and virulent disease, the flock may have to be destroyed and the farm shut down.

temporarily for disinfection. If government notification is required, Good Shepherd must be informed. Furthermore, blood testing of all breeding flocks must be performed no less than twice per year, and birds must be tested for Pullorum-typhoid, *Mycoplasma gallisepticum*, *Mycoplasma synoviae* and Avian Influenza. All Good Shepherd Poultry Ranch farms must comply with applicable federal law governing the minimum time allowed between administration of antibiotics and slaughter. Birds who become ill during the pre-slaughter prohibition on antibiotic use shall either be euthanized in accordance with Good Shepherd's euthanasia standards or provided necessary care, including antibiotics where appropriate, in which case such birds must be held back from slaughter.

6. The use of sub-therapeutic antibiotics to prevent disease and promote growth is prohibited by Good Shepherd.

7. If a bird suffers an injury or illness, it will be separated from the flock and receive immediate treatment. Since isolation can be very stressful, the bird should be treated and returned to the flock as soon as possible. If the bird is severely injured it is to be euthanized using cervical dislocation with a device approved and designed for poultry. This is the only acceptable form of farm euthanasia. Furthermore, such euthanasia must be performed as quickly and painlessly as possible.

8. All Good Shepherd farmers must develop and implement an emergency plan for their poultry, which must be understood and faithfully executed by all farm employees. The plan must anticipate emergencies such as fire, flood, snow storms, extreme heat, wind, hail and partial or complete power loss.

9. Because good flock management is necessary to a stable and healthy flock, all birds will have access to dust baths, stable roosts, protection from predators, places of retreat from other birds, and good poultry house lighting year-round. Lighting with a timer may be used, but all poultry must have no less than 8 hours of darkness per 24-hour period.

10. None of the poultry bred or grown at Good Shepherd will have any physical alterations done to them including but not limited to toe trim, beak trim, pinioned, wattle-trimmed, comb-trimmed, de-spurred or caponized. Removable leg bands may be used to determine selection of breeding birds.

11. Forced molting is strictly prohibited on all Good Shepherd farms. All poultry will molt naturally in the correct season.

12. All replacement breeding birds for the farm will come from Good Shepherd's internal breeding system. Replacement males and females will be hatched and reared on Good Shepherd farms. Furthermore, no live breeding birds will ever be shipped through the mail, either to or from any farm. If new blood is needed, it will only come to the farm via eggs, and the eggs must come from properly tested flocks. The decision to bring new blood into the system will be made by Good Shepherd and its farmers.

13. All chicks, poults, ducklings, and goslings used in the Good Shepherd system will be hatched from eggs laid by breeding hens from our approved farms. All eggs will be collected no less than once per day (twice per day is preferable). Eggs are to be gathered with minimum disturbance to the hens. All eggs gathered at each family-owned farm are to be washed and stored daily. Once eggs arrive at the Good Shepherd hatchery, they are pressure-washed and disinfected. The eggs are then stored in a cooled holding room for no more than one week before placement in incubators.

14. Daily hatchery records will be kept, and shall specify the number of eggs received, placed in incubators, and hatched, and must also specify the number of birds delivered to Good Shepherd's growers. Eggs will be candled no less than ten days from incubation placement, and records of fertile and non-fertile eggs will be kept. All Good Shepherd hatcheries must be designed and built to ensure cleanliness and bio-security. Visitors to hatcheries are discouraged, and bio-security measures must be implemented when visits occur. Backup generators of adequate size and in good working order will be available at all times to ensure sufficient supply of power to hatcheries in the event of a power outage.

15. No genetically engineered, genetically modified, or hybrid poultry or greater than first generation crosses will be hatched at Good Shepherd hatcheries. No birds will be vent sexed, and no bird will ever be killed solely on the basis of gender.

16. All Good Shepherd birds will be hatched from American Poultry Association Standard Bred genetics, and are slow-growing breeds of birds. All broiler market chickens will be grown to a live weight average of 5 pounds in no less than 4 months. Other birds will be grown to a market weight in 5 to 6 months for turkeys, 4 to 5 months for ducks, and 5 to 6 months for geese. Faster-growing birds will not be used at any Good Shepherd hatchery.

17. No day old birds will ever be shipped through postal or trucking systems. All day old birds will be checked one at a time and placed in appropriate transportation boxes designed for the number of birds being moved. All transportation boxes will contain non-slip pads in the boxes to prevent leg damage during transport. The birds will be moved from the hatcheries, vaccinated, and placed in the proper boxes before being taken immediately to the farm where the birds will be raised. The birds will be transported to the farm via climate-controlled vehicle and placed in their new home immediately. Each bird will be handled as little as possible and one at a time. All deformed or damaged birds will be euthanized immediately and humanely. Birds who are more than one week apart in age are not to be raised together, because raising birds of different ages separately is necessary to prevent the fighting and pecking that can occur between birds of different size or appearance.

18. All day old birds must be placed in their new home and given access to warmth, feed, and water within six hours of being removed from the incubators. All day old birds will become property of the farmer who receives them, because we believe such ownership fosters good stewardship and promotes healthier birds. The day old birds will have immediate access to heat, water, dry bedding, and clean feed. Since good lighting is crucial to the birds' health and wellbeing, the receiving farmer must provide the birds with between 14 and 16 hours of light per day. The day old birds will be confined to a warm, dry space that gives them plenty of room to

exhibit a full range of natural behavior. An 18-foot ring will be used to confine the baby birds for at least one week. No more than 350 birds per ring will be used. Farmers will take special care to keep the birds' bedding dry, water clean and feed free of dust and shavings. All day old birds will be checked no less than three times per day. If any signs of crowding are observed, the ring will be enlarged to the extent necessary to eliminate such crowding.

19. Once the rings are no longer necessary for the safety of the birds (not more than four weeks), the rings may be removed and the birds allowed to roam freely in the brooder houses. By this time the chicks will have learned where warmth, water, and feed can be found. Chicks will be given access to grass-covered yards starting between four and six weeks (up to eight weeks in extreme weather conditions). Poults will be given access to grass-covered yards starting between six and eight weeks (up to ten weeks in extreme weather conditions). When deciding when to begin giving the chick's yard access, the farmer will take into account weather and external temperature. Because Good Shepherd birds take longer than four months to reach market weight, they will enjoy plenty of time outside where they can roam freely on grass-covered yard.

20. All animals on our farms will be fed a nutritionally-balanced, vegetarian diet that is free of animal byproducts and is selected by Good Shepherd in consultation with poultry nutritional specialists. All poultry will have uninterrupted access to feed and water. Good Shepherd will never restrict feed or water at any stage of our birds' lifecycles.

21. All housing and shelters for the birds will have good ventilation that provides fresh air. Natural lighting is encouraged in the poultry barns. Birds should have a night time rest period without artificial lighting. Good Shepherd will never use or allow our birds to be confined in tractor systems. The following minimum space requirements are 3 square foot per breeder layer hen, 2 square foot per growing chicken. Turkeys will be placed so that there is no more than 6 pounds per square foot of live bird. There will be six inches of roost per chicken and 16 inches of roost per turkey. Outdoor pasture space will be equal to the indoor minimum requirements. Since sanitation of the poultry barns is of the utmost importance, each farm is required to develop and implement a plan for cleaning and sanitizing all poultry housing adequately. Such plans must provide enough time between flocks for necessary cleaning and "airing out" of the poultry housing. All equipment must be checked and fresh litter must be fully installed before the new flock is introduced. Enough nest boxes are to be provided to ensure that hens do not need to fight over space. The minimum of one nest for every 3-4 hens will be available. All layer hen birds will have roost access and plenty of room to roost at night.

22. Good Shepherd believes that all poultry must have free, readily available, and constant access to outdoors and pasture, and such areas must have green growth, be clean of manure, and have good drainage. Young birds will be given access to pasture at an early enough age to ensure so that they are accustomed to it and make general use of it throughout their lives. Pastures that become overused must be given downtime to recover and allow re-growth so that the birds have continuous and unconfined access to green forage throughout their life cycle. If needed, farmers will rotate pastured areas for poultry to insure this. No pesticides or herbicides will ever be used on pastured poultry areas. All pastures will be well fenced for protection from predators, and such fencing will be checked weekly to ensure that protection is maintained. Both sides of the fence lines must be kept mowed and clean so that they do not provide hiding places for

predators. Trees or bushes may only be in the center of the pasture area. In extreme weather, birds may be kept indoors with no access to pasture, but only to the extent and for the duration required by such weather. Since American Poultry Association Standard Bred birds are very hardy, Good Shepherd birds are able to handle more extreme cold and hot climates almost year-round.

23. When the time comes for the birds to be taken to market, transport is always initiated in the evening after dark, when the birds can be moved with less stress. Pre-slaughter withholding of feed may not begin more than eight hours prior to loading, and water should be made available until the birds are crated. An adequate number of well-trained workers should be on hand and should be monitored for signs of over-exertion, impatience, or annoyance. Carefully loading hundreds or thousands of birds by hand can be tedious, so workers should be given breaks as needed to prevent carelessness and boredom. A representative of Good Shepherd must be present to oversee the entire loading process. All birds are to be caught and carried to the crates one at a time, and must be handled with as much care as possible, with special attention given to minimizing fear. Rather than picking up birds directly from the flock, workers should first calmly herd groups of 10 to 12 birds into a smaller “catch pen” within the main pen, then load birds from the catch pen into the crates in order to minimize the risk of panic. Once in the catch pen, birds are to be loaded by workers in the following way: workers should catch each bird by reaching down, grasping both legs simultaneously, and quickly lifting the bird up and resting it against the worker’s stomach or chest. Birds should never be picked up by a single leg, a single wing, or their neck, as these methods can cause injury. Alternatively, birds may be gently transported in a net, as long as each bird is let out of the net by both legs. Birds should be placed individually into a crate containing birds of the same size to prevent suffocation of smaller birds by larger ones. If temporary employees are hired to help catch the birds, they must be instructed in these catching methods prior to handling any birds. An employee must be assigned the task of counting the number of birds placed in each crate to avoid overcrowding. Weather and external temperature should be taken into account, and in warmer weather the number of birds per crate should be reduced if necessary for the birds’ comfort and safety. Birds injured during loading must be separated and given their own crate, unless the bird will likely die in transport, in which case the bird must be euthanized immediately. Records showing the number of transported and dead-on-arrival birds must be kept, and copies sent to Good Shepherd. Once all birds are loaded, the truck must leave immediately for the processing plant. All birds will be transported in a trailer that will provide shelter from wind, snow, and rain yet allow movement of fresh air throughout the trailer during travel. Birds will never be transported if air temperatures exceed 95 degrees Fahrenheit. Transportation time from farm to processing plant cannot exceed 6 hours, and preferably should be less than 3 hours. Truck drivers will carry cellular phones and will contact Good Shepherd immediately in the event of an accident or injury.

24. Upon arriving at the processing plant, birds are to be unloaded as soon as possible (using the same method described above). Each crate is to remain on the truck, where the climate is controlled, until it is carried inside, such that each crate goes directly from the truck to the killing room. Crates should be unloaded one at a time, and a given crate should not be unloaded until all birds in the previous crate have begun processing. If birds must wait at the processing plant for more than 120 minutes, water must be provided. Crates will be hauled into the killing room one at a time. Birds are to be removed from crates one at a time. All crates will have center-top doors

so as to prevent injury due to crowding at one end of the crate. One at a time, birds will be removed from the crate, placed in a killing cone, and, using a stunning knife, be stunned such that they are rendered senseless immediately before their throat is cut. No bird will ever be shackled alive on conveyor belts at the processing plant. Once all the birds have been killed and all crates are empty, the crates and trailer are to be washed and disinfected before being used to transport birds again. A representative from Good Shepherd will always be on-site during slaughter to ensure that all Good Shepherd slaughter rules are followed.