

Pheasant release pen scoring system - 2021

	Essentials	Action	Yes/No	Score	
1	Feeders and drinkers	Are at least 50% similar to those used in rear?	No = 0 Yes = 1		
		Are all areas of the pen served by readily available drinkers and feeders (see note 1) and suitable quantity (see notes 2 &3)	No = 0 Nearly = 1 Yes = 2		
2	Water	Are feeders and drinkers well positioned (see note 2 &3)	No = 0 Some = 1 Yes = 2		Total for section 1, out of 5
		Water tested and suitable (see note 2)	No = 0 Yes = 1		
		Is water supply controlled (see note 2)	No = 0 Yes = 1		
		Can water be easily medicated	No = 0 Yes = 1		Total for section 2, out of 3
3	Food	Is food the same make as in rear	No = 0 Yes = 2		
		Are pellets the same size as in rear	No = 0 Yes = 1		Total for section 3, out of 3
4	Roosting area	Is at least 1/3 of area suitable roosting are	No = 0 Nearly = 1 Yes = 2		
		Is roosting type ideal (see note 4)	No = 0 Yes = 1		Total for section 4, out of 3
5	Area of cover	At least 1/3 of the pen has suitable ground cover that affords birds the ability to hide and feel confident and comfortable, and afford protection from the elements (see note 8)	No = 0 Yes = 3		
		In this area is there penetrating light	No= 0 Some = 1 Yes = 2		Total for section 5, out of 5

	Essentials	Action	Yes/No	Score	
6	Open area	Is there a significant open area with shorter vegetation (see note 5)	No = 0 Some = 1 Yes = 2		
		Is the open area close to easily available areas of cover	No = 0 Yes = 1		Total for section 6, out of 3
7	Pen conditions	Is there evidence of heavy contamination from previous years (stale pen)	Obvious = 0 A little = 1 No = 2		
		Is there significant wet areas in the pen	<40%wet = 0 >40%dry = 1		
		Stocking density (See note 6)	Above recommendations = 0 Same or Below = 2		
		No more than 7-14 days in release pen	14+ days = 0 Less than 14 days = 1		
		Ease of access to pen for direct poult delivery (See note 7)	No = 0 Yes = 1		Total for section 7, out of 7
8	Poults at release	Are all the poults released from the same source (see note 8)	No = 0 Yes = 1		
		Are all the poults released at the same time (not topped up)	No = 0 Yes = 2		
		Is there a carefully planned release time frame with consideration of weather	No = 0 Yes = 2		
		Wing clipping (See note 9)	Yes = 0 No = 1		Total for section 8, out of 6
9	Predator control	Is there evidence of good predator control	No = 0 Yes = 2		Total section 9, out of 2

	Essentials	Action	Yes/No	Score	
10	Supervision	Are birds checked daily	No = 0 Once = 1 Twice = 2 > twice = 3		Total for section 10, out of 3

Guidance Notes for Vet/Auditor

1. Feeders and drinkers must be available throughout the pen, so birds cannot move to areas of a pen where they cannot easily access and find the feeders and drinkers. They should be positioned close to the margin of open areas and areas of cover so that poults can feed and drink without being unduly frightened or scared by aerial or other predators. Open areas and rides may be easier for keepers, but feeders and drinkers should be positioned for the poults, not for the keepers.
2. One 32cm diameter bell Drinker per 100 birds should be provided as a minimum. Equivalent to 2cm per bird circular drinker space OR 3.8cm² drinker surface area per bird. if the pen is very large, then increased numbers of feeders/drinkers may be required to cover all areas.

Water Targets

Very Poor	Coliform > 1000cfu/ml	TVC >1000 cfu/ml
Poor	Coliform 100cfu/ml	TVC 100 cfu/ml,
Good	Coliform 0 cfu/ml	<100 cfu/ml

Water tests performed annually within 1 month of release and should be performed at a minimum of 3 locations. Tests should be taken from 3 different pens, or from the same pen but at different points (source/header/drinker).

Where possible, poults should only be able to drink from the water supplied to them through the water system. Where possible, external supplies such as streams for example should be excluded at least for the first few weeks. Dirty puddles and water accumulations so become contaminated with feces and should be discouraged. Feeders and drinkers should be moved to clean fresh areas where possible, but not so far as to cause birds to “lose them”.

Header tanks or dosing systems should be used in order to provide the ability to medicate the birds if required.

3. Equivalent to 125 birds per Manola feeder MINIMUM ratio. Ideally aim for 1:50. If the pen is very large, then increased numbers of feeders may be required to cover all areas

4. Deciduous woodland is best. Coniferous woodland with no ground cover is poor. There should be a variation in heights of branches to enable birds to quickly learn to go up, and then higher branches to establish good roosting. Stocking should be no more than 280 birds per acre of release pen in ancient semi-natural woodland and no more than 400 birds per acre in non-ancient woodland. Birds stocked on the high end should be in the release pen no more than 7-14 days. When refereeing to any possible effects on the environment that would be considered less than ideal, these should be recorded, and an improvement strategy introduced for future years.

5. Medium cover should be 30cm-150cm in height. Floor space is covered with grass/low lying plants. 0-30cm in height.
6. Stocking of pens should follow the GWCT guidelines on release which states:
 - 1000 birds per hectare of pen
 - 700 birds per hectare of pen in ancient semi-natural woodland.

7. Vehicle access must be possible to every pen.

8. Birds from different sources should not be mixed within the same pen. Different sources should be classed as different businesses supplying the birds, not different egg/chick suppliers providing the poult supplier. Legal basis legal obligations

9. The Defra Code of Practice for the welfare of Gamebirds reared for sporting purposes states: 5.1 The use of management devices or practices that do not allow birds to fully express their range of normal behaviors should not be considered as routine and keepers should work towards the ideal of management systems that do not require these devices. Such devices and practices include mutilations such as beak trimming, procedures to prevent or limit flight such as brailing (placing a band on a wing to prevent extension of the wing), trimming of non-sensitive flight feathers and specifically regarding wing clipping^{5.8} Outer primary feathers may be clipped to restrict flight but trimming growing feathers (“blood quills”) must be avoided if it constitutes interference with a sensitive tissue and would, therefore, be a mutilation.

Total score

Score out of 40	Rating
30- 40	Good
20- 30	Adequate
<20	Poor not suitable