PREAMBLE

(1) The Standing Committee of the European Convention on the Protection of Animals kept for Farming Purposes,

(2) Having regard to its responsibility under Article 9 of the Convention for the elaboration and adoption of recommendations to the Parties containing detailed provisions for the implementation of the principles set out in Chapter I of the Convention based on scientific knowledge concerning the various species of animals;

(3) Aware also of the established practice in the implementation of the principles of animal welfare set out in Articles 3 - 7 of the Convention;

(4) Aware that the basic requirements for the health and welfare of livestock consist of:
   • good stockmanship,
   • husbandry methods appropriate to the biological need of the animals; and
   • suitable environmental factors, so that the conditions under which geese are kept fulfil the needs for appropriate nutrition and methods of feeding, freedom of movement, physical comfort; the need to perform natural behaviour in connection with getting up, lying down, resting and sleeping postures, wing-flapping, walking, running, bathing, preening, eating, drinking, defecating, adequate social contact and egg-laying; the need for protection against adverse climatic conditions, injury, fear and distress, infestation and disease or behavioural disorder; as well as other essential needs as may be identified by established practice or scientific knowledge;

(5) Concerned that the developments in breeding and biotechnology shall not adversely affect the health and welfare of the domestic geese;

(6) Bearing in mind that it is an obligation of the Committee to reconsider any recommendation when relevant new knowledge is available and therefore wishing to encourage the continuation of research by all Parties with the object of making optimum use of new techniques to ensure that the needs of the geese are met and hence that their health and welfare are good;

(7) Considering that, in the light of established experience and scientific knowledge about the biological needs of geese, some methods of husbandry at present in commercial use, often fail to meet all essential needs and hence result in poor welfare;

(8) Aware of the welfare problems connected to certain practices in the production of foie gras which do not meet the requirements of the Convention, and anxious to encourage research on welfare aspects and alternative methods with a view to ensuring a further examination of this question; mindful of the need, in the meantime, to solve the welfare problems by modifying these production practices;
(9) Bearing in mind that the environment and management have to fulfil the animal's biological requirements rather than trying to "adapt" the animals to the environment by procedures such as mutilations;

(10) Considering therefore that strong and continuous efforts have to be made to adapt existing systems and methods and to develop new husbandry systems and methods in line with the Convention so that the needs of the animals can be met;

(11) Considering that further research on the health and welfare of geese should be encouraged and that the relevant provisions in the Recommendation shall be reviewed in the light of new scientific evidence;

(12) Has adopted the following Recommendation on the keeping of domestic geese:
GENERAL PROVISIONS

Article 1

1. This Recommendation shall apply to domestic geese (Anser anser f. domesticus, Anser cygnoides f. domesticus) and their crossbreeds kept for the production of meat, for breeding or for any other farming purpose.

2. Special provisions contained in the Appendix to this Recommendation constitute an integral part thereof.

Article 2

No goose taken from the wild shall be kept for farming purposes.

BIOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DOMESTIC GOOSE

Article 3

When considering husbandry practices the biological characteristics of the domestic geese presented below should be borne in mind.

a. The Greylag-goose (Anser anser) is considered to be the ancestor of domestic goose breeds of European origin while breeds of Asiatic origin descend from the Swan Goose (Anser cygnoides). Breeds of Asiatic origin which are characterised by a knob at the base of the upper beak are believed to be more heat resistant than those of European origin. In most breeds, wild as well as domestic, differences between winter and summer plumage and between male and female are minor. Geese are probably the first poultry to be domesticated, originally they were mainly kept on marginal grazing land. Geese are kept primarily for the production of meat, down and feathers but also for ornamental purposes, and at least historically also to keep watch.

b. Geese are gregarious birds, and in the wild they congregate in large flocks that stay together except during the breeding season where they develop a monogamous bond and disperse into pairs. Wild geese almost exclusively mate in open water, and copulation is preceded by a "dance" where the goose and gander swim side by side and perform characteristic diving movements with their heads and necks. Domestic geese may be mated with four to six females to one gander, and it is important that the flocks are established as soon as possible. Although swimming water seems to encourage domestic geese to mate they can mate satisfactorily without it. The nests may be placed in small groups, the wild greylag goose lays on average 4-6 eggs which are incubated 27-28 days by the female alone. During the incubation period the gander stays close to the nest, and when the goslings a few days old leave the nest they are cared for by both parents, at this time small family groups may be formed. The gander will aggressively protect goslings and nest and an intruder will be met by hissing and threatening attitudes or may be attacked.

c. Compared to other poultry geese have a long life span. They learn quickly and have a good memory and a well developed sight and sense of smell and hearing. Communication by a variety of vocalisations is an important part of their behaviour. Wild geese migrate over long distances and they walk and run efficiently. The ability to fly is reduced in many domestic breeds especially the heavy ones and very fat individuals may even have difficulty in walking.
d. Adult geese are herbivores while goslings eat a variety of food-items including different small invertebrates. They prefer to forage on open land where they seek short-growing grass or plants of a tender quality. Even though they spend more time grazing than swimming water is an important factor in their grooming behaviour. Important elements of bathing are the emersion of the head and shaking water from the head over the body.

e. Geese spend considerable time performing complex preening behaviour. After bathing geese carry out a variety of shaking, cleaning and snapping movements to remove water and foreign bodies and to arrange feathers. An elaborate sequence of movements is then carried out to distribute oil on feathers from the uropygial gland above the tail. This is necessary for waterproofing and heat regulation.

f. Domestic geese have from their wild ancestors retained a variety of the behavioural patterns of which social activities and the possibility to use water in their grooming ritual seem especially important. Domestic geese have also retained many anti-predator responses such as freezing, alarmcalling, threatening, attacking or attempts to run away from danger, and vigorous struggling if caught. Such behavioural responses may be associated with, or replaced by, emergency physiological responses. As the social structure of the family group is missing in intensive rearing systems and as goslings are easily imprinted on any item or person correct handling especially during the first days of their lives is important. In very barren environments which leave the geese little possibility to express their food-seeking and otherwise investigative pecking there is a risk that they direct the pecking towards other birds in the flock.

**STOCKMANSHIP AND INSPECTION**

**Article 4**

1. Any person who owns geese, or for the time being has geese under his or her control, and every person engaged in the keeping of geese shall, according to their responsibilities, ensure that every reasonable step is taken to safeguard the health and welfare of the birds.

2. The geese shall be cared for by a sufficient number of personnel with adequate knowledge of geese and of the husbandry system used to be able to:

   (a) recognise whether or not the birds are in good health;

   (b) understand the significance of behavioural changes;

   (c) appreciate the suitability of the total environment for the birds health and welfare.

   The stockman must be aware of the role of animal welfare in the daily work with birds. The issuing of a certificate of competence for the stockman by the competent authorities should be considered.

3. Geese shall be caught and handled only by competent trained staff, working under the direct supervision of the stockman and in accordance with Article 19.

4. The size or density of the group should not be too large; a large group shall not be set up unless it is reasonably certain that the stockman can safeguard the welfare of the birds.
Article 5

1. In order to develop a positive relationship between man and bird, there shall be frequent, calm and close approach from an early age such that the bird is not unduly frightened.

2. Young geese should be given appropriate experience of management practices (e.g. particular feeding and watering systems) and environmental conditions (e.g. natural light, sufficient water to fulfil biological requirements, litter) to enable them to adapt to the husbandry systems which they will encounter later in life.

Article 6

Geese bred for farming purposes shall not be used to achieve any other goal, including public spectacles or demonstrations, if such use is likely to be detrimental to their health and welfare.

Article 7

1. The flock or group shall be thoroughly inspected at least once a day, preferably more frequently, to monitor the physical condition of the animals. In carrying out such inspections, it should be borne in mind that while there should not be unnecessary noise or disturbance, young goslings in particular respond to being called or hearing human voices. A source of light strong enough for each bird to be seen clearly shall be available for the purpose of this inspection. Such inspections shall be made independently of any automatic surveillance equipment. In addition to the thorough inspection the flock or group should be checked at other times during the day.

2. For thorough overall inspection of the flock or group of birds, special attention shall be paid to bodily condition, movements and other behaviour patterns, respiration, condition of plumage, eyes, skin, beak, legs and feet; attention shall also be paid to the presence of external parasites, to the condition of droppings, to feed and water consumption and to growth. Where appropriate the birds shall be encouraged to walk or bathe. Mortality, culling and, if possible, morbidity levels shall be closely monitored and post-mortem examinations should be carried out regularly. Records shall be kept of the results.

3. Individual examination shall be made of those birds for which the overall inspection indicates this to be necessary.

Article 8

1. At the inspection it must be borne in mind that the healthy bird has sounds and activity appropriate to its age, sex, breed or type, clear bright eyes, good posture, vigorous movements and vocalisation if unduly disturbed, clean healthy skin, good plumage, well-formed shanks and feet, effective walking, bathing and preening, and active feeding and drinking behaviour.

2. If the geese are apparently not in good health, or if they are showing obvious signs of behavioural aberrations, the stockman shall take steps without delay to establish the cause and shall take appropriate remedial action. If the immediate action taken by the stockman is not effective, a veterinarian must be consulted, and, if necessary, expert advice must be sought on other technical factors involved. If the cause is traced to an environmental factor within the enclosure or accommodation which it is not essential to remedy immediately this shall be
corrected when the enclosure or accommodation is emptied and before the next batch of geese is put in.

3. Injured, sick or distressed birds shall be treated without delay and if necessary separated from the rest of the flock in suitable accommodation available for this purpose or killed in accordance with Article 24.

**ENCLOSURES, BUILDINGS AND EQUIPMENT**

**Article 9**

1. Professional advice on health and welfare aspects should be sought when a new enclosure or accommodation for geese is planned or when existing enclosures or accommodation are modified in accordance with legislation in force.

2. New methods of husbandry and new concepts of equipment or accommodation for geese should be comprehensively tested from the point of view of health and welfare and when tests are undertaken, shall not be put into commercial use unless found to be satisfactory, in accordance with a procedure to be laid down by the competent authority.

**Article 10**

When new accommodation for geese is planned, a suitable site shall be selected taking into consideration the risk from outside environmental factors such as noise, light, vibration, atmospheric pollution and from predators. Where appropriate, advantage shall be taken of natural features to provide shelter from predators and from adverse weather conditions.

**Article 11**

1. The design, construction and maintenance of enclosures, buildings and equipment for geese shall be such that they:

   - allow the fulfilment of essential biological requirements of geese, in particular in respect of water, and the maintenance of good health;
   - avoid barren environments;
   - do not cause traumatic injuries to the birds;
   - limit the risk of disease, disorders manifested by behavioural changes, injuries caused by birds to each other and, as far as possible, contamination of the birds by bad water quality;
   - avoid sharp corners, projections and materials which may be harmful to the birds;
   - provide protection from predators and adverse weather conditions, and, as far as possible, from rodents and wild birds;
   - allow for easy maintenance of good conditions of hygiene, air and water quality;
   - allow, without difficulty, a thorough inspection of all birds;
   - facilitate management of the birds.

2. Access to an outside run and water for bathing are necessary for geese, as water birds, to fulfil their biological requirements. Where such access is not possible, the geese must be provided with water facilities sufficient in number and so designed to allow water to cover the head and be taken up by the beak so that the geese can shake water over the body without difficulty. The geese should be allowed to dip their heads under water.
However, goslings under the age of 3 weeks reared artificially must be protected from getting soaked and kept away from bathing water because during this period their down feathers are insufficiently oiled.

3. Water facilities should be constructed over a well drained area and shall always be kept clean.

4. Feeding and watering equipment shall be designed, constructed, placed, operated and maintained in such a way that:
   - it minimises contamination of food and water;
   - all birds have sufficient access to it to avoid undue competition between individuals;
   - it does not cause or result in injury to birds;
   - it operates in all weather conditions;
   - the provision of water and the consumption of feed can be controlled.

5. Young geese must have free access to shelter at all times and all geese shall have access to shelter against adverse weather conditions. Buildings in which birds are confined shall be constructed and maintained in such a way as to minimise any risk of fire. Materials should be fire resistant or treated with flame retardants; all appropriate measures shall be taken to allow for immediate action in order to protect the birds, e.g. installing an alarm system and elaborating an evacuation plan for the birds. Electrical equipment and wiring shall be well maintained.

6. Where geese are housed, floors shall be of a suitable design and material and not cause discomfort, distress or injury to the birds. The floor shall include an area sufficient to enable all birds to rest simultaneously and covered with an appropriate bedding material.

7. Housing systems for geese shall allow the birds to:
   - stand with a normal posture,
   - turn around without difficulty,
   - defecate showing normal movements,
   - flap the wings,
   - show normal preening movements,
   - perform normal social interactions,
   - carry out normal feeding and drinking movements.

8. In the case of geese kept for breeding, an adequate number of nesting facilities of a suitable size and design shall be available.

Nest boxes should be placed on the floor. Resting areas shall not be so high above floor level that birds have difficulty or risk injury in using them. If nest boxes are not used adequate amounts of straw or the like shall be placed in nesting areas.

**MANAGEMENT**

Article 12

1. When considering the establishment or replacement of a flock, the choice of the strain of bird should be made with the aim of reducing health and welfare problems.
2. Measures shall be taken to minimise aggression and stress, especially when new groups are formed but also to ensure that stability of the group is maintained. Breeding flocks should be established as early in the autumn as possible.

3. The space allowance for birds shall be such that their demands on the whole environment, their age, sex, live weight, health and their need to move around freely and to perform normal social behaviour of the species be satisfied. The size of the group shall be such that it does not lead to behavioural or other disorders or injuries.

4. Adequate litter shall be provided and maintained, as far as possible, in a dry, friable state in order to help the birds to keep themselves clean and to enrich the environment.

5. Frequent checks shall be made to ensure that the environment is not infested by parasites or other harmful organisms.

6. Routine or systematic use of drugs to compensate for poor hygienic conditions or management practices shall not be allowed.

Article 13

1. When geese are kept indoors without free access to an outdoor enclosure, the accommodation shall be kept so that the ambient temperature, the air velocity, the relative humidity, the dust level and other atmospheric conditions do not adversely affect the health or welfare of the birds. Ventilation capacities of the buildings shall take account of the number of birds in the buildings in order to maintain adequate temperatures to prevent heat stress, in particular during hot weather. Moreover, appropriate measures, such as cooling of buildings, shall be taken when the weather is exceptionally hot.

2. The ventilation system, and facilities for storing and handling litter and manure shall be designed, maintained and managed to prevent the exposure of birds to gases such as ammonia, hydrogen sulphide, carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide in concentrations which cause discomfort to the birds or which are detrimental to their health.

3. Where the health and welfare of geese depend on automatic or other mechanical systems of ventilation, an effective alarm system shall be installed and arrangements shall be made to ensure continued adequate ventilation in the event of power or equipment failure.

4. Where buildings need to be locked, arrangements shall be made to allow rapid entry in case of emergency.

Article 14

1. Young goslings should not be subjected to conditions which cause either panting due to overheating or prolonged huddling and feather-ruffling due to underheating.

2. During long periods of sub-zero temperatures under free range conditions a freely accessible shelter must be provided for geese. The shelter shall be large enough to contain all birds at the same time, be maintained at moderate temperatures and contain suitable bedding.
3. In free range systems, enclosed range areas should be used in rotation, and flocks moved before the land becomes contaminated with organisms that can cause or carry disease to an extent which could seriously prejudice the health of the birds. Portable houses and drinking facilities shall be moved when necessary to avoid continuously muddy conditions.

4. If geese are to be driven from one place to another this shall be done quietly and slowly.

Article 15

The sound level shall, as far as practicable, be minimised and constant or sudden noise shall be avoided. Ventilation fans, feeding machinery or other equipment shall be constructed, placed, operated and maintained in such a way that it causes the least possible noise, both directly inside the accommodation and indirectly through the structure of the accommodation itself.

Article 16

1. All buildings shall have light levels sufficient to allow all geese to see one another and to be seen clearly, to investigate their surroundings visually and to show normal levels of activity. As far as practicable, natural light should be provided. In this case, light apertures should be arranged in such a way that light is distributed evenly within the accommodation.

2. After the first days of conditioning, the lighting regime shall be such as to prevent health and behavioural problems. Therefore, it shall follow a 24 hour rhythm and include a sufficient uninterrupted dark period, as a guideline approximately a third of the day.

3. A twilight period should be given in the dimming of lights in order to avoid disturbance or injury.

Article 17

1. All geese shall have appropriate access to adequate, nutritious, balanced and hygienic feed each day and to adequate supplies of water of suitable quality at all times. In the case of birds which have difficulty in feeding or drinking, appropriate measures shall be taken in accordance with Article 8 paragraphs 2 and 3. Methods of feeding and feed additives which cause distress, injury or disease to the geese or may result in development of physical or physiological conditions detrimental to their health and welfare shall not be permitted.

2. Sudden changes in the type or quantity of feed and feeding procedures shall be avoided except in case of emergency.

This shall not apply in the case of therapeutic or prophylactic treatment administered on the instructions of a veterinarian.

Article 18

All automatic or other mechanical equipment upon which birds depend for their health and welfare must be thoroughly checked at least once daily. Where defects are discovered these must be rectified immediately, or, if this is impracticable, other appropriate steps must be taken to safeguard the health and welfare of the geese until the defect can be rectified.
Article 19

1. Collection times shall be co-ordinated with production requirements at the slaughterhouse in order to limit the time birds are held in transport containers/crates.

2. Geese shall not be entirely deprived of food or water before transport, except in the case of transport to a slaughterhouse, which is close to the point of production.

3. Before de-populating enclosures or houses, any hindrance from fixtures and fittings, especially sharp edges or protrusions must be removed. Particular care shall be taken when moving birds within or from an enclosure or house to ensure that no bird is injured by the equipment or the handling process. Where possible, birds shall be encouraged to walk and handling reduced to a minimum.

4. Care must be taken in catching birds in order to avoid panic and subsequent injury to and smothering of the birds, for example by reducing the intensity of the light or using a blue light.

5. Unfit birds, even if they have reached slaughter weight, must not be sent for slaughter. Any bird which is unable to stand on both legs shall not be transported but must be humanely killed on the farm in accordance with the provisions of Article 24.

6. Birds shall not be carried hanging head downwards or by the legs alone. Their weight shall be supported by a hand placed under their body and an arm around the body to keep the wings in the closed position. Heavy birds shall be carried individually and put into containers/crates one by one. Transport crates with large openings shall be used.

7. The distance birds are carried shall be minimised, for example by bringing transport containers/crates as close to the birds as possible.

8. The containers shall not be overstocked and must be well ventilated. During the time the birds are held in the containers, they shall be protected from bad weather and excessively hot or cold conditions.

9. Every effort shall be made to encourage the development of improved systems for handling large numbers of birds.

Article 20

1. Those parts of the accommodation with which the geese come into contact shall be thoroughly cleaned, and, where appropriate, disinfected every time the accommodation has been emptied and before new birds are brought in. Accommodations, enclosures and all equipment, including facilities for providing water, shall be kept satisfactorily clean as long as birds are present.

2. Any dead bird must be removed from enclosures and shelters promptly and hygienically in accordance with existing legislation.

Article 21
When there is a risk of attack by predators, measures shall be taken to minimise the risk in accordance with domestic law and other legal instruments for the protection of animals or for the conservation of threatened species.

**CHANGES OF GENOTYPE OR PHENOTYPE**

**Article 22**

1. Breeding or breeding programmes which cause or are likely to cause suffering or harm to any of the birds involved shall not be practised. In particular, birds whose genotype has been modified for production purposes shall not be kept under commercial farm conditions unless it has been demonstrated by scientific studies of animal welfare that the birds can be kept under such conditions without detriment to their health or welfare.

2. In breeding programmes, particular attention shall be paid to criteria conducive to the improvement of birds' health and welfare, as well as to production criteria. Therefore, the conservation or development of breeds or strains of animals which would limit or reduce animal welfare problems shall be encouraged.

**Article 23**

1. For the purpose of this Recommendation, "mutilation" means a procedure carried out for other than therapeutic purposes and resulting in damage to or the loss of a sensitive part of the body or the alteration of bone structure, or causing a significant amount of pain or distress.

2. The mutilation of geese shall be prohibited, with the exception of tagging for identification purposes which must be done in such a way as to avoid unnecessary distress. Methods causing less distress than tagging shall be promoted.

3. Feathers, including down shall not be plucked from live birds.

**KILLING**

**Article 24**

1. If geese are ill or injured to such an extent that treatment is no longer feasible and transport would cause additional suffering, they must be killed on the spot. This must be done without causing undue pain, agitation or other forms of distress and without delay by a person experienced in the techniques of killing unless in emergency when such a person is not immediately available.

2. The methods used shall either:

   a. cause immediate loss of consciousness and death, or
   
   b. rapidly render the goose insensible to pain and distress, until death supervenes, or
   
   c. cause the death of a bird which is anaesthetised or effectively stunned.

Drowning and suffocation shall not be permitted. As geese are not as susceptible to carbon dioxide as certain other birds, the use of carbon dioxide shall be avoided.
Methods which may be used for killing unwanted goslings and embryos in hatcheries are set out in the Appendix.

3. The person responsible for the killing shall ensure that for each goose the requirements of paragraph 2 are fulfilled and that the bird is dead.

SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISION

Article 25

1. Countries allowing foie gras production shall encourage research on its welfare aspects and on alternative methods which do not include gavage.

2. Until new scientific evidence on alternative methods and their welfare aspects is available, the production of foie gras shall be carried out only where it is current practice and then only in accordance with standards laid down in domestic law.
   In any case, the competent authorities shall monitor this type of production to ensure the implementation of the provisions of the Recommendation.

3. The Standing Committee shall be informed annually of the results obtained and measures taken to improve housing and management procedures and control production.

FINAL PROVISION

Article 26

This Recommendation shall be reviewed within 5 years of coming into force, and, if appropriate, amended in particular according to any new scientific knowledge, in particular in respect to the provision of water and to stocking densities, which becomes available.
APPENDIX : KILLING OF UNWANTED GOSLINGS AND EMBRYOS IN HATCHERIES

1. Goslings which are not intended for rearing shall be killed as soon as possible.

2. Goslings should be killed by using an apparatus which contains mechanically operated killing blades approved for this purpose in accordance with national legislation, designed and operated in such a way as to ensure that all goslings are killed immediately even if they are handled in large numbers.

3. Only gases or gas mixtures which do not induce respiratory distress to the birds during induction may be used. The procedures shall be in accordance with Article 24 and approved under the legislation in force in each country.

Measures shall be taken to ensure rapid death and to avoid suffocation under other goslings by putting birds in a single layer and monitoring gas concentrations.

4. To kill any living embryo instantaneously, all hatchery waste shall be treated without delay using the mechanical apparatus mentioned above or any living embryo must be killed without delay in accordance with the general principles in Article 24 paragraph 1.