

EBENE PROTOCOLE— USERS' GUIDE

Implementation of a practical and shared method
of animal welfare assessment



Animal welfare is part of the farmer's daily concerns. It's a shared responsibility which needs the involvement and participation of many people, not only the farmers, but also the vets and other farming contributors. Scientific and technical progress increases farmers' knowledge, improving the quality of care given to their animals.

Animal Welfare — Farmer welfare

In ideal conditions, a farm animal will have access to better comfort, it will have optimal growth, it will be less subject to diseases, injuries or stress and will express more natural behaviours. Its production performance will consequently be improved. As well as the guarantee of birds' strong growth, this leads to a more satisfying work for the farmers, recognizing their expertise. In these conditions the human-animal relationship will be improved.

EBENE, a method developed for and by the poultry and rabbit industry

From the beginning, professionals expressed their need to get a simple and practical method in order to evaluate the well-being of the animal on a daily basis, the main objective being the continuous improvement of practices. From 2014, a project team from the French poultry institute called ITAVI began its close collaboration with farmer professionals as well as representatives of civil society and scientists. EBENE is cofinanced by FranceAgriMer, DGAI and poultry organizations.



A method without obligation

EBENE method is not related to any national nor European regulation. It comes from the spontaneous will of the industry, and its use depends upon the goodwill of professionals.

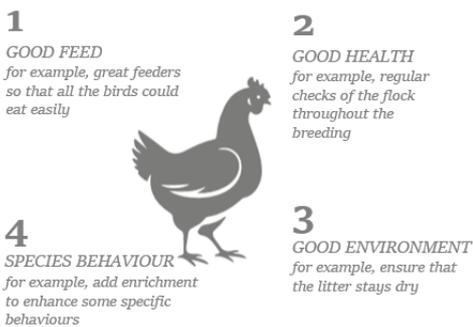


EBENE, a method supported by ITAVI

EBENE is the result of a long process, initiated in 2014. Working groups have been built with representatives from the poultry and rabbit industry. A close conversation has been initiated with the animal welfare associations such as Welfarm and CIWF, the distributors, the at home food services. A dialogue has also been established with scientists such as ISA of Lille, Anses, INRA and Oniris for a methodical support.

A reliable, scientific and feasible method

The four principles described hereafter determine a satisfying animal welfare state:



Criteria allow the establishment of each of these principles. For example, the “good environment” principle is defined by “rest comfort”, “environment comfort”, and “movement capacity”. Several **indicators** (or measures) need to be

The EBENE method favors animal-based indicators and therefore mainly includes direct animal observation (such as the feather coverage on the layers or the exploratory behaviour on the guinea fowl). When it is not possible to use them, resource-based indicators are then chosen (calculation of the drinker rows per broiler for example).

gathered in order to determine when the criterion in question is reached. Therefore, the moving capacity can be evaluated in the field by a measure of the density as well as by the number of animals stretching its wings and/or legs. These measures are done based on a **questionnaire** plus a random **sampling** of animals; without observing all of them. It represents a crucial step which must be followed with rigor and meticulousness. The EBENE method has been built based on other welfare evaluations such as Welfare Quality and AWIN. All these procedures have been validated within scientific publications. In practice, EBENE is intended to be a routine farmer’s tool; it should thereby be fast and easy to use.

Identification of improvement areas

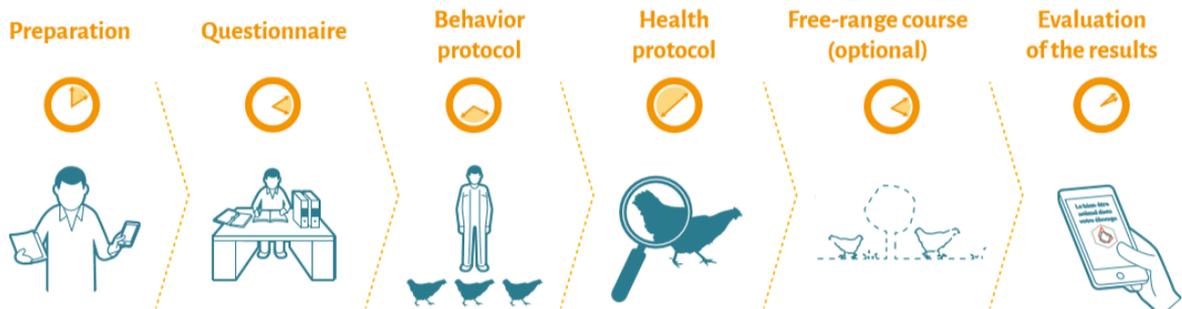
Each measure performed (questionnaire, health and behaviour protocols) is linked to the criteria it evaluates, then to one of the four great principles. The data allows positioning of a farm compared to other poultry production farms, and, at the farming scale, to measure the impact of a new practice on the welfare of the animals as well as to visualize its evolution over time. The ITAVI teams are supporting the farmers improving their practices in order to improve the animal welfare.

Be trained to assess animal welfare

This method was born from the desire for an as accurate as possible flock welfare evaluation. Before carrying out an evaluation, it is necessary to be trained on the following elements:

- › **Sampling** of animals for different measures
- › **Observation** of behaviours
- › **Interpretation** of the results

The present paper helps the users to retain the main elements learned during the former training.



Chronological sketch of the different steps to be under-taken while following the EBENE method