

Poultry Farm Buffer – Bannockburn SE PSP

On 19 September 2024, the VPA engaged with Agriculture Victoria (AgVic) to seek advice on appropriate separation distances for the Turosi Foods poultry farm at 449 Burnside Road, Bannockburn (to the south of the Bannockburn South East PSP area). This advice was sought to ensure alignment with the EPA's [Separation Distance Guidelines](#) -which states in Table 2, page 24 - *"the separation distance is as per current Agriculture Victoria advice and guidance."*

Advice and Application

AgVic provided the VPA guidance based on industry standards and regulatory requirements, recommending a separation distance to manage potential amenity impacts including odour, noise, and operational activity from the poultry farm.

High level advice from Agvic indicated that a 500-metre buffer from the hatchery aligns with best practice and provides an additional safeguard.

The advice also refers to the draft Victorian land use planning regulations for animal production (May 2023, consultation draft), which proposes fixed separation distances. Given these regulations are not yet approved, the VPA has not adopted the distances in the draft regulations, which range from 250-750m.

Use of Advice

The VPA has received consent to share this information to inform its planning process. The 500-metre buffer has been applied to ensure:

- Compliance with EPA and AgVic guidance.
- Minimising conflicts between agricultural operations and future residential development.
- Long-term land use compatibility within the PSP.

The VPA is maintaining the 500-metre buffer for exhibition of the PSP to ensure responsible land use planning by mitigating odour, noise, and operational impacts from the poultry farm while enabling orderly urban growth.

This approach aligns with established regulatory frameworks and expert advice, ensuring long-term compatibility between agricultural operations and future residential development.

The complete advice provided by AgVic is attached.



24 September 2024

Oscar Yenken
Victorian Planning Authority
Regional Victoria
Level 25, 35 Collins Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Email: oscar.yencken@vpa.vic.gov.au

Dear Oscar,

RE: Request for Advice on Separation Distances to a Hatchery and Breeder Farm (Poultry)

**Land at: 449 Burnside Road, BANNOCKBURN VIC
Lot 1 PS318480**

Reference: CPN 21000070

Thank you for the opportunity to provide advice on separation distances to a hatchery and breeder farm (poultry).

The advice is based on the following:

- *We are currently undertaking a Precinct Structure Plan (PSP) for Bannockburn and would like to request your assistance in determining an appropriate separation buffer between the proposed PSP area and the Turosi Foods chicken farm located at 531 Burnside Road, Bannockburn. The farm comprises a hatchery in the northernmost building, with breeder farms extending to the south.*
- *Based on our discussions with Turosi Foods in 2022, we gathered the following key information about their operations:*
 - *The northernmost building is the hatchery, where chicks are hatched and then transferred offsite to broiler farms.*
 - *The hatchery generates 4-6m³ of waste per week (eggshells and yolks) and is an enclosed building with minimal external impact.*
 - *The breeder farms house birds from 22 to 56 weeks old across multiple sheds, producing eggs for the hatchery. There are approximately 32,000 birds in 4 sheds in Breeder Farm No. 1, with similar numbers in the southern sheds.*
 - *Turosi Foods considers their breeder operations as low-impact, with lower density and lower odour and noise levels compared to typical broiler farms.*
 - *The hatchery is located approximately 50m from the PSP boundary, while Breeder Farm No. 1 is about 420m away.*
 - *Turosi Foods noted that their Bannockburn operation is nearing the end of its operational lifespan, but there are no formal plans for replacement at this stage.*

It is understood that:

- The seven (7) breeder farms each consist of four (4) sheds with a total of 32,000 birds on each farm.
- The total number of breeder birds is 224,000
- The breeder farms supply the hatchery which then provides the day-old chicks to populate broiler farms for the growing out of chicken meat birds.

The advice provided in this letter relates to:

1. Planning context
2. Relevant guidance

1. Planning Context

The subject land, in the Farming Zone is approximately a total of 384 hectares in area and made up of 7 parcels and is affected by:

- Land Subject to Inundation Overlay (LSIO) (GOLDEN PLAINS)
- Salinity Management Overlay (SMO) (GOLDEN PLAINS)
- Waterways.

Agriculture Victoria considers that the breeder farms are egg layer farms for the purpose of potential impacts regards community amenity, such as odour etc. in accordance with the statement provided in *Egg Industry Environmental Guidelines, 2nd edition (McGahan et. al. 2018)*: <https://www.australianeggs.org.au/what-we-do/leading-research/egg-industry-environmental-guidelines> : *The national guideline scope includes; While the focus of the document is layer farms, the principles outlined in this document are equally applicable to pullet rearing and breeder farms.*

On aerial imagery in the earliest time frame of 1985 the poultry farms are evident.

2. Relevant guidance

The following is a summary of available guidance in determining an appropriate separation buffer:

- EPA Separation distance guideline August 2024; <https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/about-epa/publications/separation-distance-and-landfill-buffer-guidelines> ; references the following guidance:
 - *Chicken meat (including free range), See further guidelines, Planning and environment guideline for establishing meat chicken farms (Guide 1 – Assessment guide) (2021).*
 - *Chicken eggs (including free range), See further guidelines, Egg Industry Environmental Guidelines – Edition II (2018).*
 - *Hatcheries, See further guidelines, As per current Agriculture Victoria advice and guidance.*
- Draft Victorian land use planning regulations for animal production; <https://engage.vic.gov.au/new-land-use-planning-regulations-for-animal-production> , includes the document: *Animal production separation distance requirements May 2023* (consultation draft), which states the following:
 - *TIER 1: FIXED SEPARATION DISTANCES Fixed separation distances provide a simple screening assessment for animal production facilities with less than the maximum animal numbers for Tier 1 (Table 3). The animal production facility and range areas must provide separation distances of at least:*
 - *250 m to a sensitive use*
 - *500 m to a rural living areas*
 - *750 m to residential zones*
 - *Poultry farm – eggs (Page 21):*

- *The separation distance methodology for poultry farms - eggs is based on the national industry guidelines Egg Industry Environmental Guidelines, 2nd edition (McGahan et. al. 2018):*
<https://www.australianeggs.org.au/what-we-do/leading-research/egg-industry-environmental-guidelines> :
 - *The national guideline scope includes; While the focus of the document is layer farms, the principles outlined in this document are equally applicable to pullet rearing and breeder farms. These guidelines are not designed to cover hatcheries and off-farm facilities that manufacture egg products.*
 - *Day old chicks are transported to rearing (pullet) production systems, which are often co-located with layer farms. Pullets are reared to around 17 weeks of age before being moved into layer sheds, where they begin producing eggs.*
 - *Where distances are not specified by state and local government departments and agencies, the following minimum fixed separation distances are suggested:*
 - *1. 500m between the impact source and any land use zone that is not compatible with the development (e.g. residential, rural residential).*
 - *2. 250m separation distance between the impact source and any sensitive land use (e.g. neighbouring houses) that is located on land that is compatible with the development (e.g. on land designated rural, farming or similar).*
- *Poultry hatchery (Page 24):*
 - *Poultry hatcheries only use Tier 1 fixed separation distances. Poultry hatcheries produce very little odour, with minimal wastes that are generally removed offsite. The poultry hatchery animal production facility must provide minimum fixed separation distances of:*
 - *250 m to a sensitive use or public areas.*
 - *500 m to a rural living areas.*
 - *750 m to residential zones where urban development is a primary purpose of the zone.*
- *Egg Industry Environmental Guidelines, 2nd edition (McGahan et. al. 2018) do not appear to stipulate number triggers for odour modelling but states the following:*
 - *Where separation distances cannot be met with this modified approach, site specific odour impact assessment may be required. This would involve the use of an appropriate odour model, that uses appropriate odour emission rates and hourly meteorological data, that is representative of the site. A specialist in odour impact assessment should be consulted for expert advice.*
- *As a reference, the Victorian Code for Broiler Farm 2009 Plus 2018 Amendments requires odour modelling for farm capacities of greater than 400,000 birds and AgriFutures Planning and environment guideline for establishing meat chicken farms (Guide 1 – Assessment guide) (2021) has a 600,000 bird trigger for odour modelling.*
- *Given the relatively low numbers of birds in the breeder farms an S Factor calculation of separation distances would appear appropriate.*
- *A breeder farm with 32,000 birds in isolation, in accordance with Egg Industry Environmental Guidelines, 2nd edition (McGahan et. al. 2018), would require a separation distance of:*
 - *178m to a house*

- 266m to a residential zone
- The individual breeder farms separation distances overlap and, in accordance with *Egg Industry Environmental Guidelines, 2nd edition (McGahan et. al. 2018)*, *It is suggested that if the neighbouring facility's calculated 'odour plume' from the separation distance formula overlaps, then the calculated separation distances will need to be increased by 50% (i.e. multiply the distance by 1.5)* requiring a separation distance of:
 - 267m to a house
 - 399m to a residential zone

Conclusion

Agriculture Victoria considers that:

- The closest breeder farm shed is approximately 420m from the southernmost extent of the *Indicative Co-design summary plan* boundary and outside the required separation distance of 399m to a residential zone.
- The 750m separation distance for a poultry hatchery prescribed in the draft Victorian land use planning regulations is a generic distance not based on the type and or scale of the operation. Noting that this document is subject to consultation and may not be the final published version.
- Given the low amenity impacts generally for a poultry hatchery, and the breeder farm requirement as noted above, the *Bannockburn SE-PSP Co-Design Summary Document October 2022* (Page 20) with a 500m hatchery buffer may be considered appropriate, albeit conservative.
- Given there are two (2) dwellings located northwest of the poultry hatchery predating 2005 aerial imagery, with the closest being approximately 230m, Golden Plains Shire Council may be able to provide evidence or otherwise as to any history of verified odour complaints. This may be more indicative of appropriate separation to sensitive uses than an odour modelling assessment.
- It may be advisable to include vegetated screening as part of the design elements of the plan to protect visual amenity.

This letter of advice is provided to assist the assessment of appropriate separation distances for proposed sensitive uses from established poultry farms in the Farming Zone as part of the proposed Bannockburn Southeast Precinct Structure Plan development. The information provided should be considered as advisory in nature to inform any decision making.

Please contact me if you require any further clarification.

Regards

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted name]

[Redacted title]

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