

## **Animal Welfare & Audits in Turkey Production**

**Collette Kaster, MS, Executive Director**  
**Professional Animal Auditor Certification Organization (PAACO)**

The demand for animal welfare audits at plants and farms continues to grow. Auditors are expected to carry relevant certifications such as ISO, BRC, SQF, HACCP, and PAACO currently serves in a role as a certification body for Animal Welfare in the western hemisphere at least. Our mission is to promote animal welfare through auditor training and audit certification, and our vision is to be the authority on animal welfare auditing.

PAACO was formed in 2004 as the need for scientifically trained, qualified auditors was recognized, and now is guided by eight different associations who each provide two board members:

- American Registry of Professional Animal Scientists (ARPAS)
- American Association of Avian Pathologists (AAP)
- American Association of Bovine Practitioners (AABP)
- American Association of Swine Veterinarians (AASV)
- American Society of Animal Science (ASAS)
- American Dairy Science Association (ADSA)
- Poultry Science Association (PSA)
- American Meat Science Association (AMSA) (Added in 2017)

Five welfare auditor certifications are now offered: meat, poultry (turkey, broiler, layer), dairy, beef feedlot, and swine. These trainings always include in depth curriculum taught by industry experts in that species, welfare and auditing and trainees can practice auditing in plants and on farms as well. Trainees must qualify for training by having a minimum combined education and experience level so that they have reasonable depth of knowledge about the area they will learn to audit.

With Certification, auditors are trained as a professional in their discipline by expert professionals in the field of animal welfare and companies are provided a recourse for inappropriate behavior by an auditor

### **Steps for Auditor Certification**

1. Qualify for certification with the required education and experience (all attendees are reviewed)
2. Attend a PAACO Certification Course
3. Complete and pass the exam
4. Complete shadow audit performance reports with a certified auditor
5. Submit shadow audits and the PAACO Code of Conduct for review and approval
6. Once approved, you will be listed as an auditor at [animalauditor.org](http://animalauditor.org)

Additionally, many companies and organization choose to certify their animal welfare audit. An expert panel evaluates that instrument against PAACO's Audit Standards and determines if it meets those criteria.

### **Auditing and Turkeys**

Auditors are taught to using several audit instruments, most typically the primary one for that species comes from the relevant trade association. Turkey training uses the National Turkey

Federation audit instrument which covers breeder, hatchery, commercial growers, catching and transport, and slaughter.

Many retail and foodservice customers requirement some level of third party auditing as part of their supplier approval process. Although the requirements of auditing may feel cumbersome, many of the traits which are audited have the added benefit of contributing to improvements in operations.

Basic expectations like feed and water availability and monitoring of the bird's environment (lighting and litter) are assessed and documented. How and when turkeys are euthanized is closely monitored in all phases of production. Records protect companies from costly recalls associated with treating with the wrong product or by not following labels. And lastly, attention to detail and the expectations of auditing helps to build a culture of animal welfare. Employees are trained and aware of the expectations of them, and managers and owners know this is part of the business going forward.

Auditing is just one element of managing animal welfare, and PAACO is dedicated to ensuring that auditors are well qualified and trained to provide companies with objective data on their conformance with an audit tool.