

# German Duck Down



Audit Date	This supply chain was audited during 2017 and 2018
Auditor	Control Union on behalf of Mountain Equipment

## Summary

This is a large scale, industrial based supply chain, predominantly supplying meat for the European market. A total of four farms were visited as well as the slaughterhouse and the pre-processor.

Despite this supply chain being located wholly in Germany and therefore deemed 'lower risk' we were not permitted the level of open access that would be normal. As such a member of the Mountain Equipment was sent to accompany the auditor on one of his visits to see practices for themselves.

Being based within Germany, the supply chain is subject to strict animal welfare rules imposed by local and EU regulation. In addition to our checks, the farms undergo regular animal welfare checks by local authorities.

The supply chain met our four key rules – all the birds were raised primarily for their meat and were humanely slaughtered, there was no evidence of down being live plucked or live harvested, the birds were not force-fed and the birds were raised in good conditions and in accordance with local regulation.

## Other Notes

The supply chain met the vast majority of the DOWNS CODEX®'s welfare criteria. Of note in the report however are that carbon dioxide and ammonia levels in the farms were not monitored, and that there was no infirmary for sick or injured birds.

Regarding the measurement of CO<sub>2</sub> and ammonia levels, monitoring these gases is a recommended (as opposed to required) part of DOWNS CODEX®. However, as noted by the auditor, ammonia smell was not present in the audited farms, and the barns visited by Mountain Equipment staff were well ventilated and there were no concerns over air circulation.

The use of an infirmary pen is another recommended part of DOWNS CODEX®. Many supply chains fail to have infirmary pens for ill or injured birds and this is something we continue to raise with suppliers, though we are not always in a position to enforce this step. Sometimes it is thought that separating a bird from a flock 'punishes' an ill or injured bird and so it is better off with the rest of the birds but this remains a matter for debate.

As already stated, this supply chain proved more problematic to audit than we would like. This has been raised with both the wholesaler, the processor and the auditors.

<b>Summary Executive Report</b>	
<b>Supplier Name</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>Location</b>	Zerbst/Anhalt (Slaughterhouse), Neutrebbin (Pre-processor), Gross Schauen (farm 1), Königsborn (farm 2), Körbelitz (farm 3), Reuden Süd (farm 4), Germany
<b>Date of audits</b>	08-09.02.2018 (slaughterhouse and pre-processor), 21.08.2017 [1 farm], 28-29.08.2018 [3 farms].
<b>Auditor name</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>Date of report</b>	23-11-2018
<b>Authors</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>Introduction</b>	
<p>In 2016 Mountain Equipment contacted Control Union (CU) with their ambition to get part of their supply chain audited for animal welfare and traceability against Mountain Equipment's Down Codex. The idea was to include in this pilot exercise in 2017 some farms, a slaughterhouse and a pre-processor belonging to the supply chain of Mountain Equipment's German supplier, Peter Kohl.</p> <p>Due to the sensitive commercial environment, discussions with the supplier took long, therefore in 2017 only one farm has been audited, while audits of 3 more farms, the slaughterhouse and the pre-processor took place in 2018. Therefore order of audits did not follow the general traceability sequence (farm-slaughterhouse-pre-processor). For the same commercial reasons as mentioned above, farms for audit have been selected by the supplier and the available time for audits did not always allow to assess all requirements of the Down Codex.</p> <p>Despite these bottlenecks, Control Union was able to get a general impression of the farm, slaughterhouse, processing and traceability practices.</p> <p>During the visits Control Union did not find any evidence of improper animal welfare or traceability practices.</p> <p>In this report a summary of findings is presented.</p>	
<b>Scope and methodology</b>	
<p>The audits were carried out against Mountain Equipment's Down Codex by Control Union's qualified auditors using appropriate audit techniques, such as interview of personnel, site visits and document control.</p> <p>The CU auditor filled out the checklist and a 'farm summary' for each farm. The checklist has been filled for the slaughterhouse and a 'findings report' for the pre-processor.</p> <p>The Down Codex has requirements for farms and slaughterhouses. These requirements reflect the 5 freedoms of animals defined by the Farm Animal Welfare Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freedom from hunger and thirst</li> <li>• Freedom from discomfort</li> <li>• Freedom from pain, injury and disease</li> <li>• Freedom to exhibit natural behaviour</li> <li>• Freedom from fear and distress</li> </ul> <p>Traceability requirements are not built in the standard, therefore the audit at the pre-processing site</p>	

was based on general traceability aspects and as no criteria were established, it shall be considered more as a findings report, than an audit report.

### Results of assessments

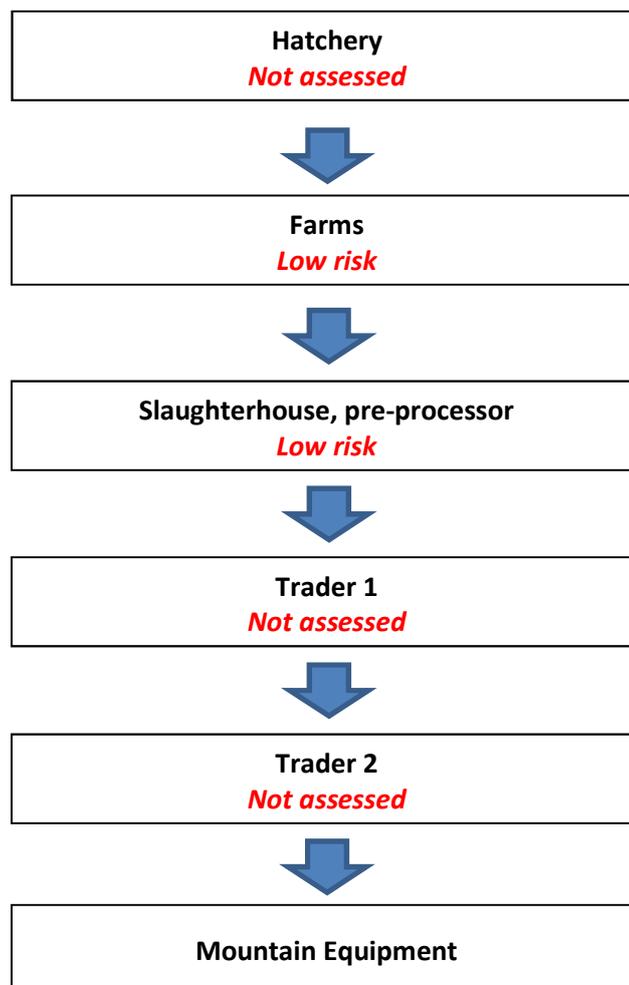
The following types of criteria were established by Down Codex:

- *Required*
- *Recommended*
- *Optional*

It was up to the auditors to decide on the rating (Pass or Fail) based on their professional experience.

The below graph shows the supply chain participants. With red CU indicated the level of risk based on the findings of the assessments.

#### Down supply chain risk assessment



**Findings at farms**

At each farm the CU auditor interviewed the farmer, visited randomly selected barns per site and reviewed applicable documentations. Auditors were given free access to all infrastructure of the farms.

Ducklings and feed for the birds are provided by the slaughterhouse. All ducklings are sourced from the hatchery. Maximum stocking density allowance is 20kg/m<sup>2</sup> at slaughter time. Ducks are usually slaughtered at the age of 39-40 days. No signs of live-plucking and force-feeding were observed during the site visits. Low risk of live-plucking or force-feeding was determined due to the slaughter age and breed of ducks.

The following items were at each visited farm non-compliant to the Down Codex:

Down Codex requirement		Failing
Carbon monoxide & ammonia levels should be monitored and kept in levels which will not adversely affect the bird's well-being.	RECOMMENDED	Carbon monoxide & ammonia levels were not monitored at any visited farm. However ammonia cannot be smelt in the buildings.
An infirmary pen which is separated from the main stock of birds should be available to birds which are ill or injured.	RECOMMENDED	Infirmary pen was unavailable for sick or injured birds.

**Findings at slaughterhouse**

The assessment of the slaughterhouse was based on the sections “Transport” and “Slaughterhouse” of the Down Codex.

CU did not observe any discrepancies regarding transport, effectiveness of stunning and method of slaughter.

**Slaughter:**

During unloading birds are handled carefully by trained personnel responsible for internal transportation, hanging birds, unloading cages. There is dim blue light at unloading area to calm birds down. Personnel responsible for slaughter is trained annually. Stunning is applied using water as electric current conducting agent. Effectiveness of stunning is continuously monitored. Killing is done manually. An emergency procedure is in place for any electricity cut off.

**Down handling:**

After slaughtering feather is washed to remove blood and other foreign material. Water is removed by a spin-dryer and a second washing takes place. After second washing water is again removed and wet feather is placed into plastic containers. All feather from one working day is put together [mass balance] ie feather coming from ducks slaughtered at the same day (even if they are from different farms) are mixed during the process. However, in case of a large producer it is possible that one day slaughter provides feather from one farmer.

At the end of the process, products are transported to the processing unit in Neutrebbin right after washing to avoid feather damage by microorganisms – rotting, bad smell etc.

### **Findings at pre-processing unit**

Process:

Approximately 2500 kg of feather arrives daily to the processing unit. Containers with feathers are accompanied by transport document. Feather is washed 2 times at the processing unit. After removal of water by a spin-dryer, feather is directed moved to a silo for temporary storage.

From silo the feather goes to dryer. Approximately 42kg of wet feather is placed in the dryer and 20 kg of dry feather is obtained at around 81-86 degrees. After drying cooling takes place with the air from dryer hall.

After cooling feather is directed to a silo and from there it goes to sorting machine. Sorting chambers are numbered and records are done on record sheet, data is entered to software. Traceability is established between each sorting chamber and bags of feathers. Ready bags have identification labels attached corresponding to the chambers.

In the warehouse bales from each chamber are put in different piles. Storing of down is usually not longer than a few days.

CU observed a well-managed traceability system at the pre-processing unit.

### **Conclusions and suggestions**

In 2017 and 2018 Control Union carried out audits for four farms, a slaughterhouse and a pre-processing unit according to the Mountain Equipment's Down Codex in Germany.

Due to restricted time available for farms audits, a complete assessment against all criteria of Down Codex was not possible. The traceability assessment for slaughterhouse and pre-processing unit was successfully completed.

The visited sites run well-managed traceability and animal welfare systems, which is reflected in their daily operations. In the effort to link all loops of the supply chain, a traceability exercise was performed and it is concluded, that the down is easily traceable from slaughterhouse to pre-processing and further to sales.

Some failings were identified at each farm (see above).

Control Union suggests to address the identified failings to further improve the already impressive production methods.

Last but not least, CU suggest that during upcoming assessments - based on trust gained by the supply chain participants - a complete access to all documentation is given allowing CU to select the farms for audits and allowing more time to complete full assessments.