Worthwhile Operational Guidelines & Suggestions

BROILER PROCESSING TIMELY INFORMATION – MARCH 2007

Incoming Microbial Load

Are your broilers as externally dirty as this one at market age? What are the consequences of receiving dirty birds for slaughter?

Intestine is a ‘perfect incubator’ for bacterial growth, as bacteria are provided optimal conditions (temperature, pH, nutrients, etc) to thrive. Consequently, a gram of fecal material may contain up to $10^{12}$ bacteria (that is 1,000,000,000,000). Reducing intestinal contents, in (i.e., digestive tract) and on (i.e., feathers, skin and feet) market age broilers, prior to and during slaughter should help the processors meet microbiological performance standards (Salmonella and E. coli) and assure product safety. We can achieve this by:

* Maintaining optimal intestinal health and function throughout the broilers life
* Focusing on litter quality (type, re-use, down-time, moisture, water activity, fecal load)
* Implementing a well-designed and verifiable pre-slaughter feed withdrawal program
* Using clean live-haul equipment (coops, crates or cages)
* Minimizing pre-slaughter plant holding time
* Having adequate bleed-time (min. 90 sec) to facilitate peri-mortem defecation
* Incorporating pre-scald vent washers (scald water overflow) and/or brush-scrubbers
* Installing multi-stage, counter-current scalding systems
* Assuring full immersion (including the feet) during scalding
* Preventing spillage of intestinal contents during evisceration

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