



Worthwhile Operational Guidelines & Suggestions

BROILER PROCESSING TIMELY INFORMATION - OCTOBER 2004

MINIMIZING WING DAMAGE

Wing damage (i.e., bruises, dislocations and fractures) has become an important quality and welfare issue for poultry. Handling market age birds from the farm to the plant is a difficult, inherently a stressful, but an unavoidable step in the production of poultry meat. All processes during this “transitional period”, such as catching, loading into crates, transportation to the plant, unloading, hanging, and stunning must be scrutinized to minimize wing damage in poultry:

1. Proper house preparation prior to catch (removal of all sharp objects; use of catching nets; penning and herding).
2. Reduce flightiness or excessive wing activity, a normal behavioral emergency response by the bird. This is the basis for catching at night or under low intensity lights.
3. Make sure all components of the transportation system (cages, coops or drawers) are well maintained and will not be a source of injury or trauma.
4. Frequently observe and train the catching system personnel (manual or mechanical) to identify source(s) of physical damage to the wings during catching and loading. Incentive programs have been successfully used in this respect.
5. Minimize yard time and provide properly designed holding areas (shade, ventilation, evaporative cooling) in the plant for maximum bird comfort.
6. Monitor the maintenance and operation of the bird unloading system. Use all means (slides, pads, curtains, belts, dim lights) to reduce bird activity during and from unloading to hanging area.
7. Use low light intensity in the hanging and stunning areas. Train employees to hang in sequence. Use “breast rub curtains” in the hanging area to calm birds.
8. Avoid handling birds by their wings during catching and hanging.
9. Install “breast rub curtains” from hanging area to the stunner. Minimize turns and elevation on the overhead conveyor line to calm birds prior to stunning.
10. Monitor the stunning system. High stunning voltages and excessive wing flapping during and after stunning, as well as during bleeding often result in wing damage.



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