

Researchers Study Infrared Heaters To Warm Turkey Poults

Poultrymen generally agree that raising turkeys requires the highest degree of management skill of any fowl. Losses among the very young turkeys are especially high. They fight and peck each other to death; they crowd to keep warm, only to smother to death; and they're especially susceptible to diseases.

Ohio researchers believe infrared radiant heaters may provide a partial answer to these problems. This December, a test project will place 1,000 newly-hatched turkeys under the

constant 90° F comfort of specially controlled infrared heaters at the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center in Wooster, Ohio.

The Ohio State University Center is conducting the turkey research in cooperation with the Columbus and Southern Ohio Electrical Company and the Ohio Farm and Home Electrification Council.

To provide the young turkeys with constant comfort, General Electric Company has devised a system combining a 2,000-watt infrared Calray® heater to

blanket the birds with an even radiant warmth; a thermistor sensing unit to detect the slightest temperature change; and a solid state control with control point differential of plus or minus 2/10 of a degree.

The infrared radiant heater, designed by GE's Industrial Heating Department, utilizes a non-breakable metal-sheathed tubular heating element with a nickel-chromium heating coil imbedded in magnesium oxide insulation. Uniform heat radiation is provided by the 50-inch tubular element. The housing

is insulated with one inch of spun mineral fiber to reduce loss of heat transmission.

To prevent the thermistor heat sensing device from being broken by the pecking of turkeys, it is hermetically sealed in a glass envelope.

About 250 turkeys in the university project are placed under each infrared radiant heater. During the first ten days, the turkeys are enclosed in a 15-foot diameter circle of composition hardboard, similar to Tektolite® lined with a reflective foil. The heaters are suspended approximately 30 inches above the floor.

The temperature directly under the infrared heaters is initially set at 95 degrees, and reduced five degrees each week until the turkeys are four weeks old. Then, the turkeys give off sufficient body heat to

keep themselves comfortable as long as temperatures are maintained above 60 degrees.

GE's Calray® radiant heaters allow young turkeys to select their own "comfort zone".

While the temperature directly under the radiant heater is constant, the temperature may decrease as much as four degrees for each foot the turkeys move away from that heater location.

Since the new infrared heaters require no overhead hood, turkeys are in full view at all times. Heaters can be easily removed for cleaning; and can be raised as the turkeys get older. There is no match for electric heating.

"If infrared heating proves to be as efficient as we expect," says Mr. H. K. Crabb, head of rural sales for the Columbus and Southern Ohio Electric Company.

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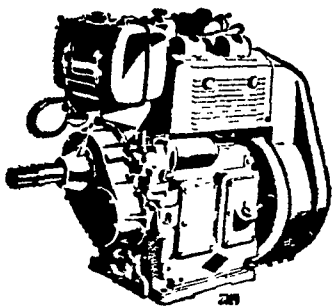
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