

Produce Vigorous Poult Through Breeder Management

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Breeder management can be broken down into three areas. The first area is brooding. Brooding usually involves the first six to eight weeks of the turkey's life. The second area is growing and conditioning. This takes the breeder up to the age of lighting, which is usually around 29-30 weeks of age. The last area of breeder management is the egg or semen production period. This period starts at the time of photostimulation and ends at the time the breeders go to market.

The performance of a breeder flock can be affected at any age by mismanagement. Actually the management of a breeder flock begins before the poults arrive at the farm. The barn should be thoroughly cleaned, washed, and disinfected before the poults arrive. Brooder rings should be already set up and the barn should be ready to receive poults. It is extremely

important that the farm manager is prepared for the poults to arrive.

Conditioning of the breeders start at an early age. At Hybrid we put roosts in the brooder barns as early as three weeks of age. Roosts help the breeder to get the proper exercise throughout their life. We believe a "fit" breeder is the key to success in egg production.

Another essential item for a breeder manager to remember is to reduce the amount of stress the breeder gets at any age, but especially the poults. The effects of stress are too often forgotten as they have a cumulative effect on the breeder. In other words, today's breeder seems to be less forgiving of mismanagement.

The growout and conditioning period requires the manager to always pay attention to details. Litter, ventilation, density, lighting programs and feeding programs are vital for the manager to manage properly. Selection usually occurs during this time. Effective selection pressure on males can improve the market weight of the commercial progeny by several pounds. Healthy males will also provide good, viable semen. Viable semen contributes to a healthy vigorous poults.

Another important part of the growout and conditioning period is

the darkout time. The length of the darkout period has to be long enough to provide time to complete new feather growth. We at Hybrid Turkeys feel that this is a minimum of 12 full weeks.

Biosecurity is the key to any breeding program. All breeder manager should have a biosecurity program in place that will protect the breeders that he manages. Showers should be an essential part of any breeder biosecurity program. Biosecurity in a breeder flock is a lot like going to heaven — nothing you do will guarantee 100 percent success, but if you work to put the odds in your favor, you'll like the results.

Body weight and age at photostimulation will affect the performance of the breeder. A breeder manager should consult the management guide from his breeder source to determine what is recommended. Research at Hybrid suggests that hens photostimulated at 30 weeks yielded the most poults per hen at 15 weeks of egg production compared to sisters photostimulated at 28, 32, and 34 weeks of age.

Hatch time can affect poult quality and hatch time is affected by breed and stage of production of the breeder flock, among other things. For example, there could be

as much as 6 to 8 hours difference in hatch time between breeds. There is a tremendous amount of stress to the poult when it is overheated in the hatcher. These stressed poults are usually the ones that flip on their backs and are too weak to right themselves. Research measuring blood glucose is showing that this is a good measure of the poults reaction to stress. The stage of production and hatch-

ing process will greatly influence the quality of the poult.

Breeder management starts early and doesn't end until the birds goes to market. It is quite an involved process which can't all be covered in this paper. The challenges are great with today's turkey breeder, but the opportunities and results are well worth the efforts.

Overlooking Disorders Can Be Costly

DEKALB, Ill. — Corn growers often overlook minor seedling diseases and disorders early in the season. That oversight could cost farmers yields and profits, said Tim Wolf, regional agronomist for DEKALB Plant Genetics.

Some diseases are not yield-threatening and disappear as corn plants continue to grow. Other diseases explode under favorable conditions and can decimate stands and weaken surviving plants.

"For that reason, diseases and disorders detected during any field scouting trip should be identified and evaluated for damage potential," said Wolf.

If seedlings are spotted, striped or dead, one or more foliar diseases could be responsible, he said.

Farmers can get help identifying a disease from an extension agent or a seed company agronomist. The best source, however, is a diagnostic lab, the agronomist said.

Seedlings are subject to other problems, too. "Stresses can be induced by inadequate or excessive fertility, improper or excessive application of insecticides or herbicides, and insects or mechanical damage from wind or implements," Wolf said.

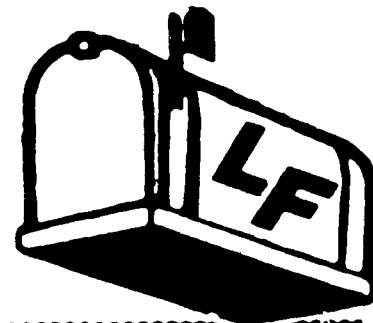
When leaves roll or twist together into "onion leaf" or "buggy whip," a herbicide reaction is the first thing to investigate, he said. But calcium deficiency or sharply alternating hot and cool air temperatures can cause very similar symptoms.

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