

# Capons Do Better With Fresh Bedding

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UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Many of the 200 capon growers in Pennsylvania each year agree with industry leaders about chick bedding.

Meat bird producers in the state say new, fresh, clean, useful bedding materials are scarce or non-existent at sometime each year.

Broiler, roaster, capon, game bird and turkey producers say bedding materials are too expensive today to place 2 inches of fresh, clean bedding under each flock of baby poults or chicks.

Therefore, in the last 10 to 20 years, we have seen more re-use of old litter.

(Bedding refers to fresh clean material; litter refers to used materials which may carry pathogens).

Most people agree that cleaning and disinfecting a house for capons after every flock and starting new capons on new bedding is a valu-

able husbandry method. Here are some factors to consider if new chicks are placed on old, used, and untreated litter.

- Old litter normally carries higher quantities of pollutants such as lead, cadmium and mercury than new bedding does, because each flock causes elements to build up.

- Old litter can carry live, attenuated or dead poultry disease pathogens from previous flocks. Growing two or more flocks of capons on one batch of bedding is not recommended.

- Old litter can harbor more parasites, vermin, or eggs of parasites.

- Most experts agree that all meat birds standing on bedding or litter eat some of that bedding or litter. Thus we see the diet of a bird can be affected by old contaminated litter if the bird's diet consists of 1 percent or more bedding or litter. Many capons do eat litter, so be careful. On necropsy, litter can be found present in small quantities or impacted in the crop or gizzard.

- Some species, for example turkeys, have been known to eat enough bedding or litter to cause illness or death.

Thus, we may wish to consider feeding insoluble or granite grit to birds to help the bird grind and pass bedding or litter materials. Feeding insoluble grit is essential for a healthy capon.

**However, do not feed capons or any young growing bird, calcium grit. NEVER! NEVER!!**

- If any pesticide or toxic litter treatment is used, it may accumulate in old litter. It should not be consumed by birds. Litter used more than once may adversely affect birds.

- In chemically testing fecal material or manure from poultry, we find many minerals or elements are concentrated more in feces than in feed. This means more parts per million (ppm) on a dry

weight basis. Such elements as nickel, copper, aluminum, zinc, chromium, cadmium, and iron are more concentrated in feces coming out of the bird than in feed entering the bird's mouth. Thus, we see how capons need fresh bedding.

- Capons may rest in bedding or litter with their breast skin pressed into bedding for many hours each day. Injury to breast, skin, or a developing blister may cause the carcass to be downgraded and not sold for a profitable grade A price.

Capon producers have a terrible time maintaining 80 percent Grade A carcasses on most farms.

For these reasons it is a valuable practice to use 2- to 6-inches of fresh clean bedding to finish capons on.

Clean and disinfect the house after capons leave and start over again with 2 to 6 inches of fresh clean bedding. If you do this you are more likely to receive \$1.80

pound for the ready to cook (RTC) carcass.

If farmers experiment with new bedding materials never before tried, approach it as a field test or trial.

Do not put toxic substances in as bedding. Observe birds frequently for the first 10 to 16 weeks and allow a diagnostic lab of experienced field person to help you.

When you try new bedding materials always be alert.

The scarce litter crisis needs new ideas, innovation, risk, faith and hope that new, valuable, fresh bedding sources can be found.

Bedding buyers for large commercial contract firms say bedding is scarce or not available or too expensive to use several months each year.

Treated wood products with PCB's or some other toxic chemical should not be used for poultry bedding.

## Highest Average Ever For Calf Sale

FREDERICK, Md. — Bidding was brisk at this year's Mid-Atlantic Brown Swiss Calf Sale held at the Frederick Fairgrounds recently.

One of the largest crowds ever in attendance saw 29 calves average \$1,243, the highest average in sale history. The quality of consignments merited good prices and calves went to the surrounding states of Pennsylvania, Virginia, and New York. One calf sold to a breeder in Alabama, and two sold to Puerto Rico.

The demand for Brown Swiss is on the rise as evidenced in this successful calf sale. In fact, nine junior calves (born March 1992) averaged \$1,200.

First in the ring and topping the sale with a bid at \$2,400 was a March calf from Jerry Harkness, We-Gotta Farm of Marcellus, N.Y. She sold to John and Bonnie Hess, Gettysburg. The third dam is the breed lifetime milk and protein champion.

Second high selling at \$2,100 was a September calf consigned by Wayne Sliker, St. Paris, Ohio. She was backed by two (VG) dams with solid production and test. Howard and Norma Fleming, Burnt Mills Farm, Hollywood,



Md. purchased the animal.

Next high selling calf, and the third animal over \$2,000, was a consignment of Dwayne and Miriam Bell, Knoxville, Md., a powerful June Conductor with a strong pedigree to match. Her dam is sired by Dotson and she is the number one cow on the Supplemental Cow Performance Index List in the January 1992 Performance Summary. She sold to Ray Espenshade, Williamsport, Md.

Many calves sold to area Maryland breeders as well.

"We had a great sale and I believe there is a tremendous future for the Brown Swiss breed as indicated by the interest and support of the buyers here today," said Scott Hood, president of the Maryland-Delaware Brown Swiss Association.

Wayne Sliker sold the animals with Maryland and junior members working around the ring.

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