

Penn State Poultry Pointers



Agricultural & Biological Engineering Agricultural Economics

BROILER BREEDER MANAGEMENT

H. S. Siegel, Professor
Poultry Science

The best economic returns from broiler breeder hens is accomplished by maximizing the number of vigorous chicks hatched per hen in each production cycle.

To accomplish this objective, it is desirable to bring birds into sexual maturity at as early an age as

hatchable eggs can be produced. However, the beginning of production by broiler pullets depends upon them reaching a certain threshold body weight at a specific age, which, in turn, depend on lighting schedules during the rearing period and on feed management. Therefore, controlling lighting and feeding schedules for pullets before they begin to lay is important.

Idris and Robbins (Poultry Science 73:603, 1994) conducted four experiments that provide informa-

tion on the optimum age for broiler breeders to begin egg production and the management methods needed to attain sexual maturity at this age. Their results indicate that egg production by commercial broiler breeders will be optimum when they begin to lay at 24 weeks of age. But management methods to achieve this target age will differ according to whether the pullets are reared, up to 18 weeks of age, in conventional (natural daylength) or in "short-day" (8 hour) rearing systems. The latter requires "black-out" housing.

The experiments showed that pullets reared under a short-day system will begin to lay at 24 weeks if light stimulation is initiated at 18 weeks and feed stimulation is initiated not later than 24 weeks of age. Pre-lay feed stimulation consisted of abruptly changing from restricted every-other-day feeding of a grower diet to a daily allowance of 0.4 lb/hen/day of a breeder diet (1250 kcal/pound; 17 percent crude protein). For pullets reared in housing with natural

daylength to commence laying at 24 weeks of age, feed stimulation should be initiated at 24 weeks and photostimulation begun at 18 weeks of age.

The results show that for pullets reared in natural daylength, feed stimulation is the key factor,

whereas for pullets reared in short-light situations, photostimulation is the key factor.

For more information, contact Dr. Kelly R. Robbins, Department of Animal Science, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN 37901-1071.

Gypsy Moth Meeting Scheduled

NORTH CORNWALL (Lebanon Co.) — The Lebanon County Conservation District and the Department of Environmental Resources, Bureau of Forestry, will be conducting a public forum regarding the infestation of gypsy moths in Lebanon County and requirements for participation in the state control program.

Those landowners residing or renting in gypsy moth infested areas are urged to attend the public meeting scheduled for Monday,

August 1, at 7 p.m. at the Lebanon Valley Agricultural Center, 2120 Cornwall Road.

Those with a disability wishing to attend the meeting and who require an auxiliary aid, service, or other accommodation to participate in the proceedings, should contact Julie Garman or Leigh Beamesderfer directly, at 272-3377 to discuss how those needs may be accommodated.



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