Poultry Science Capital Region Veterinary Science Penn State **Poultry Pointers** Agricultural Economics Agricultural & Biological Engineering

COMPARISON BETWEEN DIFFERENT METHODS OF INDUCED MOLTING AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE IMMUNE RESPONSES

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We previously reported in Lancaster Farming (39 15 :C8, Feb. 19, 1994) the results of the different methods of induced molting on second cycle performance:

 Conventional method: withhold feed and water for two days, followed by water AD LIB, limited feed for 60 days, and 8 hours of light per day.

California method, which has a longer fasting period.

Zinc added to the ration at 20,000 ppm for five days, followed. by normal feed, water and light. Performance was best in the second cycle of hens in the conventional group.

One of the concerns of induced molting to obtain a second cycle from laying hens is possible impaired immunity, which could result in a decrease in disease resistance. The immune response is the first defense mechanism against invasion of microorganisms. Therefore, we decided to study the immune response of hens that were exposed to the three different methods of induced molting.

In order to measure the immune response, the total circulating white blood cells (WBC), antibody production against sheep red blood cells (SRBC), and activities of lymphocytes (a type of white blood cell) were measured at 0, two, five, 10 and 30 days after beginning the molting procedure.

In addition, the same parameters were measured at 50-60 percent egg production as well as at peak egg production.

The activity of B- and Tlymphocytes was also studied. (Blymphocytes are involved in antibody or humoral immunity and Tlymphocytes are involved in cell-mediated immunity.)

Overall average of circulating WBC was higher in the conventional group than in the other groups, which included a control group (no molting was induced). Furthermore, it was found that antibody production against SRBC was not inhibited in any of the hens that received different methods of induced molting when compared to hens from the control group. As a matter of fact, hens in the conventional group had slightly higher antibody production than the control hens. The activity of Tlymphocytes was similar in all groups, including the control hens.

Therefore, it is very clear from our results that there is no adverse effect on immunity from any of the three methods used to induce force molting. In particular, using the conventional method could result in some enhancement in the immune response.

In conclusion, based on the production data as well as the data on the immune response, we recommend the use of the conventional method whenever there is a need for induced molting to obtain a second cycle from laying hens.



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