



Food Animal Initiative

ENVIRONMENTS FIT FOR ANIMALS FIT FOR THEIR ENVIRONMENT

FAI 3 The Poultry Development Project - March 2004

Physical data

2,500 table birds are sold every week from a free range system. The chicks are received as day olds.

4,400 free range laying hen unit. The birds are currently received at the point of lay.

2,000 free range bronze cross turkeys for the Christmas market were produced in 2003. Reared from day olds.

250 JA57 broiler breeder females and 2 male lines. Reared from day olds and due to come into lay in May.

The ground at Wytham is heavy and many poultry units currently operate under such conditions. Free range poultry is increasing in popularity and FAI are focused on good management of range under difficult conditions as this is attainable with investment. There is currently much justified criticism of the welfare of birds under free range conditions and our philosophy is not to abandon such systems but to develop them for the benefit of animals, man and the environment.

FAI Projects

'.....Results so far'

1. The development of techniques to be employed to avoid range damage (See TDS Po5 The maintenance of range cover for free range poultry).	Trees, low ground pressure vehicles, a winch to move houses and defined road systems have all contributed to the maintenance of the range (see item 1 below).
2. The management of litter quality under free range conditions (See TDS Po4 The management of litter for poultry under free range conditions).	It has been found to be necessary to bed up frequently during the winter months to maintain the quality of litter for birds at range (see item 2 below).
3. The alleviation of injurious pecking in poultry (See TDS Po3, The management of injurious pecking in turkeys).	The free range Christmas turkeys were reared without beak trimming. Limited aggression occurred which was readily managed by the use of hospital pens.
4. The management of pullets through to point of lay in order to reduce stress in the birds, numbers of floor eggs and the level of associated labour (See TDS Po1 Managing pullets through point of lay).	This project is being carried out on the small flock of JA57 broiler breeders. Enrichments have been provided to smooth the transition through point of lay and results will be available later this year.
5. Broiler production without the need to restrict feed in the parent lines (See Po5 The practical and commercial ramifications of removing the need to restrict feed in broiler breeders).	FAI has obtained male and female broiler breeder lines which do not have to be restrict fed. The potential for the chicks to meet the requirements of the market will be studied throughout the year. First chicks in May.
6. The disease status of chicks reared from free range broiler breeders (See TDS G5 Disease reduction through improved immune competence).	Currently almost all poultry parent lines are housed indoors for disease purposes. This study will take advantage of new vaccines for mycoplasma and good husbandry methods to study the effects on chicks of parental access to range.
7. Removal of the need for routine antimicrobial use (See TDS G4, Reducing antibiotic use in poultry).	There has been no requirement for antimicrobial use in any systems. Chicks are vaccinated for coccidiosis.
8. Planting of new woodland in line with government targets (See TDS Po2 Increased income from improved range provision for poultry).	The birds were unable to penetrate the undergrowth between the trees and this was subsequently mown. Future trials will look at the use of other types of poultry during the tree establishment phase.
9. Management of mucking out in free range houses (See TDS Po6 Mechanised cleaning and ark movement in free range systems).	Sheets have been designed which are pulled out by tractor thus remove the need to hand muck out sheds. The benefits of raised floors are retained.

Further developments for 2004

1. Further investment in range management will be undertaken in 2004 by modification to the feeding system, a change in layout of the site and building of a central road for servicing of the buildings.
2. Studies are underway which will allow us to make decisions regarding investment in litter managements for winter 2005.

Priority for the future

- To obtain further funding to progress the development of systems for handling birds more humanely when catching from small colony units. Previous funding from the HSA gave us the opportunity to provide a feasibility study for mobile slaughter units for poultry. These were found to be viable and the report can be located on our web site.



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