

Nesting behaviour of broiler breeders

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Broilers have been selected for growth related characteristics, which are negatively correlated to reproductive traits. This genetic background creates challenges in broiler breeders, as the hens do not make optimal use of the nests provided. This project aims to investigate what factors determine where a broiler breeder hen prefers to lay her egg, in which nesting behaviour probably plays a crucial role. Factors such as genetic background, social interactions, physical characteristics of the nest and climate might interfere with the natural nesting behaviour of the hen. Also fundamental trade-offs between different motivations, such as hunger, comfort and safety, might influence nesting behaviour. Behaviour and use of space will be measured in experimental set-ups in order to gain insight in the importance of different system components. This knowledge will be used to optimise housing conditions and develop strategies that stimulate the hen to lay her egg in the nest. The performance of this improved system will be tested in field experiments to investigate the transferability of results from experimental to field conditions.