

Why is stimulating nesting behavior using perches and slats important in pre- and early production?

- The introduction of perches or slats during the rearing period helps to stimulate female nesting behavior and vertical movement during the production period.
- Training hens to use slats and perches helps minimize floor eggs (by encouraging nesting behavior) while maximizing clean hatching eggs.
- Installing slats during the rearing period is a valuable management tool for training males in situations where water lines are located on slats in the production period. The correct angle of the slat and material used is essential to make the transfer from rearing onto the production farm as comfortable as possible.



Equipment

1. Elevated structures such as perches and/or slats
2. Nests (automatic or manual)
3. Bedding material such as wood shavings, paper, nesting mats, or straw

Note: It is good management practice to install perches during the rearing period to train and stimulate females in nesting behavior (avoidance of floor eggs). Adhere to local legislation and Codes of Practice, but as a minimum, there should be sufficient numbers of perches to provide 3 cm (1.2 in) per bird or sufficient perch space to allow 20% of the birds to roost. Perches should be placed in the pens from 28 days of age. If using slats under nipple lines, these should be introduced gradually.

Procedure



Step 1

Step 1 When using day-old to depletion programs, farms should place disinfected nests and nest bottoms in houses before the placement of day-old chicks. In contrast, production house nests should be disinfected and placed inside before transfer. In both cases, nests should be closed before the start of production.



Step 3

Step 2 Determine the type and number of elevated structures by following the guidance of local legislation and/or Codes of Practice.



Step 4

Step 3 Ensure that there are sufficient elevated structures for the birds to use. It is recommended that perches allow 3 cm (1.2 in) per bird and slats 1 m² (10.8 ft²) per 500 birds.



Step 5

Step 4 To encourage hens to use manual nests, place approximately 20% of nests at floor level at the start of production. Gradually raise them (over 3 to 4 weeks) to the required height. Provide enough nests to allow 3.5 – 4 hens per nest hole (manual nests) or 40 hens per linear meter (12 hens per linear foot) (automatic nests).



Step 6

Step 5 Fill manual nest boxes with bedding material prior to the anticipated arrival of first egg. Egg belts should be turned on 2 to 3 times per day after transfer to familiarize the birds with the changes in vibration and sound within their environment.

Step 6 Walking in the scratch area multiple times per day will help to encourage slat, perch, and nest utilization early in the flock. Floor eggs should be collected more frequently at the beginning of lay to encourage nest use and any birds observed to be laying on the floor should gently be placed in the nest.

Results

If stimulating bird nesting behavior using perches and/or slats is correctly managed:

- Daily flock observation shows the birds are using the elevated structures.
 - Birds will use both the scratch area and slats.
 - There are enough elevated structures to satisfy the birds' requirements while following local legislation.
- ✓ No action required.

If stimulating bird nesting behavior using perches or slats is not managed correctly:

- Only a minimum number of birds use the elevated structures.
- Most birds remain in the scratch area.

Corrective Actions:

- Walk the house multiple times per day to encourage the birds to move from the scratch area onto the perches or slats.
- Ensure there is a sufficient number of perches or slats to meet the needs of the birds while adhering to local legislation.
- Maintain elevated structures in good condition to ensure that there are no areas that could injure the birds.