



FAI Factsheet Po7 – The importance of perching to poultry

Only a few chicken behaviour patterns actually require a physical resource to perform them. There is little discussion on the importance of being able to lie down or stand up or even preen, but there is discussion about the importance of nesting behaviour, foraging, perching and dustbathing (because we have to provide resource for their performance)(Keeling 2003), when in actuality they are fundamental components of ‘chicken-ness’.

‘The facts....’

Layers and perches

- There is clear evidence that perches have a positive effect on bone strength (Barnett, Tauson et al. 2009, Scholz, Ronchen et al. 2009) and hens with perches were less stressed than hens without perches, as indicated by heterophil to lymphocyte ratio (Campo, Gil et al. 2005).
- Hens will open heavy doors to gain access to a perched area than a non-perch area and show increased evidence of frustration behaviour when they are not able to roost at night (Olsson, Keeling 2002)(Olsson, Keeling 2000).



Fig1. Luhua chickens perching at the Model Farm in Beijing

‘The facts....’

Broilers and perches

- Use of perches has no influence on production parameters or carcass quality (Oester, Wiedmelr 2005, Seet, Azizah 1990b).
- Birds in groups with perches showed significantly less hock lesions compared to controls (Oester, Wiedmelr 2005).
- Perching frequency is higher at higher stocking densities (Pettit-Riley, Estevez 2001), which suggests that the birds use perches to escape the crowded conditions.
- Perching increased with age up until week 5 and then decreased because the weight of the birds precluded perch use (LeVan, Estevez et al. 2000), In general perch use follows a daily crepuscular pattern but there is less perching when ambient temperatures are high (LeVan, Estevez et al. 2000).
- In groups of birds provided with perches, morality was 9% less than in non-perch houses (Seet, Azizah 1990a).



Fig. 2 Simple perches for Luhua chicken at the model farm in Beijing

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