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Getting ready for summer

Department of Agriculture, Western Australia

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GETTING READY FOR SUMMER

THE spring period is one of completion and preparation for poultry farmers.

COMPLETION

Warm Weather

Adult stock are completing the first 12 months of egg production. The birds have produced through the winter and now when conditions are warmer, and the days longer, they have less stress to contend with and should lay better.

Flocks which have laid poorly through the winter now start to produce more eggs.

Artificial Lighting

Flocks which have had artificial lighting through the winter are able to continue laying without much change in production level. The lights should be gradually dispensed with during September until in October they are no longer necessary. Suddenly discontinuing the lighting in September can adversely effect egg production.

Culling

Culling which should have been practised throughout the year should continue during September-October. This is essential if the profit margin is to be kept at a satisfactory level.

Birds which have lost weight, appear sluggish, remain on the perches during the day, or have lost abdominal capacity should be culled immediately.

PREPARATION

Young Stock

Management of young birds is most important at this stage of the year. They have to be prepared for the hot summer and the following winter.

Rearing

Farmers who are rearing semi-intensively and perching the young stock should have the chicks perching before they are nine weeks of age. If perches are not used in rearing the chicks, the litter must be completely dry and every effort made to prevent crowding.

Greenfeed

Chicks thrive on free range where they have access to natural grazing or planted crops of wheat, oats, barley, or rape. If they are housed intensively, the chicks...
should be given liberal rations of fresh, well chopped greenfeed.
Good quality feed must be available to the birds at all times.

Hygiene
Chicken housing must be clean and dry and attention should be given to keeping the house as hygienic as possible.

Deworming
Deworming should be done at 10 weeks of age.

Fowl-pox
It is recommended that fowl-pox vaccination be done at 12 weeks of age. About 12 days after vaccination, an antibiotic should be added to the feed or water as a precaution against systemic reactions resulting from the fowl-pox vaccine. The antibiotic should be fed at the recommended level for about six days.

Floor Space
Floor space should not be less than one square foot for each bird up to the time of lay.

Perching Space
Thirty-five linear feet for 100 birds up to 12 weeks of age and 50 linear feet for 100 birds up to 20 weeks of age are recommended as the minimum perching space.

Feeding Space
Feeding space is important and should not be less than:
- 1 to 4 weeks—12 ft. per 100 birds.
- 4 to 10 weeks—16 ft.
- 10 to 20 weeks—24 ft.
- Adult birds—30 ft.
- Watering space—4 ft. per 100 birds.

Summer Colds
Where summer colds in birds have been prevalent on poultry farms in the past years, attention to good management in these preparation months should lower the incidence in the coming summer.
Vaccination against fowl-pox at the correct time, regular deworming and adequate levels of Vitamin A in the diet, particularly in the hotter months of the summer, are important points of management for preventing summer colds in poultry.
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