

WORK INSTRUCTIONS FOR MONITORING POULTRY AFTER INFRARED BEAK TREATMENT



Careful management of chickens after infrared beak treatment maintains flock welfare, reduces mortality, cost of production and improves farm profit. Checking birds is an important task, particularly soon after the infrared beak treated chickens have been placed.

1. Regular inspection of the chickens is important to the welfare of an infrared beak treated flock. There should be a minimum of four inspections daily in the first two weeks after placement.
2. If the flock is quiet and does not behave normally and there is not an obvious cause, the farm manager should check with the hatchery manager or a poultry consultant/veterinarian.
3. Identify birds to be culled and humanely kill them straight away. Neck dislocation is an acceptable method.
4. Water supply.
 - a) When chicks arrive on the farm provide open water troughs or cup waterers or 360 degree activated nipples for four days.
 - b) Supplementary drinkers must be provided with bidirectional nipples.
 - c) Decrease water pressure to nipples to allow droplets to form for the first three days.
 - d) Before chicks arrive, walk down the cage rows or water line and trigger every nipple to ensure it is working.
 - e) Increase water space with additional drinkers.
5. Ensure chickens are feeding and drinking within two hours after placement.
6. Monitor feed and water consumption throughout the life of the flock especially in the first few weeks after placement.
7. Record mortality daily. It should not exceed 1 per cent above the farm average during the life of the flock.
8. Record body weight of the chicks that die and conduct post-mortems to assist with determining cause of death.
9. If infrared beak treatment results in an increase in mortality 1 per cent above the farm average over the life of the flock and poor growth, the farm manager should discuss this with the hatchery and a veterinarian to resolve the problem. The farm manager should stay in close contact with the hatchery manager to discuss progress of treated birds after delivery.
10. Check the quality of beak treatment at chick delivery.
11. Monitor the beak shape and quality of infrared treated birds at 28 days, prior to, or at placement of pullets in the layer facilities if purchased as started pullets, when a bout of pecking occurs or flock's flightiness increases and towards end of lay if there are concerns about the beak shape and whether it is effectively preventing pecking. Beaks can be assessed in combination with other activities using the relevant scoring sheets.
12. Measure a random sample of 100 birds.
 - a) Carefully observe the beak and record any condition such as splitting, chipping, thin keratinisation, beaks are impacted with feed or show signs of dieback.
 - b) Score the feather condition, flightiness and behaviour of the birds at the same time.