

Bird welfare is top priority

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GOOD HEALTH, welfare and productivity are inseparable and figure prominently in breeders' endeavours. Hubbard aims for complete harmony in this respect. The company believes it has to deliver standards over and above those already laid down by the EU or national governments. It is an absolute priority that nothing will be tolerated that compromises bird welfare.

Conventional broilers

The emphasis in the conventional Hubbard R&D programme is on broiler and processing traits balanced with reproduction traits, the challenge being to give a balance between these conflicting characteristics. Additionally, emphasis is given to ease of management and liveability, particularly leg and cardiovascular health.

Activity, robustness, docility and uniformity are key in the breeding programme and lead to good bird wel-



Manual selection of pedigree birds for leg quality

fare, consistency and reliability:

- If birds are uniform and the nutrition is correct, the skeleton grows in parallel with the supporting muscles, tendons and ligaments and will comfort their welfare as they walk firmly and painlessly.
- Good and active birds, allied to good nutrition and management, helps the growth of strong bones and muscles. It also means litter stays drier and serious welfare risks of breast blisters, hock marks and foot pad lesions are no longer a problem.
- Hubbard birds are very active, but

they also have the genetic background of docility and robustness, ensuring that catching and transportation can proceed smoothly.

- Good uniformity minimises welfare problems in the processing plant, as uniform and docile birds are easier to hang and easier to stun.

Alternative broilers

The alternative breeds of Hubbard are widely used for organic, free range, slower growing and corn fed markets. The base lines incorporate the alternative broiler breeds from the previous ISA and Shaver colour breeding programmes (JA57, Redbro, P6N). The customer requires slower growth, so selection emphasis can be given to reproduction and welfare traits while the conformation of the broiler, robustness, ease of management and liveability are of paramount importance.

The main female line used in the UK at parent level is the brown-feathered Hubbard JA57. It is a very compact bird and is extremely docile. Under free range conditions, the

broiler prefers to be outside during the day and will range throughout the designated area, as with the parent it is docile and easy to manage. Management is greatly simplified because the parent does not need the feed restriction normally associated with conventional types. Liveability is usually high with low cull rates. On the processing line, the conformation and uniformity is excellent, along with high A-grading and low condemnations.

All alternative breeds of Hubbard incorporate the same traits as mentioned for conventional breeds, with emphasis on robustness, resulting in:

- Excellent liveability and good resistance to adverse conditions.
- Better skeleton mineralisation.
- Better developed immune system.
- More resistance to stress during the growing period.
- Better liveability.
- Better leg strength.
- No need to use lighting programmes and/or feed restriction.
- Less need for medication.
- Good uniformity within and between flocks.