



HOW TO MANAGE AND PREVENT FLOOR EGGS IN CONVENTIONAL BREEDERS?

Floor eggs are both one of the most common and important issues to manage in broiler breeder production. Whatever the type of nests (manual or automatic) or the type of house, this risk should be reduced as soon as possible to keep losses to a minimum. The prevention of floor eggs starts before the onset of lay. During the production period, respecting husbandry recommendations and applying management best practices can reduce the risk of floor eggs both before the peak of lay and until depletion.

REARING PERIOD

► Objectives

- ▷ Develop a good frame size.
- ▷ Create and keep an active flock.
- ▷ Stimulate jumping and perching activity.
- ▷ Promote and maintain natural behaviour.



Difference of light intensity in the same house (3 lux – left picture & 10 lux – right picture)

► Management points

- ▷ Light duration and intensity should decrease according to the age and bird behaviour (respecting bodyweight targets and risks of injurious pecking).
- ▷ A correct light intensity (5-10 lux*) should be used. This will promote activity in the house.
- ▷ The use of perches (3-5 cm/bird) and/or platforms (1-2 m² for 500 birds) are recommended.
- ▷ If slats are used, place drinkers on them to encourage birds to jump onto the slats.
- ▷ Try to use the same equipment (feeders and drinkers) in both rear and lay.
- ▷ Do not use electric wires on feeders or drinkers that discourage jumping.



Platforms under the drinking system



Perches

TRANSFER INTO THE PRODUCTION HOUSE

All equipment (drinkers, feeders and nests) should be installed in the laying house and be operational prior to transfer.

► Automatic nest / Manual nest

- ▷ Transfer birds directly on slats and provide water and feed (if feeders are on the slats).
- ▷ After transfer, the nest belt can be turned on twice during the day to familiarise birds with the noise.

► Males:

- ▷ They should be enough mature and active to interact with the females to help push them into the nests.
- ▷ Sex-ratio: 8.5% effective males at 25 weeks.

* Where local regulations stipulate minimum light intensity then these should be respected at all times. It should be used if all technical recommendations are respected and floor eggs are a regular issue in the house.



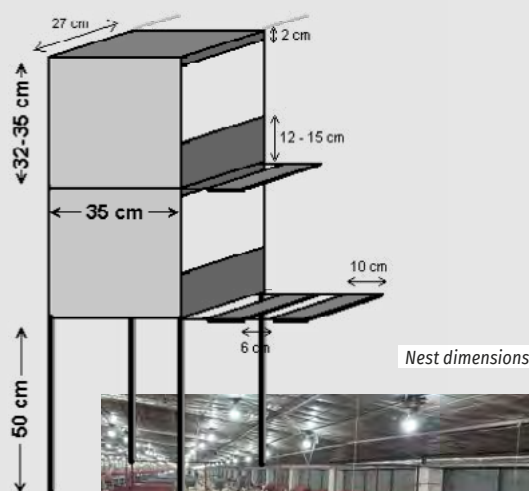
PRODUCTION PERIOD

► Objectives

- Stimulate birds to use the nests after transfer and before the onset of lay.
- Avoid too early onset of lay: objective is 5% weekly lay at 25 weeks of age.
- Floor eggs objective: stabilised at the lowest possible level after peak egg production.

► Manual nest – Management points

- Get the hens used to the nests: where possible, introduce nests a minimum of 4 weeks before the onset of lay.
- Lower the nests close to the litter level to promote nest access.
- Put clean bedding material in the nests to make them attractive and comfortable.
- Perches must be large enough to allow each bird to have easy access to both the 1st and the 2nd nest level.
- Ensure the correct nest box ratio in the house (4 hens/nest).
- Bright light (60-80 lux*) in the mating area and a lower light intensity level on the nests.
- If egg collections are made at a time when birds are laying most of the eggs, avoid too many egg collections and disturbing hens in the nests.



Nest dimensions



Use of manual nests along the walls

► Automatic nest – Management points

- Open the nests during the day at least 2 weeks before first egg to stimulate birds to explore the nests. It is also possible to open nest flaps until 30% daily production.
- Turn the nest egg belts on twice during the day to adapt birds to the noise in the days after transfer.
- Turn-on lights inside nests 1 hour before lights in the house are switched on to help early laying birds find their way to the nests.
- If slat height > 40 cm, place steps or ramps to help birds jump onto the slats. Slat slope should not exceed 5-8°. Isolate the area below the steps.
- Bright light (60-80 lux*) in the mating area and a lower light intensity level on the nests.
- Ensure the correct nest ratio in the house (80-90 hens/linear meter for colony nests and 4 hens per nest for individual nest systems).
- Water access (1 nipple for 6-10 females; 1 bell drinker for 80 hens) and nipple flow must be adequate (70-100 ml/min**) to avoid a fence effect in front of the entrance to the nests. A correct distance (1 m) to nest helps as well.



Ramps help birds go up on the slats



A correct height and flow of the nipples are essential to avoid fence effect

* Where local regulations stipulate minimum light intensity then these should be respected at all times.

** Some nipple drinker systems are designed to operate with lower flow rates for breeders so check the manufacturer's recommendations or seek advice from your Hubbard technician.



GENERAL MANAGEMENT POINTS

► LIGHTING PROGRAM

- Provide 14 h light by 25 weeks of age and 15 h light if some floor eggs are observed just before lights on.
- Light intensity can be increased two times during the same week as described in the **"Parent Stock Management guide"**.

How to identify lighting program issues?

- If there are too many eggs before the lights come on.
- If there is a high percentage of eggs laid in the afternoon.

► LITTER

- A low litter level after transfer can help to reduce the risk of floor eggs.
- The depth could be around 1-3 cm in hot conditions and up to 4-6 cm in cooler weather. If use of less than 3 cm be prepared to regularly add fresh litter to maintain litter quality.

► FEEDING

- Ensure to provide a correct feed access (chain feeder: 15 cm/female; 12 females/round pan feeder) and fast feed distribution (< 4 minutes).
- Increase feed daily after 5% daily production until peak of feed.

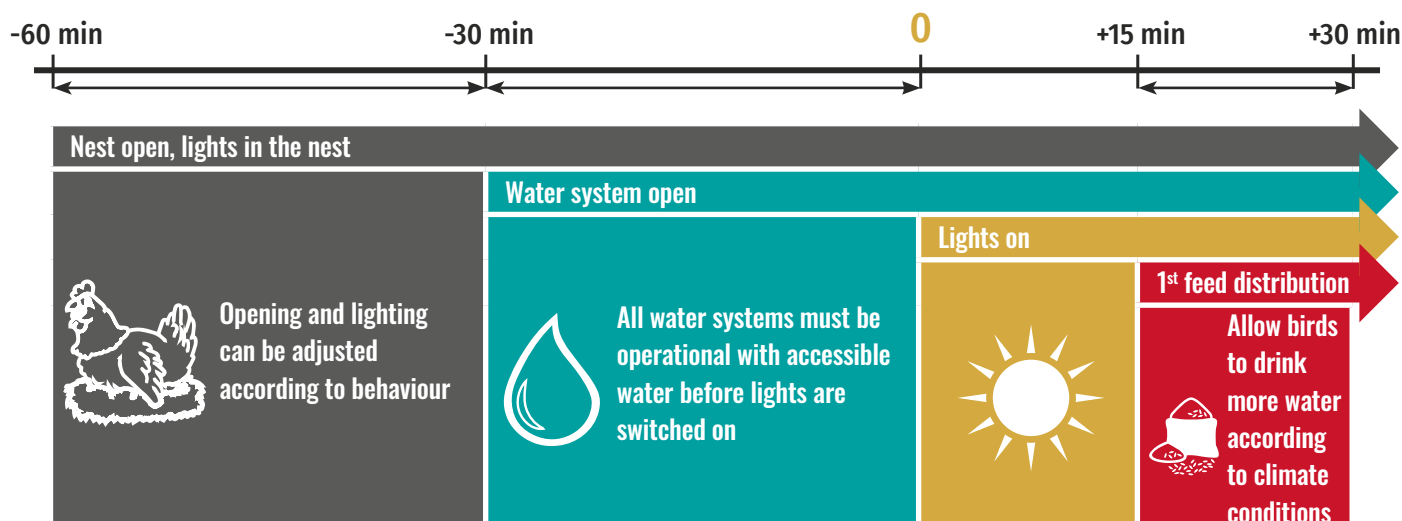
- Reach the peak of feed between 70 and 75% daily production.
- Feed consumption time may be around 3 hours at peak of lay but may vary according to feed and environment.
- Do not feed at the time when most eggs are laid during the day. The best practice is to feed the flock within 30 minutes after lights are switched on.



► NEST

- Add decoy dummy eggs or marked eggs to attract birds into the nests until the peak of lay.
- Nests must be positioned in order to avoid draughts of cold air or very high air speed inside the nests especially in tunnel ventilation systems.
- During hot weather it is recommended to have manual nests perpendicular to the air flow to still prevent air inside the nest.
- High light intensity (natural light) inside the nests may deter hens from entering the nest.

MANAGEMENT OF NESTS, DRINKERS & FEEDERS, IN RELATION TO WHEN THE LIGHTS ARE SWITCHED ON



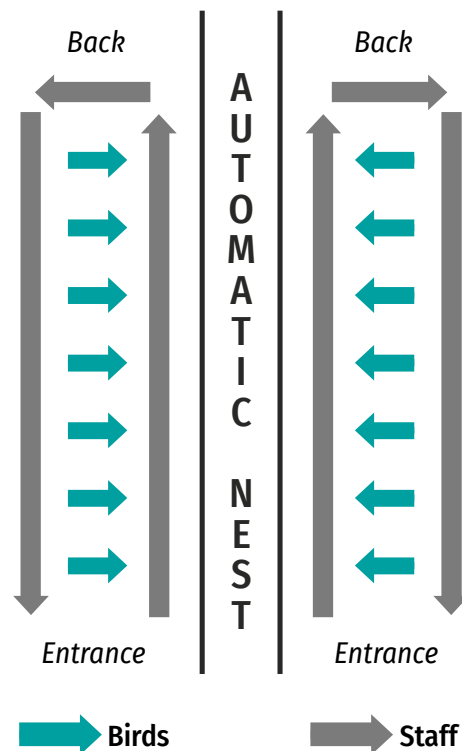


FLOOR EGGS COLLECTION

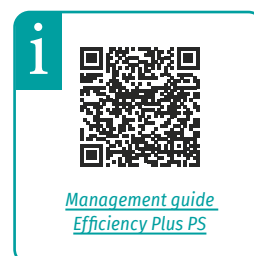
The number of floor eggs must be monitored daily after each collection to follow the evolution. Use the Hubbard Analyzer System to record this.

- **When to start?** From the day the 1st egg is laid on the floor.
- **How often?** At least **once per hour during the laying time**. At the very beginning of lay this may be 10-12 times per day. Do not disturb the females during the feeding time and walk slowly along the nests.
- **How to collect the floor eggs and move the birds?** The main objective is to teach birds to enter into the nest to lay.
 - ▷ If there is a bird close or on the egg, place it into the nest.
 - ▷ During the floor eggs collection, it is important to carefully encourage birds into the nests as shown in the right picture. In the afternoon, it is preferred to proceed in the opposite direction to move the females on the litter to be mated.
 - ▷ Using a flag or another strange object is a good way to move the flock towards the nests without making a noise or attracting birds.
 - ▷ A robot can also do this job depending on the house configuration and positioning of the nests.
 - ▷ Avoid disturbing the litter or doing something that could attract birds out of the nests in the morning.
- **How to monitor the evolution of floor eggs?** Record and monitor the daily ratio of floor/nest eggs. Identify spots where floor eggs are found and eliminate them.
- **How long to continue?** Until the floor egg percentage is stabilised at a low level.

Follow the Management guide **"Efficiency Plus PS"** recommendations and refer to your Hubbard Technical Manager for more details.



How to move birds in the house towards the nests?



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