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Poultry Patter

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MANAGEMENT RECORDS FOR GOOD DECISION MAKING

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The poultry industry has become very competitive and every manager must be on top of all decisions at all times. Good records make it possible to make the right decisions. No poultry operation can afford to make these decisions without the facts needed to make the decision.

If you are raising replacement pullets you must know three things: mortality, feed consumption, and body size. Mortality is a very good indication of flock health. Every bird lost adds to the cost of the remaining birds. The cause of death is very important because it tells you if flock treatment is necessary. The severity of an outbreak will determine whether you use medication in the water or feed. Treatment in the feed is cheaper, but it takes longer to obtain a high level of medication in the birds. Medication must begin at the early stages of a disease outbreak or too many birds will be lost before the treatment is effective.

Feed is the largest single cost in pullet growing. Feed records should be maintained on a weekly basis. Feed wastage must be corrected immediately and adequately controlled. The feed consumption should be compared to a standard such as pounds of feed required per week per 1,000 birds. An expected feed consumption standard for Leghorn pullets is shown on the record sheet (next page). Or use one developed for your strain of birds. You can lower your feed cost by the addition of 5 percent cracked corn to the diet at 5 weeks of age. This can be increased by 5 percent a week up to 8 weeks of age or when the switch is made to 14 percent grower. This means that 65 pounds of cracked corn per 1,000 birds could be fed the 5th week, 130 pounds the 6th week, and 195 pounds the 7th week.

It is also important to know how fast the birds are growing. This can be determined by weighing a 20-bird sample from the flock. It is usually easiest to weigh 5 birds at a time. Pullets should be weighed every 4 weeks. Your 20 pullets should weigh approximately the amounts shown on the record (next page). If there is any significant deviation from these weights, take a second sample. If there is still a deviation in weight that can't be explained, then the management program must be examined to determine the problem.

Most managers are much too busy to visit all their flocks every day. Furthermore, this might be a poor practice because



it could spread disease. But they must have some method to evaluate the condition of every flock at regular intervals. Every flock manager should have the responsibility to call in the bird mortality by 9 a.m. every day. This data should be plotted on a master sheet for each flock so the general manager can see at a glance the condition of every flock each morning. If any particular flock needs attention it can be attended to immediately. If drugs need to be purchased it is early enough in the day to obtain them and have the birds on treatment the same day.

The measurement of feed consumption can be handled in many ways. It must be simple with a minimum of time required to get the best possible records. One method would be to schedule feed deliveries based on consumption standards. If the unit runs out of feed then a problem is indicated. Feed inventory can be taken at a certain time every week and subtracted from deliveries to determine the previous weeks' consumption. Either your farm foreman or your secretary should be able to quickly record weekly feed consumption. If feed consumption is ahead of schedule and body weight is behind schedule, then you could have a feed wastage problem. If your body weight is ahead of schedule you may want to check your lighting program to better control the bird size as well as production costs. Body weight for age is a good indicator of the progress of the flock. The weight of 20 birds taken at random is a good indication as to the size of the birds.

Keep a record of when specific management practices are done, such as vaccinations, debeaking, and changes in the lighting program. Some managers like to allow space to record when a practice is scheduled to be done and also when it is actually completed. These records provide a flock history as well as being useful in anticipating labor and supply needs.

If these records are made available to you, you must look at them daily. You should look at all records by 10 a.m. so that you have time to take necessary action. If you get used to working with a system and you know your employees, then you can save yourself a lot of time by concentrating on the problem flocks.

A system of keeping records will keep you informed and also make your farm foreman alert to what is going on. With this awareness of what is happening, the foreman will watch the flock much closer.

You can't afford to keep records unless they help you do a better job. Each figure must have certain meaning to a management program. Sometimes we get carried away with records. We have figures we don't know what to do with. You can justify the expense of keeping only the figures that make it easier for you to do a better job. Records are important—very helpful guides to good management.

MANAGERS PULLET RECORD

Flock number _____

Number birds _____

Date hatched _____

Flock manager _____

Hatchery source _____

Date delivered _____

Age (weeks)	Daily mortality							Feed consumption/1000		20 bird weight (lbs.)	
	S	M	T	W	Th	F	S	Actual	Expected	Actual	Expected
1									150		
2									300		
3									400		
4									500		12
5									600		
6									675		
7									750		
8									825		28
9									900		
10									950		
11									1000		
12									1050		42
13									1100		
14									1150		
15									1200		
16									1250		54
17									1300		
18									1300		
19									1300		
20									1300		62
21									1300		
22									1300		

<u>Vaccination record</u>	<u>Planned date</u>	<u>Actual date</u>	<u>Serial no. and manufacturer</u>
Newcastle/bronchitis	_____	_____	_____
Newcastle/bronchitis	_____	_____	_____
Newcastle/bronchitis	_____	_____	_____
Av. encephalomyelitis	_____	_____	_____
Fowl pox	_____	_____	_____
Fowl cholera	_____	_____	_____

Coccidiosis control program _____

Dubbed _____ Debeaked _____ Wormed _____

Parasite control _____

Lighting program _____

Comments _____

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