

Covered veranda for pullets

Problem

Pullets are mainly kept indoors, but in some stages of their life, outdoor access may be advantageous.

Solution

For older pullets, access to a covered veranda may provide them with extra stimuli and prepare them for the laying period.

Benefits

The benefit of a covered veranda for pullets is still not well documented but lies in the enriched environment and the preparation for the laying period in cage-free systems with outdoor access. A covered veranda provides pullets with outdoor climate, without exposing them to precipitation and predation.

Practical recommendations

- Young pullets need a warm environment and are mostly not suited for a covered veranda. Later in the rearing period, they are more capable to stand cooler circumstances and can be given access to a covered veranda.
- Beneficial effects of covered verandas for pullets are still not well documented but practical experience suggests that they may act as enrichment of the environment reducing risk for feather pecking. In addition, a covered veranda will prepare pullets well for the production period in a house with a covered veranda.
- When pullets are given access to a covered veranda, climate effects on the pullet rearing unit should be managed well, as open popholes may cause a draft.
- Covered verandas should be equipped with litter material. Additional nipple drinkers, roughage and perches can be provided.
- Especially for organic pullets that need access to free range, a covered veranda can provide a smooth transition between indoor and outdoor circumstances for both climate and light. This may encourage the birds to exit the pullet house and make use of the free range.

APPLICABILITY BOX

Theme

Covered veranda, animal welfare

Keywords

Covered veranda, pullets, housing

Context

Transition to and operating on non-cage housing systems for laying hens

Application time

Second half of pullet rearing period

Required time

Only daytime access

Period of impact

May have an impact on the entire life of the birds

Equipment

Roof, sidewalls, water lines, litter, perches

Best in

Non-cage housing systems for pullets: barn with access to a veranda, free range, and organic production

Target audience

Farmers, farm advisors

On-farm application

System approach

- The age at which access to the covered veranda can be given depends on the climate. In warmer circumstances, pullets can be given access earlier, in colder circumstances it may be better to wait longer.
- On days vaccinations are provided, it is better to keep the covered veranda closed.

Evaluation

- Check the covered veranda daily to see how many birds are using it
- Check litter quality and water provision in the covered veranda daily
- Check the covered veranda for sick birds
- Check the temperature in the covered veranda and keep it closed if the temperature is too low for the pullets (based on their age, check management guidelines for that)

Further information

Further readings

Practice Abstract Covered veranda for laying hens: <https://bestpracticehens.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/14-Covered-veranda-Hens-EN.pdf>

Check management guides of the breed used, to find detailed information about environmental temperature settings

Weblinks

<https://www.featherwel.org/featherwel/managementhealth/thehouseenvironment.html>

About this practice abstract and Best Practice Hens

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Wageningen Livestock Research
P.O. Box 338
6700 AH Wageningen
The Netherlands

Authors: Thea van Niekerk, MSc.

Editors: Mariana Y. R. Couto, Ángela Morell Pérez, Mona F. Giersberg & T. Bas Rodenburg

Project coordinator: Prof. T. Bas Rodenburg, Utrecht University (UU), Yalelaan 2, 3584 CM Utrecht, t.b.rodenburg@uu.nl

Best Practice Hens: To support egg production in non-cage systems and improve animal welfare, a consortium consisting of 7 partners will develop Best Practices for Non-cage Egg Production Systems as a European Commission, DG SANTE pilot project. These Best Practices will provide practical support to egg producers to encourage them to convert from cage to non-cage systems, including organic production.

Project website: www.bestpracticehens.eu/

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