

Animal Welfare for Broiler Chickens

The public, more so today, want to ensure that the animals that produce the food they consume are cared for and live a decent life. Animal welfare for food animals is now a big part of policy and practice for the rearing of food animals.

Companies involved in poultry rearing share the public's concerns and have an ethical obligation to ensure the animals on their farms are cared for. Most if not all companies meet standards and are audited by government regulators and their corporate customers to ensure the standards are maintained. Healthy, quality animals are needed for food so proper treatment is not only an ethical obligation but makes good business sense.

Animal Welfare in poultry operations involve:

- ✓ Corporate commitment.
- ✓ Hatchery operations
- ✓ Proper Nutrition and feeding
- ✓ Appropriate comfort and shelter
- ✓ Health care and monitoring
- ✓ Ability to display most normal behaviors
- ✓ Ensuring farm best practices
- ✓ Humane catching, transportation and slaughter
- ✓ Breeder operations

Housing

Broilers(meat birds) are reared in large structures known as grow-out houses which are well-equipped with mechanical feed and water systems and a controlled environmental system, to provide comfort and a protective environment. The stocking density is limited and cooling fans are used to provide tunnel ventilation. The flooring/litter is composed of materials to absorb the waste products and keep down the ammonia levels in the houses.

Space

Grow-out houses are usually about 16000 square feet and stocked at densities to allow adequate growing space for the birds as they increase in size weekly.

Feed

Chicken feed is primarily corn and soybean meal with essential vitamins and minerals added. No hormones are added to feeds.

Water

Water is drawn from wells or municipal supply. All water is still treated with chlorine no matter the source and tested by an approved laboratory for pathogens

Veterinary Attention

Every broiler company employs a professional veterinarian to care for the health of birds. The farmers and company technical representatives monitor the birds' health. In case of any health problems the veterinary staff is contacted to take appropriate corrective action. Only approved medications are used and withdrawal times are observed before birds are sent for processing.

Proper Handling

Personnel are required to handle birds in an appropriate manner during pickup and arrival at the processing plant.

Humane Slaughter

After arrival at the plant, birds are anesthetized with a mild electric current and then humane slaughtered. The stunning renders the birds insensitive to pain.

Dr. Kevin Walker, BSc. DVM.

Food Animal Veterinarian

Jamaica Broilers Group

