Running a Welfare Program in an Integrated Poultry Environment Using a Best Practices Approach

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0.90 ± 0.08 in calves originally classified as Low, Average, and High calves, respectively.

In conclusion, differences in behavior of Low calves relative to their thrifty herdmates are evident prior to weaning. Their behavioral responses to weaning stress could account for lowered body mass 28 days postweaning. Identification of these calves during the preweaning period could facilitate intervention strategies to mitigate weaning stress.

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During the past 10 years, there have been a number of welfare guidelines published and as many, or more, welfare audits established. These guidelines and audits attempt to define what is expected at various stages of the live production process to ensure appropriate welfare is maintained. As production companies have moved to implement these guidelines, there has been a need to develop a process that takes all the information and puts it into an understandable program for each person who interacts with live poultry. This paper describes a “Best Practice Program for Welfare” that enables a production company to teach, monitor, correct (if needed), and verify its welfare program in an ongoing, everyday way. Best Practice modules have been developed for Producer, Farm Supervisor, Hatchery, Livehaul, Holding/Receiving/Shackling, and Stun/Kill. The end result is a program that if taught well, monitored, and adjusted appropriately will result in a solid, predictable welfare approach. In addition, it ensures a successful and uneventful audit, if that were to occur.

This paper is about the process of running a program at the production company/farm level and does not focus as much on the actual specifics of the best practice. In addition, this paper would suggest to those researching various aspects of welfare to think of how their research might be implemented into a new “best practice.”

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