

The Poultry Post

M A R C H 2 0 0 9

ARE YOU READY FOR HOT WEATHER?

As summer approaches, now is the time to prepare houses for hot weather. Summers continue to take a toll on poultry production in North Louisiana by decreased production efficiency and increased mortality. In order to prepare we must first understand the mechanisms by which birds combat heat stress.

Chickens are homeothermic, which means they produce heat to maintain a certain body temperature. A typical broiler will produce 50 BTU's of heat per hour. Multiplied by 25,000, this is a lot of heat to remove every hour. This is not a problem if air temperature is lower than the bird's body temperature. Normal body temperature is 104-107 degrees.

Feathers on a bird are a great insulator, but in contrast feathers tend to hold in heat and not let it escape easily. Birds have no sweat glands, so they evaporate heat from the body through panting. Birds breathe in cooler air into their air sacs, they would then release warmer air back into their environment. **A bird can only give off heat to its environment if the temperature of the environment the bird is in is cooler than the bird.** This is why it is crucial for the air surrounding birds to be cooler than its body temperature.

Air flow is critical in hot weather. Housing and ventilation equipment are two of the most effective means of reducing heat stress. Listed on the back are some management reminders to help birds maintain their body temperature before hot weather gets here.



TIPS TO REDUCE HEAT STRESS:

- Increase water consumption by providing plenty of cool drinking water. May need to flush lines regularly.
- Electrolytes or other supplements may help with increased water consumption.
- Keep grass cut around cool cells and fans to avoid blockage of airflow.
- Keep fan belts tight and shutters clean to get maximum ventilation benefits.
- Air inlets should be cleaned frequently to insure adequate air flow.
- Roofs should be shiny and clean to reflect heat. Repair and paint as needed.
- Cool pads should be cleaned once a week to prevent buildup of dust and algae.
- Always have a backup well or second source of water.
- Check generator daily in hot weather!
- Circulation fans can help with stagnant areas near the walls and the center of the house.
- Any holes in ceiling materials such as triply should be patched so hot air is not pulled from the attic.
- Sidewall inlets should be free of dust to avoid restriction of airflow.

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