

Instructional Scenario

Comparing Chicken Houses



Course/Duty Area: Livestock Production Management / Exploring Poultry Production

Scenario:

A farmer who manages a commercial broiler operation has noticed differences in bird behavior between two of his poultry houses. In one, birds seem active, feeding consistently, and growing at the expected rate. In the other, birds are less active, some are crowding in corners, and feed intake appears inconsistent.

The farmer has decided to investigate the various environmental, nutritional, and management factors affecting the two houses to possibly account for the difference. Your role is to assist the farmer in evaluating each house, interpret observations, and make recommendations for improving bird performance and welfare.

Big Questions

- How can differences in management practices (e.g., environmental, feed and nutrition, health and biosecurity, production, financial and resource allocation, and technology and automation) affect poultry health, productivity, and profitability in commercial poultry production houses?
- How can a systematic evaluation of poultry houses help identify and correct problems to improve health, welfare, and productivity?

Focused Questions

- What environmental factors (e.g., temperature, ventilation, lighting, humidity) should the farmer compare between the two houses?
- How can feed, nutrition management, and water access affect bird activity and growth in each house?
- What signs of stress or illness should the farmer look for when observing the birds?
- How might stocking density or space per bird influence behavior and welfare?
- What differences in equipment or facility maintenance could affect bird performance?
- How can biosecurity, disease prevention and exposure, and waste management contribute to differences between houses?
- How can the following management practices improve the underperforming house?
 - record keeping
 - environmental management
 - feed and nutritional management
 - health and biosecurity management
 - production management
- How should the farmer track observations and results to ensure improvements are effective over time?

Project Based Assessment: Design a house comparison checklist table for the farmer to fill out to compare the two houses.

Scenario submitted by Kristin Beery, Valley Career and Technical Center, Augusta County Public Schools