

The Optimal Start: Select Chicks from a Hatchery Providing Early Feeding

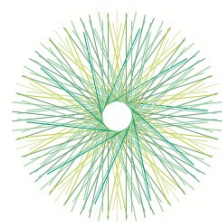


Country of GP owner: Germany

BroilerNet Challenge: Optimizing young chick management

In a commercial hatchery, broiler chicks hatch within a period of 24-48 hours in an incubator. Only once the hatching phase is over, all of the hatched animals are removed from the incubator and transported to the barns for rearing within a maximum period of 72 hours. All this time, no water or feed is available until they arrive in the poultry house. This delayed feeding can have detrimental effects on the chicks' early development in terms of their digestive tract, organs, immune and thermoregulatory systems. Therefore, the "Hatch-Care" system was developed, where newly-hatched chicks are immediately supplied with the basic necessities of life – feed, fresh water and light. This prevents dehydration and stimulates their growth and development. Hatched chicks enter through open spaces in the HatchCare tray a clean, spacious post-hatch basket free of unhatched eggs and empty shells. The basket hence provides chicks with about 40% more space than traditional systems. In the HatchCare basket, there are feed troughs on two sides, which contain enough feed for 24-36 hours. Drinking nipples in the HatchCare basket provide a continuous supply of fresh flowing water. Broiler producers can select a hatchery with HatchCare system for chick supply and benefit from stronger higher-welfare chicks for an optimal start. Animals with early feeding have a better weight development, lower mortality rate, and need less or no medication at the start. The farmer estimated a 5% return on sales as benefit due to a higher end weight. Rearing costs on the farm are estimated at €0.20 per animal per round. Additional costs for the hatchery are estimated at €0,02 per animal.

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