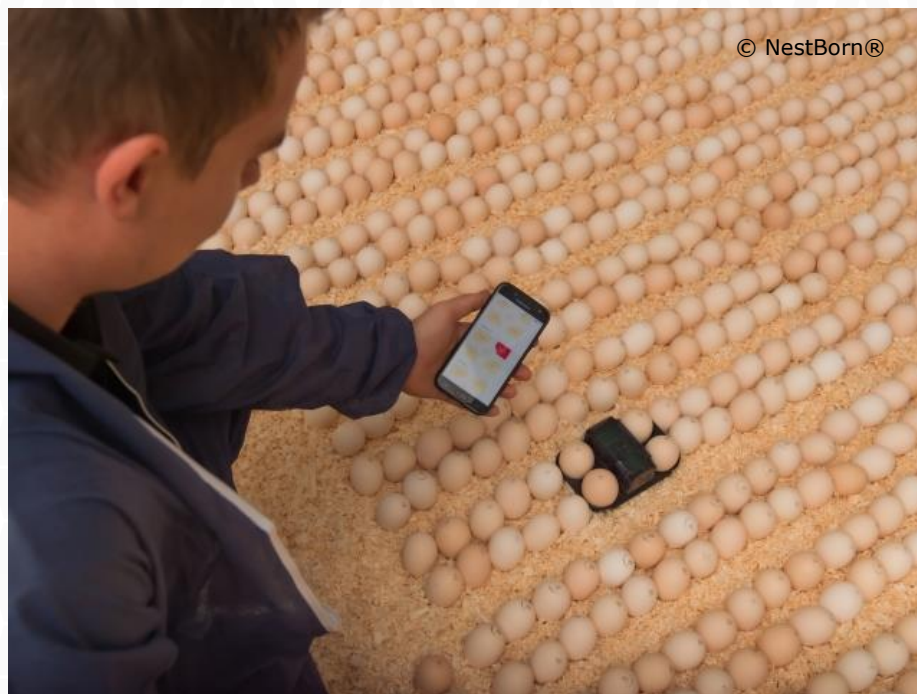


On-farm Hatching to Improve Broiler Health and Welfare from the Start



Country of GP owner: France

BroilerNet Challenge: Optimizing young chick management

In a commercial hatchery, broiler chicks hatch within a period of 24-48 hours in an incubator. Until arrival at the farm, no water or feed is available to the chicks. As this is a stressful start for the newly hatched chicks, an alternative is to hatch the chicks within the barn. By these means, the chicks have direct access to light, water and feed, while stress deriving from hatchery procedures, transport and unloading are avoided. One of the on-farm hatching systems existing is the NestBorn® system, where no major investments or modifications are needed in the poultry house. The hatchery brings and places the pre-incubated eggs directly on a litter bed in the barn, using the NestBorn® egg placing machine. At arrival of the eggs, the floor temperature should be max. 28 °C. A temperature of 37-38°C should be maintained in the poultry houses for hatching. The temperature of the eggs should be maintained between 36-38°C and kept as constant as possible. To this end, wireless sensors are placed between the hatching eggs to keep a close eye on the three-day hatching process. Overall, the workload remains typical, except for the tasks of vaccination and the collection and disposal of unhatched eggs, which are traditionally handled by the hatchery. Vaccination has to be done by the farmer with nebulization, requiring about half an hour per barn. Overall, on-farm hatching results in a better growth and the sanitary advantage is also significant with animals being hatched and raised in the same location. Pododermatitis can be reduced by 8-9 points. Nevertheless, this system costs nearly €0.60/m² more, with the cost of the chick shared between the hatchery and the farmer.

