IDENTIFICATION OF RISK FACTORS DURING BROILER TRANSPORTATION THAT INFLUENCE INJURY AND MORTALITY

Introduction

There is increased public and regulatory scrutiny and criticism over the manner in which birds are transported for slaughter. There are economic losses arising from condemnations and product loss due to broiler death and injury.

When broiler chickens are transported for slaughter there are several stages that each has the potential to cause injury and mortality: on-farm fitness of the birds, catching, loading into crates, transportation, waiting in a holding area and unloading. The variability in mortality and injury rates between loads suggests that there are multiple risk factors that can affect the risk of mortality and injury. If these risk factors, their interrelationships and relative contribution can be identified, it should be possible to identify management practices that would reduce mortality and injury rates.

Study

As part of a larger study of existing slaughterplant records, ‘on-farm’ observations of broiler catching and loading will be undertaken and these will be analyzed in conjunction with quality control records of mortality and injury recorded by the slaughterplant for each load of birds.

Assistance is requested from broiler producers who would be willing to allow the handling and loading of broilers to be observed on their farm and then with the agreement of the processor obtain access to the slaughterplant records for dead-on-arrivals and injury for that load. Individual producers and slaughterplants will not be identified and appropriate confidentiality and biosecurity practices will be followed.

‘On-farm’ observations of broiler catching and loading will be used to quantify different handling practices and their relationship with injury and mortality.

Outcomes

Preliminary results from the analysis of slaughterplant records are now available and will be prepared in consultation with the slaughterplant for submission to a scientific journal.

The knowledge and understanding gained in this study will be used to inform stakeholders by producing educational and training materials on management and other practices that are likely to reduce the prevalence of poultry injury and mortality during catching and transportation.

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