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Swedish Board of Agriculture

Broilers: Data collection in Swedish slaughterhouses



The majority of the parameters registered at the post-mortem inspections (e.g. ascites and breast lesions) give a picture of the on-farm welfare. While the rest of the parameters, e.g. wing fractures, could have happened during the transport or when handling the birds at the slaughterhouse.





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The quality of the litter is crucial. Many factors can cause bad litter (e.g. type of litter, stocking-density, water-system, feed, light programme...) Wet and dirty litter increases the risk for hock burns and foot pad dermatitis:



Therefore the registration of foot health (pad dermatitis and hock burns) is an important indicator of welfare.

Assessment of foot pad dermatitis

The method was developed by Charlotte Berg and Jan Svedberg at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in Skara:

- The assessment is carried out after slaughter and when the feet are washed and separated from the rest of the body

- 100 feet per flock; 50 at the beginning of the slaughter and 50 at the end.

- One foot per shackle is taken out as soon as possible after the legs are cut off and without prior examination.

- The feet are then assessed as "0", "1" or "2".





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Score "0" – a healthy foot, no – or very small affected area



Lesions: very small
superficial (1-2 mm);
slight discolouration (small area);
mild hyperkeratosis; completely
healed scar...



Score "1" – a foot with mild lesion- area affected does not extend over entire pad



Lesions: substantial discolouration of the foot pad;
superficial lesion, no ulceration;
dark papillae, no ulceration.





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Score "2"- a foot with severe lesion – greater surface on pad affected, sometimes with lesions on toes.

Lesions: deeper lesions with ulceration, sometimes haemorrhage; scabs of significant size;



After assessment, the feet classified as "0" are multiplied by 0; the ones classified as "1" are multiplied by 0,5 and those classified as "2" are multiplied by 2. This gives a total sum for the flock of 0-200 points that generates the following remarks:

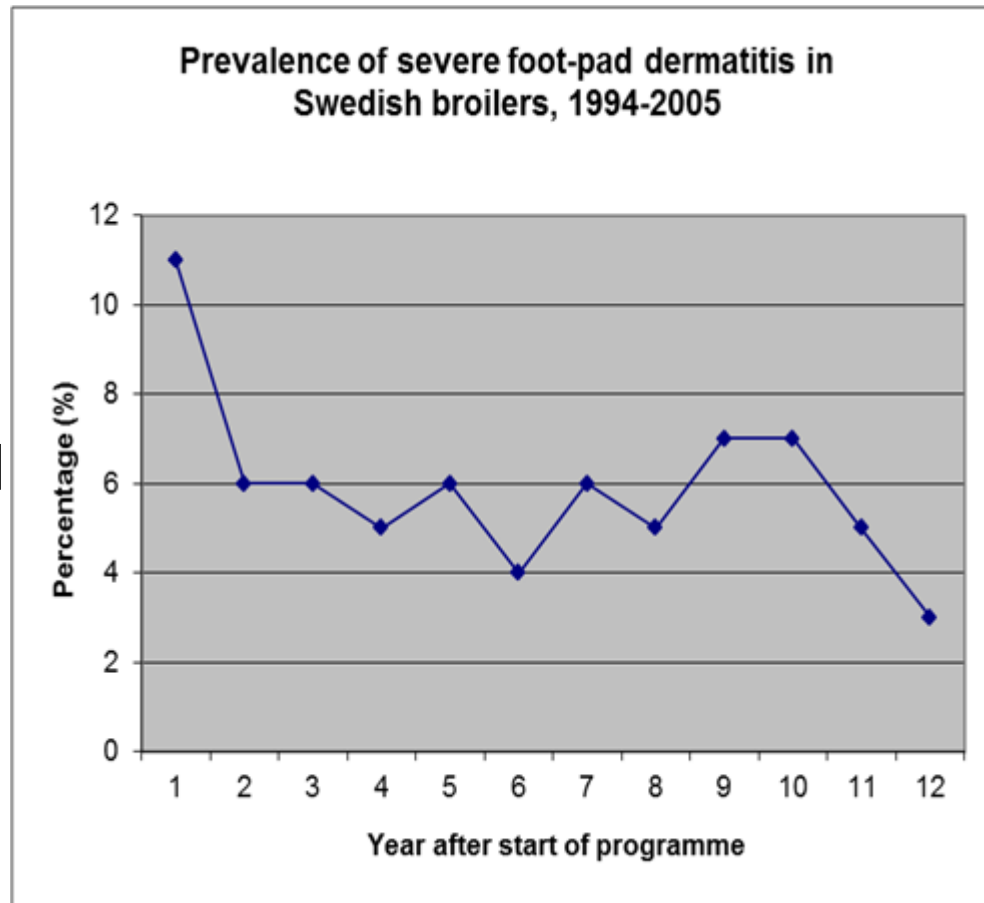
Total points < 40: no remark

Total points 41-80: remark – low level

Total points > 80: remark – high level

The result is followed up by the veterinarian responsible for the flock and the Swedish Poultry Meat Association: If more than 40, an investigation is made and measures are taken – lowering of the stocking-density is part of this.

Since the foot health registrations started in the 1990-ties, the health has improved. Apart from the animal welfare problems with bad feet, affected birds show a reduced growth rate. Better growth compensates for the cost of the foot health control...





Thanks for your attention!

