

Popular Article

Common vices in commercial poultry and its management

Jayshree Jakhar*¹, Sachin Patidar² and Santosh³

*¹Research Scholar, Department of Veterinary Pathology,

^{2,3}Research Scholar, Department of Veterinary Parasitology,

^{1,2}GB Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, Pantnagar, (Uttarakhand)

³Lala Lajpat Rai University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences.

Introduction

'Vice' refers to a bad or evil habit. It is an aberrant and undesired behavior in chickens that is detrimental to its health or usefulness. Vices are often triggered by a management or environmental factor. Once started by a single bird, a vice is copied by others and may quickly spread. It could be caused by environmental factors, inherited issues, behavioral problems, or dietary deficiencies. Chickens are the most commonly affected, however any species can be affected if kept in confined settings. Controlling it therefore becomes a significant issue. Birds may have particular vices that require special attention and care in order to be completely eradicated. The injuries that occur often result in death or devaluation of carcasses in the case of broilers, as well as egg loss in layers. Thus, vices might result in a significant financial loss for the chicken farmer.

Common vices which are seen in the poultry are

1. Cannibalism
2. Pica
3. Egg eating
4. Egg hiding

1. Cannibalism or Picking

Cannibalism is a condition in which birds in a flock attack and devour the flesh of their pen member, causing deep wounds and high mortality. In laying birds, vent pecking is common. it is vice and not a disease it should be rectified before it becomes vice. Once the birds have adopted this vice, it spreads quickly across the flock with no immediate therapy. The presence of wounds or presence of blood particularly around the cloacal orifices, is an indication of cannibalism. Cannibalism in birds occur in various form like Vent pecking, Feather pecking or Feather pulling, Toe picking, and Head picking. Cannibalism reduces the value of a bird by causing ripped and damaged flesh, as well as poor feathering.

The following are some of the factors that contribute to cannibalism:

Overcrowding- Major cause of cannibalism is insufficient space/overcrowding in housing area of birds. Birds should be placed in poultry house according to their age and breed.

Table- Space requirement of birds according to age.

S. No.	Age	Space required (sq. ft./bird)
1.	First 2 weeks	0.25
2.	3 to 8 weeks	0.75
3.	8-16 weeks	1.5
4.	16-25 Weeks	2

Bantam chickens need half quite enough area as big chickens, gamebirds require double as much. Pheasants may be given 25 to 30 square feet per bird after 12 weeks of age. pick-prevention devices such as plastic peepers or blinders may be utilised.

Mixing various varieties of fowl: The flock's normal pecking order is disrupted when various ages and sizes of fowl or chickens with different traits are mixed together. Avoid putting chickens of different species together in the same enclosure. Curiosity for the varied colours and characteristics of the feet might lead to begin toe-pecking in their first few weeks. Cannibalism is more common in birds with delayed feathering. Feathers of birds with delayed feathering are exposed to pecking for extended periods of time, making them more vulnerable to scratches. As a result, it is best to avoid rearing slow-feathering birds alongside other birds.

Excessive light- Excessive intense light or prolonged durations of light enable birds to develop hostility against one another. White light bulbs with a wattage more than 40 watts are not recommended for brooding birds. Red or infra-red bulbs should be utilised if larger bulbs are needed for heat. For growing birds 12 weeks of age and older, 15- or 25-watt lights may be used above feeding and drinking facilities. Photoperiods more than 16 hours per day have been shown to have negative consequences. Constant light may be a cause of distress for birds.

Overheated brooding house- If the brooding house temperature is excessively high, the birds might become exceedingly cannibalistic. Temperatures should be maintained at 95°F for the first week, then gradually reduced by 5°F every week until they reach 70°F in the second week. The temperature should be taken at the height of the birds' backs, right under the heat source.

Availability of less nutrition and imbalance diet- If the birds have to struggle for food and water,

or if the birds are always starving, they will increase their pecking behaviour. It is essential for birds to have unrestricted access to water and food at all times of day. The pecking order determines which birds get to eat and when they get to eat. As a result, if there is insufficient feeder space, birds at the bottom of the pecking order may never be able to eat at all. High-energy, low-fiber diets encourage the birds to be overly active and aggressive, which is detrimental to their health. Birds will pluck their feathers if they are lacking in protein and amino acids such as arginine and methionine, as well as in salt and minerals and if they are eating too much maize.

Changes in management routine- If young birds are relocated to a new site, it is important to transfer some of their feeders and waterers with them in order to assist them in adjusting to their new environment. When bigger feeders and drinkers are placed, the smaller feeders and drinkers may be put in the enclosure with the larger feeders and drinkers for a few days to assist the animals in adjusting to the new environment.

Introduction of new birds to the flock- Every time a new bird is introduced or evicted from a flock; the pecking order of the flock is interrupted. It is preferable to introduce any new bird into your pen by separating the pen with a temporary barrier for at least a week to let the birds to get to know each other. Also, adding the birds to the enclosure at night may be done. After introductions of new flock proper supervision is important to verify the pecking status. It may take a week or more for flock to re-establish the new pecking order.

Prolapse Pecking- Picking is generally followed by prolapse. It's possible for prolapse to develop in young or overweight flocks, so take care out for prolapse picking. Once an egg has been deposited, it might take some time for the reproductive organ to return to its correct position in the uterus. Young pullets and fatty layers are more likely to exhibit this behaviour. Curiosity gets the rest of other birds, and they begin picking at the uterus if it is exposed for any length of time. Once they start plucking at the uterus, it starts to bleed, and the cannibalism begins. This issue may be avoided via the use of proper feeding and management techniques. A low-calorie diet should be implemented for obese birds.

Other causes- Faulty debeaking. Haemorrhage on external genitalia due to laying of large egg by new hen attracts other birds and once the birds develop taste for blood and meat, they develop the habit of cannibalism. Insufficient space in deep litter and then shifting after late stage e.g., more than 80 days in cages, Presence of round worms, Heavy birds cannot expel eggs and become victim of picking as birds get attracted to expelled uterus, Cannibalism tends to be more common in some breeds of birds and may have genetic predisposition.

Prevention & control measures

- Cheapest way to keep away from cannibalism is debeaking which can be done right from the day old to any age of bird.
- Overcrowding of the birds must be corrected as soon as possible.
- Balance diet must be given with sufficient quantity.
- Use salt @ 1gm per 2 litres 6 to 8 hrs for 5 days or 5 kg of salt per ton of feed.
- Apply anti-picking cream made by neem leaves or used mobile oil and combination of mustard oil and pasted on wounded part.
- Birds removing own feather may be given 2 pc clove oil in olive oil as base give 2 drops daily to affected birds.
- Give Lucerne or spinach leaves or lettuce @ 2 kg per 1000 birds top dressing or increase non soluble fibre by top dressing pellet feeding to be discontinued.
- Birds involve in cannibalism must be isolated where wounded birds should also be segregated from normal birds.
- Never keep the birds starved or feeders should not remain empty.
- Avoid the exposure of excessive light or heat to birds.
- Birds that have been injured should also be separated and given good care.
- Birds in deep litter should be kept in small colonies.
- Birds have social hatchery so shifting of birds from one cage to other may be avoided. If in deep litter few birds should be shifted in advance along with feeders so that birds may not be stressful in new environment.
- In the case of layers, the environment should be peaceful since disturbance during laying causes clogged external genitalia in layers, which attracts other birds for cannibalism.

2. Pica: -

It is the eating disorder in which birds compulsively eat non-food items Such as litter material, feathers which are not fit for consumption. It is less commonly found in modern poultry farm.

Cause

- It is mainly occurred due to phosphorus deficiency in the diet of birds.
- Parasitic infestation and new litter material may predispose the birds for pica.

Prevention & Control measures

- Balance diet should be given to birds
- Good managerial care should be given

3.Egg eating: -

It is also common vice in poultry in which birds acquire a taste for their own eggs occasionally. It may begin as a result of the presence of broken eggs or unintentional egg breaking; once the birds acquire a taste for them, they begin breaking their own eggs.

Cause

- It occurs due to presence of eggs in pens for an extended length of time may also encourage birds to begin egg eating.
- It starts due to presence of cracked or damaged eggs in housing area of birds once the birds develop taste for it, they start breaking to their own eggs and eat them.
- Eggs are cracked or damaged due to soft, thin shell and lack of adequate bedding material at laying area.

Prevention & Control measures

Preventing this vice becomes pretty tough at that point.

- Egg collection interval should be reduced so eggs are not available for birds
- Isolation of birds which are develop this habit. These birds should be kept in cage system in which eggs after laying not stay in cage due to slope.
- Darkness in the laying area may be prevent this habit
- Limestone and protein should be given in the diet. It's overcome some deficiency in body

4.Egg hiding: -

Egg hiding is a maternal trait seen in jungle fowl but not in domestic fowl. However, this tendency may develop in domestic birds which are permit for freedom of movement. They hide the eggs in fields, shrubs, and other locations.

Prevention & control measures

- Restrict freedom of movement of the birds
- Laying area should be comfortable by providing straw.
- Laying area should be built inside the poultry house.

Conclusions: -

Regular debeaking of birds is a very essential Managemental practices. Birds which develop abnormal behaviour should be timely taken care off. Provide adequate nutrient supplements with proper treatment of injuries. So those some control measures may be reduced economic loss occur due to these vices and make the enterprise profitable for the poultry farmers.