Selected on behaviour

Novogen's breeding program with collective housing systems takes bird behaviour into consideration. The target is to select calm birds with a good nesting behaviour.

At 17 weeks, the pedigree hens are transferred to two complementary housing systems: one in colony cages (group of five sisters) and another one in a RFID floor system.

The colony cages allow, in particular, selection of individual families on their pecking behaviour, whereas the RFID floor system brings information on nesting behaviour. In these two systems, production and egg quality traits are also measured.

"At 60 weeks, only 30% of the best birds are kept in our breeding program," Thierry Burlot, R&D Director, told International Hatchery Practice.

Between 60 and 90 weeks, selected hens are transferred in individual cages where selection on individual traits is more intense (laying persistency, egg quality, etc).

At the end of this stage, the progeny of the best hens is used to renew the next pedigree generation.

After two years of testing with radio-frequency identification (RFID) technology, Novogen has invested in a new floor system selection farm.

This innovative technology enables individual information to be collected within a group in conditions closer to field conditions.

This information allows selection on new traits which were not used so far. Some of them are particularly interesting for alternative systems. For instance, big variations of time spent inside the nest (10-45 minutes) are observed and are strongly linked to the individual and family.

The technology also allows producers to know the interval between two ovipositions, time of lay and to identify hens which are not laying in the nest.

Another important benefit is to correlate this information to the egg quality.

novogen-layer.com