

Is Feathering Important in Poultry?

By Dr. G. H. Marutsi (BVSc, Cert PM, MBA)



The thought of why chickens are clothed in different types of feathers could have crossed or missed our minds as we go about the poultry business. The feathers form a cover around the chickens' body, thereby protecting them against all the harsh environments they can be faced with during their lifetime especially the cold winter temperatures.

Causes of Feather Loss

Causes of feather loss include, but are not limited to high stocking densities, imbalanced nutrition, high/low temperatures, parasites, and dirty environments/disease.

Feather loss is usually noted at the base of the tail, around the head and neck, and sometimes on the back. Flocks that experience excessive feather pulling issues during rearing usually suffer a repeat during production. Farmers therefore ought to take care to minimise stressors leading to feather pulling in their flock to ensure good flock performance. Where feather loss is a problem in poultry farming one should be experienced to differentiate this from the natural process of moulting (natural annual process where your chicken replaces its entire compliment of feathers over a few weeks. In a moult you will see new feathers beginning to appear).

Effects of Feather Loss;

On production - To lose feathers can be a very 'easy process', but feather regeneration is nutritionally taxing. In the case of nutritional deficiencies, the birds end up with varying forms of abnormal feather cover. During production, if a layer hen loses a substantial number of feathers, then production (egg laying) will suffer. For feather regeneration the excess nutrition used

for production will be diverted toward feather growth and development. For the chicken to lay an egg the following equation must be always balanced.

Adequate nutrition + Maintenance needs = Good production performance.

Adequate nutrition + Maintenance needs + Stressor(s) = Poor production performance.

On insulation - A bird's feathers play an important role in regulating their body temperature, much as hair does for mammals. It is therefore important to note that, poorly feathered birds in cold weather lose a lot of heat and will also have excess nutrition channelled towards heat generation instead of production.

On protection - Feathers help shield birds' bodies from bruises and scrapes, a poorly feathered bird will be susceptible to skin damage. The skin of a chicken is poorly vascularised hence it heals slowly, making the bird susceptible to secondary bacterial infections. 'Bleeders' on the skin are a great temptation to fellow flock mates triggering bad behaviours like cannibalism and subsequent mortalities secondary to the cannibalism or to bacterial infections. These scenarios result in fewer eggs going to the market.

While feathers are often considered a by-product of poultry production (and often a waste by-product), all farmers whether broilers, breeders or layer producers, should consider feather development and quality as a top metric for a successful enterprise.

For more information on poultry production contact, Dr G. H. Marutsi (BVSc, Cert PM, MBA) on 0777 586 262 or email garikai@profeeds.co.zw





BETTER INSURANCE STARTS HERE

Originally established over 25 years ago Hunt Adams & Associates is a registered and fully licensed broking agency that is Zimbabwean owned. Combined, our Hunt Adams staff have over 180 years of experience in the insurance industry.



LICENSED

Registered and fully licensed broking agency



ESTABLISHED

Established over 25 years ago



RELIABLE

180 years in the insurance industry



ARE YOUR MOST VALUABLE ASSETS COVERED?

- ✔ Agriculture & Livestock
- ✔ Motor
- ✔ Domestic and Household
- ✔ Property
- ✔ Medical and Travel
- ✔ Marine
- ✔ Liability
- ✔ Personal
- ✔ Engineering
- ✔ Bonds and Guarantees



Contact one of our friendly and professional brokers today for more information and a quote.



8 Fleetwood Road, Alex Park, Harare, Zimbabwe



08 6 7700 0719



info@huntadams.co.zw
www.huntadams.net

ZiMunda Farming

37 Victoria Drive, Newlands, Harare Zimbabwe

You received this email because you signed up on our website or made a purchase from us.

Unsubscribe

