



Assessing a Feed Withdrawal Program at the Processing Plant

Optimum recommended time for feed withdrawal is 8 to 12 hours (beginning when birds do not have access to feed in the poultry house until shackling at the processing plant).

Timing

TOO SHORT

Feed withdrawal times of less than 8 hours may result in excess feed and fecal residues in the digestive tract. This is a waste of the undigested feed as the feed will not be converted to meat. Excess feed residue will cause yield and processing problems in the plant. Fecal residues cause contamination of plant equipment and carcasses.



Feed in gizzards



Fecal contamination

TOO LONG

Feed withdrawal more than 12 hours cause the intestines to lose their tensile strength, making them easy to tear and rupture during evisceration. Gall bladders may enlarge and rupture easily causing contamination. Litter, wood chips or other foreign material may be present in gizzards from birds pecking at the litter.



Enlarged gall bladders

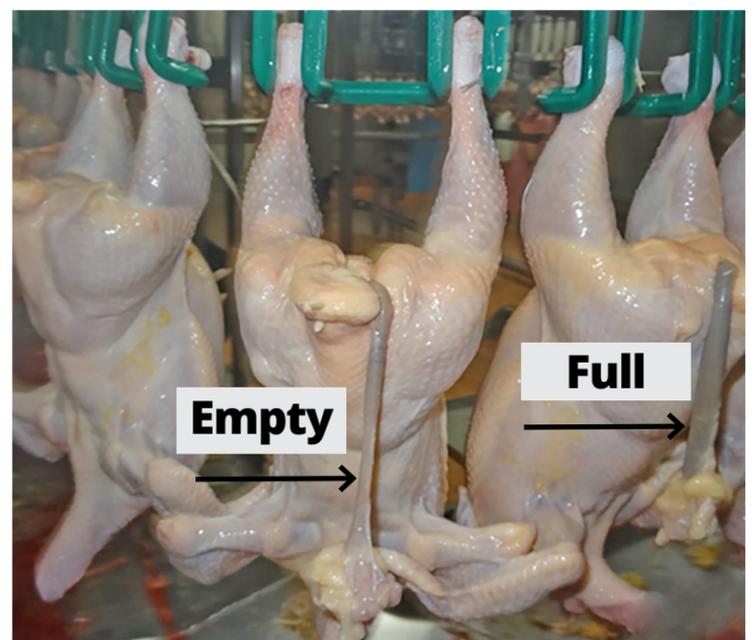


Foreign material in gizzards

Birds should have access to water for at least 2 hours after feed is withdrawn. Leave the water line down until the catchers enter the house.

Assessment

1. Randomly sample 10 viscera packs.
2. Visually evaluate the lower intestines and score the intestines as full or empty (see photo).
3. Evaluate the strength of the intestines by pulling and estimating how much force is required to break the intestines.
4. Cut open the crop, proventriculus and gizzard. Collect and weigh contents from all 3 organs. The contents should weigh less than 5 g for a 2 kg bird.



Evaluation

With the correct feed withdrawal program:

- Intestines will be almost empty and starting to flatten.
- Crops should be empty or have a small amount of water.
- Gizzard contents should vary among samples. Because birds eat at different times, a wide range of content types and amounts may be present in the gizzards. Some gizzards may be full and others empty. Some may have litter and others may have water. If all the gizzard contents are the same (all have feed, all have litter, etc.), there may be an issue with the feed withdrawal program.