

Effect of perch material and profile on the use of perches

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As in 2012 battery cages for laying hens will be banned in the EU, a lot of research has been done on the development and improvement of alternative housing systems. The Directive also states that perches must be provided to the animals. At the Provincial Centre for Practical Applied Poultry Research of the province of Antwerp in Belgium, different perches were tested during consecutive laying periods. The perches differed in materials used and in the profile of the perch. These perches were placed in enriched cages which housed 39 to 43 animals and different breeds were used through the different production periods. The use of the perches was evaluated by observations after the lighting period in which the number of animals on the perches were counted. Though at first there seemed to be an impact of the material (wood, plastic or iron) on the occupation of the perch, further tests showed that the profile of the perch had more impact. Results showed a higher use of perches when rectangular profiles were used. In order to provide the birds with suitable perches and to make sure the perches are used, the right material and profile is necessary.

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