

Technical results aviary system: great variation between flocks

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From 2012 on battery cages will be forbidden in the EU and therefore different alternative housing systems are being developed and researched. One such system is the aviary which consists of different levels where the birds can move freely and are housed in large groups. The management of such a system is totally different from the rearing of birds in (battery) cages and new problems have risen. During five laying periods the technical results of an aviary were collected, processed and evaluated. The experimental set-up was not always the same but an overall conclusion regarding the end results is definitely possible. It is clear that the technical results show a lot of variation in time and can differ strongly from flock to flock. Average mortality rate ranged from 3 to 31% and was influenced by the occurrence of cannibalism or mite infestation. Laying percentage per hen housed varied between 70 and 85 percent. The percentage of eggs laid outside the nests was also very different between the production periods. The variation in technical results is much higher than in cage systems and this should be taken into account by poultry farmers when they review the different housing systems available to comply with the EU directive.

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