

## Pre-slaughter fasting time and welfare assessment in broilers

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An experiment was carried out in the experimental poultry house of FMVZ/UNESP, Botucatu, Brazil, where 100 one-day-old male broilers were housed at a density of 10 birds/m<sup>2</sup>. Feed and water were supplied ad libitum. When the birds were 42 days old, 40 birds were selected at random, and transported in crates to the experimental processing plant of FMVZ/UNESP, where four experimental groups, of 10 birds each, were established according to the pre-slaughter fasting period. Group I was submitted to 6 hours of fasting; Group II, 9 hours of fasting; Group III, 12 hours of fasting; Group IV, 15 hours of fasting. The aim was to evaluate bird welfare, as well as their behaviour, inside the transporting crates during lairage until slaughter. The following parameters were assessed: thermoregulation behavior (panting); idle or active (lying or standing); anxious behavior (normal or excessive peeping). Data were submitted to ANOVA using SAS (SAS, 1991) statistical package, and means were compared using the Tukey test (5%). During lairage, broilers usually spend most of the time lying, which characterize overload on the legs, which may lead to breast blisters. As bird welfare deteriorates, peeping and feather pecking rates increase. The data obtained were submitted to ANOVA and to the Tukey test (5%). The pre-slaughter fasting period influenced ( $p < 0,05$ ) the behaviours evaluated. It was observed that the welfare of the birds was affected more as pre-slaughter fasting period increased. Birds fasted for 15 hours no longer stood and there was a high incidence of feather pecking and peeping, evidence of bird distress. There was no difference ( $p < 0,05$ ) in the percentage of birds sitting or agitated observed at 12 or 15 hours of fasting. These results are consistent with those found in literature stating that long fasting times increase bird stress (Northcutt, 2003; Castro *et al.*, 2008).

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