

Correlations between gait score and leg problems in broilers

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Aimed at determining the incidence of femur degeneration (FD) and tibial dyschondroplasia (TD), joint deviations (valgus and varus) and leg and foot asymmetry of broilers, an experiment was carried out at FMVZ-UNESP/Botucatu. 200 male Cobb broilers were housed in an experimental house at a density of 10 birds/m². At 42 days of age, 100 birds were assessed for gait score and valgus or varus deviations at the poultry house. These birds were weighed, sacrificed by gas stunning, and their right and left femur heads and tibial proximal epiphysis were scored for FD and TD by gross examination. Femoral and tibial symmetry were subsequently analysed to verify possible correlations among lesion scores due to FD and TD and valgus or varus deformities, bone symmetry, and gait score (Nääs et al, 2008). The results did not show any significant differences ($P>0.05$) among the parameters evaluated, nor any incidence of varus deformity. In addition, the correlation between most parameters and gait score were low, except for valgus deformity and tibia length (Garner *et al.*, 2002; Weeks *et al.*, 2000). It was concluded that gait score is very subjective, and may not correspond to bone changes.

Keywords: gait score, broilers, femur, tibia