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IMPORTANCE OF THE FEED DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM

In order to optimize the genetic potential of a laying hen, feeding techniques should be adapted to its natural behavior. Its abilities of feed storage in the digestive tract and higher consumption in the last hours of the day must be used for a better coverage of its needs in production or during the rearing period. There are several benefits:

- Faster increase of feed consumption at the onset of lay
- Better adaptability in challenging conditions (sanitary, climate, feed quality)
- Optimization of the production: egg number, egg weight, eggshell quality

FEED DISTRIBUTION IN PRACTICE, REARING PERIOD

In rearing, feed distribution practice can be divided into three (3) periods:

- Until week 3 of age:

Chicks need to have a permanent access to the feed to attain a good start.

- From 4 weeks of age to 7/8 weeks:

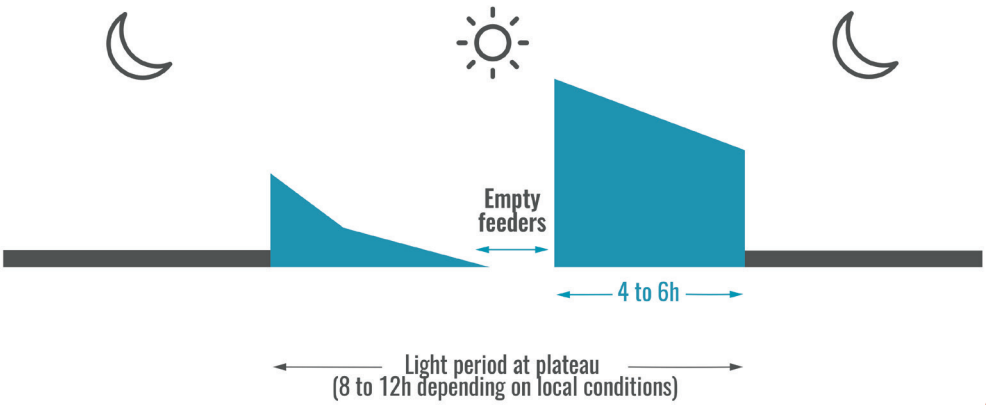
Implementation of daily empty feeder to train the birds to eat all the fine particles. The amount of feed given will be adjusted, so feeders must be empty at midday. This has to be implemented as soon as possible and progressively.

- From 7/8 weeks until 2% of lay:

All the feed distributions should be scheduled during the last 4/6 hours of the day (but in practice, many people are using one third in the morning & two thirds in the afternoon). Pullets will get used to eat before the night period to enhance their calcium appetite once in production. Finer particles will be eaten more easily in the morning 2-3 hours after the lights have been switched on, as hens' digestive tract is empty.

Having the feeders empty once per day has at least two benefits (true in rearing & production periods):

- It assures that all particles are eaten, reduces the risk of selective eating and improves the uniformity of the flock
- It helps the crop to develop better. Therefore, it can deal with a fast increase in consumption level at the onset of lay.



Example of feed distribution program in rearing

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FEED DISTRIBUTION IN PRACTICE, PRODUCTION PERIOD

- Due to the calcium appetite effect, more than 50% of the feed is eaten spontaneously during the last 5-6 hours of the day. Giving the main feed distribution in the afternoon, allows increasing the feed and calcium intake just before or during shell formation. Therefore, it allows optimizing the production and shell quality.
- Daily empty feeder in the middle of the day avoids accumulation of fines particles leading to under-consumption and increases the feed intake. This does not qualify as feed restriction as the hens adapt to the situation. The goal is to ensure that the hens consume the maximum of feed in the shortest time possible before the night period.
- Duration of empty feeders can vary according to the strains. It is recommended to have a daily empty feeder period of 1-2 hours for the NOVOgen WHITE (not more) and 2-3 hours for the NOVOgen BROWN. The latter has a higher capacity to increase its consumption to compensate a period of feed limitation.
- Running the feeders too many times increases competition between the hens, which creates poor uniformity of the flock due to selective eating of larger particles. Hence, it is recommended to carry out as minimum number of feed distributions as possible. It will be determined by feed density, feeding conditions, manual or mechanical distribution.

Here are a few examples of distribution schedules:

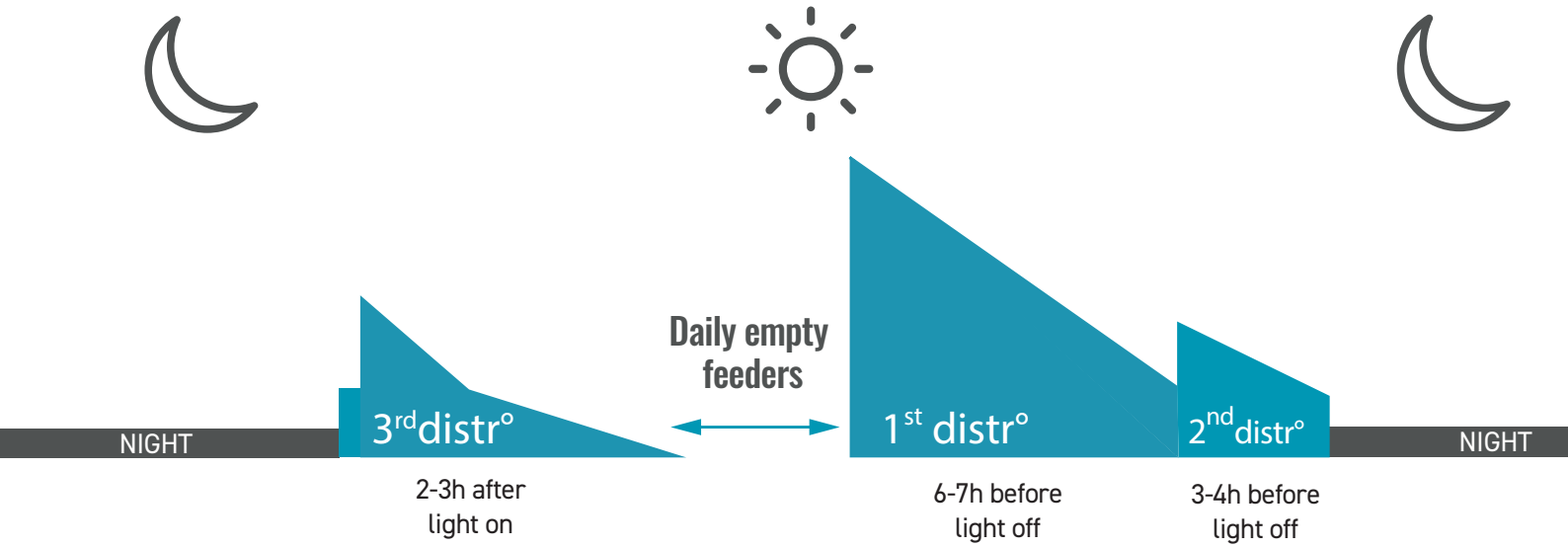
- Two (2) distributions:
  - Two thirds of the feed will be given approximately 5-6 hours before turning off the lights and the remaining one third during the 2-3 hours after turning on the lights.

- Three (3) distributions:
  - First distribution will occur 6-7 hours before the lights go off, the second approximately 3 hours before turning off the lights, and the third will occur during the 2-3 hours after turning on the lights.

CONCLUSION

Genetic progress has been considerable in recent years. However, feed and feeding techniques are key factors that allow expressing the genetic potential in terms of productivity, egg quality, and behaviour.

For more details, you can consult our web site with the nutrition guide & all the management guides, and our NovoCenter.



Example of three (3) feed distributions schedule in production

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