

CONSTRUINDO SABERES, FORMANDO PESSOAS E TRANSFORMANDO A PRODUÇÃO ANIMAL

DOES ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT DECREASE AGONISTIC BEHAVIOR AND STEREOTYPY IN LAYING HENS?

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Egg production systems, space is reduced and the farm offers little choice for chickens, producing negative impacts on the poultry' natural behavior. Thus, to ensure welfare, environmental enrichment techniques can be adopted that modify the space and social atmosphere of the animals, both in physical, sensory, cognitive, food and / or occupational form. Thus, the objective of this project was to evaluate if the insertion of a new and unusual object in the environment (farm), interferes in the occurrence of agonistic behaviors and stereotypies. Twenty Dekalb Brown hens were used in the laying phase. The animals were kept free in a shed with feeders, drinking fountains and community nests. The experiment was carried out for four consecutive days. For the control, the observations made on the first day, without the object in the environment, were considered. On the following days, the object for the animals was made available, consisting of a round rubber toy with elastic and soft, with several tentacles and four different colors (blue, green, purple and orange). Toys were available to the chickens for two hours in the morning, a period of increased incidence of agonistic interactions and animal agitation. Upon completion of the observation, the objects were removed and kept out of sight of the poultry. We defined the behavioral categories threat, escape, fight and stereotypy as variables. The Wilcoxon test ($P = 0.05$) was used in the statistical analysis program R. There was no significant difference when comparing the control with the other days that environmental enrichment was available. However, when analyzing the absolute data, it can be observed that there was a fall of 18.5% of a total of 254 escape behaviors, 24.5% in 273 threats and 31.5% in 38 stereotypies, after providing environmental enrichment. Thus, we can conclude that although there is no significant response, the supply of the toy decreased the incidence of agonistic behaviors and stereotypies, which can be considerable in a farm of laying hens, in relation to welfare. However, this project serves as a pilot and should be repeated in a future experiment with a larger number of animals.

Keywords: escape, poultry, stereotypy, threat, toy

Promoção e Realização:



Apoio Institucional:



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