

Management and results of small-scale organic laying hens in Southern Brazil. Case report.

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Introduction

The production and demand for organic eggs has been growing impressively in Brazil, however the productive sector still does not have a consolidated methodology of production according to organic production regulations. Considering that the organic system is preventive, the whole context must be re-evaluated and adjusted and not simply regarded as a substitution of inputs (Escosteguy, 2007).

Case presentation

We report on the management of 100 laying hens of Isa Brown line from June 2015 to December 2016 on a traditional small family farm in Viamão / RS. The farm has been organically certified for seven years. We describe the hygiene management adopted and the results achieved where the animal, the environment and prevention were taken into account when establishing a management system.

1. Feeding

The animals receive a balanced feed based on certified corn and soybeans, supplemented with forage peanut pasture (*Arachispintoi*) and fermented corn. Fermented grains improve the formation of a healthy microbiota. (Silva, 2000, Figueiredo, 2016).

2. Animal welfare

After the age of 45 days the pullets have free access to grassland during the day. The total area used is one hectare divided in five pickets. The henhouse with an internal area of 30 m² has five direct exits for each picket. The hens have a comfortable environment as in addition to adequate space, the pickets have several trees, providing shade and shelter from strong winds as well as a sensation of protection.

3. Sanitary management

The animals rotate in the pickets observing the principle of decontamination of the pastures through a minimum rest of 40 days. This interferes in the life cycle of both internal and external parasites.

4. Use of bioactive and medicinal plants

The farmers also use herbs once a week, to help in the control internal and external parasites.

To control the red mite (*Dermanyssus gallinae*)

Citronella (<i>Cymbopogon spp</i>)	alcoholic solution 5%	spray in the nest
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Herbs used v.o. to reinforce the control of internal parasites. (100 hens)

Thyme (<i>Thymus vulgaris</i>)	5 ml cereal alcohol solution 5%	mixed in the ration
Oregano (<i>Origanum vulgare</i>)	5 ml cereal alcohol solution 5%	mixed in the ration
Banana tree (<i>Musa spp</i>)	Leaves and stem of one tree	Free consumption

Results

Average 40 -66 weeks old

MORTALITY	2%
PRODUCTION	84,21%
EGGS'S WEIGT	66,19 g

The owners declare that they are satisfied with the results because although the organic ration is expensive, productivity is high and economic return is satisfactory.

Discussion and conclusions

The good results are indicative of the success of the adopted management. We consider that it is fundamental to analyze the entire production system and to take prophylactic measures correcting any errors mainly related to environmental infestation by parasites and animal welfare. The use of medicinal plants in animals should also be further studied and encouraged, considering the good results and low cost.



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