

Promoting range use in broiler chickens

Problem

Consumers expect organic broilers to stay outdoors. At the same time, range use may improve chicken welfare. However, in some farms a low number of chickens uses the range daily.

Solution

Providing a range area with varied vegetation and artificial shelters encourages range use. The house should have a covered veranda, as smooth transition to outdoors, to encourage chickens to use the range.

Impact

Providing a covered veranda and more varied structures in the range will encourage chickens to go out and may also help to prevent welfare problems.

Practical recommendation

When designing an organic chicken farm, consider the features and management of the free-range area in order to stimulate the chickens to go out more often, including:

- **If possible, place the range with good soil quality to mitigate nutrient leakage (clay).**
- **Use annual rotation of ranges and manage the ground close to the house so that the soil stays loose and is allowed to dry and recover.**
- **Apply pop holes or other exits to the house for easy access to the covered veranda and the range.**
- **Design the indoor environment, windows, and light systems to minimise light contrast between house and range.**
- **Consider supplying a covered veranda to encourage the chickens to enter this area and to range further away from the house.**
- **Supply vegetation, bushes, and trees in the range to stimulate the chickens to move further away from the house.**
- **If natural shelters are sparse, provide artificial shelters in the range for shade and protection from aerial predators.**
- **Choose a genetic line of broiler chicken suitable for free-range production.**

Applicability box

Theme

Animal welfare

Keywords

Chicken health, chicken welfare, consumer expectations, free range, organic, broilers

Geographical coverage

Global

Application time

Whole production cycle

Required time

Whole production cycle

Period of impact

Whole production cycle

Equipment

Artificial shelters, bushes, grass seed, trees, covered veranda



Picture 1 Easy access encourages the broiler chickens to enter the outdoor range.



Picture 2: Varied structures in the range attract the chickens to be outdoor more often.

Further information

Further readings

- CORE Organic Newsletter 'How is the bird health at Swedish organic broiler farms?': <https://projects.au.dk/coreorganiccofund/news-and-events/show/artikel/how-is-the-bird-health-at-swedish-organic-broiler-farms/>
- CORE Organic Newsletter 'Organic chickens using the free-ranges are often in better welfare condition': <https://projects.au.dk/coreorganiccofund/news-and-events/show/artikel/organic-chickens-using-the-free-ranges-are-often-in-better-welfare-condition/>

Weblinks

- Check the [Organic Farm Knowledge Platform](#) for more practical recommendations.
- **Project web page:** <https://www.slu.freebirds.se/>

About this practice abstract and FreeBirds

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