

Implementation of the Welfare Quality® broiler welfare monitor in The Netherlands

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In 2011 we studied whether it is possible to simplify the WQ broiler welfare monitor to make it less time consuming and thus more feasible in practice, without compromising the quality. The conclusions of that study were that there were possibilities for simplification but that the simplification strategies should be re-tested in a sample of farms that showed larger differences in final scores (De Jong et al., 2011). In addition, stakeholders indicated that although the monitor in its present form is too time consuming, the underlying measures may be valuable to the farmer to guide his management decisions and thus to improve broiler welfare on-farm. Therefore, a new project started with the following aims: (1) to test the proposed simplification strategies to promote adoption of the broiler welfare monitor in practice; (2) to study if and how the monitor may function as guidance for the management of the farmer. Fifty farms (one house per farm) are involved in the project and veterinarians are asked to discuss the results with the farmer. Each farm will be monitored four times in order to study if management changes are effective. In the first year (2013) the full WQ protocol will be used. If analysis after the first two visits shows that simplification is possible, the simplified protocol will be used during two visits in 2014. We will present the methodology used in the project to feed back the information to farmers and veterinarians, and present results of the first year (outcomes of farms of different categories and correlation between measures).