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A field study on first week chick mortality: which factors are related?

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In the production chain of broilers, chick mortality during the first week is an important measure for chick quality and is therefore highly related with the conception of broiler farms about their suppliers and thus the price paid for the chicks. This figure is often used as a measure of the efficiency in the breeder-hatchery-broiler production chain in addition to hatchability. In this study, we investigated the factors that are related to the first week chick mortality in broiler farms. Field data from two commercial Dutch hatcheries from 2004, 2005 and 2006 for 482 broiler farms were analysed. Chick mortality was significantly ($P < 0.05$) related to parental age, seasonality, parental breed, parental feed company and the interaction between parental breed and parental feed company. Moreover, there was significant ($P < 0.05$) difference in first week mortality between broiler farms and between different broiler houses in a single farm.