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Good Management Practices for the **Cobb800™** Broiler

The Cobb800™ broiler is a high yielding bird bred for exceptional performance. Focusing on a few key management points, producers can attain the genetic potential of a broiler that sets the standards for productivity and profitability.

Pre-Placement Equipment Checks

The key to successful broiler rearing starts by having a systematic and efficient preparation program in place. This program must start well before the chicks arrive on the farm. Pre-placement house preparation provides a solid foundation for efficient and profitable broiler production.

Minimum ventilation	• Start each flock with a good tight house, allowing ventilation rates to be effective and eliminate drafts on chicks. • Static pressure tests need to be evaluated for fan efficiency and house tightness. • Stir fans should be used as soon as the houses start the preheating process for fuel efficiency. • Check carbon dioxide level before placing chicks. CO_2 levels should always be < 3,000 ppm. • If litter is reused, the ammonia level should be < 25 ppm before chicks are placed.
Temperature sensors	• Place temperature sensors at bird height, away from any heat source and in cooler sections of the house, such as close to side walls.
Heaters	• Verify that all heaters are installed at the recommended height and operating at maximum output. Heaters should be checked and serviced BEFORE pre-heating begins
Floor Temperature	• Houses should be preheated so that the floor, litter, and ambient temperatures are stabilized at least 24 hours before placement. To achieve targets, begin pre-heating at least 48 hours before chick placement. • Litter temperature should be recorded before each placement. • Floor temperatures are critical for the first two weeks as the birds tend to lose significant heat through their feet. Correct litter temperature has a big impact on early performance especially mortality, weight gain and flock uniformity.
Drinkers	• Clean and sanitize the drinker lines. Flush all drinkers prior to placement. • Water must be clean and fresh. • Manually activate all nipples prior to placement. • Adjust pressure to produce a droplet of water visible on each nipple, without dripping. • Check for water leaks and air locks. • Ensure that nipple drinkers are at the chicks' eye level. • Weekly water line sanitation is needed while the birds are in the house.
Feeders	• For partial house brooding, supplementary feed should be provided for the first 7 to 10 days in the form of turbo feeders / trays and paper. Allow a minimum of 50 chicks per supplementary feeders. Providing a small amount of feed on a flat surface is very beneficial for a great start. • It is very important that the supplementary feeding system does not become empty as this will place great stress on the chick and reduce yolk sac absorption. • Continue to feed supplemental feed and do not allow the turbos, lids and pans to become empty. • Refresh supplemental feeders three times daily until all chicks can access the main feeding system. • It is highly encouraged to provide starter feed as a good quality and consistent crumble. • The automatic feeder system should be flooded at all times to ensure easy chick access to feed.

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Brooding

The importance of the brooding period cannot be over emphasized. The first 14 days of a chick's life sets the precedent for good performance. Extra effort during the brooding phase will be rewarded in the final flock performance. It is important to prepare the chick with a strong start in brooding by promoting early feed and water intake and good husbandry without compromise.

The organs and frame develop rapidly the first 14 days of life. Focus on this time frame is important to produce healthy birds. Consider these points:

- Develop a strong cardiovascular system early by providing the correct temperatures in brooding. The cardiovascular system must be able to distribute oxygenated blood to all the tissues. If chicks must compensate for temperature extremes by raising metabolic rates, the heart will be strained, and the cardiovascular system development may be impaired.
- Early bone development is essential. A strong skeletal system will be necessary to support the weight of the bird.
- A robust immune system is one of the most important factors. Keep in mind that many times, sick birds will not eat, and, in turn, will not gain weight. Similarly, poor gut health can lead to poor feed conversion.

Good Management

Getting every chick to consume feed and water quickly is top priority. Chicks will consume 20 to 25% of their body weight in feed and 40 to 45% of their body weight in water 24 hours after placement. Provide 1 supplemental tray per 50 chicks to help ensure chicks can access feed easily.

Drinker Line

At placement, nipple pins should be at chick eye level. After 2 days, adjust the height so that the bird's head is at a 45-degree angle to the nipple. As the flock ages, raise the line keeping the height at a 45-degree angle to the bird's head for life of the flock. Chicks should always drink from the drinker lines with feet flat on the floor.

Temperature

The key to maximizing bird performance and welfare outcomes is providing a consistent housing environment adjusted to the needs of the birds. This is especially critical for young birds where a consistent ambient and floor temperature are key factors to promote good activity.

Lighting

- Target a light intensity of 4 to 5 foot candles during brooding.
- Light intensity should not vary more than 20 %. Uniform distribution of light throughout the house is essential.
- Around day 10, gradually reduce light intensity 0.5 to 0.75 foot candles, unless local legislation prohibits this reduction.

Feed

- Provide feed in a crumble form in trays, turbos, or paper.
- Set automatic feed pans in full flood mode to maximize accessibility.
- For brooding, place automatic feed pans on the ground, in the litter and set on overflow where possible.
- Set the feed level within the automatic pans so that feed is easily accessible but spillage is minimized.
- Raise automatic feeders incrementally throughout the growing period so that the lip of the trough or pan is at mid-breast of the bird at all times.

Chicks from pre-peak flocks

Chicks from pre-peak breeder flocks are smaller and have a greater need for external heat to maintain their optimal body temperature compared to larger chicks. Smaller chicks have increased surface to body weight ratio and therefore body heat loss is greater than that of larger chicks. For small chicks, use higher brooding temperatures.

For optimum early development of chicks sourced from young breeder flocks, it is critical to provide easy access to water and feed. These chicks have a high demand for water accessibility. Water line height, pressure, and temperature along with good, clean water are keys to getting these young flock sourced chicks off to a great start.

Water program

Once the lights are turned on, the birds will feed first, then drink water. Therefore, it is critical to provide the water volume needed. A high volume of water is required to ensure water is distributed to the end of the drinker lines. Insufficient water volume will create air pockets in the drinker lines and birds will have to travel to find drinkers with water. It is not uncommon for a house full of 9 lb (4 kg) broilers to consume more than 3500 gal (13,000 L) of water in a day. It is critical that this water is clean, cool, and fresh. Ensure that the drinkers are well maintained and checked regularly for proper flow, temperature, and quality. Nipples should be able to supply 80 to 90 ml per minute. Keep in mind that late in the flock of big birds, the water consumption has a large impact on litter quality.

Nipple Flow Rate Guidelines*	
Age (Days)	Water flow per 30 seconds (ml)
0 to 7	20
8 to 14	25
15 to 21	30
22 to 28	35
29 to 35+	45

**General guidelines provided. Consult manufacturer for equipment specific guidelines.*

Lighting program

The light intensity and distribution impacts broiler activity. Correct stimulation of activity during the first few days of age is necessary for optimal feed consumption. At day 1, the lights should be on for 24 hours, after which the house should be dark for 1 hour per day. Around day 10, introduce longer periods of darkness. Extended lighting periods help chicks learn to eat and drink, ensuring a strong start. Periods of darkness are important for resting, preventing skeletal defects, supporting the immune system and flock uniformity.

Lighting Guidelines*	
Day	Hours of Dark
1	1
10	6
7 days before processing	4

**Dark periods should be adjusted to suit growth patterns by each company.*

House temperature and air quality

House temperatures should never vary more than 2 degrees (ºF) from the target temperature. The goal of effective temperature control is to adjust the environment in a way that chickens are unaffected by any changes in temperature. It is important to ensure an optimal environment with good ventilation and ensure good litter quality and lighting. Ventilation is important for removing excess heat as broiler growth accelerates and daily feed consumption rapidly increases.

Monitor bird behavior and feed intake. Adjustments in air exchange rates, air velocity and house set points need to ensure bird comfort. Increased bird body temperatures will cause panting, reduce feed intake and subsequent decreases in daily gains. Higher levels of panting indicate energy required for growth is being used for heat dissipation. Panting will add humidity to the house environment and increase feed conversion.

Temperature Guidelines*	
Age (Days)	Temperature (ºF)
1	91 to 92
7	85 to 86
14	81 to 82
35	70 to 71
55	55

**Varies based on house humidity, stocking density and cooling source.*

Nutrition program

For optimal performance, use the Cobb800 recommended diet. This diet is specifically formulated for the Cobb800, a high yielding breed. Results may differ from expected performance when using a feed program recommended for other broiler products. The nutrition program and performance targets are available in the Cobb800 Broiler Supplement and can be downloaded from our website at www.cobbgenetics.com/resources.

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