



# The **Cobb800™** Behavior and Management Guidelines

The Cobb800 breed represents a significant advancement in poultry genetics. This broiler breeder has been bred for improved livability, early lay performance, and excellent persistency. Understanding global technical experience and applying best-practice recommendations for pullet management, production and nutrition can optimize breeder performance and attain the genetic potential of Cobb's newest breed.

## The Essentials

- Biosecurity should always be top priority. Flock health is essential to achieve breed potential.
- Follow Cobb feed recommendations. Internal research has shown that Cobb's recommended feed specifications have a positive impact on flock uniformity, fleshing, feathering, and performance.
- Provide ideal brooding conditions (feed, light, ventilation, bedding, temperature and water management) and closely monitor to ensure physiological requirements are met for optimum bird comfort.
- Adequate feeder space and flock uniformity are essential to achieve optimum performance. Inconsistent feed intake is the main cause of uniformity issues.
- Observe the flock during feeding as often as possible – weekly at a minimum. Ensure feed distribution of < 3 minutes with chain and pan feeders in the dark and correct feed space requirements.
- Monitor daily water intake and provide adequate drinker space.
- Consistent flock uniformity ( >75 %) and low coefficient of variation (10 to 12 %) are preferred during the rearing period to achieve proper conditioning prior to photo stimulation.

Please refer to Cobb Breeder Management Guide for general flock recommendations and uniformity management available at [Cobbgenetics.com](http://Cobbgenetics.com).

## Rearing

### Support development for good health and feathering

**It is critical to support good development in the first 6 weeks.** In particular, correct skeletal structure, organ development, and feather growth early in life will impact parent stock performance. It is recommended to provide Chick Starter feed for the first 5 weeks to support strong development and good feather growth.

Keep the flock on the target body weight plan. **It is essential to attain the 4-week body weight target.** After 4 weeks, birds should continue to gain body weight from 5 to 6 weeks. Field observations have indicated that weight gain stalls at 5 and 6 weeks tend to correlate with some abnormal behavior (feather pick / licking). Ensure consistent weight gain that is on target throughout the rearing period to support correct conditioning at photo stimulation.

### Be aware of unique behaviors

**This female is water efficient** and does not play with the water lines. For this reason, litter should remain dry and allow dust bathing. **Water restriction is not necessary and not recommended.** Because this female has a lower water intake than other breeds, it is recommended to always keep water available when the lights are turned on.

**Birds may ingest organic matter while digging and exploring in the litter.** If bacteria, worms, microorganisms or intestinal pathogens are ingested with the litter/dirt, intestinal issues can occur. In some cases, ingesting pathogens may cause enteric disease negatively impacting body weight gains. Therefore, deworming and intestinal health programs are important to support good gut health and prevent intestinal related diseases.



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## Minimizing stress in rearing is important for good outcomes in production

**This pullets response to stress varies and depends on the event and duration.** In severe cases, very stressful events can induce abnormal behaviors that begin in production and last through depletion. It's important to minimize stress by ensuring good management practices and taking extra care for regular flock treatments. Create and adhere to a schedule for feeding, visiting, house checks, walking programs and any maintenance. Avoid entering the house outside of the scheduled times. When penning birds for weighing, ensure ample space inside the pen and pen as few birds as possible. Prevent loud noises including machinery inside and outside the house. Noises from motors, pumps and lawn mowing equipment can startle the birds.

**Conduct vaccinations at 10 to 12 weeks with extra care** including gentle handling, low lighting, and supportive recovery. Ensuring birds are correctly conditioned at 10 to 12 weeks will help prevent adverse impacts related to stress associated with the vaccination process.

**Maintain a stocking density of 1.5 ft<sup>2</sup> per bird (≈7 birds/m<sup>2</sup>) and ensure adequate feed and water access.** Insufficient feeder and drinker line space due to over stocking can create stress and lead to abnormal behaviors. Likewise, feeders and drinkers that are not operating correctly, can reduce feed and water availability and cause stress. Check feeders to confirm they are working correctly and feed is being distributed around the entire track (into all pans). Adjust feeders to the correct height so they are easily accessible. Check water availability throughout the house and verify that the water temperature is correct, nipple pins are not clogged, the water is clean, and the pressure is set correctly.

**Lighting intensity can be reduced** to help calm the flock if needed. Be sure to check with and comply with local legislations. Do not dim lights below local regulatory mandates.





## Transfer

Minimize stress during transfer with good preparation and planning. Transfer is one of the most critical moments in the life of breeders. The success of transfer depends on the rearing farm management, transfer process, and preparation of the production farm. For a smooth transition, plan the transfer in detail and ensure the hen house is ready to receive the flock before transfer begins.

### Create and follow a plan for transfer

The laying house must be ready to receive the flock, with the **feeders, drinkers, and nests fully operational, one week before** the transfer date. Ideally, use the same drinker and feeder equipment styles in rearing and in production.

Ensure that there are **enough clean crates, coops or containers to move the entire flock**. Being prepared with the correct equipment and sufficient numbers of containers is crucial to ensuring the move is as quick and efficient as possible.

**Trucks, crates, and crews should be dedicated to the transfer of pullets**. Otherwise ensure 72 hours have passed since equipment and crews have been exposed to other birds.

Birds should have **empty crops and digestive tracts prior to moving** to reduce stress and keep the equipment clean. Birds can be fed after transfer.

Before moving, **ensure males and females reach the standard weights and body conformation for their age**. Moving birds too early can cause production issues and mortality.

Give copies of **all flock records from the pullet rearing farm to the production farm**. Include feed and water intake, body weights, vaccination records, and any notes. These records can be very valuable to understand issues that may arise on the production farm.

### Minimize stress during the transfer process

Move the birds at night or in the early morning, **during hot weather**. **In cold weather**, reduce bird exposure to extreme temperatures by using closed trucks.

If using containers or coops with wheels, **clear a path in the scratch area before releasing the birds**. Any obstacles can cause delays or injuries to birds and humans.

When taking birds out of crates or coops by hand, **place them directly on the slats**. If using modules with a loader or a pullet trailer, birds should be placed on the litter since this process involves mechanical equipment. To prevent injury, never place birds directly on solid equipment (ex: feeder or nests).

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## After transfer:

**After all birds are moved, distribute feed in the feeders.** Feed will provide a distraction, reduce stress, and help the birds become familiar with the new house. Depending on transportation, weather, and moving distance, feed amounts can be increased 30 to 50 % the 1st day after the move.

Observe the birds closely and perform crop checks (at least 100 birds) to **make sure that they have accessed feed and water.** Place birds with dirty beaks, clear veins on legs, pale combs, hard crops or those with no feed and water in the crop on the slats close to the drinkers.

Birds with good fleshing and fat reserves **will rapidly lose conditioning if they do not find water and feed.** Without good feed and water intake, birds will use fat stores for energy, which will ultimately impact production.

Walk through the house frequently to **encourage birds to use the slatted area.** The birds must become acclimated to accessing the slats for water, feed and nests.

If equipment is different from the rearing house, carefully observe feeding the first 3 days after transfer to correct any issues.





## Production

### Nutrition and feed management to support egg production

Once photo stimulated, **egg production onset and climb to peak egg production is rapid.** Under optimal conditions, the 1st egg is laid 8 to 12 days after photo stimulation. **Make sure that hens are consuming higher calcium containing Breeder 1 (B1) feed by 1st egg,** which involves proactive logistical coordination. Initiating B1 shortly before the first egg will not cause issues. However, delaying B1 could cause lingering mortality and thin eggshells.

**When feeding into lay, consider that this hen has very rapid egg production and requires large daily feed increases.** During peak egg production, the hen's body will allocate more resources to egg production than for growth. Flock managers should not hesitate to allocate necessary increases.

Around or shortly after peak feed amounts are reached, **the flock may reduce intake and prolong feed cleanup.** Reducing feed post peak should be managed carefully to maximize egg production but prevent excessive weight gain. Focus on hen daily body weight gains, daily egg weight changes, and feed cleanup time to help determine the amounts and timing of feed reduction from peak feed amounts. Using a timed feeding approach can help to maintain body condition, reduce floor eggs, and support flock uniformity [see Timed Feeding white paper for more information].

### Manage egg production to ensure clean nest eggs

With a rapid onset of egg production and climb to peak production, **be prepared and open nests 1-week after transfer to the hen house.** Delaying any longer may cause issues with floor and slat eggs.

**This female has a relatively short egg laying window (3 to 4 hours).** Sufficient nesting space is very important to prevent floor and slat eggs. Additionally, nests should be easily accessible. Check the area in front of the nests to be sure there is enough space between any equipment (ex. water lines) and nest entrances for hens.

**Ensure the flock has water available with flow rates necessary to support egg production.** Check the water lines often as sufficient water consumption is very important.

**Field observations consistently report that this hen is very social.** Her social nature makes community nests more suitable, as it is not unusual to see two hens squeezing into one single hole in mechanical or manual nest systems.

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### This hen has a curious nature

This hen will continue **digging and exploring the litter into production**. These behaviors can promote floor egg laying. Ensure good management practices focused on floor egg prevention, that include preventing shadows in cool cell areas and below equipment such as pan feeders.

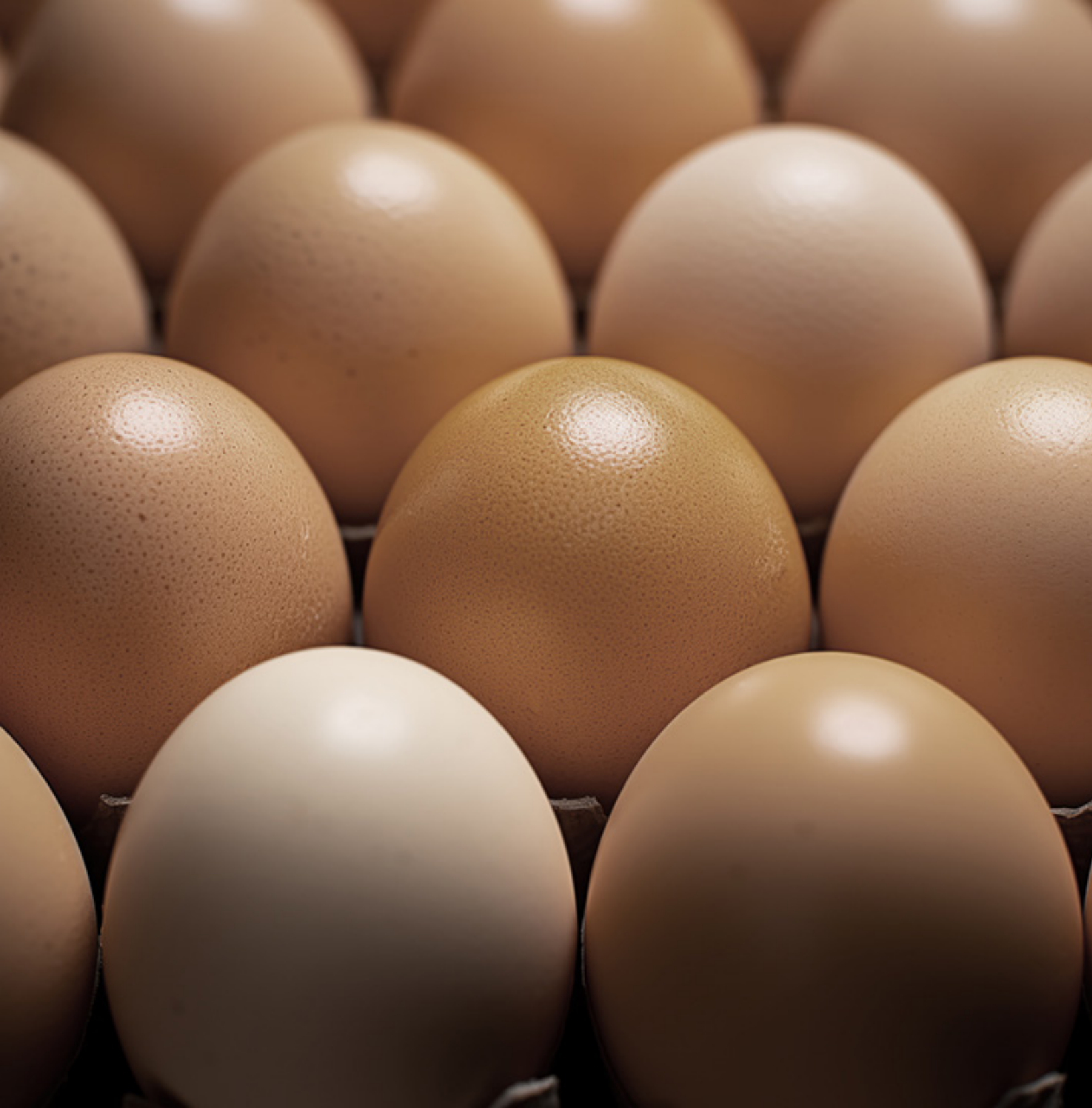
**When resting, hens like to sit with their sides against a wall or pressed up close to the side of the slats.** Therefore, it is also important to focus the walking program on the floor areas to move hens. While walking, cross the house in a moderate pace and gently nudge hens that do not immediately move. Walking quickly, making a lot of noise, and aggressively moving hens can cause stress to the hens, as well as the flock.

### Monitor male and female interactions

**Hens are very receptive to males** and do not shy away from the scratch area. Good male management and mixing at recommended male to female ratios is important to prevent aggressive male behavior. Her social behavior and receptivity to males may increase the risk of injury or mortality if males display aggressive behaviors.

Male and female sexual synchronization is important for good production. Consider that **this hen matures very early** when deciding on timing of mixing in the production house.





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