

Research project IZS VE 07/12

Effects of preslaughter transportation on the welfare of turkeys and spent hens

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During loading and transport to slaughterhouse, several factors expose poultry to social stress, injuries and thermal discomfort. Heat stress was identified as a major cause of dead-on-arrival incidence (DOA) for broilers, while few data are available regarding turkeys and spent hens. Moreover there is a lack of data on temperature distribution inside the transport vehicles and about turkeys' needs of movement, strictly hindered by the actual cage height.

The first aim of this project is a retrospective analysis of DOA of a significant number of turkeys and spent hens transported to slaughter, taking into account the effect of all single factors that may affect animal welfare: temperature, travel distance and duration, animal genotype, gender, live weight, age, stocking density and cage height.

Subsequently, we will investigate the stress response of selected groups of poultry settled in different parts of the transport vehicle in summer, winter (trial A) and also considering the effect (trial B) of four experimental cages. Environmental parameters during transport will be recorded by means of data loggers inside the cages.