Animal welfare: impacts of pre-slaughter operations on the current poultry industry

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Abstract

The pre-slaughter operations are characterized by all the steps after the phase of raising at the farm until hanging of birds on the slaughter line, and this period is relatively faster than the farm phase. Nevertheless, this phase can cause acute stress in broilers, due to the direct handling of the birds at catching and by offering unknown stressful stimuli to the birds during transportation, lairage and hanging on the slaughter line. Other stressful factors such as handling the bird, crating density, impacts on live load, distance and duration of transport between farm and slaughterhouse, and microclimatic conditions in transport and lairage affect the welfare and, consequently, the meat quality of broiler chickens. The effects of these losses will be felt by all sectors of poultry farming. For all these factors, it is important that the poultry production chain be aligned in the near future to meet the external and internal consumers’ requirements regarding animal welfare. Therefore, the aim of this review is to address the main critical points, which affect the welfare of broilers during pre-slaughter operations in intensive production systems.

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