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Litter Management

Litter management is critical to foot pad quality and general disease control. Wet litter leads to ammonia production and subsequent respiratory and leg quality problems.

Causes of Wet Litter:

1. Inadequate beginning litter depth
2. Crowded birds
3. Improper temperature and humidity
4. Inadequate air turnover
5. Inadequate or uneven air movement in barn
6. Poor waterer management — depth of water in waterers, height of waterer, water spillage

Litter Management Practices

1. Begin working litter as "caked area" develops in the brooder ring and early during the growing period.
 - Remove "caked litter"
 - Stir to break up caked litter
 - Add dry litter or rake dry litter over wet areas as needed
 - Till litter:
 - Tilling litter each week can be helpful if only the top of litter is caked.

- Excessive tilling may increase litter eating problems.
- Tilling litter may increase ammonia release.

2: Add Heat

- Adding heat increases the moisture carrying capacity of air.
- a .6°C (1°F) increase = > 2% Relative Humidity increased carrying capacity
- an 11°C (20°F) increase approximately doubles moisture carrying capacity of air.
- In a turkey of 6-10 weeks of age, the moisture in the droppings and the moisture exhaled exceeds the heat given off by the turkey. The net result is wet litter. Additional heat is needed to be able to "absorb" moisture.
- In a turkey of over 13 weeks of age, the moisture in the droppings and the moisture exhaled is less than the heat given off by the turkey. The result is the exact opposite and you may end up with dry and dusty barn conditions.

Control this situation with ventilation, lower temperatures and use of "foggers" (adding moisture).

3: Adjust Ventilation

- Adequate and even air movement in barn aids in removing moisture and equalizes temperature.
- Proper air turnover removes moisture, dust, ammonia, resulting in good air quality.
- Good air quality is essential 24 hours per day, throughout the birds' life.

4: Reduce Water Spillage Through Water Management

- Height of waterer — keep waterers even with the backs of the turkeys. Adjust frequently.
- For the first 14 days, keep water level at the top of the waterer lip. After 14 days, water depth should be ½" or 12 mm.
- Clean and disinfect waterers daily.
- Move waterers every other day to prevent wet areas from forming (donuts). Have at least three locations to which waterers can be moved.

Some barns are now set up to move waterers daily.

Litter management is one of the most important key factors in turkey production

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