



## Management of Birds during Winter Season

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### INTRODUCTION

Chickens are very sensitive to extremes of weather specially winters during which their growth, egg production and health may be seriously hampered. An ideal temperature of 12-24°C is needed to maximize their potential. So if the temperature goes below 12°C then steps must be taken to warm the house. Therefore, farmer must be ready to take on these challenges by adopting some winter stress alleviating practices to overcome economic losses.

#### Major adverse effects of cold stress:

- Chick mortality is very high during winter season.
- Birds consume more feed to maintain their body temperature which increases their cost of production. In spite of consuming more feed, the growth is not as par, because most of the energy of birds used in maintaining their body heat.
- Because of less evaporation in winter more moisture is retained which creates dampness in the house.
- Oxygen supply is reduced due to respiratory tract infections like chronic respiratory diseases, infectious bronchitis and avian influenza which compromise the lungs capacity.
- Sexual maturity is delayed in pullets so these birds turn out to be poor layers.
- Combs become cyanotic in winter.

#### Preventive measures to combat cold stress:

- Provide warm water to the birds.
- House should be designed in a way that maximum sun light enters the shed during day time.
- Sliding windows/side curtains can be used during daytime to release the ammonia which can be closed during night time to prevent severe winds.

- Vitamin C as well as vitamin E can be given to increase the immune response.
- Remove all leaking waterers and repair leaky roofs.
- Provide clean litter material and increase the thickness of litter (use at least 6 inch thick litter).
- The roof height should be lowered.
- Seal all the cracks and crevices in the house.
- Provide good ventilation but prevent chill air from entering inside the shed.
- Solar heaters can be used to warm the house.
- Number of feeders should be increased as compared to summer.
- Plastic sheets should be put over exhaust fans to prevent cold waves entering in.
- Fat can be added to the feed to meet the higher energy requirements of the birds.
- Many of vaccines/ medicine/ antistress vitamins are given to poultry through water. As water consumption of bird is reduced during winter season. Therefore, care should be taken that waterers are removed few hours prior to water medication and medicine/vaccine is given in less amount of water so that birds can consume total water and each bird get benefit of medicine/vaccine or other supplements.
- LPG operated Gas Brooders can be used which gives much more uniform heat as compared to conventional types of brooding practices like Electric Lamps, Coal or Wood. The radiant Gas Brooder creates better microclimate for the chicks so that they can choose their most comfortable place and warmth at any time. This results in proper growth and weight gain.

In this way better management of birds can be done to maximize their production capacity and good health.