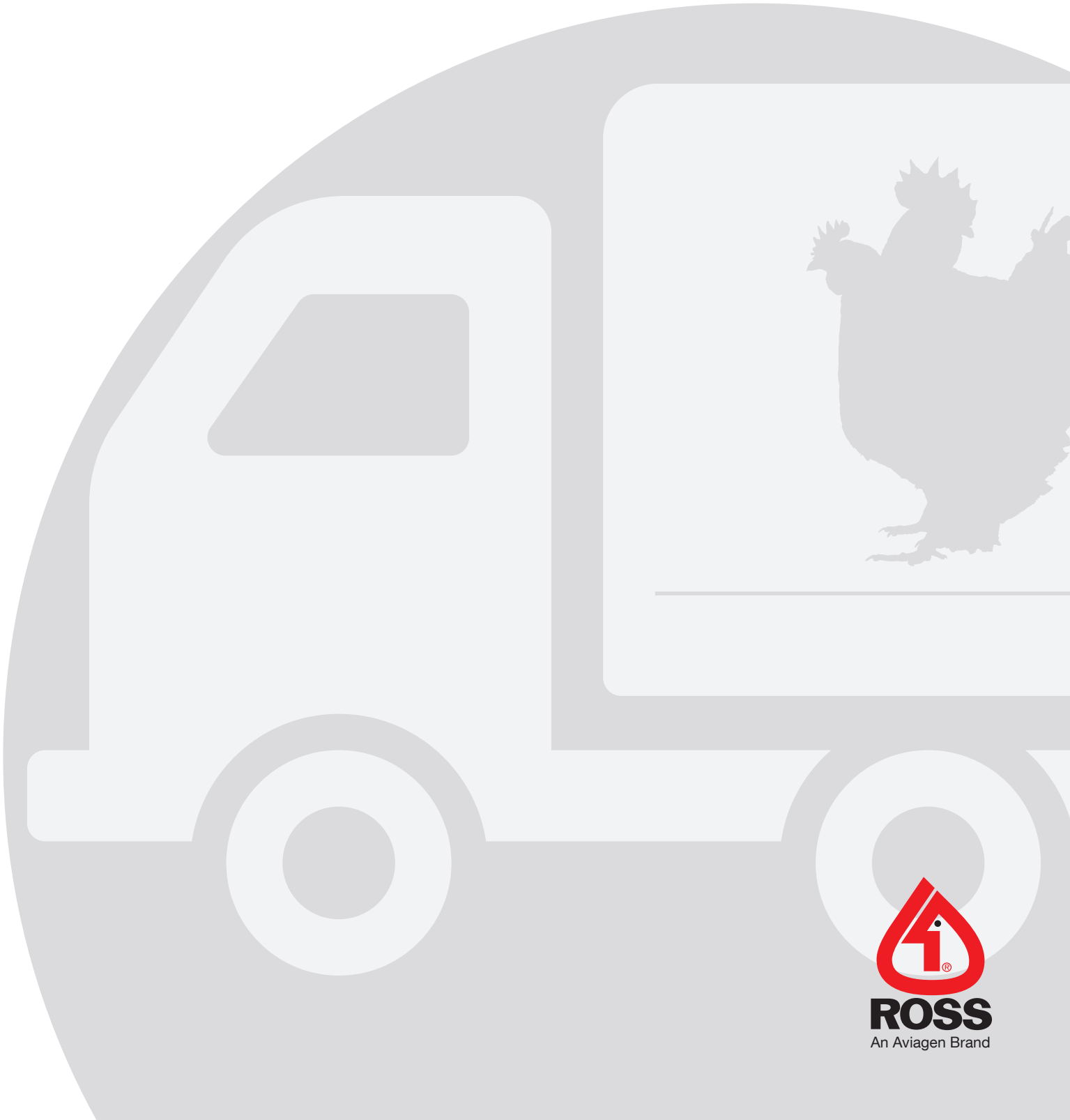
Best Practice
in the Breeder House

Transfer (Rear and Move)



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Best Practice in the Breeder House

Transfer (Rear and Move)

Introduction

Where rear and move facilities exist birds are transferred out of the rearing facilities and moved to the laying facilities before lay commences. This process must be managed carefully to avoid losses in body weight and flock uniformity, reduced breeder performance, welfare and even increased mortality.

Transfer

Best practice management of the transfer process starts about 2 weeks before the birds are moved with transfer planning and continues until about 5 days after transfer with monitoring the birds to ensure they have settled into the laying facility.

Best Practice for Transferring Broiler Breeders

1	Prepare. Ensure the laying house is laid out ready to receive the flock well in advance. Minimize environmental and equipment differences between rear and lay facilities.
2	Ensure birds can find feed and water easily and quickly upon arrival.
3	Monitor crop fill and bird behavior after transfer to ensure birds are eating and drinking and have settled in well to the new facilities.

Pre-Transfer

1 **The lay house must be ready to receive the flock, with feeders, drinkers and nest boxes in place at least one week prior to the planned transfer date.**

2 **Feeding and drinking equipment, feeding space, lighting programs and biosecurity should ideally be the same on the lay farm as on the rear farm.**

3 **The production farm manager must have complete rearing records for the flock in advance of transfer to allow unloading of stock to be appropriately organized.**

Records should include;

- Bird numbers
- Body weight and uniformity
- Feed amounts
- Lighting program
- Vaccinations and medications

4 **Minimize the difference in environment between the rear and lay houses.** If it is cold outside, it is beneficial to pre-warm the lay house to achieve a floor and air temperature of 18-20°C (64-68°F). This will prevent condensation build up and help maintain litter quality, and will optimize feed intake.

5 **During loading and transportation:**

- Birds should have an empty digestive tract but water must be available for as long as possible (up to at least an hour before loading).
- Crates, equipment and the trucks must be clean and disinfected and checked for bacteriological status.
- Crate height and density should allow all birds to sit in one layer. The number of birds per crate must adhere to local legislation. In high temperatures the number of birds per crate should be reduced.
- Birds should be caught and handled carefully using both hands. Adhere to local legislation.
- Birds should have adequate protection from the weather and appropriate ventilation; air should move freely around and between crates.


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Transfer

1 **Transfer should not be completed before 18 weeks or after 23 weeks of age.** For light-proof laying facilities transfer should not be later than 21 weeks, for open-sided housing transfer may need to be delayed (depending on season and natural day length).

2 **Move males at least one day before females.** This gives males time to find the feeders and drinkers, and become accustomed to using the slatted area.

3 **Transfer must be timed so that all birds can find feed and water before the lights go off at night.**


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4 **The key to a successful transfer is encouraging feed and water intake.**

- Feeding and drinking systems should be the same in the laying and the rearing facilities.
- Birds should have access to feed and water upon arrival at the laying house.
- If nipple drinkers are used in the laying house but bell drinkers have been used in rear, increasing the pressure in the nipple line and/or shaking the line (until a drop of water appears on the nipples) for the first few days will help birds find water. This strategy needs to be managed with care if litter quality is to be maintained.
- If bell drinkers are used in the laying house but nipple drinkers have been used in rear, set the bell drinkers low for at least the first week after transfer or until all birds have found water.
- Female feeders should be set to half the recommended height for the first 3-4 days after transfer to help the birds find feed quickly. Bird activity at feeding should be monitored to ensure all birds are feeding prior to lifting the feeders to the correct height.


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5 **Do not feed birds on the morning of transfer but provide extra feed upon arrival at the laying house (approximately 50%). Extra feed should also be given the day before and day after transfer (approximately 50%).** The actual amount of extra feed given should be adjusted depending on season, environment, transport time and historical data.

6 **Transferring birds directly onto the slats will help them find feed and water.**


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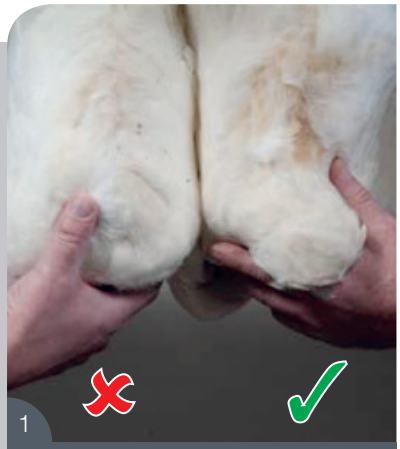
After Transfer

1 **After transfer assess crop fill of both males and females.**

- Crop fill should be assessed 30 minutes after the first feed and then again 24 hours later.
- A random selection of at least 50 males and 50 females should be assessed for crop fill.
- Ideally all birds assessed should have full crops after feeding. If this is not the case then the reason for this needs to be investigated:
  - Inadequate feeder space.
  - Inadequate feed distribution.
  - Inadequate feed amount.
  - Inadequate water availability.

2 **Continue to monitor feeding behavior.**



1 *The bird on the left has an empty crop while the bird on the right a full crop.*

Successful Transfer

1 **If transfer has been managed well birds will find feed and water quickly, and there will be minimal effect on growth and flock CV%.**

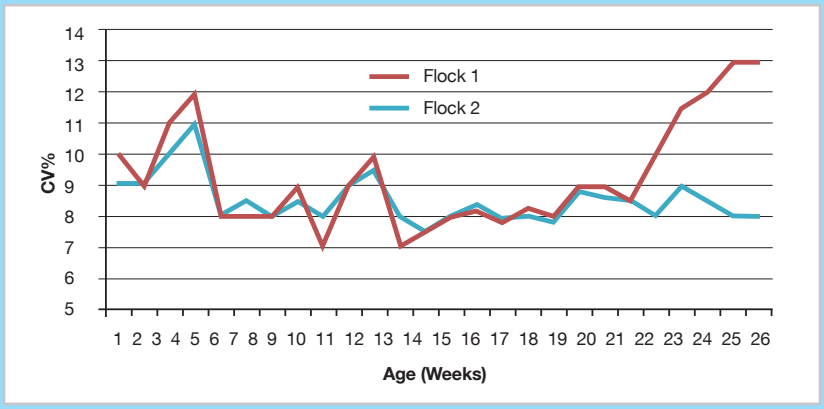
Practical example

After transfer, a flock (Flock 1) that had been well-managed during rear with a CV% of 8.5 at transfer, showed a dramatic increase in CV% (13 by 25 weeks).

An investigation showed that:

- **There was a change in equipment between the rear and lay houses (from pan feeders and nipple drinkers to chain feeders and bell drinkers).**
- **Birds were not unloaded on to the slats where feeders and drinkers were positioned.**
- **There was no feed in the feeder lines when birds arrived.**
- **Crop fill was not being assessed.**
- **The house had not been walked enough to encourage the birds to move around.**

In the subsequent flock (Flock 2) birds were unloaded directly on to the slats where feed and water were, feed was available to the birds upon arrival, the house was walked regularly during the first 48 hours and crop fill was assessed to ensure birds were finding feed and water. CV% remained unchanged after transfer.



Notes

Notes

Every attempt has been made to ensure the accuracy and relevance of the information presented. However, Aviagen® accepts no liability for the consequences of using the information for the management of chickens.

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