How can illuminated signs de-stress chickens?

The welfare of birds in the poultry industry is of vital importance. One groundbreaking EU-funded project is exploring ways to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of farmed chickens.

The EU-funded CHICKENSTRESS project was established to investigate environmental factors (such as housing) that lead to chronic stress, as well as the neurobiological, genetic and developmental factors that lead to higher resilience. The project has now been featured in the CORDIS series of explanatory videos titled Make the Connection.

While new housing systems for hens are an improvement on battery cages – banned
in the EU since 2012 – identifying the environments most suitable for hens remains challenging. The CHICKENSTRESS project, undertaken with the support of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions programme, sought to identify possible ways of reducing stress in new housing systems.

“We still don’t really know what environments birds find least stressful,” notes CHICKENSTRESS project coordinator Tom Smulders from Newcastle University in the United Kingdom. The project found that adding light to hatching facilities, great environmental enrichment, and LED lights that encourage hens to explore living spaces could all improve well-being. The innovations are already attracting interest from commercial poultry farms.

‘Make the connection with EU science’ is a series of explanatory videos focusing on the scientific content and exploitation aspects of EU research projects.

Keywords

CHICKENSTRESS, hens, chickens, brains, neuroscience, genetics, neurobiological

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CHICKENSTRESS

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