

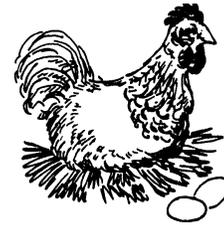


*The University of Georgia*

**Cooperative Extension Service**

*College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences / Athens, Georgia 30602-4356*

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## **COMMERCIAL EGG TIP...**

### **FULL FEED MOLTING OF LAYING HENS**

During the past several years, there has been a marked interest in the possibility of molting commercial layer flocks without resorting to extended periods of feed withdrawal. The traditional forced molting program, used widely by the commercial egg industry for many decades, involves a combination of reduced light and total feed removal for about 1½ weeks. Egg production ceases after 5 days, from 25 to 30% of body weight is lost, and after approximately 5 weeks the flock returns to production. While this method has proven to be a highly effective means of rejuvenating layer flocks, the extended period of feed withdrawal has become objectionable to a number of consumer groups. As a result, attempts have been made to develop molting programs which are not based on complete feed withdrawal.

Occasional reports can be found in the scientific literature indicating that high levels of zinc or low levels of sodium might be used to reduce feed intake. However, the methods currently being investigated are based more on the formulation of diets very high in fiber, and as a consequence low in metabolizable energy. A number of feed ingredients, in fact, are quite low in the amount of calories actually digested and absorbed by the chicken. In the accompanying table, several such feed ingredients are listed, along with respective energy and nutrient contents. The objective in using such diets is to provide adequate amounts of calcium, phosphorus, vitamins and trace minerals to ensure the bird has adequate amounts of these essential nutrients. The energy level is held quite low so as to encourage a moderate degree of weight loss, without incurring an unacceptable degree of mortality. As egg production rapidly decreases, the bird's need for protein and amino acids is similarly reduced.

A problem occasionally encountered when using high levels of fibrous ingredients is that feed may bridge and not flow cleanly through feed distribution systems. This consideration may limit the use of some high fiber ingredients.

At the 2004 Georgia Poultry Conference in Athens, GA, the subject of non-feed withdrawal molting programs will be discussed. For those unable to attend, a copy of the report

### **PUTTING KNOWLEDGE TO WORK**

The University of Georgia and Ft. Valley State College, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and counties of the state cooperating.  
The Cooperative Extension service officers educational programs, assistance and materials to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex or disability  
An equal opportunity/affirmative action organization committed to a diverse work force..

will be available through the Poultry Science Department of the University of Georgia.

INGREDIENT	METABOLIZABLE ENERGY		PROTEIN	CRUDE FIBER
	Kcal/Lb	Kcal/Kg	%	%
DDGS	1275	2805	27	9
Rice mill feed	325	715	3	36
Soybean hulls	300	660	10	40
Wheat middlings	950	2090	15	9

  
Nicholas M. Dale  
Extension Poultry Scientist

Extension County Coordinator/Agent

“Your local County Extension Agent is a source of more information on this subject.”