Taking the Mystery out of Downgrading
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What is Grade?
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Parts Condemnation

All carcasses are inspected and unwholesome portions are removed (trimmed) and discarded

- Infected areas
- Green bruising
- Breast blisters
- Deep muscular blood clots
- Scabs & sores
- Contamination/mutilation
What is Grade?

- Grade A is highest result possible in the group project of producing turkeys.
- Everyone involved from the hatchery, grower, catching crew, driver, and everyone in the processing plant have to perform correctly to achieve this goal.
Types of Grades

CFIA Grade A
Utility Grade
Grade B
Grade C
CFIA Grade A Prominent Discolorations

CFIA Grade A

• 1.6 cm² Breast (dime size)
• 6.5 cm² Elsewhere (toonie size)
• Non-prominent Discolorations
  - Theoretically unlimited
CFIA Grade A Skin Tears

CFIA Grade A <5.5 kg
- 6 mm Breast
- 2.5 cm Elsewhere

CFIA Grade A >5.5 kg
- 1.2 cm Breast
- 3.5 cm Elsewhere
Dislocated Joints/Broken Bones

• No dislocated joints or broken bones
CFIA Grade A
Conformation
Green Bruises

Green bruising not allowed
Scabs/Scratches

- Birds with scabs are not allowed to be given a grade until the scab is removed.
- Sometimes the scab can be trimmed without removing the skin or the amount of trimmed skin is under the Grade A tolerance for skin tear.
CFIA Grade A Wing Tips

CFIA Grade A

• No wing tip requirements

• Missing wing tips can be a source of customer complaints but more commonly complaints are for missing giblets!
CFIA Grade A Tails

CFIA Grade A

• Must be attached
• Everything went smoothly and according to plan in all phases of production, livehaul, and processing.
• System is “running on all 8 cylinders” from hatchery through the plant
• Opportunity for very low parts condemnation
• Generally lower risk for animal welfare concerns
Consistently Low Downgrading Indicates

- a positive attitude
- good animal husbandry
- a respect for poultry welfare
- an ability to adapt to adverse and sometimes challenging conditions
- Good relationship with CFIA
- desire for profit
- pride
50% A Indicates

• There were problems
  – Live production?
  – Live haul?
  – Processing?

• Potential for high parts condemnation

• Inefficient processing

• Increased risk for animal welfare concerns: broken wings, legs, green bruising

• Potential for finger-pointing
Downgrading Diagnostics

- Downgrading diagnosis allows us to identify and measure individual causes of downgrading. This provides a scorecard for all those involved in producing the birds as to their portion of the downgrading profile.
- Once individual causes of downgrading are measured, they can be managed and corrected.
- Not only can defects occurring from grow-out can be separated from those occurring during catching, transportation, and during processing, the specific actions or situations can often be identified.
Most Common Types of Downgrading

Green bruises/Old wing bone breaks
Scabs and sores
Breast blisters
Catching Wing bruises/breaks
Old Wing Bone Break

- Common cause of hen and tom growing downgrading
- A wing that was broken & set or re-calcified several weeks before processing
- Identified by hard lump of bone, majority on humerus, minority radius, ulna
Old Wing Bone Break

- May have open abscess
- Infection often causes liver to turn green and can cause confusion to the osteomyelitis program
- Most often trimmed and bird passed but downgraded
Old Bone Break Prevention

- This defect is several weeks old. Gentle handling of turkeys at all times is needed
- Care during move from brood to grow-out
- Never grasp a turkey by its wing or wings
- Following lighting program directions carefully
- Reduce activity of turkeys, especially when working in a flock
Color Changes

- Color is a clue as to the age of a bruise
- Red appears almost immediately
- 12-24 hours shiny black (black eye)
- 24-36 hours green appears
- Usually healed in 2 weeks

Do not try this at home
Green Bruising

- Bruises which occurred at least 2 days before processing
- Associated with bird activity on farm
- Green may indicate another defect present (ruptured tendon, old bone break, etc.)
- Can be from internal or external injuries
Green Bruises
Preventing Green Bruises

• Prevention in many ways similar to old bone breaks
• Watch bird density, especially just prior to moving
• Don't force turkeys to move so fast they use their wings to get away. Personnel and equipment should move slowly through flocks, especially within 2 weeks of marketing
• Use slow-moving litter tilling/housekeeping equipment. Raise up feeders and waterers when tilling. Don’t crowd birds into corners when tilling
Green Bruising
Green Bruising
Total Wing Damage

- Top Plants
  - Old Bone Breaks
  - Green
  - Picker
  - Pre-Scald
  - Catching

- Ind Ave
  - Old Bone Breaks
  - Green
  - Picker
  - Pre-Scald
  - Catching
**Leg Synovitis/Swollen Drums**

• An inflammatory and/or infectious process usually in the hock joint or in the tendons which causes the leg to be enlarged. This is usually accompanied by abnormal fluid.

• Can be due to a tendon rupturing in the hock joints, especially in heavy hens and heavy toms.
Foot Paw Quality
Leg Synovitis by Foot Pad Score

% Leg Synovitis vs Foot Pad Score

- LBH
- C-Hens
Use Paws as Indicators
Leg Synovitis

- Prevention is based mainly on controlling each infectious disease that affects bones and joints
- Have disease outbreaks and/or leg problems accurately diagnosed as to cause so treatments can be more effective
- Keep litter in barns soft and dry
- Repair water spills immediately
Scratches/scabs/sores
Sores/Scratches

• Leading cause for over-trim in the processing plant
• Most very poor grading flocks have extensive old scratch problems due to toenails. Some flocks achieve excellent grades without being toe trimmed.
• Density, lighting, breed, nutrition, & husbandry can all have influences on scratches
Elevated scratches directly accounts for downgrading but indirectly affects:

- Sub-cutaneous condemnation
- Picker tears
- Contamination condemnation
Toe Trimming

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<th>% Scratches/Scabs</th>
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<th>Hens</th>
<th>Toms</th>
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<tr>
<td>4-Toes</td>
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Legend: **0-Toes**, **3-Toes**, **4-Toes**
Scratch Prevention

• Remove dew claw on hens!
• If high breast/body scratches, possible situations that cause birds to become scared and pile
• Wing/leg scratches may indicate competition for feeder/waterer space
• Watch for crowding around heaters
• Correct feathering problem if it exists
• Prevent out-of-food situations
Completion of Breast Blister Trim
Conditions Conducive to Breast Blisters

- Overly hard crusted litter
- Warm litter
- Soft spongy litter
- Leg weaknesses
- Any condition causing turkeys to lie down more than usual
- Age
- Breed
Catching Wings

Leading cause of downgrading for hens and #2 for toms only after breast blisters

Highest rates are on toms 10-13.5 kg
Catching Wings

- Lower rates for hand catching than using a loader
- Any means to reduce wing flapping in the chasing, loading, or catching process will decrease rates
- Avoid catching at sunrise or sunset
- Significant difference in day versus night catching
Catching Wing Improvement

- Where there’s smoke, there’s fire. Any wing activity has the potential for catching wing bruises or breaks
- Never grab a bird by only 1 wing
- Avoid over-chasing, causing birds to flap their wings and jump on birds in front of them
- Include activity up to 12 hrs prior to catching when problem-solving catching wings
- Potential for damage influenced by many items such as bird size, time of day, flock condition
Wrap-up

- Plant downgrades should not be treated with mystery and suspicion but identified and isolated by causes.
- When the causes are measured, they are able to be managed.
- The last 2 weeks before marketing are critical to prevent many types of growing downgrading, especially green bruises and scabs/scratches.
Wrap-up

• Review data for each flock and develop an action plan for the next flock
• Visit the plant, watch your birds, ask questions
• Ask procurement team about opportunities for downgrading improvement
Wrap-up

Thank you AQINAC!