Egg production, egg quality and crop content of Rhode Island Red hens grazing on natural tropical vegetation.

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Abstract:

The aim of this experiment was to study the suitability of the outdoor system for Rhode Island Red hens under the tropical conditions of southern Mexico. Twelve floor pens, each containing four birds, were divided randomly into two groups. The first group was raised indoors only, while each of the second group replicates had access to an outdoor area with natural-grown vegetation from 0800 to 1700 hours daily. Both groups fed ad libitum on a commercial layers diet. The results revealed no differences in body weight between treatments. The outdoor group recorded significantly higher egg laying rate (86.90 vs. 78.05 %), higher egg mass (50.66 vs. 45.30 g egg/hen/day), and higher feed intake (103.70 vs. 97.67 g/day) versus the indoor group. The outdoor group had eggs with darker yellow yolks (9.46 vs. 5.46), lower yolk, and higher albumen proportions (P

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