

How to determine the right drinker for the job

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With all of the different drinkers on the market, it is not surprising some poultry producers get confused and make the wrong choice. For instance, a drinker designed for broilers will likely fail if used in a broiler breeder/parent stock operation because broiler breeders are so aggressive when drinking. Their strong pecking wears the smaller nipple-type drinker made for broilers to the point where they leak or have excessive discharge when triggered. In this article, we intend to discuss the different types of birds and the type of drinker that addresses the needs of those birds.

Broilers

Broilers are raised from day one to growout on the same drinkers and drinking system. This requires a drinker with a trigger pin that even a day-old can activate. The water pressure and height of the drinking line should be easy to adjust as the birds grow. And, the system should not leak even as older birds peck more aggressively.

Anything that interferes with the birds getting all of the water they want will negatively affect growth and feed conversion rates. Drinkers for broilers dispense the water birds need according to pressure settings.

Commercial layers

Layers (commercial layers 18 weeks and older) need a more rugged, specially designed drinker because they are mature birds throughout the entire production cycle. A problem many producers have experienced is that the birds' movement and the operation of feeding and ventilation equipment causes cages and aviary systems to vibrate.

This can result in the ball in the drinker rattling off its seat causing the drinker to leak. This results in

wet floors, pits and belts – a very unhealthy environment for the birds. Some producers respond to this situation by using drinkers with catch cups. Ziggity find that catch or drip cups, whether used in a battery cage system or one of the alternative housing systems, are an unsuitable choice. Whatever is in the poultry house can, and will, end up in the cups, fouling the water. Catch cups also allow for bird-to-bird cross contamination.

Drinkers for commercial layers need heavier shut off balls. The ball-to-seat contact point should be higher, which means more of the ball's weight is below the seat. This helps prevent inadvertent seepage.

Broiler breeders

Broiler breeders – called parent stock in some parts of the world – are large aggressive birds that are tough on drinkers. They have larger beaks and strike the drinker harder.

These birds (3.5kg) need a bigger, harder drinker that can withstand their abuse. These drinkers need a twin-lock design to keep them secure on the pipe. The hard pecking from these birds would simply knock a standard single-lock drinker off the saddle and cause water spills.

Some producers prefer this type of drinker to have a shield. The shield forces the birds to drink at the correct angle, regardless of bird height.

Turkeys

When enclosed watering systems began achieving better results in broiler flocks, turkey farmers asked if that technology could apply to their situation. However, research revealed that turkeys and chickens drink in very different ways.

Chickens from day one peck at a nipple-type drinker to activate it. Most day-old turkey poults can drink effectively from a nipple-type drinker, but within 10 days, their eye-to-beak coordination begins to fail. Many poults simply cannot connect properly with a drinker's trigger

pin. The older the poult, the more pronounced the problem, resulting in poor overall performance.

Turkeys, in general, need a drinker that presents a larger target to compensate for their poor eye-to-beak coordination. What is needed for turkeys is a drinker as rugged as those used for broiler breeders with a tray connected to the trigger pin. The turkeys drink the small reserve of water that is present in the tray; and while doing so, their necks push the tray to the side. This replenishes the water they have consumed.

Such a system exposes only small amounts of water to the poultry house environment and that water changes frequently. This keeps the bacterial load to a minimum.

As the birds mature – male turkeys to about eight weeks and females up to 16 weeks – growers should consider switching to an open watering system.

The enclosed system provides the birds with the healthy start they need to overcome the less healthy conditions caused by the open system in the final grow out phase.

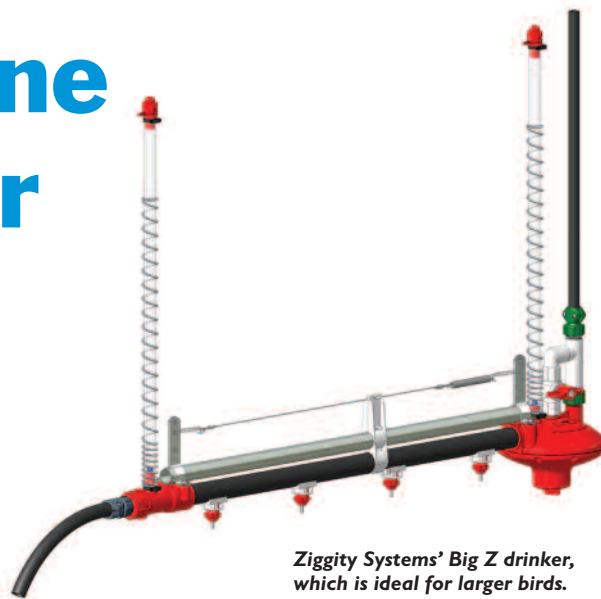
Ducks and geese

Ducks and geese have far higher water usage to body weight ratios than any other poultry. This puts extra demand on a watering system in duck and geese applications.

To meet the demand and to stand up to the aggressive pecking by ducks and geese, producers need to turn to a more robust drinker.

Drinkers like those used for broiler breeders/parent stock are ideal, although a drinker with a higher discharge may be required.

Choosing the wrong drinker for a poultry operation can have disastrous and costly consequences. It would benefit a producer, especially a novice, to study the choices care-



Ziggity Systems' Big Z drinker, which is ideal for larger birds.

fully and consult with experts on the type of drinker to employ.

Drinker lines refined

Ziggity Systems Inc has spent the past couple of decades refining its drinker lines. It has eliminated drinkers that did not perform well and has improved on those that work.

Their Max3 drinker is designed for broilers and broiler breeder and commercial layer pullets. Max3 drinkers work effectively because of the technology built into them.

The patented concave trigger pin releases water quickly at low pressure and rotates the ball to keep internal drinker components clean.

The ball is light and easy for even very young birds to activate. The Max3 is available in twin-lock and single lock styles to work with most watering systems.

The Max8 drinker was designed for commercial layers, 18 weeks and older. Its design is so different that only one component part can be found on Ziggity's previous generation of layer drinkers. It has a heavier shut off ball that is less likely to rattle off the seat, and the ball-to-seat contact point is higher, which means more of the ball's weight is below the seat.

The Max8 is available in twin lock and J-lock styles to work with any watering system.

The Big Z drinker is ideal for broiler breeders/parent stock and ducks and geese. This drinker can withstand the abuse these larger birds (3.5kg) dole out.

It comes in a larger twin-lock design with an option for a shield, which is effective in maintaining drier slats and pits in broiler breeder/parent stock operation or with an Activator reservoir, making it ideal for turkey poults. ■