Effect of whole oats in broiler diets

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Abstract

Whole wheat feeding is common practice in broiler production in many countries, but less interest has traditionally been given to inclusion of other whole cereals. Oats are generally not included in broiler diets due to its relatively low energy content in relation to the price. However, oats have beneficial properties such as a high protein content and quality, a good fatty acid composition and high contents of minerals, vitamins and antioxidants. In layers, oats inclusion has shown beneficial behavioural effects such as less feather pecking. The present trial comprised 20 groups of 4 broilers, each group designated to one of four dietary treatments. From 7 days of age, whole cereals (100% wheat/0% oats, 90% wheat/10% oats or 75% wheat/25% oats) were included in the diet at 10%, gradually increasing to 50% from 30 days. At 34 days, live weight, feed conversion ratio or feed intake did not differ between diets, despite the lower ME content in the oats supplemented diets. No differences in slaughter yield, total carcass fat or abdominal fat were found, and health was over-all good. These results indicate that oats possess interesting properties, not calculated for in traditional feed formulation.

Key words: oat, wheat, nutrition, layer

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