

Light and Larvae for Little Layers



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Introduction

- Feather pecking (FP) impairs welfare in laying hens
- Possible causes: fearfulness and lack of foraging opportunities
- Incubation & rearing conditions are critical to develop resilience

Goal: We aim to reduce fearfulness and FP by adding green light during incubation and live larvae enrichment during rearing



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Methods

- 400 ISA Brown chicks, incubated under 12:12 or 0:24 light-dark cycle
 - Enrichment: larvae in dispenser (2x2 fact. design; incubation x larvae)
- Data: FP observations (5wk), approach test (6wk), and feather damage (FD) (16wk)**

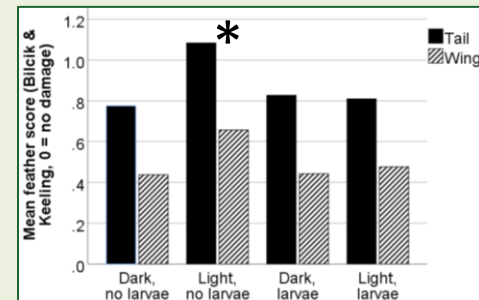
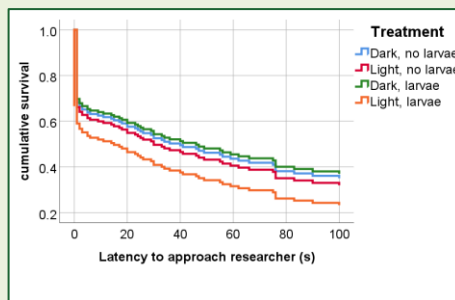
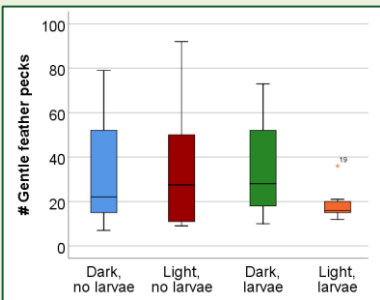


Results

Feather pecking: No effect in gentle FP (KW, $p=0.392$); Hardly any severe FP observed

Approach test: No effect on fearfulness towards familiar human (Cox PH, $p>0.173$)

Feather damage: 'Light-no larvae' group more tail damage (KW, $p<0.026$)



Discussion

- More tail damage in light-no larvae group
- Little/no treatment effects: All chicks were enriched (small groups, lot of handling) & too early to observe severe FP/FD?

Conclusion: Little treatment effect on fearfulness and FP so far, but analysis of additional tests ongoing