

## Standard Operating Procedure for

### Beak-Tip Amputation

#### Definition and Reason for Procedure:

Removal of the anterior tip of the beak from the upper mandible alone or upper and lower mandibles together, as a prevention against feather-picking, fighting, and cannibalism in birds in intensive housing.

Facility: [REDACTED] \*

Age: 7 - 10 days (birds)

Type: Laying

Equipment: Precision cam activated beak trimmer (Lyon), with a blade temperature of 595° C and guide-blade holes of 4.0, 4.37, and 4.75 mm diameters. Machine is secured to the top of a transportable table to facilitate its use in a variety of rooms.

Restraint: Manual

#### Procedure:

1. Beak trimmer needs to be plugged-in and the blade allowed to achieve a temperature of 595° C prior to starting to perform the procedure.
2. While sitting in a chair immediately in front of the beak trimmer, hold a chick in either hand with the tip of the index finger below the lower beak and the thumb positioned behind the head. In this position the chick is held firmly without using pressure. With a little pressure of the index finger the tongue is pulled to the back of the mouth avoiding burning during the debeaking process. In this process the lower beak is always pulled backwards a bit which means that the beak, and the head, should be angled to do an even cut of the lower and upper beak.
3. For the average-sized chick the beak should be placed in the center guide-plate hole. For larger or smaller chicks use the appropriate guide-plate hole. The object is to make the cut between .12 and .18 inches in front of the nares. The beak should remain in the guide-plate hole for 2 seconds in order to ensure adequate cauterization and hemostasis. If properly cauterized, the cut surface of the beak will have a black line across it.
4. Afterwards, the birds should receive feed in the form of a fine crumble or mash at a depth of one inch.

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Precautions:

- Person performing the procedure should avoid distractions.
- Do not trim beak if bird appears ill.
- Do not rush the procedure.
- Use a pyrometer to keep blade temperature at correct setting.
- Monitor the condition of the blade and change when necessary; at every 10,000 birds or every two years, whichever is sooner.
- Only well-trained crews will perform the trimming. As of this date, the only individuals authorized to conduct this procedure are:

The Manager of [REDACTED]\*  
The Assistant Manager of [REDACTED]\*  
[REDACTED]\*

References:

- Thornberry, F.D., et al (no date) Debeaking Laying Stock to Control Cannibalism. Fact Sheet L-631; Texas A&M University, Agricultural Extension Service, College Station.
- Bakker, Ing. Winfried (1997) Precision Debeaking in Heavy Breeders. Technical Newsletter. International Technical Services, Avian Farms, Inc. Waterville, Maine.
1999. Position On Poultry. AVMA & Animal Welfare. American Veterinary Medical Association, Schaumburg, Illinois.

**\*Indicates information redacted in web version of SOP. Versions without redactions can be requested from the Office for Research Protections after IACUC protocol approval. Send your request to ORP-IACUC@rtto.psu.edu. Please be sure to provide your name, PSU access id (abc123), e-mail address, approved IACUC protocol number and which SOP(s) you need.**

*Last approved by the IACUC on 12/08/2008*