

CASE STUDY: ROBERT LANNING

■ "Windows" is the current buzzword at Devonshire Poultry and the first thing that strikes you when you arrive at Tower Farm is that you can see the chickens without entering the sheds.

Robert Lanning, a contractor farmer, has spent the past few months retrofitting double-glazed uPVC windows to his older sheds, equivalent to 3% of floor area. Light levels are now typically about 100 lux from the window to the first feeder line dropping to 60 lux in the centre of the shed.

"Watching the birds, they seem to move in the building as the sun moves during the day. Therefore, I'm convinced birds like it. They seem to like having both brighter and darker areas."

In his newest

Robert Lanning is convinced the birds like having windows in the shed.



sheds, transparent ventilation flaps act as windows and only account for 1.5% of the floor area. However, since their completion, the RSPCA brought in a target of 3-6% for Freedom Food. So he is now planning to add an extra window under each existing one.

He is also continuing to develop enrichment, as he believes the industry still hasn't got it right yet. In a typical shed, there is one football for every 1000 birds plus CDs hanging on string, straw bales and wooden perches. However, Mr Lanning is no longer convinced about the value of footballs, as birds soon become bored with them.

In contrast, he believes straw bales are the best means of enrichment as birds are stimulated by pulling bales apart and running around with pieces of straw in their beak.

Hanging up maize cobs works better than CDs



by giving birds a reward, but his eventual aim is to design a pecking block, possibly made from maize, molasses and peas that can be cheaply produced.

In his newer sheds, he is experimenting with a perching system with the aim of encouraging birds to jump around. "The idea came while visiting a multi-tier layer unit."

On his other sites, Mr Lanning rears conventional birds where there is no enrichment. "We could put enrichment in, but we are not paid to do it. And

PVC windows have been fitted to the older sheds.

with tight turnaround times, it is not economic as it requires extra time to clean out the sheds and put in enrichment for the next flock."

Mr Lanning stressed that he is proud to grow conventional chicken and he sees Freedom Food as just a bolt-on. "I have no problem with the conventional system, welfare is high and it is a good product."