

Enabling behaviour change in laying hen farmers using Motivational Interviewing



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Injurious Pecking

- Injurious pecking includes gentle feather pecking, severe feather pecking (SFP), vent pecking & cannibalism causing injury to the bird
- It is widespread
 - UK survey of farmers found 65% identified it in their own flocks
- It can also start at rear
 - SFP seen in 27% of visits at rear and at 16 weeks on average 12% of birds in a flock had missing feathers (Gilani *et al*, 2013)

Why is Injurious Pecking a concern?

- Removal of feathers is painful to the recipient (Nicol *et al*, (2013), Rodenburg *et al*, (2013))
- Thermoregulation/feed consumption
 - Birds with poor feather cover due to IP eat up to 40% more feed (Blokhuis *and others*, 2007)
- Increased risk of disease and death
 - Encouraging farmers to reduce mortality from IP will also benefit productivity and sustainability (Nicol *and others*, 2013, Weeks *et al*, 2016)

What is Motivational Interviewing?

- MI helps us to use a guiding style to engage with clients, clarifying their strengths and aspirations, evoking their own motivations for change and promoting their autonomy in decision making
- **Work together to find solutions**
- **One size does not fit all**
- **Reduce barriers**



Aim, Material & Methods

Aim

The aim of this UK study was to test a support approach for commercial implementation and uptake of evidence-based strategies aimed at reducing injurious pecking (IP)

- 29 producers recruited by BEIC
- Enriched colony cage systems
- Barn aviary system
- Free-range
- Flock sizes 3,000 – 16,000
- Beak tipped and intact flocks



Material and Methods

- Working alongside the farmer to monitor feather cover and create bespoke Feather Cover Action Plan
- A structured interview was used at the first visit to determine motives, learning styles and incentives. The facilitator used open questions, affirmation, reflective listening and summary reflections. A follow-up visit discussed progress and feedback.

Opportunities to maintain feather cover
Creating a Bespoke Plan Together



Walk around flock/house, discuss action areas that apply, current practice and where producer particularly wants to develop new bespoke management ideas: *is there anything you'd particularly like to focus on to reduce injurious pecking? Would you like to show me?*

Keeping an eye on feather cover for health and welfare

Current practice (s)



Bespoke action (s)



Results

Table 1. Levels of producer motivation to plan changes to manage feather cover in their FCAP, compared with levels of engagement at the first visit

Level of engagement with FCAP	Number of farmers	0-1 changes in FCAP	2 changes in FCAP	3-9 changes in FCAP
low	7	5	2	0
medium	7	2	3	2
high	14	3	1	11

Levels of engagement were subjectively assessed from the structured interview. Farmers denoted 'low' had indicated the project and IP was not a current priority; 'medium' reflected general, open-minded interest and 'high' farmers were highly motivated to control IP and develop a FCAP

Results

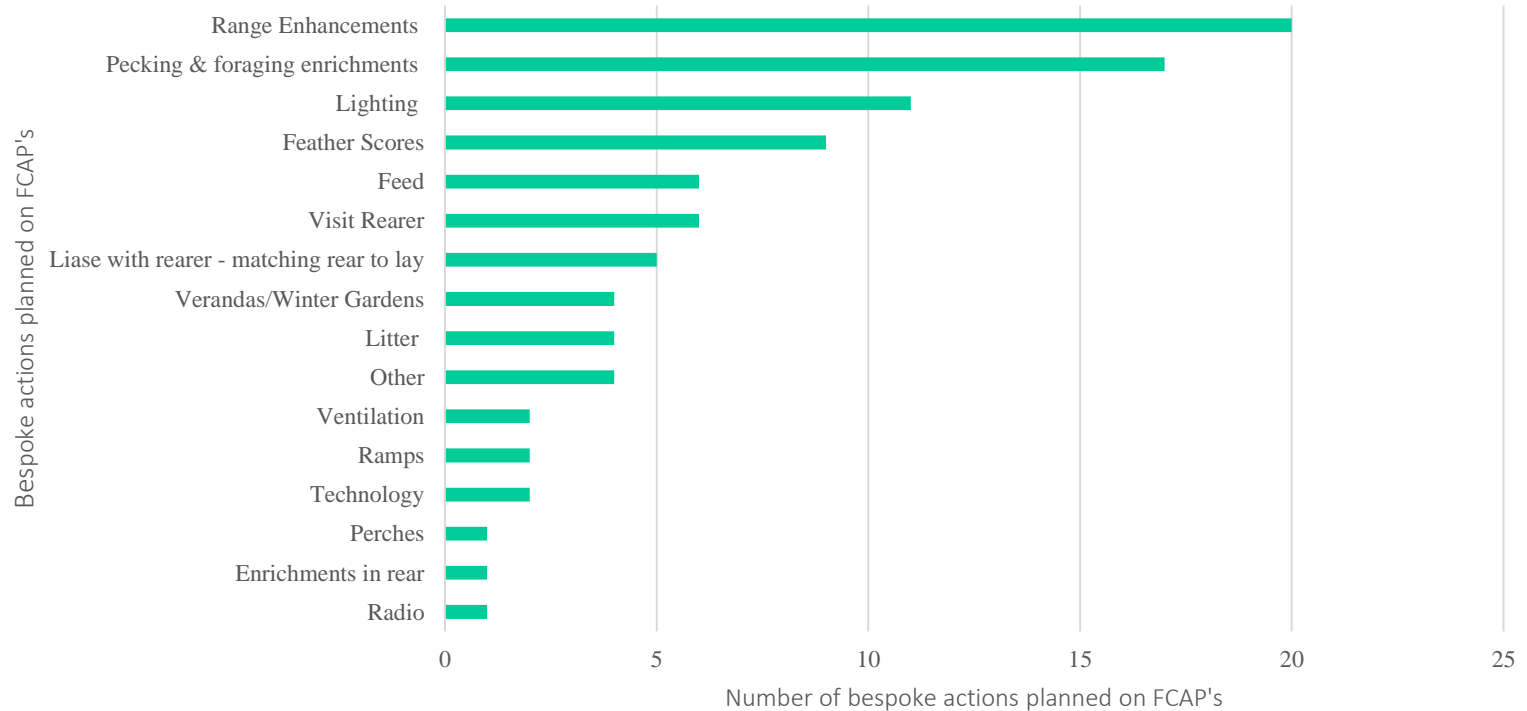


Figure 1 Type and frequency of bespoke actions planned on project farms at the first visit. Note that some farms planned several actions within a category such as pecking and foraging enrichments

Results

Farmers who were initially more motivated and engaged with FCAP tended to implement more actions from their FCAP

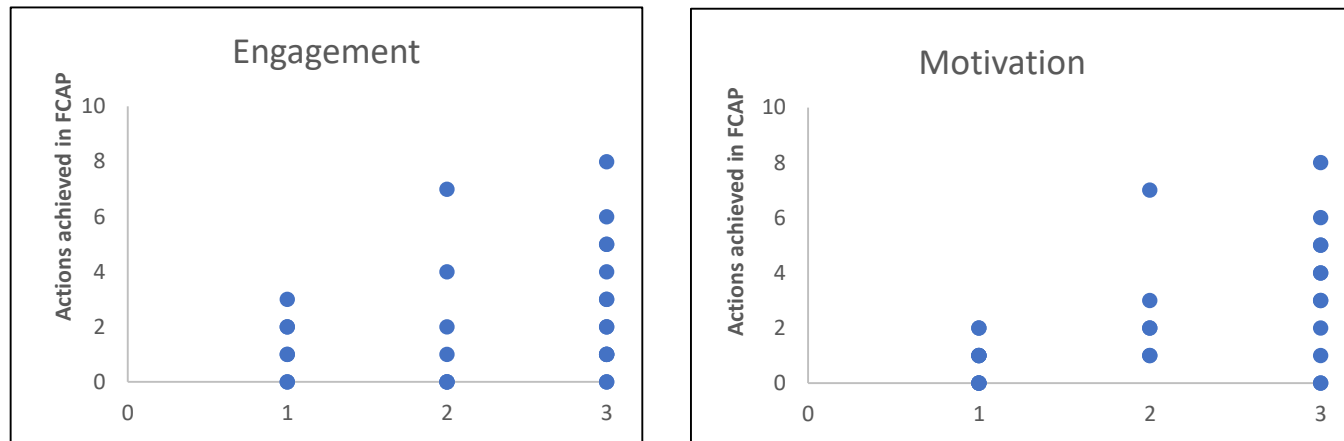


Figure 2. Higher levels of initial engagement (a) and motivation (b) tended to be associated with achieving more actions within their *FCAP* (Score 1 is low, 3 is high- see Table 1)

Bespoke actions applied on farms



Discussion & Conclusions

- This project established that FCAPs can lead to positive changes in flock management with the support and encouragement of MI facilitation.
- Levels of motivation increased as 90% of farmers in free range systems made up to 8 changes (mean 3) – a high level of behaviour change.
- We consider this project provides further evidence of the value of MI facilitation approaches in supporting farmers to make autonomous changes to improve animal welfare, productivity and sustainability.

Maintaining Feather Cover in Laying Hens

which aims to reduce injurious pecking in laying hens.

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Website: <https://lhwf.co.uk/>

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