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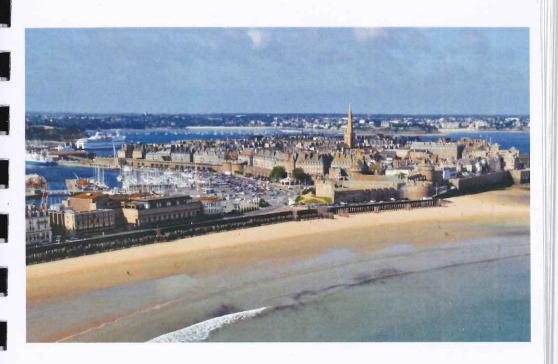
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# Assessment of surface temperature variation under chronic high ambient temperature in four experimental layer chicken lines differing for heat resistance and feed efficiency traits.

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In this study we used infrared thermography to quantify the effect of ambient temperature (AT) on surface temperature (ST) variations of the comb, the shank and the eye in contrasted chicken genotypes at thermo-neutrality (22°C) and at high AT (32°C). Four INRA experimental chicken lines, representing a unique range of genetic variation for traits known to be important for heat tolerance and feed efficiency, were measured: the Fayoumi breed, known to be resistant to high AT and to parasitic infections; a naked neck dwarf (LS) line of brown-egg layers selected for longer clutch periods; and two lines of Rhode Island Red layers divergently selected for high (R+) and low (R-) residual feed intake. In total 189 hens (50 Fayoumi, 46 LS, 49 R+ and 44 R-) were reared under thermo-neutrality (22°C). At 28 wk of age the AT was increased to 32°C until 33 wk of age. Infrared thermographic pictures were recorded on all animals at 3 time points to estimate ST: at thermal neutrality (T1), 1 week after the increase of the AT (T2) and 4 weeks later (T3). Rectal temperature was also recorded at the same time points. At 22°C a wide variability in body ST was observed, both between and within genotypes, particularly for comb and shank temperatures, while rectal and eye temperatures were more homogeneous. At 32°C, the opposite trend was observed, with differences among lines existing only for rectal and eye temperatures. At 22°C the Fayoumi had the lowest and the R+ the highest rectal and eye temperatures. The same ranking was observed at 32°C. On the contrary, at 22°C the Fayoumi and R+ had the highest comb and shank temperatures, respectively, and no significant differences were observed at 32°C among lines. Significant genotype × temperature interactions were observed for the comb and shank ST alone. Although large correlations were observed among ST (r between 0.75 and 0.84, p<0.0001), correlations between surface and rectal temperatures were generally low, with the eye being slightly more correlated to the rectal temperature (r= 0.30) than the comb or the shank (r= 0.24 and 0.25, respectively).

Keywords: Heat stress; Surface body temperature, Infrared thermography; chicken