

PRECISION DEBEAKING OF WEEK-OLD CHICKS

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Debeaking chicks with a precision machine at 6 to 9 days has several advantages over later debeaking.

- . It is faster.
- . There is less physical strain on birds and man.
- . It prevents costly early wing, toe, and vent picking.
- . There is less feed wasted.
- . Different operators using the proper precision device always remove the correct amount of beak.

The illustrated machine controls the amount of beak removed by an 11/64-inch hole in a guide plate and by timing cauterization.

To debeak a chick, hold its head, placing your finger under the throat. Closing your fore-finger under the throat of the chick will draw back the tongue and withdraw the lower beak slightly, to avoid cutting it more than necessary.

Insert the chick's closed beak in the hole in the guide plate--a thin, stainless steel plate mounted on a crossbar for attachment to the machine. A cauterizing-cutting blade is heated to glowing cherry red--approximately 1500° F. A motor-controlled cam pushes the hot cutting blade through the beak and keeps it in a cauterizing position against the hot blade for 2.5 seconds before the blade moves away from the hole. The cauterization time regulates the amount of beak tissue killed back of the cut. Unless this tissue is killed back beyond a critical point, undesirable regrowth of the beak will occur.

This method of debeaking is permanent. If the bird is kept in a cage with not more than three other birds, cannibalism seldom will develop.



Figure 1. Hen debeaked by precision debeaking at maturity.

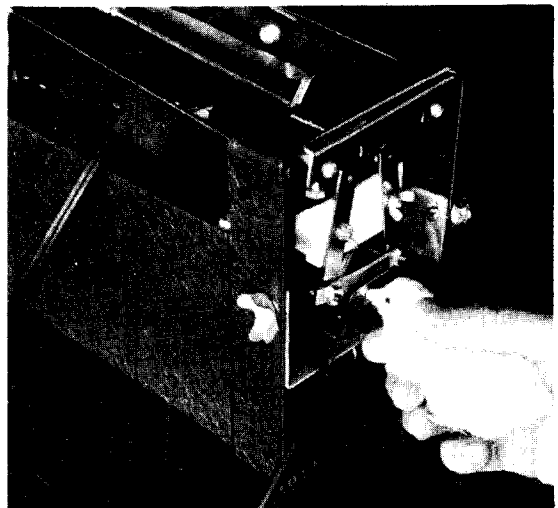


Figure 2. Six-day-old chick being debeaked.

Division of Agricultural Sciences
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

PRINTED SEPTEMBER 1976

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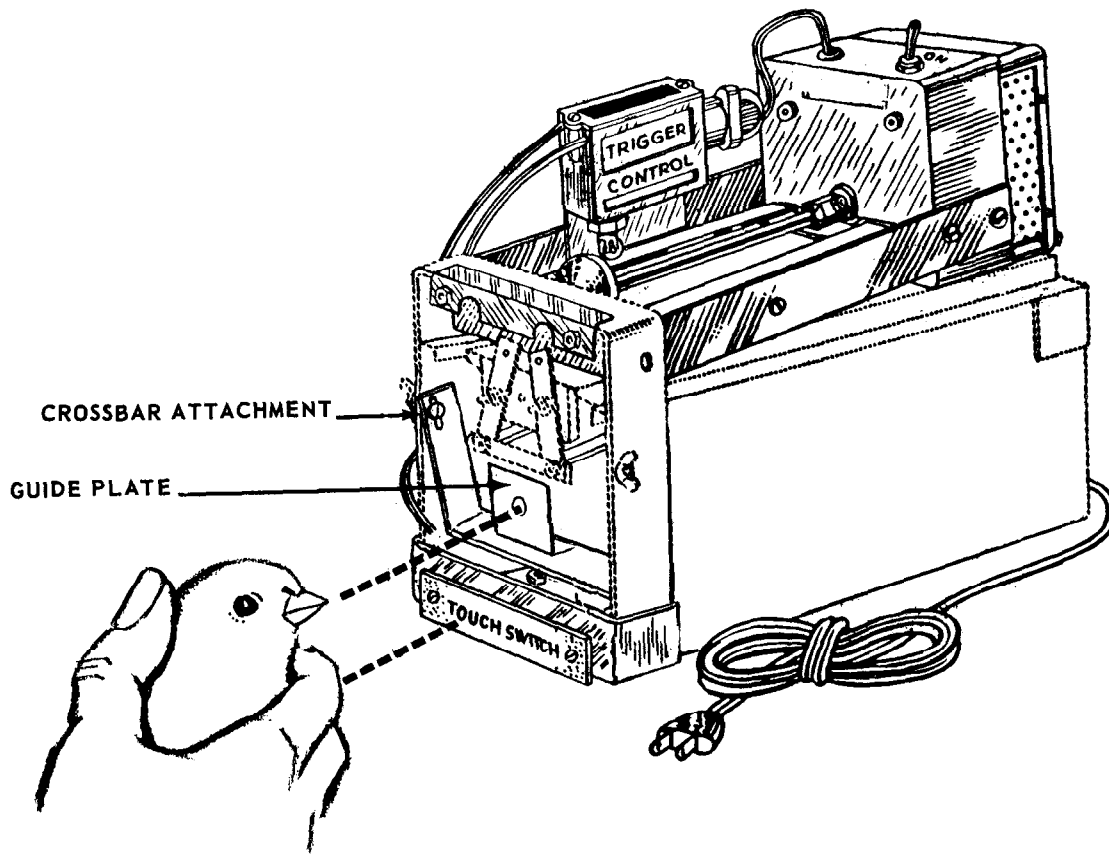


Figure 3. Debeaking equipment with motorized unit attached, showing guide plate and crossbar attachment and hole where chick's beak is inserted



Figure 4. Six-day-old chick after debeaking.

Formerly OSA #151

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