

4- Social Behavior

- ✓ It can be defined as one consequence of life in groups is the development of social interactions and relationships between group members.
- ✓ Fowls are a **gregarious species** and their social behavior is affected by group composition and group stability in the flocks.
- ✓ They maintain personal space by communication via postural changes.
- ✓ Important signals are associated with the position of the head and the relative angles of the head and the body to other birds.
- ✓ They maintain contact with flock mates by:
 - a) Sight up to intermediate distances
 - b) Vocal communication at longer distances or if out of sight.
- ✓ **Examples about social behavior:**

First: individuals often help each other for mutual benefit that may be either simultaneous (as when pheasants roost in contact for shared bodily warmth) or turn-and-turnabout (as when a quail helps others by alarm calling, and is itself helped similarly on other occasions).

Second: social behaviour is especially common between relatives, because relatives have genes in common by inheritance from common ancestors.

There are some factors that influence Social Behavior:

a- Individual recognition

- Generally, fowls **recognize each other** by appearance based on the shape of the comb, wattles and head. Also, color changes in plumage are identifiable.
- Only very major changes result in a failure to recognize flock mates.
- Members of flocks that are broken up forget each other within 3 to 4 weeks.

b- Communication

- 1- The fowl uses a variety of **sounds** in order **to communicate** with other fowls. For example: food calls, predator alarm calls, pre- and post-laying calls and rooster crowing, Broody hen distress calls and the clucking calls of the broody hen to her brood.
- 2- Fowls communicate also with others **by displays and changes in posture** such as head up or head down, tail up or tail down, or feathers spread or not spread.

c- Pecking and the peck order

- ✓ Pecking and the peck order is a skill specific for fowls.
- ✓ They **peck to:** 1) escape from the shell, 2) get nutrition (feed and water), 3) obtain and keep personal space and to establish relationships as well as for other reasons called peck order.
- ✓ **Peck order** means establishing a ranking structure in the flock of dominant and subordinate members. This organization is established separately for males and females in the same flock.

5- Breeding = Reproductive Behavior

- Behavioral pattern occurring during reproduction needed to maintain animal species. It includes Sexual behavior and Maternal behavior (nesting behavior).
- In nature, fowl is a seasonal breeder.
- It lays only **(one egg) / (23-26 hours)**
- Produces a **clutch** of about **10-15** eggs.
- During incubation period the hen takes care.
- When the chicks are about 10 to 12 weeks old she starts the **weaning** process.

6- Abnormal behavior

Any behavior performed out of its natural status. These abnormal behaviors might simply be annoying to animal owners also may be dangerous for the animal and others or even threaten.

Example on abnormal behavior:

A- Feather pecking and cannibalism

- ✓ **Feather pecking occurs** when one bird pecks or pulls at the feathers of another.
- ✓ **Mild pecking** is normal as peck order.
- ✓ **Sever pecking** can damage plumage and injure a bird's skin and sometimes this behavior leads to cannibalism.
- **Cannibalism** is defined as the pecking, tearing, and consuming of skin, tissue, or organs of flock mates.
- Cannibalism is a learned behavior that can spread quickly through a flock.
- Cannibalism is easier to prevent than to treat.
- It is a problem that can occur among birds of any age, type of breed, all types of housing systems.
- If cannibalism is not closely monitored, the resulting losses to the flock due to flesh injuries and death can be quite high.
- The **cause** has a genetic component, **but** management conditions play a major role as well.
- **Feather pecking and cannibalism can be prevented by avoiding:**
 - 1)Over-crowding; 2)Over-heating; 3)Excessive light; 4)Inadequate nutrition;
 - 5)Flock size; 6)Flocks of different ages and colors; 7)Sudden changes;
 - 8)Inadequate nest boxes.

B- Escape Behavior – A protective mechanism.

Shortly after, **the first signs of aggressive behavior** are seen. Two chickens approach each other aggressively **and then before contact is made they race away i.e. escape.** The **final stage** is where **real contact** is made and is the **truly aggressive stage**. It is **from these true fights** that **the dominant/subordinate relationships are established.**