

**MSc Defence**

Finding the Perfect Perch: Factors Influencing Perching and Roosting Choices in Growing Pullets and Mature Laying Hens

**Steeley Ellis**

Date: Thursday April 29, 2026 at 9:00 am

The MSc Defence for Steeley Ellis has been scheduled for Thursday April 29, 2026 at 9:00 am. The defence will be held in-person in ANNU 141.

**Examining Chair: Dr. Vern Osborne**

**Advisor: Dr. Tina Widowski**

**Advisory Committee Member: Dr. Alexandra Harlander**

**Additional Member: Dr. Derek Haley**

**Abstract:**

We investigated the daytime perching and nighttime roosting preferences of growing pullets (Chapter 2) for round perches of different diameters, the preferences of mature laying hens with different health conditions (Chapter 3) for different elevated structures, and their method of locomotion used for ascent and descent. Overall laying hen pullets did not show a preference for perch diameter, however, at night, pullets prioritized roosting at a location which offered the best vantage point. In mature laying hens, mild to moderate keel bone fractures and footpad conditions did not influence their preferences for elevated structures or their method of locomotion used for ascent and descent. Altogether, the results from this thesis suggest that factors like height and location of the perch may matter as much to the birds as perch design, and that the effects of more severe health conditions on perching and locomotion should be further investigated.