

Egg and chicken meat industries research roadmap to carbon neutral

THE more than 20 million Australians who regularly eat chicken and eggs will soon lower their dietary carbon footprint thanks to a new carbon-neutral project from Australia's poultry industries.

The research, which is a joint partnership between Australian Eggs and AgriFutures Australia, is one of the most comprehensive carbon footprint assessments ever conducted in Australian agriculture.

Lead researcher Dr Stephen Wiedemann said the last carbon footprint assessment of Australia's poultry industries was conducted over a decade ago, and he believes recent improvements could see carbon-neutral chicken and eggs being produced at a modest cost in the near future.

"The first step before identifying pathways to carbon neutrality is to conduct a comprehensive carbon footprint of the entire supply chain – from the planting of the grain chickens eat to the packaging and transport of the final product," Dr Wiedemann said.

"Once you have that all-important baseline for the entire industry, you can test the impact of steps individual farms are taking to lower their footprints and then identify ways to mitigate whatever emissions remain.

"In the case of poultry farms that already have a relatively low carbon footprint, it should be possible to offset the residual emissions and get to carbon neutral."

Australian Eggs managing director Rowan McMonnies said preliminary modelling had

shown carbon neutral eggs could be produced for as little as an extra few cents per dozen.

"The egg industry has made huge environmental improvements in recent years, from solar powered farms to better hen genetics and sophisticated composting regimes that turn by-products into organic fertiliser," Mr McMonnies said.

"These changes have been made for both economic reasons and good environmental stewardship but given the carbon footprint reductions already achieved by some farms, it makes sense to investigate the ways to get to carbon neutral."

As an average Australian eats more than 60kg of chicken meat and eggs per year, AgriFutures Australia managing director John Harvey said this is a significant project for people interested in dietary carbon footprint.

"Chicken is the most consumed meat in Australia by some margin, and per capita consumption has increased tenfold over the past 50 years," Mr Harvey said.

"While we are already a low emissions protein, the sheer volume of chicken in the national diet means anything we do to lower our footprint will have a significant impact.

"Chicken meat producers around the country are looking forward to seeing the pathways to carbon neutrality options for them at the conclusion of this project."

A pilot program will be run as part of the research to develop an auditable carbon neutral product for both eggs and chicken meat under the Austral-

ian government Climate Active program.

Q: What is the first, most affordable step all producers should take in order to reduce carbon footprint?

The greatest contribution to carbon footprint is feed, which is also the greatest cost.

Ensuring feed consumption is optimised has proven the best way to reduce carbon to date and it is likely that further improvements can be made going forward.

Q: If it will cost farmers and producers more money to go carbon neutral, what are the incentives for them to do so?

There are short- and long-term incentives to move towards carbon neutrality.

Many steps align with cost savings and economic viability but in the long term the community will expect agriculture industries to contribute to a lower-carbon future and the egg industry wants to position itself as part of the solution.

Q: Over what timeline do you see the implementation of carbon-neutral strategies occurring?

The timeline for carbon-neutral strategies is very broad – having commenced over a dec-

ade ago and likely to see incremental improvement over the next decade.

The carbon-neutral project will accelerate this process by identifying the parts of the supply chain that present the greatest opportunity.

Q: The pork industry has seen a high take-up of anaerobic ponds/lagoons on-farm to reduce greenhouse gases and provide bioenergy opportunities, is this something the poultry industry could successfully implement?

Every manure is different and in the egg industry the most successful process has been composting.

This can be done on a large scale to produce fertiliser that reduces the use of chemical fertiliser in grain and horticulture production.

Q: Would government be involved to supply 'carbon credits' and similar to incentivise reducing carbon footprint?

Whether or not a carbon credit scheme is developed, there are clear incentives for the egg industry to position itself as a seller of credits rather than a buyer and a lower carbon supply chain will remain the goal. ♀



Australian Eggs managing director Rowan McMonnies.



The author in her office presenting online at the virtual Australian Veterinary Poultry Association Conference.

Open for business and support

THIS month has been fairly quiet at Poultry Hub as we grapple with our new normal.

Not surprisingly, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we operate.

We are still open for business and will continue to be here to support the Australian poultry industry.

This month we received six full research proposals following our open call for research held earlier in the year.

These proposals are currently being reviewed by the industry committee and I look forward to sharing details of the successful projects with you soon.

We are also pleased to announce that we will have a second round of funding later in 2020.

This month I lamented at the thought I was meant to be enjoying the warm weather on the Gold Coast while attending the 2020 PIX conference.

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 this conference has been postponed until early next year.

However, the Australian Veterinary Poultry Association Conference, which is usually run in conjunction with PIX, still went ahead in an online format.



by **TAMSYN CROWLEY**
Director



I would like to congratulate the organisers of this online conference for an extremely well-prepared meeting. I thoroughly enjoyed the two days of presentations.

I gave a presentation on the current and future activities of PHA and while the presentation went well, it was a bit weird to not have any feedback on my jokes while talking to my computer screen!

However, this may have been a blessing in disguise. Everything went off without a hitch, the only things missing were the catering and networking opportunities.

Poultry Hub's Job Ready Training initiative continues to have an impact in the New England region of NSW.

We are currently trying to attract more registrations with the hope that we will return to

face-to-face training in late June.

We are also exploring opportunities to take this program to a national level, so if you are interested in being part of this training or want to know more, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Lastly, I would like to announce we have decided to postpone Ideas Exchange this year.

Given the uncertainty, we are unable to plan for the face-to-face event.

However, we will be bringing you an online meeting that will snapshot the research activities we have funded.

This event will be held in September, so stay tuned for further details.

To stay updated about our research funding or if you are interested in being part of our training program, check out our website or contact us at poultryhub@une.edu.au to join our mailing list. ♀



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Poultry Industry Calendar of Events

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JUL 7 – Annual Poultry Club Show
Ipswich Showgrounds, Ipswich, QLD

JUL 20-22 Poultry Science Association
(PSA) Virtual Annual Meeting
poultryscience.org/PSA-Annual-Meeting

NOV 4-5 – Poultry Xpo, Stratford,
Canada www.poultryxpo.ca

2021

FEB 9-10 – Australasian Poultry
Science Symposium, University of
Sydney, NSW www.apss2021.com.au

APR 11-13 – Poultry Information
Exchange/Australasian Milling
Conference (PIX/AMC), Gold Coast,
QLD www.pixamc.com.au

JUN 21-23 – European Symposium on
the Quality of Poultry Meat and XIX
European Symposium on the Quality
of Eggs and Egg Products, Krakow,
Poland www.eggmeat2021.com

AUG 8-12 – World Poultry Congress,
Paris, France www.wpcparis2020.com

AUG 16-18 – World Poultry Science
Association (WPSA) – Cambridge UK
www.wpsa2020.org/

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The pressing case for caged eggs in Australia

WHEN you walk into a supermarket to buy eggs, you are faced with three distinct choices – caged eggs, barn laid eggs and free range eggs.

Eggs are the most affordable source of protein for all Aussie families and on average we each consume 247 eggs per head each year.

Egg Farmers of Australia is the lobby voice of Australian egg producers and represents farmers who operate within all three egg-production systems.

In total, our farmers produce 19 million eggs every day to satisfy the growing domestic demand for Australian eggs.

This creates jobs and equates to a \$1.8 billion injection into Australia's economy.

Like most small businesses, about 98 percent of egg farmers operate family-run farms.

When it comes to caged, barn laid and free range eggs, all three farming methods are necessary in order to maintain a reliable and sustainable supply of eggs to your local supermarket.

Recently however, there has been adverse publicity about caged egg production, fuelled by animal activists, a decision by Coles to ban caged eggs in some of its stores and ignorance within the media.

Big retailers such as Coles and the national arm of the RSPCA are behind a drive to ban caged egg farming in Australia, in the misguided belief that other forms of egg production are in the best interest of laying hens.

However, these birds are not mistreated.

In discussing this topic two issues are worth exploring further – the economic consequences of the sudden removal of caged eggs from Australian agribusiness, and the humane welfare and treatment of the caged hens themselves.

Removing caged eggs from our production system without a long-term plan and compensation would be disastrous for many rural farming families, as well as those city families who rely heavily on eggs as a staple form of nutrition.

For Coles, the idea is more about positioning itself as a 'corporate social citizen' than out of real compassion for Australian poultry.

Retail giants claim that axing the caged egg sector is what consumers want.

However, the next time you visit a major supermarket take a good look in the egg fridge.

The chances are the shelf with caged eggs – the cheapest of all eggs to produce – is among the emptiest.

This is because caged eggs are what many families buy most, especially those juggling

tight household budgets in lower socio-economic circumstances.

This is evidenced by the CSIRO, which reports that in Australia around 40 percent of all eggs sold in our supermarkets are cage farmed.

The facts about caged egg farming are often distorted by those who do not understand the humane standards sustained by the modern industry.

In reality, egg production systems are technologically far more advanced compared to 'battery hens' that were common in Australia in the 1970s, and unlike other countries 'battery' hen farming, where a bird is tightly and uncomfortably enclosed in a single cage, is banned in Australia and does not exist.

When comparing free range, barn laid and modern caged eggs, it might surprise you to learn that of all natural foods, caged eggs are among the lowest cost protein available in your supermarket.

They are the cleanest eggs, with the lowest incidence of disease amongst hens, and to ensure consumer appetite for fresh eggs is sustainable, it's necessary that about 88 percent of the world's egg production is from caged eggs.

In terms of welfare, scientific research shows that caged hens are healthier and have the lowest incidence of disease.

Antibiotics are not needed in this environment and the mortality rate is the lowest of any of the three production systems.

Cage farming also offers the highest protection from predators and because of a high level of on-farm biosecurity standards, it has the lowest need for vaccination.

Importantly for the environment, caged farming has the lowest carbon footprint out of Australia's three key egg production methods.

Believe it or not it is free range egg farming that leaves the highest carbon footprint.

Free range eggs also cost the most to produce and are more likely to cost more at the supermarket.

In free range farming eggs must be washed, antibiotics are required, and both cannibalism and mortality rates with free range flocks are higher than for any other farming method.



**Egg Farmers
of Australia**

by **MELINDA HASHIMOTO**
CEO



could be passed to humans.

While Australia has high standards in its eggs and egg producers, other countries do not.

As the sixth largest country in the world Australia's population continues to rise, with expectations that we will reach 40 million people beyond the next decade.

This upward trend will create an even greater demand for eggs, underlying the need to maintain current caged egg production as it stands.

This is to ensure a sustainable and affordable supply of the protein.

When it comes to the debate about caged eggs emphasis is often placed on animal welfare.

Egg Farmers of Australia agree that excellent animal care practices are paramount for all of Australia's egg farmers.

This is why, when a new set of national welfare standards and guidelines governing the care of farm animals is endorsed by the federal government, our organisation wants those rules mandatory on every egg farm.

Further to this, Egg Farmers of Australia support a cap on the current system of caged eggs.

While the use of conventional cages as they stand now is able to continue, Egg Farmers of Australia has made a commitment that in long-term future there will be no new conventional cages added to the current egg production cycle within Australia.

This rule will coincide with the introduction of the long-awaited Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines, currently under government review.

This action means that egg producers who are looking to expand their operations need to do so by investing in new methods of egg production other than conventional cages, which are now in use.

Unlike New Zealand, maintaining a cap on conventional cages is necessary to ensure the continuation of a reliable and sustainable supply of eggs to Australian consumers without generating chaos in the marketplace.

The other key point of this debate is that if the supermarket goliaths genuinely want to maintain a reliable supply of Australian laid eggs, then they should be willing to pay more per egg to our farmers.

The next time you tuck into your bacon and eggs for breakfast, a baked muffin at smoko or a quiche during the day, consider the cost of producing each egg going into such dishes.

Grain to feed hens, water, electricity, wages, fuel and vet fees even the cardboard cartons that make it easier to trans-

port and store your eggs – are all inputs that are paid for by farmers.

The prices on shelves are decreasing, particularly for the non-cage segments.

As with the milk industry, big supermarkets are largely to blame for stifling farm returns when it comes to negotiating the price of eggs.

Absurdly, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission does not allow our organisation to talk openly about how much each farmer receives per egg.

The ACCC claims it would be colluding.

It's an unfair rule.

Because by doing so, the ACCC increases the supermarkets' power to keep wholesale prices low – obstructing the ability of family-run egg farms to earn a fair living.

If, however, our multinational supermarket chains paid farmers a fairer margin for each egg they dispatch, then caged egg farmers would be in a better position financially to examine new farming methods and opportunities in future.

As it stands today, a sudden ban on caged eggs would unfairly leave farmers with 'stranded assets'.

What does this mean? Caged egg farming is a long-term investment.

Many farmers might take out 30-year bank loans to set up a viable caged production system.

To close this system overnight, without compensation to pay off their bank debts, would be extremely unfair.

To break it down, for ordinary mums and dads, such a move would be akin to being forced to bulldoze your family home but still having to pay the mortgage afterwards for a building that no longer exists.

In conclusion, let's recap... according to the CSIRO, currently around 40 percent of all eggs sold in Australian supermarkets are caged.

Therefore, it is not hard to work out that if caged eggs were removed from the shelf, retailers would never have enough eggs to satisfy consumer demand, and the cost of a carton of eggs would skyrocket beyond affordable means.

To make up the shortfall, eating foreign imported eggs would need to be considered.

This would pose significant health risks to your family and to Australian agribusiness.

As Aussie egg farmers, we ask the public and decision makers to hear us out and fully appraise all of the facts on the issue of caged eggs.

The choice to buy caged, free range or barn laid eggs should be that of consumers, not the retail giants.

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Animal welfare must be front and centre



RSPCA Australia's science team produces a quarterly *Animal Welfare Science Update* to lift awareness of recent developments in animal welfare science that relate to the RSPCA's work.

The *Update* provides very readable plain English summaries of what the RSPCA's science 'peeps', including the likes of Melina Tensen – senior scientific officer (farm animals), determine are the most relevant and interesting scientific papers and reports on animal welfare published in the previous few months.

I get it and I enjoy reading it.

Typically, it covers farmed and other animals and birds.

The latest issue 68 had a couple of poultry pieces which caught my eye and I hope they catch yours.

I'll share them with you now, word for word, on the condition you read them with an open mind and offer your feedback, if so inspired, direct to NPN.

My 'two bob's worth' is that animal welfare needs to be front and centre in any discussion about our meat or egg laying industries.

Without recognising its inherent importance, we let our industry and consumers down, let alone the birds who make us the dollars and feed our customers.



Cant Comment
by
BRENDON CANT

Keeping dual-purpose laying hens decreases risk of injurious pecking

Commercial laying hen husbandry has several welfare challenges.

One of these challenges is injurious pecking, which is an abnormal behaviour carried out by laying hens often due to poor or stressful housing and management conditions.

It results in poor welfare, as injurious pecking is associated with feather loss, pain, reduced thermoregulation and a greater risk of cannibalism.

Another welfare challenge in commercial farms is the killing of one-day old male chicks.

A possible solution to this is to have dual-purpose laying hens where the males can be grown for meat production.

However, it is not clear if dual-purpose hens present greater risk for injurious pecking than conventional laying hens.

This study was conducted in Hannover, Germany where over 11,000 conventional and dual-purpose laying hens were evaluated.

All hens had untrimmed beaks and the two groups

were housed in identical conditions throughout the study.

Lesions associated with injurious pecking were assessed through a visual scoring method by a trained observer on a weekly basis and injuries were scored based on the body part affected and severity of the damage.

In conventional laying hens feather loss began in week 23 and progressed over time as 50 percent of individuals presented feather loss at an age of 32 weeks, and 92 percent of the hens were affected by the end of the study.

In the dual-purpose hens, feather loss was only observed after week 34 and at the end of the study only 8 percent of the dual-purpose hens had been affected.

No sign of injury or severe feather loss was observed in the dual-purpose hens, whereas 50 percent of conventional laying hens had severe feather loss after week 48, and 10 percent of the hens presented skin injuries after week 63.

These results indicate that keeping dual-purpose hens could be a possible alternative to avoid the practice of one-day old male chick culling, and reduces losses due to injurious pecking.

(Giersberg MF, Spindler B, Rodenburg B et al (2020) *The dual-purpose hen as a chance: Avoiding injurious pecking in modern laying hen husbandry. Animals 10(1), 16.*)

Finding the preferred nest for meat chicken breeder hens

Finding the preferred nest for meat chicken breeder hens has multiple benefits for both hens and producers.

Where hens' welfare requirements are met and they are provided appropriate nests, they are more likely to be healthy, present less aggressive behaviour and

produce more eggs.

Further, hens are more likely to lay eggs in a preferred nest, which thereby reduces the number of eggs laid outside the nests – floor eggs.

Reducing floor eggs is beneficial for producers because floor eggs can lead to economic losses.

This study conducted in the Netherlands involved 600 female and 54 male breeders, which were assigned to six even-sized pens.

Each pen had four types of nests: a nest with plastic walls; a nest with plastic walls and a partition in the middle; a nest with wooden walls; and a nest with plastic walls and a ventilator underneath. Hens were observed and eggs were counted in each nest for 12 weeks.

After 12 weeks, the preferred nest was closed and hens were observed for an additional two weeks.

During the first 12 weeks, the hens preferred the wooden nest, as more eggs were laid there and hens spent more time sitting in the wooden nest than in the other nests.

The wooden nest also received less visits per egg laid.

However, this resulted in higher crowding and aggressive behaviours in the wooden nest.

The nest with the ventilator was the least preferred nest.

After closing the wooden nest, the hens laid eggs in the nest that was closest to the wooden nest.

These results indicate that the material used for nests is an important factor to consider when designing suitable nests.

(van den Oever AC, Rodenburg TB, Bolhuis JE et al (2020) *Relative preference for wooden nests affects nesting behaviour of broiler breeders. Applied Animal Behaviour Science 222:104883.*)

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For more information regarding Super-Saver XL furnace heaters, contact Peter Lutterschmidt on 03 9313 0313 or at peter.lutterschmidt@agcocorp.com

Investing in smart farming future

SUSTAINABLE farming efforts are being boosted with more Australian government support under the latest round of the \$43.5 million Smart Farms Small Grants program.

Agriculture Minister David Littleproud said 113 projects would share in more than \$5 million to equip farmers with new skills and knowledge to improve sustainability and their bottom line.

"Our farmers have always looked after the land and we are giving them a helping hand to adopt best practice natural resource management methods," Minister Littleproud said.

"It is a critical time for agriculture which is poised to lead Australia's recovery out of COVID-19.

"This funding will improve the resilience and productive capacity of farms but will also have an immediate effect of stimulating local economies and bringing people together, when the time is right.

"Locals know best and that's why we're supporting them in activities such as rolling out projects to improve soil health and

demonstrating how new technology, such as drones, can help farming businesses.

"Smart Farms Small Grants is part of the second phase of the National Landcare program, a \$1.1 billion Australian government commitment to natural resource management."

Minister Littleproud said the successful recipients would receive grants of up to \$50,000.

"There is a strong emphasis on knowledge building such as Barron River Catchment Management Association's feral pig control community engagement project in Queensland," he said.

"There are also projects that adopt high-tech innovations such as South Australian No Tillage Farmers' best practice tool for reducing catastrophic fire risk in sustainable farming systems.

"By investing in clever farming ideas such as these, we are helping to ensure Australian agriculture's success story continues."

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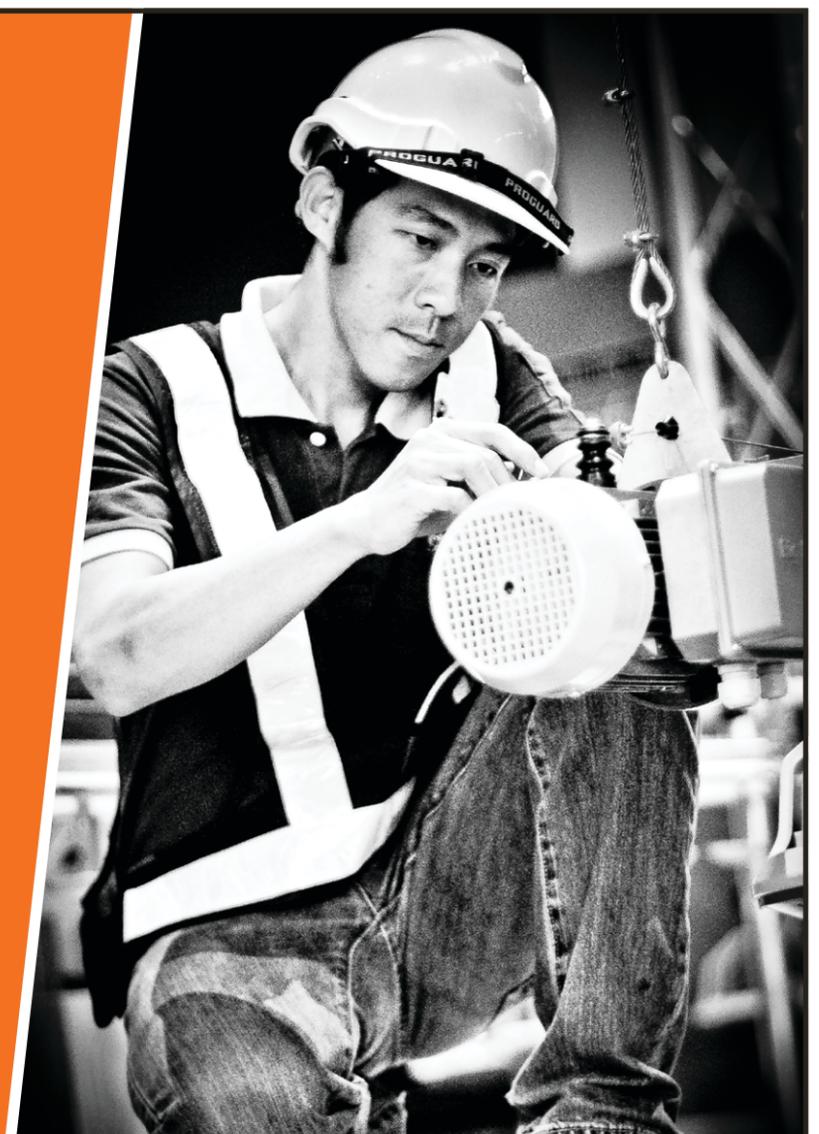
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Confident chickens are more productive



IMAGINE two people who share a house and eat the same food but when it comes to exercise, one is a couch potato and the other a runner.

That's the analogy University of New England researcher Isabelle Ruhnke uses to explain her latest experiment comparing egg production rates of free-range hens that like to roam with those that don't venture out.

And her findings go against what the industry expected.

"We had the initial hypothesis that the birds that go and range are not doing as well as the ones that stay in the shed around the nice feed, close to the nest box," Dr Ruhnke said.

"But quite the opposite was true."

The study saw 16,000 hens from 16 to 72 weeks of age fitted with antennas and microchip bands on their legs with their movements tracked around the property.

"These 'rangers' were outside within that first time period of 22 weeks of age, and when we looked at the egg production, they laid about 15 percent more eggs in the nest box than these birds that stayed in the shed," Dr Ruhnke said.

"It wasn't until they were 52 weeks of age, that the 'stayers' laid more eggs than those birds that would go out and range, which is really significant.

"In some operations, a one percent increase in egg output can translate to hundreds of thousands of dollars in extra revenue a year."

Non-for-profit organisation Australian Eggs co-funded the research and managing director Rowan McMonnies said it was the first time sub-populations in free-range hens had been examined.

"It was difficult to know what to expect," Mr McMonnies said.

"There had been an assumption within the industry that production was closely linked to food intake but the research shows the nature of the hen could be a strong factor.

"That they sit under the trees, don't come home at times, and need more energy to deal with the environment and would therefore be skinnier — but it was the absolute opposite we've proved in every one of the five flocks we investigated," Dr Ruhnke said.

"The question we have now is, why are these birds better than the others?"

The increased exposure to sunlight of the ranging hens is believed to be one of the contributing factors to their higher production.

"We also knew that these ranging birds were a bit heavier at the beginning, so they might have been a bit early in their sexual maturity," Dr Ruhnke said.

"These are things we're working on at the moment, and what farmers now are trying to discover by themselves — how do we get these birds that are staying in the shed to go outside, and what impact would that have for our production?"

The birds' movements showed that, given time, the more fearful hens would eventually move further from the shed.

"They became more confident and moved outside and egg laying increased," Dr Ruhnke said

"Overall these birds can, under good management, outperform those birds that stay in the shed.

"We found the birds that spent more time on the range had a better feather cover for example.

"They also had more parasites, which is not surprising.

"But nevertheless, they were better performing."

Mr McMonnies said the study showed not all hens were the same, and there was now more research to do.

"Free-range farming presents greater challenges and variability than other farming systems, so as the category grows we need to explore ways to improve and make outcomes more consistent," he said.

First published on abc.net.au

Coming out of their shells – researchers find outgoing, active free range hens are better egg producers. Photo: Prue Adams



Isabelle Ruhnke led the study that saw laying hens fitted with microchip trackers around their legs. Photo: Isabelle Ruhnke



The study explored the movement and production of free range hens only. Photo: Nikolai Beilharz

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Building blocks to deliver investment in technology and low-emissions future

THE National Farmers' Federation welcomed the Government's Technology Investment Roadmap discussion paper released recently.

NFF CEO Tony Mahar said research and development and the ability to innovate and develop new technologies across the economy will shape our capacity to transition to a low-emissions future.

"The report rightly seeks to have all options on the table for consideration," he said.

"There are a range of technologies that continue to be under development such as hydrogen, which if proved, provide significant transition opportunities as an alternative fuel source."

Mr Mahar said while such technologies were being developed there was a continued need to manage a careful and just transition.

"A sensible and measured approach to transition is critical, especially during these tough economic conditions."

Mr Mahar said importantly, the paper recognised the opportunity for agriculture to be part of a low-carbon future.

"In the agriculture sector, there are opportunities to improve soil carbon levels and live-

stock productivity, as well as deploying technologies to enhance fertiliser use, carbon storage in vegetation and improve fire management," he said.

"There's no doubt agriculture will continue to play a significant role in a low-carbon future as an industry that can both emit and sequester carbon.

"Greater technological investment will ensure agriculture can contribute to Australia's emissions reduction goals while allowing farmers to grow food and fibre for a growing global population."

The agriculture sector has already made a significant contribution to Australia's emissions reduction targets.

Between 1996 and 2016, agriculture reduced greenhouse gas emissions intensity by 63 percent.

As part of its vision for farmgate output to tally \$100 billion by

2030, the NFF has a goal for the sector to be trending towards carbon neutrality by the same year.

"The NFF and our members recognise the broader challenges of emissions reduction, especially in electricity and transport, both of which are major cost contributors to the agriculture sector," Mr Mahar said.

"Affordable and reliable electricity will be important going forward, in which gas generation will play a part in firming the grid.

"The paper also acknowledges the role of microgrids and stand-alone power systems in lowering costs and emissions and improving reliability for rural and remote communities.

"The NFF looks forward to further engagement through the discussion paper process."



National Farmers' FEDERATION



Photo: Bruno Thethe

Nhill, Victoria duck processor slashes more than 60 jobs

DUCK processor Luv-a-Duck has been forced to cut more than 60 jobs because of the impact of coronavirus. Six full-time positions have been made redundant, 15 casual positions have been terminated, 40 additional casuals have been stood down indefinitely and other casuals have had their hours cut.

Thirty of those stood down worked at the company's Nhill processing plant in north-west Victoria, where processing has been cut from five days to three days a week.

Luv-a-Duck chief executive James Thomp-

son said the business relied heavily on the restaurant trade and was hit hard by government closures of indoor venues.

"It was like someone switched a light switch and we lost more than 70 percent of our food service market overnight," he said.

Mr Thompson said the business was prepared for a long road to recovery.

"We've just had to batten down the hatches, drop the periscope and descend to the depths to ensure we can get out to the other side," he said.

"It's beholden on us

to ensure that the business remains viable and gets through this storm.

"We could be looking at a good 18 months to two years away."

Despite the financial impact of COVID-19 on the business, Mr Thompson said he had no doubt it would endure.

"The business was founded on strength and grit, and it will successfully come out the other side bigger, better and stronger."

Nhill is the biggest town within the Hindmarsh Shire, and the council could be able to provide a lifeline

to some of those who have lost their jobs.

The council will employ 13 full-time staff for the next six months, as part of the Victorian government's Working For Victoria initiative.

Council's chief executive Greg Wood said the aim was for staff to return to their previous jobs after six months.

"There may be an opportunity for people to look at a more permanent role as they come up," he said.

"But we are anticipating most of the people will go back to their previous employment once that starts to ramp-up again."

AgShows provides grants to 122 regional shows

REGIONAL agricultural show societies across Australia will share in \$20 million worth of grants to renew and reinvigorate aging showgrounds through the Regional Agricultural Show Development Grants program.

Minister for Agriculture David Littleproud said the grants would also serve as a much-needed cash injection in the wake of recent bushfires and the COVID-19 outbreak.

"Agricultural shows are a major drawcard for our regional towns many of which have had to cancel events this year due to COVID-19," Minister Littleproud said.

"These grants will help

show societies refurbish their showgrounds and facilities, so that when their next event rolls around it will be even more attractive to show-goers.

"Ag shows are the heart and soul of our regional communities.

"They bring and keep communities together, link the country to the city and provide a key boost to these local economies."

These events showcase the hard work and innovation that goes into producing Australia's food and fibre.

"Upgrading show facilities means more visitors to these regional events, more local employment and more tills ringing in

local businesses," Minister Littleproud said.

"The grants will be used by the successful show societies for a range of infrastructure works, from small-scale upgrades to major overhauls and new builds that will benefit not only the show, but the community throughout the year, and in emergency situations as was the case in the recent bushfires.

"The Australian government wants to see our agricultural shows continue to thrive and be enjoyed for generations to come."

For successful applicants visit agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/infrastructure/ag-shows



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NATIONAL Poultry
NEWSPAPER

Santrev and FarmMark will be joining forces

WE are very pleased to announce that effective July 2020, Santrev and FarmMark will be joining forces.

This is a very exciting opportunity for both companies, our employees and our clients.

Increasingly, Australian poultry and pig growers have been looking for a greater level of accountability and professionalism from industry service providers, and bringing these two companies together will provide that service.

The new company will offer full turnkey ability under one roof, with enhanced industry experience and expertise.

The merged business will create a more comprehensive infrastructure with faster response times for clients across the country and provide a true 'one-stop-shop' for experienced growers and new growers alike.

Complete services provided by the new entity will include:

- Design and consultation service;
- Full project management function;
- Build programs providing competitive pricing and guaranteed completion times;
- Internal equipment with multiple equipment options;
- Electrical services and equipment; and
- Commissioning and training support.

This is a marriage of two highly compatible firms who have worked together for 20 years and both companies firmly believe the customer should always come first.

We hold similar values and philosophies on doing business: doing an excellent job that provides high performance and a quality outcome, with an emphasis on honesty and integrity and acknowledging the importance of bringing a

positive attitude to work.

FarmMark Director Luigi Di Clemente said, "It is important to build a strong and trustworthy relationship with our clients and we stand behind all our products with spare parts and warranties."

"We will continue to offer the best ongoing service and training to help achieve the best results."

We will continue to build and own farms for

ourselves that give us the insight into the industry that makes us better at what we do every day and provide a greater opportunity to our clients to be more successful in this competitive global environment.

Though we will now operate under one company umbrella, day-to-day operation will continue as normal and Santrev and FarmMark will carry on

in their current states, so ordering and invoicing will be as normal.

You will still be dealing with the same people and you can depend on the same quality of work and service.

Please join us as we look forward to an exciting and prosperous future for our employees, our project partners and our clients.

Luke Trevanion
Santrev director



Luigi Di Clemente and Luke Trevanion

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Chook poo assists with social distancing

SWEDEN has resorted to using chicken poo to stop students from breaking social distancing rules.

When faced with the question of how to stop 30,000 young people gathering for a beer-fuelled festival celebrating spring, officials came up with a load of sh*t.

That was the solution offered by Lund, a Swedish city that hosts the annual celebration of Valborg from April 30 to May 1.

Officials organised the spreading of chicken manure in the central park to discourage people gathering there.

Lund environmental committee member Gustav Lindblad said, "We had the opportunity of fertilising the lawns in the park and because it will stink, it may not be so nice to sit and drink beer there."

Valborg marks the arrival of spring and thousands of young people – mostly students – travel from across the country for a raucous night of festivities in Lund's Stadspark, which translates to City Park.

Lund's mayor Phillip Sandberg confirmed the decision with a Facebook post.

Sitting at Valborg in a park stinking of chicken manure where leaf blowers are making a noise and blowing things around is not a pleasant experience.

On the other hand, it

is good for the lawn, as chicken manure contains phosphorus and nitrogen, so that we have a really nice city park for summer.

It was announced that the whole City Park would be closed at Valborg, and maintenance measures were to be carried out in the park on the day to prevent the possible spread of COVID-19.

Comments on the post suggested the idea had gone down well, with several calling it 'creative' and 'fantastic'.

However, one social media user questioned whether the loss of smell, reported as a common COVID-19 symptom in young people, would mean potential attendees wouldn't notice the stench of the manure in the park.

In comparison to other countries, Sweden has taken a more relaxed approach to tackling COVID-19 – keeping schools, restaurants and night-clubs open.

Social distancing is the responsibility of citizens and a national lockdown is enforced.

Swedish leaders say the strategy has worked but there is criticism, particularly of the reported death rate of 22 deaths per 100,000 people, according to research from John Hopkins University.

Neighbouring Denmark has recorded seven deaths per 100,000 people by comparison.



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Aussie Pumps' new poultry hot wash sizzlers

AUSTRALIAN poultry producers are among the most efficient and hygienic in the world.

The 'need to clean' is constant and of paramount importance to the quality of the product they produce.

One Australian pump manufacturer has worked with producers around the country to develop a product range particularly suitable for livestock applications.

Aussie Pumps, a 2.5-acre factory in Sydney's Norwest business

district, is proud of its new 'Sizzler' hot wash machine.

Aussie Pumps chief engineer John Hales said, "We're conscious of the need for constant reliable cleaning equipment."

"We ensure hygiene rules are adhered to in the easiest, safest and most cost-efficient way."

The result of constant evolution of the product range is Aussie's new Sizzler Hot Wash.

The Sizzler, designed in Australia, is a high-pressure hot wash ma-

chine delivering 1800psi of pressure with a flow of 10l/pm.

With a maximum temperature of 80C, the machine has the ability to eradicate bacteria.

The Sizzler is compact and easy to move with four flat-free tyred wheels.

Though it weighs 100kg, it's manoeuvrable with an integrated handle and full stainless steel cover.

Underneath that shiny stainless steel exterior, there is a heavy-duty

four pole (slow speed), 1450rpm single-phase 240V motor.

That motor drives a top-quality Italian triplex pump with ceramic pistons.

"Everything on the machine is built for quality," Hales said.

"We built it based on the feedback we were getting from the users around Australia."

The machine is loaded with safety controls, designed to protect the machine and operator.

It has delayed total stop, which stops the machine 30 seconds after the gun trigger is closed.

This saves fuel and can prevent accidents.

Micro-leak protection stops the machine in the case of leaks in the hydraulic circuit when the gun is shut down.

'Clogged Nozzle Control' stops the machine if the nozzle in the end of the lance is blocked, preventing the possibility of a build-up of pressure in the system.

Dry Running Protection and Intelligent Auto Switch Off are also part of the system.

Ignition boiler delay ensures low fume emissions when the boiler starts up.

Turbo-lances are available to give extra whack if there's any hard cleaning to be done.

A flat surface cleaner can also operate off the machine.

The company believes using its engineering innovations can help producers save money and operate more efficiently and hygienically manner.

A stainless steel roll frame is also available, as are foaming devices for applying sanitiser through the machine.

Bigger machines are available in a pressure range of 3000-4000psi, making them suitable for even high-output processing plant.

The company also has a range of heavy-duty cold wash machines with flows to 28l/pm and pressures as high as 5000psi.

These machines are available in single and three-phase configurations and are compact, slow speed, long life and minimum maintenance.

Poultry producers can qualify for the regular specials that come out on this equipment and could receive the 100 percent depreciation allowance if they make an acquisition before June 30.

It's a smart move to buy before the end of the financial year.

For more information and the details of your closest Aussie authorised distributor, or for direct technical information and support, contact Aussie Pumps on 02 8865 3500 or aussiepumps.com.au



Aussie's Sizzler hot wash machine is an ideal germ killer in processing plants.



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Could coronavirus be the catalyst for resurgence in competitive chicken breeding? Photo: Matt Bamford



Thousands of birds of all shapes and sizes compete in the National Poultry Show. Photo: Kathleen Dyett

COVID-19 lays the foundation for future chicken Olympics

A PERFECT balance of power, athleticism and beauty is a lot to ask of a chicken but champion breeders Chris White and Alan Bailey have come closer than most to producing flawless fowl.

For four years they have prepared for the National Poultry Show, also known as the chicken Olympics, and were left shattered when the four-yearly event was cancelled due to COVID-19.

The veteran breeders hope the surge in popularity of pet chickens will lay the foundation for a new generation of competitors.

For more than 20 years, the National Poultry Show has been the place where fanciers can lay claim to being Australia's best breeder.

About 5000 birds are brought in from across the country to compete.

Veteran competitor Chris White works all year round to prepare.

"It's like having a race

horse on Melbourne Cup Day, you've got to have everything in perfect order," he said.

"And it also takes a bit of luck."

Raising chickens has been his lifelong passion.

"Everyone reckons I was born with feathers, and I haven't changed," Mr White said.

He was deep into his final preparations for the 2020 show when it was cancelled due to COVID-19.

"It was extremely disappointing for many people," he said.

"Nothing matches the national show."

But Mr White said he was heartened to see more people using their time at home to start raising chickens.

"It's tremendous that so many people are getting exposure to it, just by having a few laying hens in the backyard," he said.

"It's a giant network and the more people who join — that is good for everyone."

He said the hobby is a perfect relief from the pace of modern life.

"I can come home from the hardest of days and the stress of the day is gone — it's fantastic," Mr White said.

Cessnock farmer Alan Bailey was hoping to win back-to-back honours with his grand champion from the 2019 Sydney Royal Easter Show.

"I was shattered when I found out it was cancelled," he said.

"I had a good team ready, I couldn't get them any fitter."

The decorated fancier learned his craft from a coal miner who would record every piece of meat and vegetable fed to his chooks.

He said there are endless opportunities to get involved.

"When you can, head along to your local agricultural show and have a look," Mr Bailey said.

"There's plenty of people who are keen to share their knowledge.

"It's also one of the only hobbies where you can eat your mistakes."

The Royal Agricultural Society of NSW has been watching the uptick in chicken enthusiasts with interest.

RAS president Glen Best said it was a silver lining in an otherwise gloomy year.

"It's absolutely a good opportunity to get involved," he said.

"Most people start with just a few laying hens and then they get bitten by the bug.

"It's a hobby that has great physical and mental benefits, and can be a break from the busy society we live in these days."

He said he would not be surprised if coronavirus was the catalyst for a new wave of top tier competitors.

"We certainly need youngsters to come through and replace the older generations," Mr Best said.

First published on abc.net.au



Veteran competitor Chris White is happy to pass on his knowledge to the younger generation of fanciers. Photo: Matt Bamford



Alan Bailey was hoping to win back-to-back honours with his prized game fowls. Photo: Matt Bamford



Raising chickens has been a reprieve from COVID-19 for many families. Photo: Penny Travers



Fanciers spend years preparing for the 'chicken olympics'. Photo: Matt Bamford



Photo: Drew Hays

E. coli vaccination is safe for hens in lay

A NEW study from Denmark shows that a live vaccine against escherichia coli can safely be used in hens in lay, a practice that may help limit e. coli transmission in both broiler and egg production.

According to the study's author and a professor at the University of Copenhagen Henrik Christensen, e. coli can be transferred horizontally and vertically in poultry production and both cause serious problems.

"Horizontal transfer occurs in the hatcher but it will also occur in the poultry house during production, where e. coli will

be all over, especially in the litter," Dr Christensen said.

"So it's difficult to control horizontal transfer — it's easier to control the vertical transfer.

"If the hen is infected, then her eggs can also be infected by e. coli, and this infection will be transferred into the hatcher and into the day-old broilers.

"So we have to focus on vertical transfer for control."

Traditionally, he explained, treating the day-old chicks with antibiotics has controlled vertical transmission.

However, this approach

has fallen out of favour in Denmark and elsewhere due to concerns about antibiotic resistance.

Another option is to improve management, he added, but that can only work to a certain extent.

A third option is vaccination, which he said is commonly used in layers and broiler breeders during rearing.

However, he noted, vaccination has not traditionally been used in hens in lay due to a lack of safety data.

"When the hens start laying, they are more stressed and additional stress caused by vaccination could cause more harm," Dr Christensen said.

"So people have been reluctant to vaccinate."

Another concern was the possibility of live vaccine strains surviving in the environment and recombining with field strains, putting both bird health and food safety at risk.

The study, recently published in Veterinary Microbiology, was conducted by the University of Copenhagen in a flock of more than 10,000 layer

parents in Denmark.

Investigators sought to determine firstly the effect of vaccination on layer health, laying performance and hatching results, and secondly whether the vaccine strain could shed cloacally and survive in and on the surface of the eggs.

The birds were given a live e. coli vaccine twice during rearing at five days and 14 weeks, and a third time while the birds were in lay at 30 weeks.

Egg samples and cloacal swabs were taken three and seven days following the third vaccination to determine presence of the e. coli vaccine strain inside and on the surface of the eggs.

Results indicated that the vaccine strain was not shed cloacally and was not present in and on the eggs.

"From the samples we took, we isolated e. coli bacteria and we then used various methods to identify the vaccine strain," Dr Christensen said.

"We were not able to recover the vaccine strain three days after vaccination in and on the eggs, or from the cloacal swabs."

In addition, he said, the vaccine had no adverse effects on health and production parameters — number of eggs, hatching and progeny — when administered to birds in lay.

"Based on these results, we can say that it's possible to use a vaccine with hens in lay without any adverse effects," Dr Christensen said.

"The vaccine strain will not survive in the production environment or on the eggs.

"So that can be two reasons to vaccinate hens in lay both for broiler parents and for table egg layers.

"One reason is of course to protect the hens themselves — so we have a lower mortality related to e. coli and also more animal welfare.

"The other reason is mainly related to broiler parents because by limiting the level of e. coli infection, we're able to limit the vertical transfer of e. coli to the broilers.

"It's also a way to limit the spread of e. coli, some of which have a zoonotic potential to be transferred into the human food chain."

Simple and easy DAF system

DISSOLVED air flotation systems can be complicated, with pump, compressor, air saturation pressure vessel and controls, but this complication can turn into 'set and forget' by using an EDUR 'multiphase' pump.

According to Australian distributors, Hydro Innovations, the EDUR DAF pump does not need compressed air and does not need an air saturation vessel.

The EDUR multiphase pump has a unique design, enabling it to handle an air and water combination.

It is set up with a restrictor valve on the suction and an air 'snorkel', which draws in atmospheric air into the suction of the pump.

The pump then sheers and mixes the air with the water before discharging it under pressure to mimic what would happen in the conventional system — within the pressure vessel.

As with the conventional system, the EDUR pump 'forces' the air into solution

with back-pressure created by a discharge restrictor valve.

When the air saturated water is released back into the DAF tank, the air comes back out of solution forming micro bubbles 30-50 micron, and floats fats, oil and grease to the surface for collection.

The EDUR pump effectively replaces the standard pump, the air compressor and the air saturation vessel.

This system simplification also has an impact on running costs.

No compressor to run and maintain, and no maintenance or yearly recertification on an air saturation vessel.

EDUR Pumps of Kiel in Germany has been building application specific pumps since 1927.

Though relatively new to the Australian market, they have been successfully supplying DAF pumps to European, Chinese and US food manufacturers for over 20 years.

Australian food producers can now take advantage of these technologically advanced and cost saving processes.



Live poultry linked to salmonella outbreaks in US

THE US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention have linked live poultry and backyard birds to salmonella cases in 28 states.

Live poultry in backyard flocks across the country have caused salmonella infections that have sickened 97 people.

Reporting in MedicalXpress indicates that 17 people have been hospitalised.

No deaths have been reported in this outbreak.

Nearly a third of the confirmed cases are children under five

Spring and summer are popular times to build backyard flocks

and purchase new chicks.

However, the CDC warns that people can get salmonella from lax biosecurity protocols or touching live poultry.

The CDC recommends all backyard flock owners wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water after touching live poultry and anything in their environment.

Owners should be advised not to kiss backyard poultry, nor let children younger than five touch the birds because children are more likely to contract severe salmonella infections.



Photo: Karim Ghantous

"they look like sh*t but pump like Arnold Schwarzenegger"

Trevor Egan, MC Herd

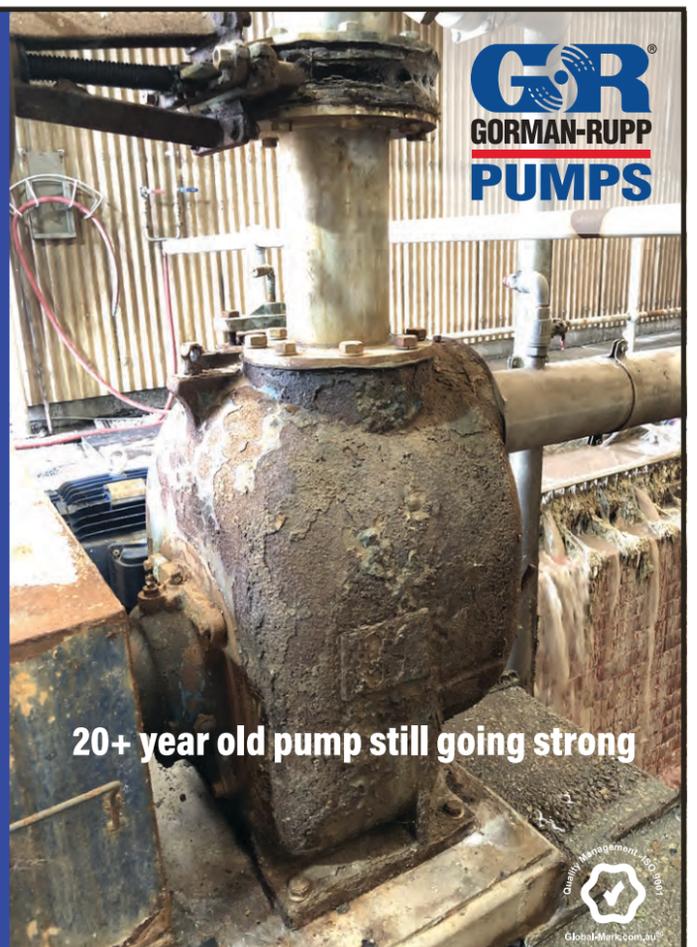
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Apiam's Zoono sanitiser will protect for up to 30 days

ONE of Australia's leading veterinary service providers, Apiam Animal Health, has secured the Australian distribution rights of a revolutionary surface sanitiser and protection nanotechnology.

The new-generation disinfectant – Zoono Z-71 Microbe Shield – has been demonstrated to protect against bacterial, viral and fungal pathogens for up to 30 days.

It is ideal to be used as part of a dairy farm's sanitisation program, whether that is:

In animal handling facilities such as around farm gates, latches and handles;

Buildings and office touch points such as keyboards, equipment and phones; and

In vehicle and machinery interiors.

Importantly, Z-71 Microbe Shield is approved by Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration for use against COVID-19 on hard surfaces.

The TGA approval comes on the back of research conducted in the United Kingdom against a COVID-19 surrogate, feline coronavirus, where Z-71 Microbe Shield was able to reduce the viral levels by over 99.99 percent.

Apiam managing director Dr Chris Richards said the biggest differ-

ence between this sanitiser and others on the market is it continues to remain effective over time through killing pathogens by mechanical rather than chemical action.

"It has been demonstrated through extensive research over 10 years against a range of pathogens to be effective for up to 30 days," he said.

"Laboratory tests are currently progressing to establish the duration of protection that the Z-71 Microbe Shield product will have against a COVID-19 surrogate.

"In studies in the US, Apiam has been able to demonstrate prevention of clinical disease against the pig coronavirus, PED virus, for over 30 days following a single application of the product to all surfaces.

"Both mechanical and chemical sanitisers will kill most pathogens pretty much straight away but the fact it has been tested to be effective against many germs for up to 30 days on surfaces is a major breakthrough."

Apiam acquired the distribution rights for livestock and animal health industries in Australia in November last year for the disinfectant technology, which is manufactured in New Zealand by fellow ASX-listed company Zoono Group Limited.

"We were initially at-

tracted to the Zoono products for use by our network of vets to sanitise and protect piggeries, poultry sheds and livestock systems, as well as for use in biosecurity programs with the technology," Dr Richards said.

Dr Richards said Apiam has also been using its current supply of Z-71 Microbe Shield to sanitise its own offices and veterinary hospitals around the country.

"Veterinary practices are seen as an essential service and we want to ensure we make it as safe as possible for our staff and clients," he said.

Dr Richards said there had been strong demand from both Apiam clients and the greater community for the use of its products, and that Apiam was providing fogging services where requested to assist other essential businesses and workplaces to improve their biosecurity and hygiene systems.

Dr Richards said Apiam had plenty of stock of Z-71 Microbe Shield and was expecting to get additional supplies of both Z-71 Microbe Shield and Zoono's hand sanitiser in coming weeks, which would be available through Apiam clinics and at countryvet.com.au

It is available in five-litre bulk containers as well as 150ml and 250ml spray bottles.



Photo: Natalie Ng

Welcome outcome on wet markets

THE Minister for Agriculture David Littleproud was pleased to see the strong international support, which he led in April at the

G20 to investigate wildlife wet markets as part of the broader review of COVID-19.

Minister Littleproud said his call for the ex-

pert review would provide a greater understanding of how to prevent another devastating event.

"Since 1980, two pandemics have been linked to wildlife wet markets and a further two linked to unsustainable wildlife practices – this is acknowledgment we need to work globally to protect ourselves from these risks," Minister Littleproud said.

"We have long known about the dangers associated with wildlife wet markets and the potential for pandemics they pose but they also are a risk to agriculture and food security.

"That is why I worked with Australia's chief veterinary officer Mark Schipp to push for glob-

al reforms underpinned by a scientific review.

"The review will be a joint World Health Organisation, World Organisation for Animal Health and Food and Agriculture Organisation collaboration.

"It will take a global effort to reduce the risks for disease to emerge and spread, and the threat to agriculture that the mix of wildlife, domestic animals and humans provide in wildlife wet markets.

"Together we can gather information that will contribute to the betterment of all nations.

"Let's hope the outcomes of the review finds ways to protect human life and the agriculture that underpins global food security."



Photo: Raymond Pang

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