



Jenny Stanton with daughters Grace, Annabelle and Matilda with their free range chickens on Kangaroo Island.

Free range chickens on Kangaroo Island flourish

STARTING with the intention of buying a few chickens for their own consumption but becoming the only chicken meat farmers on Kangaroo Island, the founders of Primal Harvest have a mission.

During a mainland visit, Will and Jenny Stanton spontaneously decided to purchase some meat chickens for themselves and daughters Grace, Annabelle and Matilda but returned to their Stokes Bay farm with a flock of 200.

"Will has always wanted to get meat birds because we eat a lot of chicken ourselves

and have previously questioned what's in those we buy," Jenny Stanton said. "We love knowing our chickens are raised with the utmost care, the way nature intended, and this has a big impact on the quality of their meat."

Raised on a sheep and cropping farm near Narri in the mid-north of South Australia, Jenny is a qualified agronomist, while Will is a third-generation Kangaroo Island farmer who grows kowari oats in collaboration with a local farming business, Kangaroo Island Oats.

Now the pair have turned

their passion for healthy living into a growing business, supplying the island and mainland with pasture raised on open fields – PROOF – accredited chickens.

Their farm is on the sunny north coast of Kangaroo Island, meaning the close proximity to the sea moderates the temperature against frost and the northerly wind.

Sandy ground provides a paradise for chickens, allowing them to engage in their instinctive behaviour of scratching for bugs and dust bathing.

With no foxes on Kangaroo Island, unrestricted by fences and completely free to roam pastures and native vegetation, their free range chickens are living the dream in dome shelters that are moved to fresh pasture each day.

"I just didn't realise how quickly they grew," Jenny said.

"We're doing this for our children, growing food more naturally and keeping them healthy and happy."

Processing every eight or nine weeks, the Stanton family offer everything from whole chickens to

wings, thighs, hearts, livers and even feet, and have added smoked chicken to their Kangaroo Island Primal Harvest range, which they hope to soon take nationwide.

"Wanting to grow chickens to feed our family has led to Primal Harvest," Jenny said.

"We grow our birds knowing that we are going to eat them and love having total control of what the birds consume."

Jenny's passion for the connection of food and health means she is all about primal ingredients, so there is no soy, no genetically modified organisms, no hormones and no medications or antibiotics fed to the chickens.

"We take the effort to give them apple cider vinegar, diatomaceous earth, seaweed and biochar to support their immunity because we know we are what we eat," Jenny said.

"Our premium pasture-raised chickens enjoy green grass, sunshine and fresh air."

"We believe chickens raised the best, taste the best." 🐔



Will Stanton shares his love for regenerative agriculture and vision of growing wholesome food with his wife and three daughters.

Eghwaaa enhances economic autonomy

THIS month has been a challenging time for all, with Armidale being one of the first regional areas of NSW to go into lockdown.

This has altered many of our plans but has also provided some fantastic opportunities to engage in other ways with many different people.

Recently, we were contacted by a very motivated group of university students from Taiwan.

They have proposed a fantastic project that will benefit a small but very deserving sector of their community.

Similar to Australia, Taiwan is witnessing the increasing gap between urban and rural areas.

Located in Hualien, the Ihowang tribe have a group of elderly farmers who are using traditional farming methods, and the eggs they produce are organic, safe and healthy.

The students have proposed a cooperative economic model titled 'Eghwaaa' for the elderly tribes' people to enhance their economic autonomy.

The population is ag-



by **TAMSYN CROWLEY**
Director



ing and many of them face partial disabilities, hence they have a heavy reliance on government subsidies.

Given that these elderly tribes' people constantly face an unstable economic future and are unable to be self-sufficient, the student group have designed a membership-based business model that will lead to economic autonomy.

The groups' motivation is threefold – improve the dignity and value of the elderly, increase the tribal land use rate and raise awareness of economic autonomy within the tribe.

Further to their business model, the students plan

to hold a tribal garden party every six months to enable members – people who have subscribed – to visit the chickens and experience the tribal customs.

This event will further drive the local economy through engagement and the facilitation of a cultural market.

PoultryHub Australia plans to engage further with these students to aid them in achieving their goals.

I'll keep you posted on their progress.

These types of interactions are what motivate me to engage with young people and encourage them to come up with

➔ continued P2



Members of the Ihowang tribe in Hualien who are keen to be part of the Eghwaaa initiative.

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Poultry Industry Calendar of Events

2021

SEP 14-17 – SPACE International Exhibition for Animal Production 2021, France, uk.space.fr

SEP 22-24 – Meat Pro Asia 2021, Thailand, meatpro-asia.com

SEP 27 – Farm Kids School Holidays – Chickens Workshop, Byron Bay, www.eventbrite.com.au

NOV 21-22 – AVAMS21, Gold Coast www.avams2020.com.au

2022

MAR 30 - APR 1 – 7th International Conference on Poultry Intestinal Health, Columbia, www.ihsig.com

MAY 15-17 – Poultry Information Exchange and Australasian Milling Conference (PIX/AMC), www.pixamc.com.au

How to supply event details: Send all details to National Poultry Newspaper, PO Box 162, Wynnum Qld 4178, call 07 3286 1833 or email: design@collins.media

poultrynews.com.au
07 3286 1833

HAVE YOUR SAY!

All producers are encouraged to send in letters to be published in NPN, outlining any concerns or issues they may have with the industry.

This is an open forum where you can cover any topic, whether for or against an issue.

Please send your letters to: editorial@collins.media or PO Box 162, Wynnum Qld 4178

IEC and Australian egg farmers

WHAT is the International Egg Commission?

And how are Aussie egg farmers connected?

Many of those involved in egg farming have probably heard of the International Egg Commission and wondered how Australian egg farmers are connected to the organisation.

Hannah Rose is the global communications manager with IEC and I asked her to help fill us in on the commission's role.

The International Egg Commission is part of the World Egg Organisation – the only global organisation entirely dedicated to representing the egg.

It is run by egg producers for the benefit of egg producers, with egg industry members in over 75 countries.



Egg Farmers of Australia Inc.

by **MELINDA HASHIMOTO**
CEO



The Aussie connection

The Australian egg industry plays a leading and vital role within the IEC, with Australian egg producers holding several key leadership roles.

These include Kent Antonio of McLean Farms being a member of the IEC governing executive Board, Rowan McMonnies of Australian Eggs having a seat

on the international chief executive officer forum, and Frank Pace of Pace Farm being one of the selectors who propose future Board chairs and senior Board members.

On behalf of egg producers around the world, the IEC represents your interests to international bodies that have an impact on our industry, including the

World Health Organisation, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, the Consumer Goods Forum and the World Animal Health Organisation.

The OIE is particularly relevant to the egg industry as they not only set international guidelines for overseeing the prevention and control of avian influenza, but they also set recommended standards for animal welfare of laying hens.

The OIE only deals with national governments or international organisations, which is why the IEC has an agreement with the OIE on your behalf and is recognised as the representative of the global egg industry.

As a result of this agreement, the IEC was able to nominate a scientist to sit on the OIE ad-hoc scientific group to help shape the initial draft of the Animal Welfare and Laying Hens standards.

It has also given the IEC direct communication links with key OIE leaders.

Global collaboration

In addition to representing the interests of the egg industry to key international bodies, the IEC also supports global collaboration and information sharing on areas of international importance through its conferences, regional events, virtual programs, networking opportunities and the establishment of global expert groups.

The current global expert groups include the Avian Influenza Global Expert Group, which has developed tools to support egg farmers to implement good levels of biosecurity to prevent the spread of avian influenza.

The IEC also coordinated the creation of a Global Egg Nutrition Expert Group and an Environmental Sustainability Expert Group, which Frances Jewell of Australian Eggs and Kent Antonio of McLean Farms are respective members of.

For more information on the International Egg Commission visit the IEC website, internationalegg.com



International Egg Commission

Eghwaaa enhances economic autonomy

from P1

novel ways to solve problems, both in our industry and society.

Finally, we recently awarded two honours scholarships worth \$5000 each.

These scholarships were made possible by the collaboration of Australian Eggs, AgriFutures Chicken Meat and PHA, through the Chook Chat Shack.

The first recipient is Corey-Ann Firman, a student from the University of Adelaide whose project

is titled, 'Improving chick post-hatch performance from young breeder flocks using in ovo creatine monohydrate supplementation'.

The second student Natalie Mendes, a student from the University of New England, will be investigating if a complex rearing environment can prepare meat chickens to range by increasing activity and improving leg health.

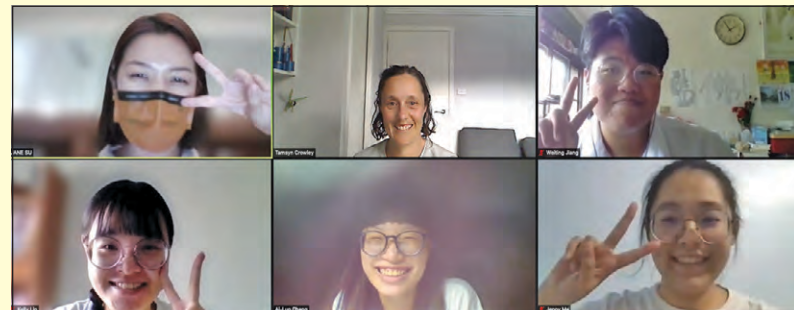
I wish both students the best for their studies and look forward to sharing

the results later this year.

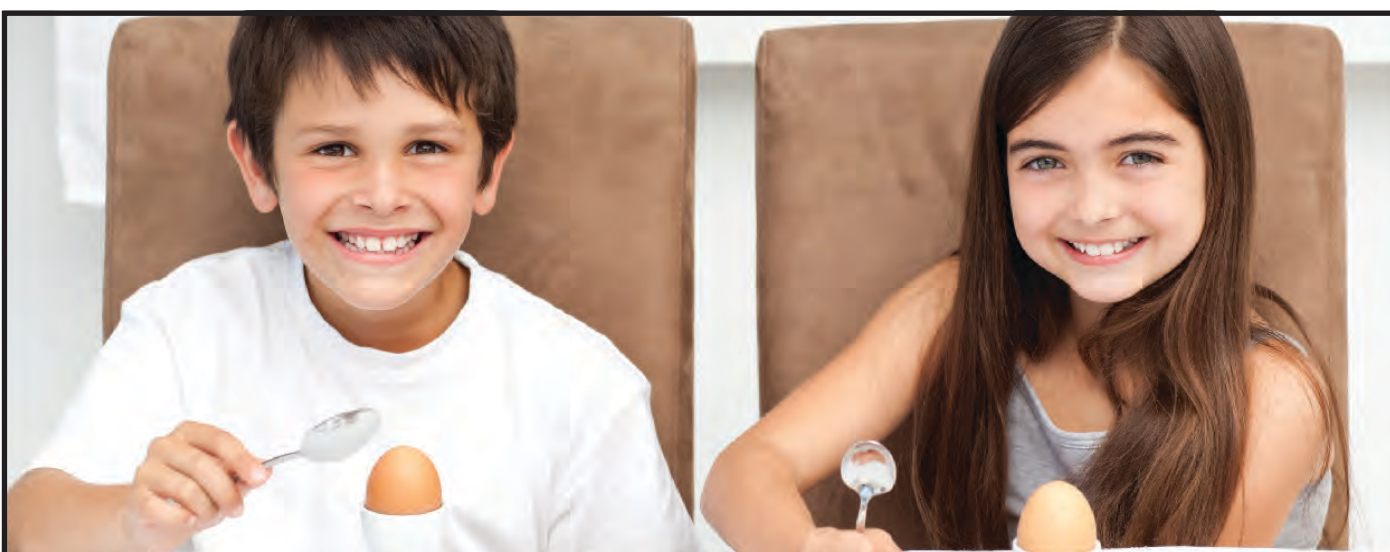
I hope you are all safe and well and encourage you to reach out – we are always looking for ways

to support the industry and farmers, and would welcome any suggestions of how we can be of assistance.

If you have an idea or want to chat all things poultry, contact our office poultryhub@une.edu.au



A Zoom session with the highly motivated Taiwanese students. Such beautiful smiles!



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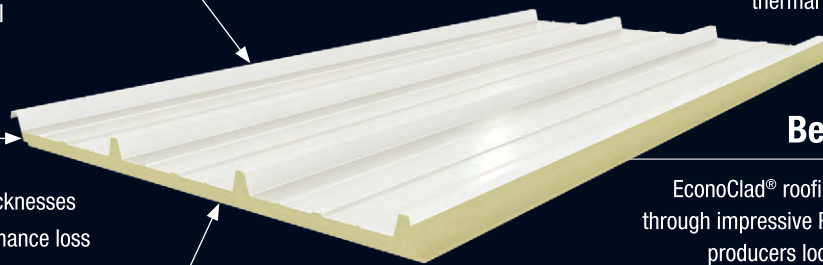
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The job mandate debate

FOLLOWING the early August announcement by food manufacturer SPC that it would be the first Australian company to force staff to be vaccinated against COVID-19, there has been a string of arguments, both for and against, put forward by government, union and business bodies.

The Shepparton-based company that makes Ardmona canned tomatoes and Goulburn Valley packaged fruit, will mandate that all staff must be fully vaccinated by the end of November in order to enter any company location.

Also believed to include contractors, the mandate means everyone must have at least the first vaccine dose scheduled by September 15 and administered by the end of October.

Staff will receive time off to receive their vaccinations and special paid leave of up



Cant Comment
by
BRENDON CANT

to two days for anyone who becomes unwell after their vaccination.

Those with pre-existing conditions and unable to receive the vaccine will have their circumstances reviewed on a case by case basis.

Visitors to SPC sites, including its cannery in Victoria, will also be required to be vaccinated.

SPC chairman Hussein Rifai said the measure aimed to ensure the health and well-being of all staff and the broader community.

Meanwhile, in a chicken industry first, Ingham's will extend its health and well-being benefits to include a new vaccination leave policy to cover its people across Australia and New Zealand to increase accessibility to COVID-19 vaccinations.

In an August 3 statement, Ingham's chief executive officer and managing director Andrew Reeves said Ingham's had worked hard to care for its people through the pandemic.

"I am proud that we're having ongoing conversations to ensure this continues to be our number one priority," Mr Reeves said.

Ingham's decided it was important to support its people and their work-life balance by allowing them to take paid time during their workday at a time more convenient and accessible to them than what it might be on a weekend or out of work hours.

In the same week SPC announced it was mandating COVID-19 vaccinations, Queensland meatworks Teys at Rockhampton revealed that 94 percent of its workforce had been fully vaccinated.

Teys Australia manager John Langbridge said the company did not see the necessity to even consider mandating COVID-19 vaccinations.

"We are promoting the vaccine and encouraging workers to talk to their local medical practitioner, their trusted source of health information, and to take that advice," Mr Langbridge said.

On its website under a 'COVID-19 update' dropdown menu, the Australian Chicken Meat Federation stated, "ACMF is providing ongoing assistance and advice to its members to continue to safeguard the supply of chicken meat to Australian families."

"It is important to know that there is no evidence that chickens, or chicken meat, are in any way involved in the transmission of COVID-19."

"The industry recognises that the health and safety of

its workforce is paramount and must be its first and foremost responsibility.

"We will always prioritise the health and well-being of the industry's workforce and thus are working with companies to ensure that practices and contingency measures continue to be in place to protect employees, their families and the broader community.

"We commend the exemplary, ongoing efforts made by our members and their supply chain partners in adapting to the challenges that this pandemic presents us with.

"ACMF is committed to supporting its members throughout the COVID-19 response and recovery, to help industry to manage and mitigate the current, changing and future impacts of COVID-19."

A quick review of the Egg Farmers of Australia website didn't turn up anything in relation to COVID-19, despite it being the national representative body of Australian egg farmers and representing 85 percent of all Australian egg farming.

Under 'Who we are' it stated, "EFA promotes and ensures the sustainability of the whole Australian egg industry, developing and advocating policy and participating in public conversations on issues affecting the industry."

I'd have thought, given the disruption and uncertainty COVID-19 has delivered on so many fronts over the past 18 months, it might have deserved a reference of some sort. 🐔

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QUEP 2021 AGM notice

QUEENSLAND United Egg Producers announce the 2021 annual general meeting to be held as a Microsoft Teams video meeting at 10.00am on October 22, 2021.

The meeting will address the election of directors, including the statutory requirements, plus receive the latest update on the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Poultry and

the impacts for future egg farming.

A COVID-19 update will also be provided with a focus on Queensland Health protocols to positive cases in your workforce.

All current members will receive an invitation by email prior to the AGM date with the Teams link.

QUEP invites new members to join the organisation and add to the strength of the rep-

resentation offered to egg farmers.

New members should contact John Coward for registration details.

For more information, call John Coward on 0407 622 166 or send an email to john.coward1@gmail.com



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New energy guide for Australian farmers

THE National Farmers' Federation is teaming up with the Energy Efficiency Council – the peak body for experts in smart energy management – to launch a new guide for farms that are looking to slash their energy costs through smart energy management.

The new 'sector spotlight' on farms is the latest in the EEC's 'Navigating a dynamic energy landscape' series and shows how farms can cut costs, improve productivity and reduce emissions with energy efficiency, renewables and demand management.

National Farmers' Federation chief executive officer Tony Mahar said the guide was timely, "Aussie farmers have seen their en-

ergy costs more than double in the last decade."

"The great news is we've seen leading farms avoid a big chunk of those extra costs by getting smarter with how they use energy."

"This guide is about getting those stories out there and giving farmers the practical information they need to start reaping those benefits," Mr Mahar said.

Energy Efficiency Council chief executive officer Luke Menzel said, "Agriculture is getting more energy intensive, as farmers look to boost productivity and deal with other challenges such as reduced rainfall."

"Put that together with volatile energy prices and farmers are more interested than ever in what they can do to manage their energy costs."

"This practical guide covers all the bases – energy efficiency, renewables, load shifting and procurement – so it is a great starting point for farms looking to roll up their sleeves and start reaping the benefits of smart energy management," Mr Menzel said.

For more information, visit energybriefing.org.au



Energy Efficiency Council CEO Luke Menzel.



Country Fresh Eggs, produced by Smalls Trading Co, occupies a total area of 4.63 hectares and carries a significant number of birds that produce eggs for a vast area throughout central Queensland.

Smalls Trading Co poultry egg farm Country Fresh Eggs for sale

ELDERS Real Estate Rockhampton has been instructed by the Smalls Trading Co to offer the poultry egg farm Country Fresh Eggs, located near Rockhampton, for sale by private treaty.

The outstanding family owned farming enterprise occupies a total area of 4.63 hectares – or 11.44 acres – and carries a significant number of birds that produce eggs for a vast area throughout central Queensland.

The opportunity to acquire a locally owned and supported business of this calibre is rare.

The form of sale provides an excellent opportunity for both smaller private and large corporate buyers to participate in the process.

The key features include:

- The largest major egg production farm in central Queensland

- Secure and private location close to Rockhampton – population over 80,000

- Produces and sells 25,000 dozen eggs a week

- Accommodating over 66,000 birds in full production, with possibilities to further enhance

- Numerous storage silos

- Extensive list of loyal customers

- Established supply of fresh eggs to Rockhampton and the central Queensland region

- Retail and wholesale market

- The past 12 years figures show outstanding returns of 15.5 percent net on capital outlay.

Country Fresh Eggs, produced by Smalls Trading Co, is a family owned poultry egg farm that has been operating since 1959.

The employees are all local residents and work

a maximum of 38 hours a week, including weekends and holidays.

All staff are trained in animal welfare, workplace health and safety and food safety, and the business is accredited under Egg Standards of Australia and Safe Food Production Queensland.

The farm has an environmental permit and are audited yearly to keep accreditation.

This business is proud to state that it abides by all codes and standards related to the egg industry.

This is a genuine sale as the owners are moving towards retirement.

Private inspections only.

For all enquiries, contact Jess Cunningham on 0456 957 261 or jess.cunningham@elders.com.au or Virgil Kenny on 0427 334 100 or virgil.kenny@elders.com.au

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SunPork joins PIX AMC for an expanded conference



CHAIR of the organising committee of the Australasian Milling Conference David Bray is very excited to announce the joining of the SunPork group of companies to the AMC, scheduled for May 2022.

"This is a great step forward in linking the Australia feed industry with its key end-users in the livestock industry," Mr Bray said.

The SunPork group is the largest pork producer in Australia, which includes SunPork Farms farming about 52,000 sows, PIC Australia, Swicker's Kingaroy Bacon Factory and SunPork Fresh Foods.

The group employs more than 1800 staff across 52 locations in four states and two countries.

SunPork group chief executive officer and managing director Dr Robert van Barneveld said that SunPork was excited to be joining with AMC.

"This will definitely start the necessary engagement in the many segments of the pork production supply chain, avoids duplication

of resources delivering a world-class event and provides SunPork and other members of the pork industry with a one-stop shop conference," Dr van Barneveld said.

"The synergies with the Poultry Information Exchange will also be important given the pork and poultry industries face similar operational challenges."

Dr van Barneveld said the conference will provide a platform to tackle key issues facing the intensive industries.

"Sustainability of the pig and poultry industries needs to be differentiated from the wider red meat sector and we need to take control of the confinement debate," he said.

"Changes in the way we produce food are inevitable, but it is better to work together, have robust discussion around the issues and take a proactive approach to solutions."

"A combined PIX AMC SunPork conference will provide exactly the forum we need to facilitate this."

As a direct result of SunPork and AMC working together, suppliers and stakeholders in the sector will for the first time have the opportunity to engage and support the pig, poultry and milling industries at the one event in Australia.

This critical mass is even more pertinent given the long-term international travel restrictions that continue, and the need for Australian producers to maintain access to the latest industry developments.

This collaboration will enable broader industry participants beyond SunPork to attend the conference and take advantage of the array of speakers and exhibitors that will be in attendance.

The conference team looks forward to seeing you at PIX AMC and looking forward to your ongoing support as we make arrangements for an extended program.

More information will be released in due course as the planning for PIX AMC 2022 continues.

RSPCA calls for an end to barren battery cages

RECENTLY the RSPCA published an article on barren battery cages, explaining the key terms.

Having long been concerned about the welfare of Australian layer hens being kept in barren battery cages, the RSPCA outlined a timeline of its work to free hens from these cages and why 2021 was the year it would finally succeed.

The article goes on to clarify layer chicken industry terms, including the term 'battery cages'.

A layer hen is described as a breed of chicken bred to lay eggs, brown in colour with a red comb, expressing normal behaviours of nesting, perching and foraging.

The article states, "A battery cage is a small barren wire cage that's used to house egg-laying hens."

"It's about 40cm tall and there are four to seven hens confined to each cage.

"They stand on a floor all day and night, with each hen having less space than a piece of A4 paper.

"There are many thousands of these cages stacked in sheds – sheds that may contain up to 100,000 birds.

"The cages are called 'battery cages' because the stacks of cages resemble the cells of a battery unit."

The RSPCA refers to them as barren battery cages "because they're just that – barren."

"Hens in these cages experience extreme confinement and behavioural restriction, without the abil-

ity to perch, nest or forage."

Conventional cages are defined in the article as "a term used by the egg industry to describe these small barren wire cages."

"In the early 2000s, regulations were changed to allow each layer hen a hundred square centimetres of extra space in barren battery cages – that's about the size of an iPhone!

"The egg industry took the opportunity to re-brand these cages as 'conventional', but a 'conventional cage' is still no different in any meaningful way to a barren battery cage and is just as bad for the hen's welfare."

Whereas, a furnished or

enriched cage is a cage that includes opportunities for hens to express natural behaviours, such as a perch, nest area, scratch pad and more space per bird.

The RSPCA claim these furnished or enriched cages are not currently used in Australia at any large scale.

And go on to note, "They obviously offer some benefits over more crowded and barren battery cages, but because they don't allow hens to perform their full range of natural behaviours, the RSPCA believes the needs and welfare of layer hens are best met in a well-managed cage-free system."

Cage-free or barn-laid

systems consist of large sheds where birds are free to move around and lay their eggs in a nest.

A free-range system is one where hens have access to an outdoor area during the day.

At night, large flocks of free-range hens are kept in sheds or barns to keep them safe from predators.

In a recent e-newsletter, the RSPCA called on Australians to help end barren battery cages, asking the public to make their state and territory governments aware of their support to phase out battery cages.

State and territory agriculture departments met in mid-August with the new

national Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Poultry – which currently include a phase out of barren battery cages – on the agenda.

The RSPCA also noted it was aware of some unusual claims about battery cages from various sections of the egg industry and took the opportunity to clear up any confusion the claims may have caused.

In particular, a claim that battery cages are illegal and have been since 2008.

According to the RSPCA, "This is simply untrue."

While the term 'battery cage' was coined by the egg industry itself, as battery cages became strongly

associated with poor animal welfare, the industry chose instead to start calling them 'conventional cages'.

This coincided with new regulations from 2008, requiring hens be given one hundred square centimetres of extra space – mobile phone sized.

Another claim to come to the RSPCA's attention was that battery cages provide a form of 'social housing for hens', suggesting that hens may have previously been housed individually.

The e-newsletter clarified, "This is also untrue – a number of hens are crowded into each battery cage, usually between four


and nine birds, with each having less floor space than an A4 sheet of paper within the cage."

The RSPCA, in closing, stated, "Whatever you choose to call them, it's time for these small, barren wire cages to go."

"We won't let a war of words distract us from the real issue – which is that these barren wire cages are bad for layer hens – but this information might be helpful in conversations with your MP or others.

"Again, we thank you for your advocacy for Australia's hens."

For more information, visit rspca.org.au/take-action/layer-hens



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- Is strong proponent of animal friendly and sustainability;
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Priscilla Gerber of the University of New England, School of Environmental and Rural Science, Animal Science department.



An increase in demand and cost of chicken bedding has stimulated interest in alternative bedding sources worldwide.

Alternative chicken bedding materials and proposed guidance levels



BEDDING material or litter is an important requirement of meat chicken production, which can influence bird welfare, health and food safety.

A substantial increase in demand and cost of chicken bedding has stimulated interest in alternative bedding sources worldwide.

However, risks arising from the use of alternative bedding materials for raising meat chickens are currently unknown.

Organic chemicals, elemental and biological contaminants, as well as physical and management hazards, need to be managed in litter to protect the health of chickens and consequently that of human consumers.

This requires access to information on the transfer of contaminants from litter to food, to inform risk profiles and assessments to guide litter risk management.

Current rearing systems for meat chicken production usually use

bedding materials to absorb moisture from bird excreta and to increase bird welfare.

The combination of bedding material and bird excreta is known as 'litter'.

Bedding materials traditionally used around the world are usually organic – wood shavings, sawdust, bark, rice hulls, peanut and nut hulls, straw, shredded paper and peat – but some inorganic materials such as sand have also been used.

A substantial increase in demand and cost of chicken bedding has stimulated interest in alternative bedding sources worldwide.

A number of alternative bedding materials, derived from recycled materials from the wood and paper industries – recycled wood, dried paper sludge and recycled cardboard – and by-products of crop industries such as cereal crop residues, crop and nut hulls have been proposed.

To date, there have been a number of studies on potential hazards and contaminants regarding the use of spent chicken litter for land application.

However, very few studies have investigated potential contaminants that are detrimental to animals and humans in bedding materials before their use, and those are restricted to recycled wood and paper and cardboard by-products.

There have been many recent examples of contamination of chicken meat and eggs because of chicken exposure to persistent organic pollutants through contaminated feed, housing materials, and litter in traditionally raised chickens.

Alternative bedding materials with unknown properties could increase such risks.

Litter material may also be associated with increase in the incidence of diseases and physical injury to chickens.

Therefore, the bedding used can potentially have negative impacts not only on bird health and welfare but also on overall food safety as contaminants can be transferred to humans consuming chicken meat.

A review by Priscilla Gerber of the University of New England, School of Environmental and Rural Science, Animal Science department and Integrity Ag and Environment's Nic Gould and Eugene McGahan analy-

ses results of a survey, conducted January 2020, of the available published peer-reviewed literature on contaminants in feed, bedding and litter.

The review assessed knowledge regarding contaminants and management risks associated with chicken bedding materials, focussing on the Australian production system, to enable the selection and risk management of alternative bedding.

Because of the lack of guidelines to assess the risk of various contaminants and hazards in alternative bedding materials, contaminants that may be present in conventional bedding materials, housing structures and poultry feed – able to cause disease in chickens and be transferred to chicken products – were reviewed.

Contaminant levels that cause adverse health effects in chickens and maximum permitted levels of contaminants in feedstuff were provided to aid selection of alternative bedding using a risk management approach.

Contaminants and hazards of known and potential concern in alternative bedding are described and compared with existing standards for feed.

The contaminants considered included organic chemical contaminants such as pesticides, elemental contaminants such as arsenic, cadmium and lead, biological contaminants such as phytochemicals, mycotoxins, and microorganisms, physical hazards and management hazards.

Sustainable sourcing and management of bedding for poultry production is a recognised issue within poultry industries in many countries.

The use of alternative bedding has the potential to adversely affect the health and welfare of chickens, workers and consumers of chicken meat.

Organic and elemental contaminants can be transferred from litter to the meat and organs of meat chickens during the production cycle and cause disease to chickens or make the meat unsuitable for human consumption.

The maximum guidance levels in the total diet for poultry and the toxicological levels based on published experimental data are provided for key contaminants, which can be used as a trigger

for further investigation or mitigation if exceeded in potential bedding materials.

To assess the level of potential risk posed by these hazards, guidance values can be used as part of a semiquantitative risk assessment process in accordance with ISO 31000 (ISO, 2018) and 31010 (IEC, 2019).

It is crucial to consider the consequences and likelihoods of certain risks when choosing to use alternative bedding for poultry production and to consider control options.

As such, a risk assessment method based on the guidance values suggested in this review will assist the chicken meat industry in assessing the likely hazards in alternative bedding materials.

Future research could improve knowledge around the transfer of contaminants from bedding material to meat chicken tissue and potential impacts to bird health, as there are very limited studies in this area.

Based on the limited studies published, there is currently no indication that alternative bedding materials such as recycled wood and by-products of the paper industry would cause illness to chickens, or that transference of compounds would be above the maximum permitted limits in edible tissues.

However, it is important to consider that there could be variability in contamination in different batches of bedding material, and additional studies to ascertain the contamination potential of bedding materials from different sources is required.

While this review has identified potential hazards in litter based on available experimental data, additional hazards may be identified that represent significant risk to the industry, and further work needs to be done to both identify novel risks and provide guidance values to underpin industry risk assessments.

For the full review and scientific literature for acceptable levels of contaminants in chicken feed for guidance by those involved in selecting and using bedding materials, visit sciedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0032579120306994

For further information on agri-environmental research, visit integritytyag.net.au

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UNE poultry nutritionist Dr Natalie Morgan.

Seeking a revolution in chicken gut health

CAN a waste product deliver important improvements to chicken production?

What if antibiotic use in poultry production could be significantly lowered by using waste products from milling?

Dr Natalie Morgan is investigating these possibilities after winning the Australian Eggs Award in the 2021 Science and Innovation Awards for Young People in Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

A poultry nutritionist at UNE, Dr Morgan is using her \$22,000 award to fund an eight-week project to examine the effects of adding prebiotics called xylooligosaccharides to the diets of egg-laying hens.

XOS have been studied in meat chickens, where they significantly improved gut health and production, but have yet to be investigated in egg-laying chickens.

Dr Morgan observes that egg-laying hens live longer than meat chickens, so establish more mature gut microbiomes, suggesting the positive effects of XOS might be amplified.

The grains fed to commercial poultry contain long-chain sugars that reduce nutrient absorption in the bird's gut, meaning these expensive and important nutrients are wasted, or act as a food source for pathogenic gut bacteria.

To deal with the problem, all commercial chicken feed contains an enzyme that breaks up the long-chain sugars into more desirable forms – including XOS.

As a prebiotic, XOS fuel beneficial gut bacteria.

Dr Morgan's question is, "So what happens if we add prebiotic XOS directly into the feed, as opposed to relying

on the chickens to make them in their gut?"

Because XOS can be extracted from waste products derived when grains are milled for starch, it is a potentially cheap way to obtain gains in poultry production – an industry where most other avenues for production gains are pushed to their limits.

Dr Morgan's hope is that her pilot project will show the potential for supplementing feeds with XOS to boost hen feed conversion and productivity, and lower faeces contamination of eggs – and possibly even improve gut health to the point where it affects the chickens' immunity to disease, lessening dependence on antibiotics.

If even one of these results emerges from the pilot, Dr Morgan's work with XOS may extend considerably.

Cameras offer new vision for chicken welfare

AGRIFUTURES Australia and the University of Southern Queensland are seeking technology partners to commercialise novel video analysis software to better detect growth and welfare indicators of poultry flocks and enhance on-farm decision making.

Poultry farmers spend a great deal of time checking the health and welfare of their chickens.

This can mean walking through the flock up to three times a day monitoring for signs of poor health.

However, a Queensland research team has recently developed a more accurate and efficient system than visual checks, which is almost as simple as mounting a camera on the poultry shed wall.

Funded by the University of Southern Queensland and AgriFutures Australia's Chicken Meat Program, mechatronic engineers Dr Cheryl McCarthy and Dr Derek Long have linked continual on-board image analysis – similar to facial recognition – with a low-cost camera to provide regular updates on flock movement throughout the day.

The ground-breaking system is an Australian first, and after two years of testing USQ and AgriFutures Australia are seeking interest from commercial partners to complete an extended range of trials in large commercial sheds and manufacture a shelf-ready product.

"The cameras observe the daily behavioural pat-

terns of the chickens, picking up changes that could be indicative of underlying health issues," Dr McCarthy said.

"The algorithms in the camera technology recognise subtle changes in patterns of behaviour and the information is provided to the farmer throughout the day as a brief report."

Existing camera techniques used for monitoring flocks analyse the number of pixels in the image rather than analysing individual animals, making it difficult to correlate accurately with bird activity.

This innovative software can recognise and differentiate chickens from the background of the shed or enclosure and converts the pixels to physical distances, which means the technology can also be used for predicting physical sizes and bird weights.

"We'd anticipate a farmer would have a low-cost colour camera in their shed recording video clips and the software algorithms will analyse the images and turn them into data reflecting bird behaviour patterns and provide that to the farmer," Dr McCarthy said.

Each camera can 'see' around 1000 chickens per day and its findings can then be extrapolated across a flock of 40,000 to 50,000.

Former AgriFutures chicken meat advisory panel chair and grower Guy Hebblewhite said, "The technology is a game changer for improving welfare, productivity and forecasting

for the supply chain."

"There is currently no system evaluated in Australia for chicken shed monitoring.

"Practically on farm, this technology will allow growers to monitor flocks around the clock.

"Growers will also be able to estimate the weight of their chickens throughout the shed and identify if they are on target or not.

"This information could then be provided to processors to assist in forecasting," Mr Hebblewhite said.

Dr McCarthy has already considered the type of commercial partners to take the technology to market, and said a big attraction is its potential for use in industries other than poultry.

"A technology provider working in poultry or agriculture with sensing equipment or cameras in their product range could port the developed video analysis software onto their preferred camera hardware and develop a graphical user interface to present video analysis results to

the farmer," Dr McCarthy said.

"This has been tested on broiler chickens, but the image analysis software could be re-parameterised or re-trained for layer flocks, to account for differences in the physical nature of layer versus broiler strains.

"A commercial partner with interests in livestock could use the same hardware and adapt the algorithms to detect attributes like beef cattle weights and condition scores.

"A lot more processing ability and detailed information can be extracted from the same type of camera hardware, it would just need to be validated in additional trials."

In the push for a competitive advantage in animal welfare, fast food chain McDonald's is actively researching camera technologies in the US and Europe to monitor broiler flocks, using different approaches to the USQ technology.

Judy Kennedy
This article was first published on growag.com.au



Dr Cheryl McCarthy was part of the research team that developed the novel video analysis software to better detect growth and welfare indicators of poultry flocks and enhance on-farm decision making.

Smalls Trading Co poultry egg farm for sale



ELDERS Real Estate Rockhampton has been instructed by the Smalls Trading Co to offer the poultry egg farm Country Fresh Eggs, located near Rockhampton, for sale by private treaty.

The family owned farming enterprise occupies a total area of 4.63 hectares and produces eggs for a vast area throughout central Queensland.

The opportunity to acquire a locally owned and supported business of this calibre is rare.

Key features include:

- The largest major egg production farm in central Queensland
- Secure and private location close to Rockhampton – population over 80,000
- Produces and sells 25,000 dozen eggs per week
- Accommodating over 66,000 birds in full production, with growth potential
- Numerous storage silos
- Extensive list of loyal customers
- Established supply of fresh eggs to Rockhampton and the central Queensland region
- Retail and wholesale market
- Past 12 years figures show outstanding returns of 15.5% net on capital outlay.

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Poultry comes clean with Aussie Pumps

ONE Australian pump company appreciates the challenges that poultry farmers face on a daily basis.

Producing a top-quality product, in line with the stringent health and hygiene standards, is a constant battle.

Aussie Pumps, Australia's major manufacturers of high-pressure water blasters, have been working with a variety of farmers for the past 20 years to develop products that are particularly suitable for these applications.

The company started with 3000psi machines, often engine drive but more recently electric drive, with the ability to handle hot water up to 60C.

Many of those machines are still working in farms and sheds around Australia and doing a great job every day.

As the company progressed and learned to understand the trials and tribulations of the producers, they realised that bigger machines with more capability, were necessary.

The current generation of machines is far different to those early production units that were in their day considered to be state of the art.

Aussie's Scud series – power with style

When Aussie Pumps launched the unique, occupational health and safety designed, Scud machine, the standard product was

already a 4000psi engine-powered pressure cleaner.

Driven by either a Honda petrol engine or Yanmar diesel, the Scud with its stainless-steel frame and four big steel wheels with flat free tyres, was a natural for any farm clean up.

The 4000psi capability meant it could move effluent fast, creating huge time savings for growers.

Bigger models, up to 20lpm, quickly followed, with that combination of pressure and a 20lpm flow, the job got done faster.

Aussie Pumps product manager Greg Tkacz said: "What customers liked about the product was the ease of operation."

The Scud design was quickly registered and is

quite unique in the world of pressure washer machines.

The stainless-steel frame means no rust or corrosion, while the ergonomic design eliminates 'sharps'.

The design also makes the machine highly mobile – it is easy to push around and turn because of its perfect balance.

The Aussie Scuds are now available up to 5000psi and with larger flows as well.

Hot water too

The idea of using hot water or even steam for cleaning and sterilising capabilities at the same time as pressure washing was appealing to some farmers.

Killing potential viral germs in any intense animal husbandry application was considered vital.

In response, Aussie Pumps developed a 4000psi steam cleaner, delivering a 15lpm flow.

It moves waste fast. Steam operated over 90C, the cleaner is super effective for sanitising sheds.

Aussie Pumps work hard to design and bring to the market machines that are not only cost competitive but built in Australia.

"The whole idea is to learn from our customers and to ask them what they need," Mr Tkacz said.

"Our ultimate desire is to give them something better than they could have imagined."

Further information, including Aussie Pumps new comprehensive catalogue 'Blaster Blitz 6' featuring pressure-cleaning machines and accessories, is readily available from aussiepumps.com.au



Ingham's high safety standards has enabled it to remain an essential service and keep operating throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ingham's paid vaccination leave

THROUGHOUT the COVID-19 pandemic, Ingham's has focussed on keeping its people safe.

In an industry first, Ingham's is now extending its health and wellbeing benefits to include a new vaccination leave policy to cover its people across Australia and New Zealand and to increase accessibility to COVID-19 vaccinations.

Ingham's chief executive officer and managing director Andrew Reeves said, "Ingham's has worked hard to take care of its people through the COVID-19 pandemic, and I am proud that we're having ongoing conversations to ensure this continues to be our number one priority."

"In this latest initiative, we decided it was important to support our people and their work-life balance, which means they can take paid time during their work day

and at a time that makes it more convenient and accessible to them than what it might be on a weekend or out of work hours."

Since the COVID-19 pandemic emerged, Ingham's has prioritised its support for people's safety.

This has included:

- Establishing an incident management team to coordinate company-wide actions and consultation with governments, health agencies, customers and unions to ensure safety standards are met

- Providing additional paid pandemic leave benefits to enable staff – including casuals – to stay home, get tested and stay safe without financial burden

- Reconfiguring labour-intensive operations to enable physical distancing by installing guarding and implementing enhanced personal protective equip-

ment and high standards of hygiene practices

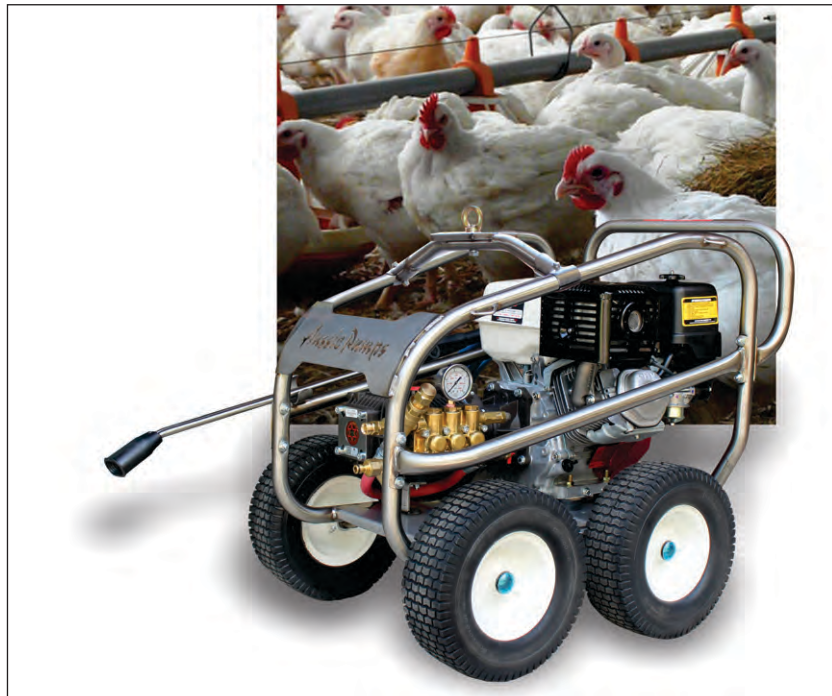
- Providing direction on car-pooling to ensure safe travel to and from work

- Building temporary on-site facilities such as lunchrooms to accommodate physical distancing during breaks

- Separating shifts to reduce the number of people at any one time on sites

Increasing communication and consultation with employees, including frequent updates on how to stop the spread of COVID-19 via an internal communications app, Workplace.

Ingham's high safety standards has enabled it to remain an essential service and keep operating throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, with job security for its people and nourishing consumers with fresh, convenient and affordable food that is always good.



Aussie Pumps unique Scud design combines high pressure and high flow to make clean-up easy!

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RSPCA Approved means better chicken welfare

IN Australia, meat chickens are not kept in cages and both male and female chicks are raised to produce meat.

Most meat chickens are housed in large sheds – ‘barn raised’ – with some also having daytime access to the outdoors – ‘free range’ – once they are fully feathered.

Traditionally, chickens have been raised in barren environments without the opportunity to express natural behaviours, such as perching, foraging and dust bathing.

As chickens – even free range birds – will spend the majority of their lives inside, it is important they have a good indoor environment with perches, good quality litter and interesting objects to peck at.

Typically, chickens are kept in dim light for 23 hours a day to discourage movement and increase food intake to promote weight gain.

This can lead to eye-sight issues and poor leg strength.

Poor quality and damp litter can also cause hock, breast and foot burns.

The popularity of chicken as a diet staple for many Australians has meant that meat chickens have been bred over many generations to grow and gain weight very quickly.

This rapid growth rate, coupled with inadequate shed environments, can cause serious welfare problems for the birds, including leg injuries, fractures and joint problems.

The RSPCA believes meat chickens should be raised in environments that cater to their physical and behavioural needs and give them a good life.

Housing environments for meat chickens should include perching, litter for dustbathing and foraging and enrichment in the form of objects and materials to peck at and play with.

Meat chickens should also be provided with appropriate lighting, equivalent to natural light, with periods of both light and dark, so that the birds can rest properly.

In the short term, providing a shed environment in which birds are encouraged to move helps alleviate the health impacts of their fast growth rates.

However, in the medium to long term, the RSPCA believes the industry must shift towards slower-growing meat chicken breeds to avoid the leg weakness and other disorders associated with fast growth rate.

Through the RSPCA Approved Farming Scheme, the RSPCA works closely with growers committed to raising chickens to higher animal welfare standards.

Since releasing its first animal welfare standards for meat chickens in 2010, more than 2.5 billion chickens have benefitted

from better conditions on farm.

Today, 78 percent of Australia's chicken meat has been farmed to the RSPCA's standards.

This is arguably one of the biggest improvements for farm animal welfare that Australia has seen and was encouraged by demand from consumers.

To help improve the welfare of farmed chicken, the RSPCA actively engages in the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Poultry farming processes, to advocate for the improvement of chicken welfare.

Look for the RSPCA Approved logo on chicken in the supermarket and when dining out.

The RSPCA Approved logo means the chicken meat has come from a farm where birds are raised according to the RSPCA's detailed animal welfare standards.

These standards include:

- Good indoor environments – because even free range chickens spend most of their time indoors
- Space and good lighting, encouraging chickens to be active
- The chickens can perch to rest and keep their bones and muscles strong
- The birds can enjoy a dry litter floor covering, to scratch and dust bathe.

Farms are visited regularly by an RSPCA assessor to ensure good animal welfare.

More information can be found at rspcaapproved.org.au



Farms are visited regularly by an RSPCA assessor to ensure good animal welfare. Photo: RSPCA

Enhanced poultry farm biosecurity

ON July 31 last year, birds tested positive for avian influenza on a Golden Plains free range egg farm.

Over the following four weeks, a further five farms in Golden Plains, East Gippsland and Gannawarra Shire tested positive.

In total, three strains of avian influenza were found on six Victorian poultry farms, infecting three bird species – three egg farms with highly pathogenic H7N7 avian influenza, two turkey farms with low pathogenic H5N2 avian influenza and one emu farm diagnosed with low pathogenic H7N6 avian influenza.

One of the farms, Longview Emu Farm near Kerang, was the last to test positive on August 25 and lost 5100 birds as a result.

After learning valuable

lessons, the farm introduced enhanced biosecurity methods to prevent future outbreaks, including the use of footbaths, separate vehicles for different areas on the property and building a new facility for chick rearing.

Benefiting from the biosecurity lessons learnt during last year's avian influenza outbreak – the largest experienced in Australia – Victorian poultry are avian influenza free thanks to the combined efforts of stakeholders, community and emergency response teams.

With the potential to decimate the industry, and the prospect of transmission to humans, the outbreak was quickly controlled.

The Victorian Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas said, “The response of farmers, businesses, local com-

munities, scientists and emergency personnel to the outbreak was sensational – it meant we could eradicate avian influenza from poultry flocks in Victoria.”

“We must remain vigilant to minimise the risk of emergency animal and plant diseases in Victoria and protect our agriculture and environment from the impacts of pests and diseases,” Ms Thomas said.

Australia was declared free from avian influenza on February 26, 2021, with about 1400 observational visits and 2700 surveillance texts initiated to achieve the status.

To minimise the risk of additional birds testing positive in the Golden Plains Shire, a ‘housing order’ was introduced as part of the response – an Australian first.

The order required all domestic poultry to be housed – reducing the risk of interaction with wild birds and further cases developing.

To assess the status of the avian influenza outbreak, 21,650 samples were analysed by diagnostics and research laboratories at Agriculture Victoria's bioscience laboratory AgriBio, assisted by CSIRO's Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness.

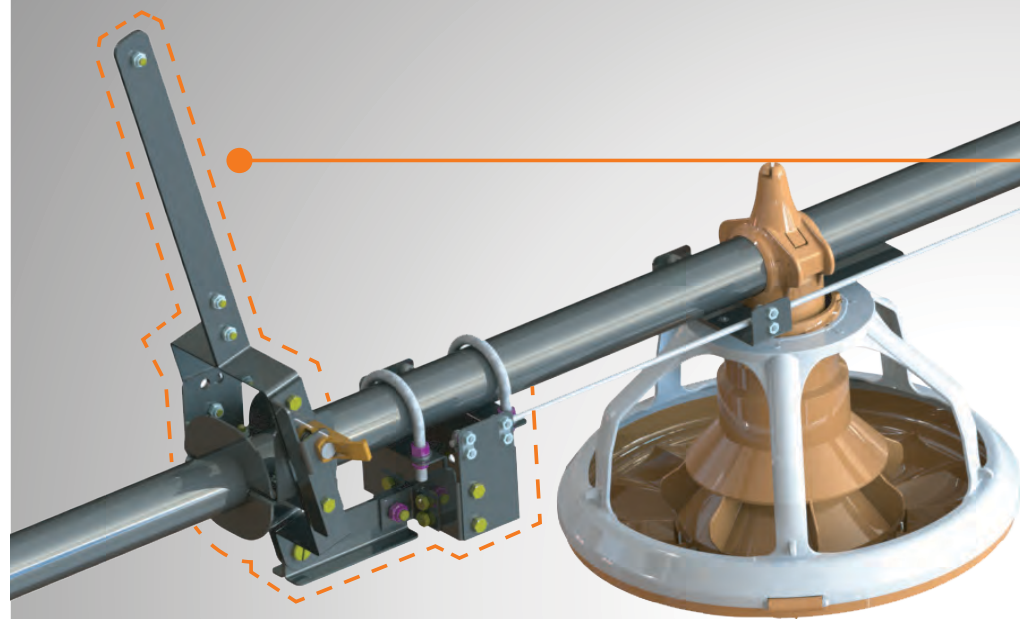
For more information on avian influenza in Victoria, visit agriculture.vic.gov.au



Victorian poultry are avian influenza free thanks to the combined efforts of stakeholders, community and emergency response teams. Photo: Henrique S Ruzzon

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Litter amendments can be an option to reduce ammonia levels in sheds with reused litter. However, managing ventilation and minimising litter moisture are the leading ways to reduce the ammonia levels in meat chicken sheds.



These products take a different amount of time to activate in the litter and it is best to apply them before chicks are placed.

Potential litter amendments

LITTER amendments are commonly used overseas to control the ammonia concentration in meat chicken sheds, particularly when reusing litter.

Litter amendments can also provide antimicrobial and environmental benefits and increase the nutrient value of spent litter.

While litter reuse is not currently widely practiced in Australia, the increasing cost of litter is making litter reuse and litter amendment products more attractive.

For farms that reuse litter or are considering reusing litter, this explains the benefits and challenges of using litter amendments, how different types of amendments work and other strategies to control ammonia.

Always check the product label and manufacturers recommendations and consult with your integrator company or veterinarian before using new products in poultry sheds.

Litter amendment benefits

- Lower ammonia emissions with fewer associated risks
- Lower operating costs when combined with litter reuse, compared to new bedding
- Lower costs associated with heating during brooding when combined with litter reuse
- Lower counts of disease, virus and food safety-related pathogens
- Higher nitrogen content

and fertiliser value of spent litter.

Litter amendment challenges

- Chemical exposure when not applied appropriately – wrong timing or uneven application

- Requirement for longer downtime between grow-outs when combined with reused litter

- Litter reuse combined with litter amendments requires additional preparation of bedding compared with full litter clean-outs and using new bedding.

Litter types

There are different types of litter amendments, which work in different ways to reduce ammonia.

They all interfere with the normal process of how ammonia forms in litter.

The types of amendments are:

- Acidifiers
- Adsorbents
- Inhibitors
- Biological products.

Acidifying agents

Acidifying agents are the main type of products used.

These products work by making the litter more acidic (pH below seven), which reduces the amount of ammonia gas produced.

Reducing the amount of nitrogen converted to ammonia, results in more nitrogen retained in the litter as ammonium salts, potentially increasing the fertiliser value of the spent litter.

The most common acidifiers used in poultry farms are dry acids and include

sodium bisulfate, ammonium sulfate (alum) and ferric sulfate (iron III sulfate).

These products take a different amount of time to activate in the litter and it is best to apply them before chicks are placed.

Reapplication may be required depending on the product.

Always check the manufacturers recommendations prior to use.

Adsorbents, inhibitors and biological products

Adsorbent litter amendments work by binding the ammonia to the surface of the litter, which reduces the amount of ammonia released into the air.

Several naturally occurring products, such as clay and peat might be effective at adsorbing ammonia, but research has shown mixed results.

Using adsorbents can also be expensive due to the large amount of material required.

Inhibitors could also help reduce ammonia formation by restricting microbial activity.

Some have been found to be marginally effective, and expensive.

Biological products are promoted as 'seeding' the litter with beneficial microbes.

These microbes convert nitrogen into a more stable form but may still release some ammonia soon after application.

If you're considering this type of product, any potential short-term release of ammonia will require

careful planning when timing product application so that ammonia is low by the time chicks are placed.

While adsorbents, inhibitors and biological products have shown some reduction of ammonia in trials, more research is needed to assess their effectiveness under Australian conditions.

Other strategies to control ammonia

Litter amendment products are not the only way to manage ammonia in meat chicken sheds.

A common practice in Australia is brooding on fresh bedding material, which reduces ammonia-related issues during this time.

Managing litter moisture levels and utilising ventilation to remove moisture and ammonia from the shed is a very effective method to keep ammonia levels low.

This involves monitoring and managing litter, ventilation, heating, evaporative cooling, drinking systems, and other production and environmental factors during the grow-out period.

This extension project is funded through the AgriFutures Chicken Meat Program.

This project supports the adoption of innovation and research and development outcomes for the Australian chicken meat industry.

For more information, contact either Mark Dunlop at mark.dunlop@daf.qld.gov.au or visit agrifutures.com.au



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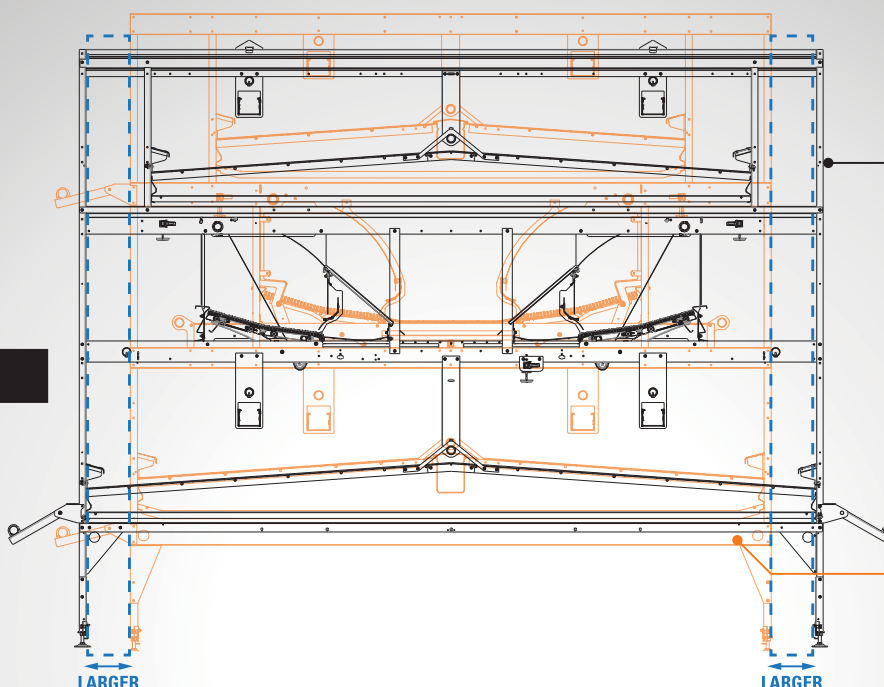
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