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NATIONAL Poultry NEWSPAPER

Vol 9. No. 9 September 2026 National Poultry Newspaper PO Box 162 Wynnum 4178 Phone 0450 672 553 Email ben@collins.media



ACMF represents industry at FoodPro and Meat Business Women events

THE Australian Chicken Meat Federation has been actively engaging with the broader supply chain and wider industry stakeholders these past few months, attending both FoodPro and the Meat Business Women 2026 Gender Representation Report Insights & Awards Evening in Melbourne. Each presenting a



fantastic opportunity to gain insights into the latest innovations, trends and achievements across Austral-

ia's food production and meat sectors.

As part of this year's FoodPro exhibition, ACMF participated in the FoodPro networking lounge, offering the chance to connect with industry associations, media partners, suppliers and visitors from across Australia's food manufacturing and processing industries.

This provided us with a platform for meaningful discussions on the opportunities and challenges facing the sector and the future of Australia's meat and food industries, from innovations in manufacturing and food safety to meet rising consumer demand sustainability.

We also had the privilege of hearing from leading food tech experts and businesses at

continued P2

EFA's strategic plan delivering for Australian egg farmers

EGG Farmers of Australia's strategic plan – endorsed by the EFA Board in 2025 and implemented from January 2026 – has now been in place for over six months.

While there is still much work ahead, the first half of the year has seen solid progress across EFA's key priorities, with a strong focus on supporting egg farmers, strengthening industry resilience and ensuring the sector remains well positioned for future challenges.

EFA's highest priorities continue to be a focus on national policy relating to biosecurity, food safety and animal welfare, and more recently assisting with export issues.

This year, EFA has provided members with information highlighting areas where regulations differ between states.

The organisation has also continued to lead by example in its own biosecurity practices, including implementing strict farm visitation protocols, allowing adequate time between farm visits and adopting meas-



and achievable animal welfare initiatives.

Policy development has been active across a range of areas, including poultry management, ovo-sexing technologies and organisational governance.

EFA has continued to influence broader industry policy through engagement with Animal Health Australia and by contributing to discussions that support the work of

continued P2

ures such as disposing of footwear after visiting production sites.

Regular industry updates have also helped keep producers informed of emerging risks and developments affecting the sector in relation to H5 avian influenza.

Advocating for effective legislation and policy remains another significant focus.

Over the past six months, EFA has contributed to numerous engagements with government and continues to provide submissions both independently and in partnership with the intensive industries Animal Health Australia group.

This work has helped ensure the egg industry's voice is represented in discussions that shape the future of agriculture and animal

industries in Australia.

EFA has also continued to work collaboratively with stakeholders, including Specialised Breeders Australia, to support practical



EFA is tracking well against its first-year objectives of finalising strategic priorities.



ACMF connected with delegates at the industry networking lounge at FoodPro 2026.



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Poultry Industry Calendar of Events

2026

SEP 1-3 – Shell Egg Academy 2026, Indiana, USA. <http://shelleggacademy.org/>

SEP 22-24 – Poultry Asia 2026, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. <https://www.poultryasia.com/>

SEP 27-30 – Mediterranean Poultry Summit 2026, Split, Croatia. <https://www.mpn-wpsa.org/split2026/home/index.php>

OCT 6-8 – 2026 Latin American Scientific Conference (PSA) – Parana, Brazil. <https://poultryscience.org/opportunities/conferences/latam-scientific-conference>

OCT 13-14 – Poultry Symposium for Live Production – Arkansas, USA. <https://www.thepoultryfederation.com/events/poulttrysymposium>

OCT 14-15 – Dutch Pork & Poultry Expo 2026 – Hardenberg, Netherlands. <https://www.porkpoultryexpo.nl>

NOV 10-13 – EuroTier, Hannover, Germany. <https://www.eurotier.com/en/>

NOV 25-27 – Poultry India, Hyderabad, India. <https://www.poultryindia.co.in>

2027

JAN 26-28 – International Production & Processing Expo (IPPE) 2027, Atlanta, USA. <https://www.ippexpo.org/>

FEB 1-3 – APSS 2027, Sydney, NSW. <https://apss.sydney.edu.au>

MAR 10-12 – VIV Asia 2027, Bangkok, Thailand. <https://asia.viv.net>

How to supply event details:

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ACMF at the Meat Business Women Australia Gender Representation Report Insights & Award Evening in Melbourne.

ACMF represents industry at FoodPro and Meat Business Women events

from P1
the forefront of new technologies designed to optimise production performance across food manufacturing environments.

These engagements are important in ensuring the chicken meat industry remains connected to evolving consumer expectations and broader policy and market developments shaping Australia's food production landscape.

FoodPro also offered an opening for ACMF to strengthen existing relationships and engage with organisations working across the supply chain on technological advancements and policy initiatives that support a productive, innovative and sustainable meat industry.

Continuing our en-

agement with the broader sector, ACMF veterinary officer Dr Claire House attended the Meat Business Women 2026 Gender Representation Report Insights & Awards Evening.

The event celebrated the women driving positive change across Australia's meat and food supply chain, while highlighting the importance of diversity, leadership and workforce development in building the industry's future.

The evening hosted a 150 industry professionals to discuss the progress in gender representation across meat industries and provided an opportunity to hear from industry leaders and of their outstanding achievements, as well

as initiatives in support of female professional development within the meat sector.

These events both supplied insights into the innovation, leadership and emerging trends shaping Australia's meat industries.

As the sector works to sustainably feed a growing population, staying connected to developments in technology, policy and workforce capability helps identify opportunities that support long-term growth and resilience.

We look forward to engaging in such valuable forums in the future, not only for our own strategic knowledge building but to continue to represent Australia's most loved meat protein.  **ACMF**

Avian influenza update

ON August 23, 2026, testing at CSIRO's Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness confirmed H5 high pathogenicity avian influenza in a long-nosed fur seal, found at Beachport in South Australia.

This is the first detection of H5 bird flu in a mammal species in Australia.

Though this is a concerning development, it is not unexpected that H5 bird flu has been detected in other wildlife, particularly marine mammals, in areas where there are high levels of infection in wild birds.

On August 14, ACDP confirmed H5 HPAI in a wild brown skua at Burgess Cove in Rocky Cape National Park, northwest Tasmania.

This was the first detection of H5 bird flu in Tasmania.

Tasmania has also reported a greater crested tern from King Island that has returned a positive result at the state

laboratory which is undergoing confirmatory testing at ACDP.

On August 12, we changed how we report on H5 bird flu detections.

Reporting will be based on events rather than individual bird detections, where an event may involve one or more birds.

Significant developments that may change

the national situation, such as detections in new species, new locations, will continue to be communicated to the public.

There remain no detections in poultry or in our agricultural production system.

The risk to human health remains low. 

Dr Beth Cookson
Australian Chief
Veterinary Officer



Dr Beth Cookson

EFA's strategic plan delivering for our Aussie egg farmers

from P1
Australian Eggs.

Efforts to increase awareness and understanding of the egg industry have also extended beyond the farm gate, with EFA participating in public speaking opportunities through the Churchill Fellowship network.

Looking ahead, further engagement is planned through World Egg Day activities in Canberra. Building stronger relationships across the industry remains central to EFA's mission.

During the first half of 2026, EFA representatives attended state industry dinners, visited farms, met with existing and new members and strengthened connections across the sector.

Ongoing engagement with Australian Eggs – including regular discussions with its managing director, communications and engagement specialist, in house veterinarian and industry veterinarians in the industry – has further strengthened collaboration on challenges affecting producers nationwide.

Trade remains an important issue for the future of Australian egg production.

EFA continues to monitor developments in import and export policy and maintain close engagement with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. Rather than duplicating existing information, EFA is ensuring relevant government updates are provided directly to the board to support informed decision-making. 

Industry resilience and preparedness have also remained a priority.

EFA participated in a crisis management planning workshop on May 29, reinforcing the organisation's commitment to ongoing preparedness and effective emergency response.

With disease outbreaks, biosecurity threats and supply chain disruptions continuing to affect agricultural industries globally, ensuring robust crisis management arrangements remains essential.

Internally, EFA has invested in increased technology capability and strengthened cybersecurity safeguards. While balancing priorities and time allocation has been challenging at times, important progress has been made.

A successful staff planning day was held and strategic progress reporting has been implemented.

Later this year, EFA staff will meet to review achievements, identify lessons learned and determine opportunities for continuous improvement.

Overall, EFA believes it is tracking well against its first-year objectives of finalising strategic priorities, engaging stakeholders and advancing important advocacy efforts.

As the organisation moves into the second half of 2026, the focus remains firmly on delivering practical outcomes that support Australian egg farmers and strengthen the long-term sustainability of the industry. 



**Egg Farmers
of Australia**

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Cage free egg shift could equal increased emissions and land use

A WHOLESALE shift to free range and organic egg production could increase greenhouse gas emissions by 60 percent and almost double land use, according to research from the University of Oxford.

The findings highlight the environmental trade-offs that can emerge as egg producers and markets move towards cage-free production systems – an issue that is also relevant to Australian poultry producers facing growing expectations around animal welfare, sustainability and production efficiency.

Published in *Royal Society Open Science*, the study examined several possible scenarios for the egg industry in the United Kingdom, including transitions to barn, free range and organic systems, while keeping total egg production constant.

The researchers found that moving entirely from the existing production mix to free range and organic systems could increase greenhouse gas emissions by 60 percent and almost double the amount of land required.

A key factor was the need for larger laying-hen populations in some cage free systems to maintain the same level of egg production.

The study also found a significant increase in hen mortality under 100 percent free range and organic scenarios.

The researchers concluded that moving away from cages without simultaneous improvements in mortality rates and feed efficiency could increase the environmental footprint of egg production.

print of egg production.

For Australian poultry producers, the findings reinforce the importance of looking beyond individual sustainability measures and considering how changes to production systems affect productivity, feed use, land requirements, mortality and overall environmental performance.

University of Oxford's Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment senior research associate in sustainable food solutions Dr Harriet Bartlett said animal welfare, environmental impacts and food production needed to be considered together.

"Our research highlights the importance of considering animal welfare, environmental impact and food production together when shaping the future of egg farming," she said.

"Being aware of these tricky trade-offs will help us make better decisions for the environment and animal welfare in the future."

The research comes as global egg production has expanded significantly over the past five decades, increasing the importance of understanding its environmental footprint.

The study notes that the global food supply chain accounts for about 26 percent of human-caused greenhouse gas emissions, while also contributing significantly to eutrophication and terrestrial acidification.

However, the Oxford researchers stressed that the findings should not be interpreted as an argument for returning to caged production.

"This is not to say concerns around eggs

from caged chickens can or should be dismissed or that we should return to restrictive caged systems," Dr Bartlett said.

"But we want farms and consumers to be aware of all the potential impacts when it comes to the methods by which we produce our food.

"By taking a broader view, we can find the best ways to balance these trade-offs as we pursue a more sustainable global food system."

The researchers acknowledged an important limitation of the

study – much of the underlying UK production data was collected in 2009-10.

That means the analysis does not reflect improvements made in laying-hen genetics, nutrition, housing, health, management and feed efficiency over the past 15 years.

The authors nevertheless said the dataset remained the most comprehensive available for comparing UK laying-hen production systems.

For Australia's egg industry, the study provides another reminder that production-system

changes can involve complex trade-offs.

Improving hen welfare while maintaining efficient feed conversion, low mortality and high productivity will be critical to limiting the environmental impacts of future changes to egg production systems.



Scan to view the study in full.

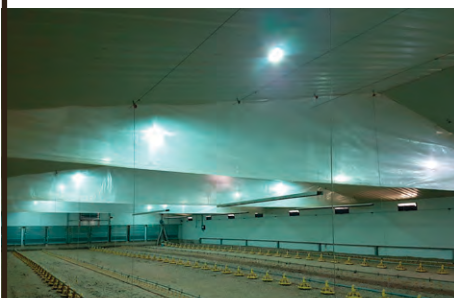


Moving entirely from the existing production mix to free range and organic systems could increase greenhouse gas emissions by 60 percent and almost double the amount of land required.

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The findings reinforce the importance of looking beyond individual sustainability measures and considering how changes to production systems affect productivity, feed use, land requirements, mortality and overall environmental performance.



Antarctic fur seals on Heard Island tested positive during research voyages by the Australian Antarctic Program. Photo: Hugo Sykes



There were also confirmed gentoo penguin cases on the island. Photo: Hugo Sykes



Wildlife teams assessing the site of a mass mortality of southern elephant seals on Heard Island. Photo: Julie McInnes

Bird flu facts from Dr Ron Granville

YOU'VE probably seen the media reports about H5 bird flu being detected in Australia and perhaps wondered about its significance.

I've had a look through comments associated with mainstream news articles posted on Facebook.

The level of ignorance and cynicism on display is astounding.

Conspiracy theorists seem to be out in force, so I thought I'd try to do my bit to counter all the rubbish.

Here are the facts as I know them.

Sorry for the length – it's not a simple story.

Firstly, a bit about influenza viruses generally.

There are many hundreds of strains or subtypes of influenza viruses worldwide, and they tend to have relatively limited host ranges (species they infect).

Flu viruses are normally differentiated by two distinct proteins found on the surface of the influenza A virus – H for

hemagglutinin and N for neuraminidase.

So, for example, the two most common seasonal flu viruses infecting people are H1N1 and H3N2.

They can occasionally 'spillover' into species such as pigs but not commonly.

The 2007 equine influenza outbreak was caused by H3N8, which only infects horses, donkeys and such, and the occasional dog.

The poultry outbreaks in Australia in 2020, 2024 and 2025 were caused by H7N7, H7N3, H7N9 and H7N8 strains.

Influenza viruses have a tremendous ability to change their genetic makeup through either antigenic drift (mutations) or antigenic reassortment – if two different flu viruses infect the same cell at the same time, their gene segments can mix and match, creating a new virus.

The current concern is with highly pathogenic avian influenza subtype H5N1, which the media has been referring to as H5 bird flu.

However, this is a bit simplistic.

There are around 10 branches/groups of the H5N1 family, called clades and also numerous sub-clades.

Currently we are mainly worried about only one of these – H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b.

It has a very wide host range and causes serious illness or death.

This virus first appeared in 2020, probably through reassortment and ongoing mutation of other H5 viruses.

Since 2021, HPAI H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b has spread rapidly

across the world, except for Australia and New Zealand due to our isolation.

It has caused mass mortalities in wild birds, poultry and some marine mammal populations.

All bird species are thought to be susceptible to this strain, and it has been detected in over 100 species of mammals – wild, domestic, terrestrial and aquatic.

The rapid spread across and between countries is primarily associated with the movement of wild birds.

The global H5N1 HPAI outbreaks differ from previous outbreaks of HPAI by their:

- Rapid global spread
- Large number of outbreaks
- Increased severity of illness
- High mortality rates in wild birds and some mammalian species
- Wider host and geographical range
- Longer persistence of virus and/or repeated exposure.

In the order of 30-40 million plus domestic poultry in Europe and 90 million in the US have died or been culled because of ongoing outbreaks.

Apart from wild and domestic birds, HPAI H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b has been confirmed in dairy cattle, pigs, cats, alpacas and goats in the US, farmed mink and dairy cattle in Europe and sheep in the United Kingdom.

In the US, it has affected hundreds of dairy herds across the country, causing severe illness.

Pigs, alpaca and goats are only mildly affected.

As the virus spread

continued P5

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Bird flu facts from Dr Ron Granville

from P4

south through South America, it caused large scale mortalities in sea lions and seals along both the Pacific and Atlantic coasts.

It eventually spread to the Antarctic.

Human cases have been reported following close contact with infected poultry, dairy cows or raw (unpasteurised) milk.

However, there have been only a very small number of human deaths.

The World Health Organisation has assessed it as a low public health risk, yet care should still be taken with potentially infected animals.

Late last year this virus was detected in several species on Heard Island, including the southern elephant seal, the Antarctic fur seal and the gentoo penguin.

This island lies over 4000km southwest of Perth and is part of the remote sub-Antarctic Australian external territory.

It appears to have killed around 13,000 seal pups there.

At the time of writing, the current concern related primarily to migratory (pelagic) birds found infected in WA, Queensland, South Australia,

NSW and Tasmania.

These do not normally make landfall though presumably did so because they were sick.

Whether these are isolated cases or the tip of the iceberg, only time will tell.

However, there is a real worry that H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b could hugely impact native bird species if it gets a foothold – which it could do, for example, through scavenging by native birds and/or animals.

Once established, it would be impossible to control.

The only option for domestic poultry farms would be

to keep the birds isolated as much as possible from wild birds.

This possibly means that free range poultry production may have to cease.

So, ignore the conspiracy theorists.

This virus is a 'clear and present danger' to both our domestic birds and our wildlife populations.

The impacts could be devastating and could even cause extinction of some threatened species.

I'm just hoping that it doesn't take hold.

Dr Ron Glanville
Principal Consultant
Biosecurity Advisory Service



Dr Ron Glanville



Southern elephant seals on Heard Island have been severely impacted by H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b, with an estimated loss of approximately 13,359 pups (roughly 76 percent of the island's pup population), with mortality rates reaching up to 97 percent in some heavily affected harems. Photo: Victoria Marzullo

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H5N1 study reinforces need for broader livestock surveillance

THE arrival of H5N1 high pathogenicity avian influenza in Australian wild birds has put poultry producers on heightened alert, with new research from the US adding to concerns about the ability of the virus to infect a broader range of livestock.

A recent Iowa State University study has found that the mammary glands of several production animals, including pigs, sheep, goats, beef cattle and alpacas, contain receptors that could potentially allow avian influenza viruses to infect them.

The findings are particularly relevant as H5N1 continues to demonstrate its ability to cross species overseas.

The virus has infected poultry and wild birds as well as mammals including dairy cattle, with more than 1000 US dairy herds affected since H5N1 was first detected in cattle in 2024.

For Australian poultry producers, the research reinforces the severity of the threat and the importance of maintaining strict separation between poultry, livestock, wild birds and people.

Since Australia confirmed its first detection of H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b in a wild bird in June, detections have spread across several states, with the virus now confirmed in both migratory and non-migratory seabirds.

A mass mortality event involving greater crested terns was confirmed in South Australia recently.

Research raises cross-species concerns

Sialic acid is a sugar molecule found on the surface of animal cells.

Influenza viruses use these molecules as docking points to attach to and enter cells.

The Iowa State researchers found receptors in the mammary tissue of pigs, sheep, goats, beef cattle and alpacas that could potentially support influenza infection.

They also identified relevant receptors in human mammary tissue.

Research assistant professor of veterinary diagnostic and production animal medicine and the study's lead author Rahul Nelli said: "The main thing we wanted to understand in this study is whether there is potential for transmission among these other domestic mammals and humans, and it looks like there is."

The researchers stressed that evidence of actual infection in the livestock species examined remains limited.

However, professor of veterinary pathology and one of the study's co-authors Dr Todd Bell said a lack of detections does not necessarily mean the virus is absent.

"If we don't look, we don't know," Dr Bell said.

That message is particularly relevant to Australia as surveillance expands following the detection of H5N1 in wild birds.

Wild birds remain the immediate biosecurity concern

There have been no confirmed detections of H5 bird flu in Australian commercial poultry or the wider agricultural production system to date.

However, the increasing number and geographic spread of wildlife detections encourages producers to remain on alert.

Australian authorities have advised poultry producers to implement heightened biosecurity measures, with voluntary housing of free range birds where practical in the precautionary response, consistent with animal welfare requirements.

For free range and outdoor poultry operations, the challenge is particularly significant because wild birds can introduce infection onto farms through direct contact or contamination of feed, water, equipment, clothing and footwear.

The current Australian situation also reinforces the importance of preventing contact between poultry and other livestock where practical, particularly as international experience demonstrates that H5N1 can cross into mammalian species.

Milk highlights another potential pathway

The Iowa State study was prompted in part by the discovery that dairy cattle can become infected with H5N1 and shed high levels of virus in milk.

In the US, infected dairy cows have produced milk contaminated with H5N1, leading to extensive surveillance of raw milk.

Pasteurisation effectively inactivates influenza viruses, making commercially pasteurised milk safe.

The researchers warn that the potential for infection in other mammalian livestock should also be considered where

raw milk is produced or consumed.

For Australian producers, the broader lesson is that H5N1 should not be viewed solely as a poultry disease.

The virus' international history demonstrates its capacity to move between birds and mammals and adapt to new hosts.

Biosecurity remains the first line of defence

The Australian poultry industry's immediate priority remains preventing H5N1 from moving from wild birds into commercial flocks.

That means continuing to treat wild bird activity around poultry farms as a serious biosecurity risk and reviewing measures such as:

- Preventing wild birds from accessing poultry sheds, feed and water
- Checking sheds, netting and exclusion measures for gaps or damage
- Maintaining dedicated farm clothing and footwear
- Controlling visitors, vehicles and equipment movements
- Separating poultry from other livestock where possible
- Monitoring birds closely for signs of disease or unusual mortality
- Ensuring suspected disease is reported promptly through the appropriate state or territory channels.

The Australian Government said the human health risk from the current Australian detections remains low, though H5N1 is a serious and highly contagious animal disease.

As H5N1 establishes itself in Australian wildlife, understanding where the virus is, which species it can infect and how it moves between wildlife, poultry, livestock and people will be critical to protecting Australia's poultry industry.

As Dr Bell said, we don't know if we don't look.



Scan for the full study.



The current situation reinforces the importance of preventing contact between poultry and other livestock where practical, particularly as international experience demonstrates that H5N1 can cross into mammalian species.



A mass mortality event involving greater crested terns was confirmed in South Australia recently.

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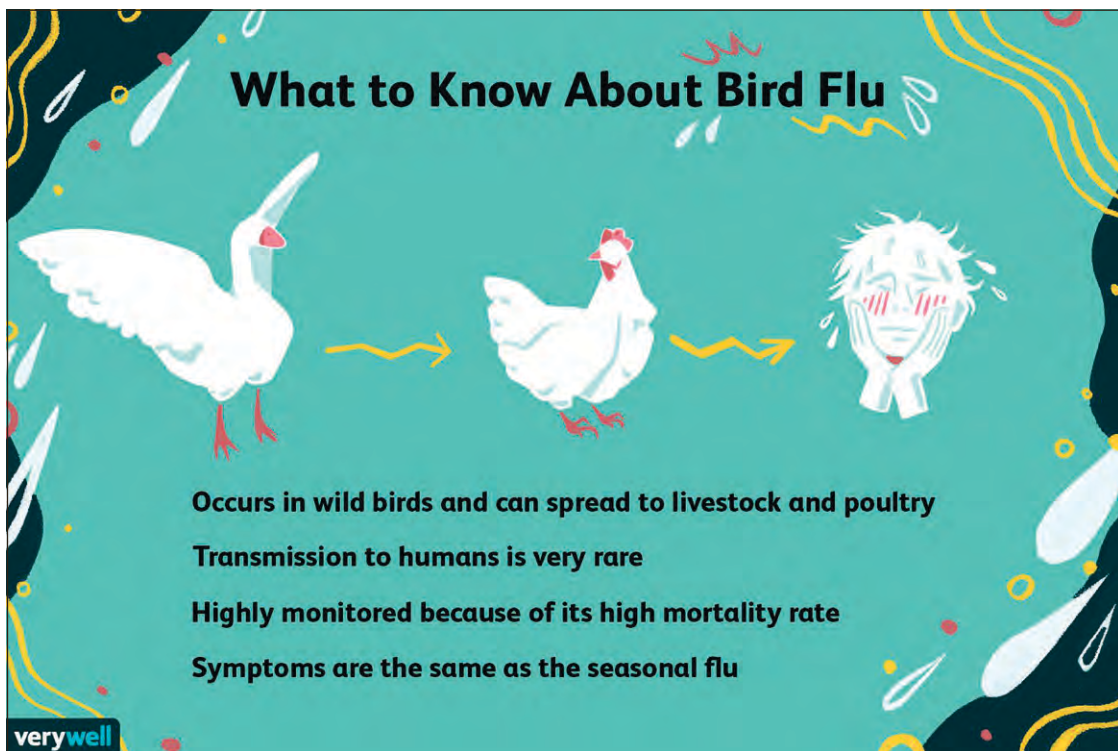
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Looking back on bird flu

TWENTY years ago I bought and read, with considerable intrigue, a little paperback titled *Everything You Need to Know About Bird Flu & What You Can Do To Prepare For It*.

First published in the United Kingdom in 2005 and authored by Jo Revill, then health editor of *The Observer*, it included a foreword by Professor Peter Openshaw, head of Respiratory Infections Section, Imperial College London.

Prof Openshaw had worked on respiratory viruses since 1985.

Given what Australia is currently experiencing with what looms as an insidious incursion of the potentially rampaging and deadly H5N1 strain of bird flu, I thought it worthwhile revisiting the book and reflecting on what was promulgated back then.

My main take-home from Openshaw's published thoughts back then was simply this, "It is vital that we have a well-informed, educated public that can make sound judgements, respond appropriately and evaluate the uncertainties intelligently."

I am concerned that 20 years down the track, many of today's consumers remain ill informed and that this will have – if not already having – a tragic negative impact on sales of eggs and chicken products due to the misinformation and fear surrounding the emergence of H5N1 on our shores in recent weeks.

This was brought home to me on the weekend when shopping for premium beef mince (for my much-loved shepherd's pie) at a local long-stand-



Cant Comment
by
BRENDON CANT

ing wholesale and retail family owned meat supplier, which also stocks local eggs from a producer who I've long faithfully supported.

When I pointed out to the shop assistant and forthright family member that the free range branded eggs were probably no longer free range as the laying hens were likely now being kept shedded with the unfortunate arrival on our shores of H5N1, she agreed.

She then quickly noted that many shoppers were already declining to buy eggs, or chicken meat for that matter, as they falsely believed H5N1's arrival meant all poultry products were no longer safe to eat.

This brings me back to Prof Openshaw's early days statement that the public must

be well informed and educated.

This is certainly the necessity now, but I'm not sure it's the case.

The message needs to be out there now, before H5N1 has even landed among our domestic fowl flocks that eggs and chicken meat will remain safe to eat.

Commercially produced chicken and eggs will remain safe to eat during H5N1 avian influenza concerns, provided they are handled and cooked properly.

Government biosecurity measures and strict quarantine protocols will prevent sick birds or contaminated products from entering the public food supply chain.

My understanding is that no evidence exists that humans can contract H5N1 by eating properly cooked poultry or eggs.

At the time of writing this column, testing at the CSIRO Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness had confirmed 231 cases of H5 high pathogenicity avian influenza in wild birds across Australia, with infections restricted entirely to wild seabirds and migratory species.

While there had been no detections in commercial poultry at that time, this of

course may change and that's where appropriate due diligence, public information and alerts must come into play.

Let's hope our commercial poultry businesses don't suffer big hits.



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Author Jo Revill.



The research highlights the importance of considering the flock as a whole when investigating fertility problems.



Broiler breeder fertility may be influenced by flock dynamics

FLOCK structure and social interactions could be contributing to variation in broiler breeder fertility, according to a study presented by US Auburn University researchers at the 2025 International Poultry Scientific Forum.

The findings suggest that breeder fertility cannot always be explained by looking at individual males or females in isolation, with group size, flock uniformity and management practices such as male spiking also potentially influencing reproductive performance.

The research highlights the importance of considering the flock as a whole when investigating fertility problems, rather than automatically attributing poor reproductive performance to individual birds.

Bigger groups recorded higher fertility

The Auburn study involved 396 females and 64 males allocated to different group sizes and management treatments.

The birds were divided into four treatment groups:

- Large groups with male spiking
- Large groups without spiking
- Small groups with spiking
- Small groups without spiking

There were four pens for each treatment.

Fertility declined as the birds aged, but larger groups recorded higher fertility than smaller groups at 40 and 50 weeks of age.

Interestingly, the smaller groups produced more eggs per hen.

That result reinforces an important point for breeder management – egg numbers and fertility do not necessarily move together.

A flock producing more eggs does not automatically produce a higher number of fertile eggs or deliver better overall reproductive efficiency.

The researchers also identified differences in embryonic mortality associated with group size, though the effects varied depending on the stage of embryo development.

Individual birds don't tell the whole story

The research adds to previous work suggesting that individual male characteristics are not necessarily reliable predictors of fertility in naturally mating breeder flocks.

A 2005 study published in *Poultry Science* examined factors including male-male competition, mating behaviour, sperm quality and physical characteristics.

While some individual traits were associated with mating behaviour, the researchers did not find a straightforward relationship between those characteristics and fertility.

That is important because commercial breeder flocks operate as social groups.

Male competition, mating behaviour and interactions between males and females can all influence which birds mate and how successfully mating occurs.

Consequently, a fertility problem may not always be traced

to a single male or a single measure of reproductive capacity. **Spiking showed an effect**

The Auburn researchers also examined male spiking – introducing additional or younger males into an established breeder flock.

According to *US Poultry*, spiking improved reproductive outcomes in the study, alongside effects associated with group size and flock uniformity.

However, the results should not be interpreted as evidence that spiking will automatically improve fertility in every commercial flock.

The practice is influenced by factors including flock age, male condition, male-to-female ratio, body weight, uniformity and the management system being used.

The Auburn study is more useful in demonstrating that spiking needs to be considered as part of the broader reproductive management program, rather than as a standalone solution to declining fertility.

Uniformity remains critical

The findings also reinforce the importance of achieving and maintaining good flock uniformity.

Body weight management is closely linked to reproductive development.

Males and females need to reach appropriate body weight and sexual maturity while maintaining sufficient uniformity across the flock.

Poor uniformity can create differences in sexual maturity, mating activity and reproductive perfor-

mance between individual birds.

As breeder flocks age, maintaining an appropriate balance between male and female condition becomes increasingly important.

Look beyond the fertility percentage

The research suggests that investigating breeder fertility requires a broader approach than simply examining fertility percentages or individual bird measurements.

When fertility starts to decline, producers and advisers may need to consider a range of factors, including:

- Flock age and production stage
- Male-to-female ratio
- Body weight and flock uniformity
- Male and female condition
- Mating behaviour
- Distribution of males and females
- Male competition
- Spiking history and timing
- Overall flock management and housing conditions.

The research does not suggest that individual bird characteristics are unimportant.

Rather, it indicates that their contribution to fertility can be affected by the environment and social structure in which the birds are managed.

A flock-level approach

The practical takeaway is that fertility should be viewed as a flock-level outcome.

Individual male assessment, body weight control and reproductive monitoring remain important tools, but they may not

• continued P9

The Auburn findings suggest that the interactions between birds, group size and management practices can also influence reproductive outcomes.

Aussie Pumps helping to keep poultry farms clean

MAINTAINING clean sheds is one of the most important jobs on any poultry farm.

Regular wash downs help reduce disease risk, improve biosecurity and provide healthier conditions for livestock.

Behind every effective cleaning system is reliable pumping equipment capable of handling tough wastewater day after day.

Aussie Pumps has spent decades supplying Australian farmers with self-priming centrifugal pumps designed to move wash down water, livestock effluent and wastewater.

Built for demanding agricultural applications, the company's GMP pump range has earned a reputation for reliability in harsh operating conditions.

According to Aussie Pumps chief engineer John Hales, livestock wastewater presents unique challenges because it is often both abrasive and corrosive.

"Poultry operations generate wastewater containing manure, feed particles and other solids that can quickly wear conventional pumps," Mr Hales said.

"Keeping sheds clean is essential for bird health, but it also means the pumping equipment needs to withstand continuous demanding use."

Cavitation cause and solution

Cavitation occurs when there is insufficient water entering the pump, allowing tiny air bubbles to form and collapse against the impeller.

These repeated impacts create small pits on the impeller surface that gradually reduce pump efficiency and performance.

When cavitation is combined with the corrosive nature of livestock wastewater, the result can be increased maintenance costs, reduced flow rates and costly downtime.

To help producers overcome these challenges, Aussie Pumps now offers selected GMP self-priming pumps fitted with cast 316 stainless-steel impellers.

Instead of replacing an entire cast-iron pump with a stainless-steel unit, farmers can upgrade the component that experiences the greatest wear.

The cast 316 stainless-steel impeller provides excellent resistance to corrosion and abrasion, extending service life while maintaining pump performance in demanding livestock applications.

Originally introduced for heavy-duty industrial applications, the stainless-steel impeller option is now being expanded across the Aussie GMP semi-

trash pump range to support Australian agriculture.

For poultry producers, the result is a pump that delivers dependable performance, requires less maintenance and helps keep essential wash down systems operating when they're needed most.

"Every farm is different and we're always keen to hear how our pumps perform in the field," Mr Hales said.

"Customer feedback helps us continue improving our products and developing practical solutions that meet the changing needs of Australian producers."

For more than 30 years, Aussie Pumps has worked alongside farmers, councils and industry to develop pumping equipment suited to Australia's toughest environments.

Whether it's wash down systems, wastewater transfer or general farm water management, the company's focus remains the same – delivering reliable long-lasting equipment backed by local engineering support.

For further information on the Aussie GMP range and the new stainless-steel impeller option, contact Aussie Pumps on 02 8865 3500 or visit www.aussiepumps.com.au

Aussie Pumps



John Hales shows how cast-iron impellers erode in corrosive applications.

Broiler breeder fertility may be influenced by flock dynamics

from P8

explain all of the variation occurring within a commercial flock.

The Auburn findings suggest that the interactions between birds, group size and management practices can also influence reproductive outcomes.

That means a decline in fertility should not automatically be attributed to semen quality, an individual male or another single factor.

Instead, producers should consider how male condition, female condition, flock uniformity, mating behaviour, group structure and management interact to determine the reproductive performance of the flock.

The study ultimately reinforces the complex nature of broiler breeder fertility and suggests that understanding what is happening across the flock may be as important as identifying what is happening in individual birds.



A fertility problem may not always be traced to a single male or a single measure of reproductive capacity.



Scan for the research summary.



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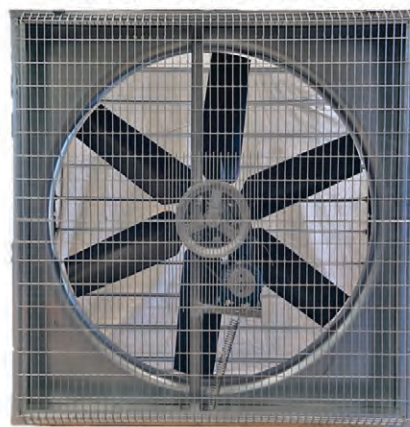
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Gary Sansom Scholarship applications are now open

THE Gary Sansom Scholarship aims to uncover future chicken meat industry supporters and leaders, providing funding and additional support to help students make their mark on the industry right from the beginning.

The scholarship was established in honour of former AgriFutures Chicken Meat advisory panel chair and Australian Chicken Meat Federation president Gary Sansom, who himself was a great leader of the chicken meat industry.

Mr Sansom was a long-standing supporter of programs encouraging new people into the chicken meat industry and championed several communication and training initiatives vital to the industry.

This scholarship in his name aims to do just that, encourage new people into the chicken meat industry and support them to build a thriving career in the industry.

The prestigious Gary Sansom Scholarship will seek to identify high-quality students, foster a career pathway in the chicken meat industry and support industry-relevant research.

Worth up to \$30,000, the scholarship is broken down per level of study as follows:

- Honours – \$10,000 per year for 1 year
 - Masters – \$10,000 per year for 2 years
 - PhD – \$10,000 per year for 3 years.
- Each scholar is also provided with additional support and opportunities:
- Attendance at poultry industry conferences
 - An industry supervisor (coordinated by AgriFutures Australia) who will provide study and career pathway support
 - Career pathway assistance post-scholarship and studies – the AgriFutures Chicken Meat Program will assist the scholar in making contact with industry members in areas where the scholar is interested in pursuing a

career, as well as providing networking opportunities throughout the scholarship period.

The scholarship will support Mr Sansom's vision for the industry, to ensure it is valued and respected by all sectors and the Australian community.

It aims to develop leadership in the research community.

Who can apply

The successful candidate will be a broad thinker, someone who wants to contribute to the Australian chicken meat industry long term.

We are looking for people who want to make a difference in the chicken meat industry by conducting research that can be readily applied by the industry.

We are also looking for people who want to contribute to the industry by providing leadership in the future.

Applicants must be an Australian citizen or resident and enrolled or eligible to enrol at an Australian university undertaking postgraduate study (PhD, Masters or Honours degree or equivalent).

In addition, students must be willing to have a member of the Australian chicken meat industry as a supervisor and have a desire to contribute to the Australian chicken meat industry in the long term. Students with an interest in and commitment to the chicken meat industry are encouraged to apply.

The successful scholar may study part-time if undertaken in conjunction with a current industry position.

They may also hold a postgraduate award (that would be rescinded if successful) but be no more than halfway through the chosen course of study.

The award is also available to future students, who have not begun their postgraduate studies but are eligible for enrolment in the chosen degree.

Applications for the 2027 Gary Sansom Scholarship close on Monday October 5, 2026.

As part of the application process, students are required to outline why they want to contribute to the Australian chicken meat industry and what they want to gain from the scholarship.

Applicants will be short-listed following the assessment of the written applications.

Those who are short-listed will be required to participate in an interview with the scholarship assessment committee.

Two referees must be nominated to support the application.

For more information, scan the QR code below.

AgriFutures Australia



The 2026 AgriFutures Gary Sansom Scholar Amelia Sofra.



Under the law, eggs labelled as 'free range' must come from hens that are able to roam and forage outdoors for at least eight hours each day. A difficult situation for producers when government advice requires birds to be housed to protect them from exposure to infected wild birds.

Free range egg labelling rules eased as producers respond to our H5 threat

AUSTRALIA'S free range egg producers have been given further breathing room on labelling requirements as some farms temporarily house hens to reduce the risk of H5 entering their flocks.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has indicated it will continue to exercise discretion over enforcement of free range claims where producers are affected by government-directed housing measures.

The issue has become increasingly relevant as H5 has been detected in wild seabirds across Australia, with a recorded 309 positive events as of August 23.

There have been no detections in poultry or the wider agricultural production system.

National authorities have nevertheless supported heightened poultry biosecurity measures, including options for states and territories to advise free range producers to house birds where practical and consistent with animal welfare requirements.

Labelling issue creates challenge for free-range producers

Under Australia's free-range egg labelling

requirements, producers making a free range claim must meet prescribed conditions relating to hens' access to outdoor areas and stocking density.

H5 bird flu creates a difficult situation for producers when government advice or orders require birds to be housed to protect them from exposure to infected wild birds.

The ACCC has previously established guidance recognising government-directed housing during an H5N1 outbreak as an "exceptional circumstance."

Under that guidance, the ACCC can choose not to take enforcement action against free range egg and poultry meat producers affected by a government housing or-

der for up to 90 days from the order or until the order expires, whichever is shorter.

However, the concession does not mean producers can simply continue using a free range claim without considering consumers' expectations.

The ACCC's guidance states producers affected by housing orders are expected

continued P11



The ACCC has recognised the issue in its guidance, noting that it understands the cost involved in changing packaging while also making clear that consumers should receive accurate information about how eggs have been produced.

Free range egg labelling rules eased as producers respond to our H5 threat

from P10 to have alternative labelling and consumer-information arrangements where housing is likely to continue for an extended period. **H5 threat remains outside commercial poultry**

For producers, the distinction between the current wildlife detections and an outbreak in commercial poultry remains critical.

DAFF stated there were currently no detections of H5 bird flu in Australian poultry or other agricultural production, and no evidence that the virus has established in Australian wildlife.

However, the detection of H5 in wild birds has prompted heightened surveillance and biosecurity measures.

The experience overseas has demonstrated the consequences when H5 viruses enter poultry populations, making prevention of contact between wild birds and commercial flocks a priority.

DAFF recommends poultry producers maintain strong farm biosecurity, minimise contact between poultry and wild birds, restrict visitors and ensure vehicles, equipment and footwear are appropriately cleaned and disinfected.

Producers are also encouraged to manage feed and water sources to reduce their attractiveness to wild birds.

Producers face practical labelling problems

The temporary housing of free range flocks creates a particularly difficult challenge for egg businesses because packaging is often ordered well in advance and produced in large print runs.

Changing cartons at short notice can therefore be expensive and impractical, particularly for smaller producers.

The ACCC has recognised this issue in its guidance, noting that it understands the cost involved in changing

packaging while also making clear that consumers should receive accurate information about how eggs have been produced.

That leaves producers balancing three competing priorities – protecting their birds from H5, complying with government directions and maintaining truthful information for consumers.

Housing decisions remain with jurisdictions

There is currently no blanket national requirement for all Australian free range poultry to be housed.

State and territory governments are responsible for surveillance and response activities and can introduce measures appropriate to their local circumstances.

National authorities have supported voluntary housing of free range poultry where practical and consistent with animal welfare requirements while the H5 risk is assessed.

For producers, this means housing requirements and advice can vary according to location and the evolving disease situation.

The ACCC's approach also needs to be understood in that context.

Its H5 guidance is designed specifically for producers affected by a government housing order rather than providing a blanket

exemption from free range labelling requirements.

Biosecurity remains the priority

While the labelling issue is creating a significant commercial challenge for free range egg businesses, the overriding industry priority remains keeping H5 bird flu out of commercial poultry.

Australia's poultry industry remains free of H5 bird flu, and maintaining that status is critical for producers, consumers and Australia's domestic and export poultry markets.

For free-range operators, that means continuing to assess the risks posed by wild birds and taking practical steps to prevent contact wherever possible.

For all poultry producers, DAFF said any unusual signs of disease, including unexplained production declines, should be reported to a veterinarian or the 24-hour Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888.

The current situation is a reminder that H5 bird flu is not only a disease-control issue.

For free range producers in particular, an incursion could have implications extending from flock health and biosecurity to animal welfare, production systems, labelling, consumer expectations and market access.



ACCC deputy chair Mick Keogh said it was important that free range producers "make efforts to communicate the reality of the situation."



ProTen development manager Ashley Etherington with Inghams' general manager farming and milling Sheridan Alfirevich.

Inghams announces investment in new Victorian poultry breeder farm

INGHAM'S Group Limited recently announced a significant expansion in its Victorian poultry breeding operations.

In partnership with ProTen, Australia's largest corporate meat chicken grower, Inghams is investing in two new state-of-the-art poultry breeder production farms in Charlton, Victoria.

The collaboration capitalises on ProTen's proven expertise in poultry farm development and operations, ensuring the delivery of world-class production facilities.

The project represents an investment of approximately \$50 mil-

lion and will see the construction of 16 highly automated production sheds across the two farms, with construction scheduled to commence in the August 2026 and operations expected to begin in the first half of 2029.

The new facilities will be managed by Inghams following completion.

Once completed, the breeder farms will incorporate the latest technology in egg grading and sorting, utilising artificial intelligence-based systems to assess each egg produced.

The scale of the investment and advanced automation will enhance Inghams' opera-

tional efficiency and contribute to reduced transport costs.

This project represents a major commitment to regional Victoria and is expected to create employment opportunities within the local Charlton community during both the construction and operational phases.

Inghams' general manager farming and milling Sheridan Alfirevich said, "This development represents an important investment in our Victorian farming operations and the Charlton community."

"Building on our longstanding presence in the region, these new state-of-the-art breeder farms will meaningfully

expand our national breeding capacity and deliver world-class animal welfare and biosecurity outcomes.

"We are excited about the project and look forward to continuing to grow alongside the Charlton community for many years to come."

ProTen chief executive officer James Wentworth said, "We are pleased to partner with Inghams in creating this state-of-the-art facility that will help feed Victoria into the future."

"We are also very grateful for the support Buloke Council has provided for the project."

Inghams

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Logistics of determining a rare breeds classification

THE past two decades have seen a growing interest in rare breeds of all species of domestic animals.

Indeed, the face of livestock farming has changed so much in such a short period of time that some breeds well-represented 40 years ago are now rarely encountered.

Dorset Horn and Romney Marsh sheep are two examples of this in the lamb meat industry, while Guernsey and Dairy Shorthorn cattle are examples in the dairy industry.

Of course, there are breeds across all the species that have always been minority breeds, their existence being maintained by dedicated enthusiasts or because they have filled a small niche market.

There are others whose fortunes have waned and then experienced a resurgence in popularity, among which are many of the pure breeds of pigs, which have found renewed favour because of their adaptability to free range husbandry.

Unfortunately, none of the pure breeds of poultry that formed the basis of the commercial egg and chicken meat industries decades ago have seen the

resurgence in popularity experienced by their porcine counterparts.

The Rare Breeds Trust of Australia is the one national organisation that embraces all of the species of domestic livestock and works to assist in the preservation of the rare breeds within those species through various programmes and incentives.

One of these is to conduct a poultry census on a regular basis to gauge the status of all of the breeds recognised in the *Australian Poultry Standards*.

The census is conducted on a voluntary basis, with some of the breed clubs throwing their support behind the project by encouraging their members to participate.

Unlike the breeds of other species whose numbers can be ascertained from the registration schemes run by the relevant breed society, there is no poultry registration system in place to identify the numbers of each of the particular breeds kept in this country.

Some of the states have a rare breeds poultry club, which picks up on the work done by the Rare Breeds Trust of Australia by organising a dedicated rare breeds show and by assisting with the sponsorship of a rare breeds section in all-breeds shows run by other poultry clubs.

Among these are the Rare Poultry Breeders' Association – which is based in NSW but has members in each of the states – and the Tasmanian Rare Breeds Poultry Club Inc, which is based in Tasmania.

So how does a state-based rare breeds poultry club decide which breeds are rare in their state and which breeds aren't?

The following is the method adopted by the Rare Poultry Breeders' Association in determining its classification for its annual show.

The Rare Poultry Breeders' Association's annual show is divided into two distinct sections – one for rare breeds and the other for rare varieties.

The rare breeds section includes those breeds in which each variety is deemed to be rare, while the rare varieties section is reserved for breeds that

have some varieties that are relatively common but other varieties that are rarely seen.

An example of this is the Australorp, a breed that has an active breed club and one variety, the black Australorp, that is relatively common in both its large fowl and bantam form.

However, the Australorp is also recognised in both a blue and a white variety, neither of which is as common as the black variety.

Therefore, the show schedule currently provides a class for blue and white Australorps, but none for black Australorps.

If at some stage in the future, the blue or the white variety becomes much more popular, that variety will also be eliminated from the show schedule.

If the black variety were to become particularly uncommon, it would be included in the schedule.

Each year the association holds a classification committee meeting, where data from each of the east coast royal shows is presented, along with submissions that may have been sought from specialist breed clubs.

While the entries in the royal shows may not give an accurate picture of the number of fowls kept in a particular breed, they do give a fairly reliable comparison between the various breeds – and an idea of what is popular and what is not – and are often an early indicator of trends that are occurring within the breeds.

An example of this is the Sebright breed of bantam.

For many years, the Sebright was considered to be a rare breed.

However, last year 28 were shown at the Sydney Royal, while 38 were entered in the Canberra Royal.

This year, the upward trend continued, with the number entered in the Sydney Royal being well into the forties and more than 50 entered in the Canberra Royal.

Unfortunately, the 2026 data for the other royal shows were not available at the time of writing to include a comparison with last year's entries.

When there is a consistent upward or downward trend in the numbers of a breed entered in these major shows, that breed is put on review for the

following year and a decision is then made to either eliminate it, add it or maintain the status quo.

In addition to the methodology mentioned, the committee also compares its decisions with the results of any recent Rare Breeds Trust of Australia poultry census to determine if there are any glaring anomalies between the lists compiled by the two organisations.

When the list has been determined, a schedule is then compiled which reflects the breeds and varieties included for that year.

An interesting development over the past few years has been the inclusion of classes for varieties that have been accepted by the relevant breed-based club but not yet recognised in the *Australian Poultry Standards*.

Several breed clubs made submissions to the standards committee back in 2018 seeking to have additional colour varieties recognised in the upcoming third edition of the *Australian Poultry Standards*.

However, to date no decision has been made by the standards committee with regard to those submissions.

So, in order to support the breed clubs and the process of recognition, they have been catered for in classes for 'provisional varieties'.

More information about the activities of the Rare Breeds Trust of Australia and the Rare Poultry Breeders Association can be found on their websites, scan the relevant QR code below.

Grant Andrews
Rare Poultry Breeders Association



Scan for the Rare Breeds Trust of Australia website.



Scan for the Rare Poultry Breeders Association website.



The blue variety of the Australorp is not as well-known as the black.



Based on recent entries in major shows, the Sebright is a breed that is growing in popularity.

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Dr Michael Kogut presenting at APSS 2025 on the chicken gut ecosystem and the impact of feed additives.



Feed additive impacts on chicken gut ecosystem

AUTHOR at *Poultry World* and key speaker at Australian Poultry Science Symposium 2025, Dr Michael Kogut shares his article ‘Impact of past, present and future feed additives on the chicken gut ecosystem: their role in productivity and sustainability’, edited for this publication.

Summary

Optimal gut health is of vital importance to the performance of poultry to be able to perform to their genetic potential.

Understanding a ‘healthy gut’ requires knowledge of the functional interactions of all components of the enteric ecosystem – the host, the microbiota and the environment.

The connections between these diverse physiological features of the enteric ecosystem underscore the extent of areas encompassed by the gut and the difficulty in correlating specific components of gut health with the ability to regulate poultry performance.

Antibiotics used as growth promoters have successfully controlled dysbiosis and enteropathogens for the past 70 years.

However the recent increase in worldwide non-AGP poultry production is challenging the industry in management, health and animal welfare.

Therefore, there has been a major focus on the development of alternatives to antibiotics that have concentrated on those directed towards the microbiota especially including pre, pro and postbiotics.

However since the host is under selective pressure to ensure the microbiota becomes and remains beneficial, there is now an increased focus on how the host can exert control over their microbiota and the development of novel antibiotic alternatives that can be directed towards modulating immunity, barrier function, the gut-brain axis and intestinal epithelial functional metabolism.

Introduction – intestinal ecosystem

A functionally reliable and healthy gut is of vital importance to the modern broiler to be able to perform to their utmost genetic potential and maintain sustainable production.

A healthy gut requires functional interactions between the components of the intestinal ecosystem – the host, the gut microbiota and the environment, especially diet – but including mycotoxins, infections and temperature.

The connections between these diverse physiological and ecological features of the gut emphasise the difficulty in correlating specific components of gut health with the ability to regulate poultry performance.

As an ecosystem, the interactions between the microbiota and the avian immune system regulate multiple pathways in enteric homeostasis and disease.

The microbiota composition and biogeography of microbial communities in the gut are shaped by the constitutive func-

tions of the host components of ecosystem (immune response and epithelial cells), while in return the microbiota influences the induction, development and training of the host’s immune system.

This intimate interaction induces the protective responses to pathogens, prevent commensals from over exploiting host resources and maintain the regulatory pathways that mediate the sustained tolerance to the commensal microbes.

Commercial poultry are unique in the establishment of the microbiota and gut development.

In current commercial production of chickens, chicks are hatched without the presence of adult hens in a clean sanitary hatchery environment, though it is now known that some transfer of maternal microbiota into the embryo does occur.

Consequently, the commercially hatched chicks are more reliant on environmental sources of microbes to colonise the intestine, which soundly affects the diversity of the gut microbiota.

Moreover, the development of the gut in neonatal chicks is hindered by the delay of access to feed for 1-3 days post-hatch.

Lastly, neonatal poultry exhibit a transient susceptibility to infectious diseases during the first week of life.

This susceptibility is largely due to a qualitative impairment of the avian innate and acquired

continued P15

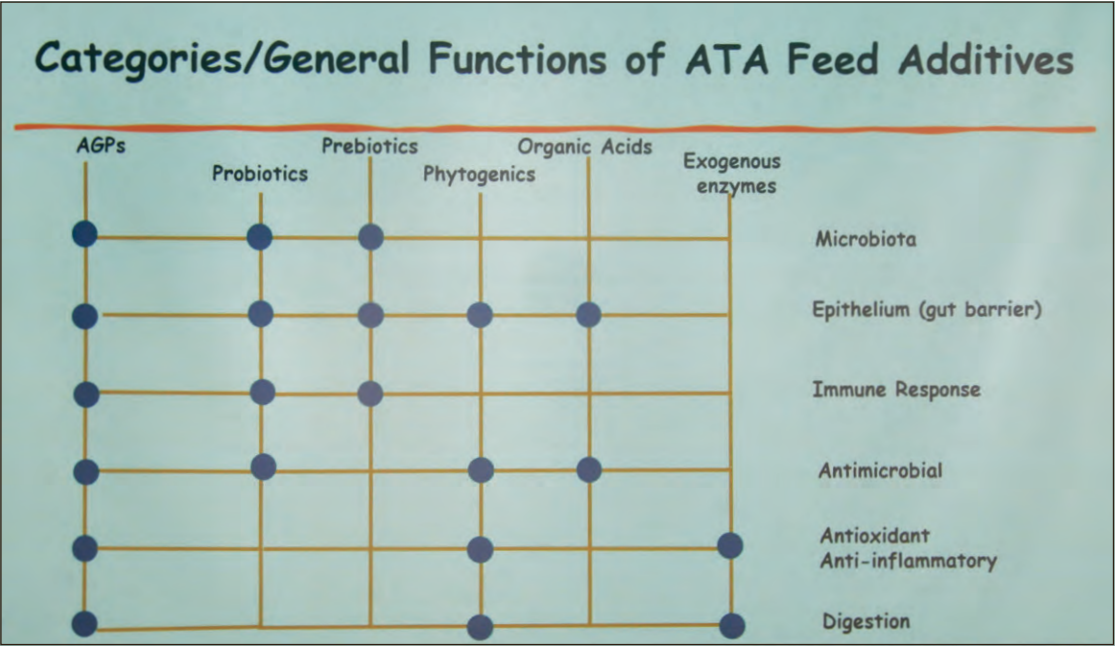


Table 1 - Microbiota-centric alternatives to antibiotics.		
Approach	Rational	Mechanism(s) of action
Prebiotics	Supply complex food product not digestible by host to stimulate specific members of microbiota	Provide nutrients, prevent pathogen adhesion, stimulate host immunity, improve gut barrier function
Probiotics	Replace a presumed “missing” organism(s)	Competitive exclusion, release antimicrobial factors, stimulate host immunity, improve gut barrier function
Synbiotics	Supply a complex of a microbe or microbes with a prebiotic meant to be used by these organisms to replace a missing function in a microbiome	The prebiotic substance used in the synbiotic selectively favors the growth and metabolite production of probiotics.
Postbiotics	Any substance released by or produced through the metabolic activity of the microorganism, which exerts a beneficial effect on the host, directly or indirectly	Improve potency of active microbes: immunomodulatory, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant
Exogenous feed enzymes	Diets that contain different anti-nutritive factors that impede normal digestion and nutrient absorption	Digest different anti-nutritive factors (non-starch polysaccharides) that impede normal digestion & nutrient absorption; supports growth of beneficial bacteria
Phytobiotics	the plant-derived products: (1) herbs (flowering, nonwoody, and nonpersistent plants), (2) botanicals (entire or processed parts of a plant such as roots, leaves, and bark), (3) EOs (hydrodistilled extracts of plant volatile compounds), and (4) oleoresins (extracts based on nonaqueous solvents)	Growth promotion, gut morphology reinforcement, nutrient digestion/absorption, biofilm control, immunomodulation; antioxidant activity
Organic acids	Those acids built on a carbon skeleton, known as carboxylic acids, which can alter the physiology of bacteria, causing metabolic disorders that prevent proliferation and cause death.	The supplementation of organic acids at the right high doses in animal feed can increase the bodyweight, improves feed conversion ratio and reduces colonization of pathogens in the intestine.

Table 1 - Microbiota-centric alternatives to antibiotics.

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Feed additive impacts on chicken gut ecosystem

from P13
host defences characterised by:

- The general failure of T cells to proliferate and secrete cytokines
- A reduced ability to produce immunoglobulin
- A functional inefficiency of heterophils and macrophages for the first 7-21 days of life for chickens and turkeys.

In modern broiler production, the first week post-hatch represents about 25 percent of the post-hatch production period, so managing gut health during this period is central to overall broiler production.

Therefore, the establishment of a healthy and functionally beneficial neonatal intestinal microbiota in poultry is unlikely and linked to exposure to environmental microbes in the hatchery, transport trucks and on the farm.

Consequently, the normal development, maturation and programming of the immune system and other physiological functions involved in early life intestinal homeostasis is arguably affected.

It is generally agreed that it takes about three weeks for the microbiota to reach a stable mature state, though this can vary greatly depending on farm management and bird genetics.

The slow development of functional efficiency of the chicken innate system mentioned above is undoubtedly related to the three-week

development of a mature gut microbiota.
Antibiotic growth promoters and the gut ecosystem

For over 70 years subtherapeutic concentrations of antibiotics as feed additives were used for improving growth promotion in food-producing animals including poultry.

However increased antibiotic resistance in food animals has led to the complete ban on antibiotic growth promoters in animal feeds by the European Union in 2006, China in 2020 and subsequent FDA request for the voluntary removal of medically important AGPs from animal feed in the US.

The US Federal Government began enforcing the Food and Drug Administration Veterinary Feed Directive in 2017 that significantly reduced the availability and usage of antibiotics as growth promoters in farm animals.

Notably, no consensus based on scientific evidence has ever described the mechanisms of action of AGPs.

Remarkably different antibiotics with diverse mechanisms and targets of action induced growth promotion and increased feed efficiency in poultry.

Evidence thus far has separated the effects of AGPs into two basic gut ecological targets – the microbiota and the host.

Several hypotheses have evolved to explain how subtherapeutic levels of AGPs

affect the microbiota:
•Limiting opportunistic pathogens and subclinical infections

•Reduced nutrient competition by microbiota

•Alteration or reduction of microbiota metabolites that regulate signalling pathways

•Enrichment of the cecal microbiota with butyrate and lactic acid-producing.

Alternatively, AGPs may function by directly reducing the energy cost of constant low grade inflammatory response in the gut resulting from persistent interactions with infectious and non-infectious environmental stressors – nutrient, physical, chemical, biological stimuli.

Thus, AGPs promote an immunometabolic-balanced environment in the intestine that promotes the growth of beneficial commensals and increases the production of beneficial metabolome, including small chain fatty acids, indole and bile salts, which consequently increases intestinal enzymatic activity, metabolism and energy harvesting that results in weight-gain increased production.

Conclusion

As poultry meat and products are expected to increase to meet the protein demands of an expanding world population, so to must the commercial poultry industry meet the challenges of physiological and environmental sustainability.

Genetic selection for production traits are likely to be limited for further increases.

Therefore, modulating and/or improving the health of the intestine is of utmost importance in meeting these challenges.

A shift in gut health initiatives from a microbiota-centric regulation of the host

physiology to a more host-directed approach of modulating multiple gut-microbiota axes – gut-brain, gut-lung, gut-muscle – seems to be a more practical and measurable means of making progress to meet the challenges of the future.

Dr Michael H Kogut
USDA-ARS



The author speaking at APSS 2025.

Table 2 - Host-Directed Mechanisms to Control Microbiota.

Approach	Rational	Mechanism of Action	Modulation
Immune response	Innate: use PRRs ¹ to bind MAMPs ²	Innate: production of AMPs ³ , cytokines; Trained immunity: epigenetic & metabolic reprogramming of innate immune cells	• Segmented filamentous bacteria
	Acquired: identify & change chemical ligands by Ag specific receptors	Acquired: sIgA, cytokines	• PRR agonists and antagonists (β-glucan, oxidized low-density lipoprotein)
Barrier function	Physical barrier: Limit microbial contact with host cell; Allow metabolites to pass both directions	Tight junction (TJ) proteins seal paracellular space	• Cytokines, Dectin-1, mannans, yeast fraction
	Chemical barrier	Mucus, AMPs, IgA	• Nanobodies
Neuroimmune interactions: Gut-brain axis	Bidirectional biochemical communication between neurons and immune cells regulate homeostasis and disease.	Bidirectional signaling cytokine receptors on neurons; Neuro-transmitter receptors on immune cells. Neurotransmitter production by microbiota	• Extracellular vesicles
			• Dietary (tryptophan, fiber, glutamine, Vitamin D, SCFA, polysaccharides)
Epithelial cell function/metabolism	Sense/respond to microbial and immune cell signals (mitochondrial signaling platform)	Paneth cells: production of AMPs	• Neurotransmitters, MAMP agonists, DREDDs ⁴
	Impose ecological control mechanisms: shape spatial and nutritional niches throughout gut	Goblet cells: mucin secretion	• Microbial metabolites (Butyrate, 2° bile acids)
	Specialized functional cells	Enteroendocrine cells: secrete hormones regulating gut physiology	• Growth factors (EGF, KGF)
		Enterocytes: absorptive (nutrient/H ₂ O) and metabolic functions (mitochondria)	• Pharmaceuticals that target epithelial cell metabolism: modify mitochondrial function/dysfunction
			• Nanobodies
			• PRR agonists and antagonists
			• Cytokines

¹PRRs = pattern recognition receptor
²MAMPs = microbial associated molecular patterns
³AMPs = antimicrobial peptides
⁴DREDDs = designer receptors exclusively activated by designer drugs

Table 2 - Host-Directed Mechanisms to Control Microbiota.

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All of the planning is coming along nicely for
APSS 2027 and we have eight excellent invited
speakers who are very excited to be involved in
the symposium next February.

IMPORTANT DATES:

➤ **18 September 2026**

Paper submission and pre-registration closes

➤ **1 October 2026**

Online registration opens

➤ **18 December 2026**

Author and early bird registration deadline

Confirmed invited speakers:

- Steven Ricke - *University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA*
- Mark Lyte - *Iowa State University, USA*
- Jaap van Milgen - *INRAE, France*
- Roy Brister - *Alltech, USA*
- Birger Svihus - *Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Norway*
- Rosemary Walzem - *Texas A & M University, USA*
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