

## Australian chicken meat industry showcased on global stage at FAO

THE Australian Chicken Meat Federation was honoured to be invited – through the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture and the Australian Embassy in Rome – to participate in the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation Global Conference proceedings in Rome during October.

The event brought together global leaders to discuss the future of sustainable livestock production.

Representing the Australian chicken meat industry, ACMF chief executive officer



Dr Mary Wu joined international experts to discuss sustainability, animal health, biosecurity and the evolving expectations of consumers.

Dr Wu highlighted that animal health is a prerequisite for sustainable livestock production, underpinning food safety, animal welfare and trade.

She noted that biosecurity prevention and preparedness are far better than response, and that continued investment in early detection, surveillance and disease preparedness, particularly for avian influenza, remains critical for the Australian industry in maintaining resilient food systems.

Collaboration between government, industry and researchers remains central to these efforts.

The panel discussion also provided

continued P2



## Celebrating World Egg Day

■ A global tribute to Mother Nature's perfect protein

WORLD Egg Day, celebrated annually on the second Friday in October, is a global recognition of one of the world's most versatile and nutritious foods.

Since its establishment in 1996 by the International Egg Commission, this day has united egg producers, consumers, nutritionists and communities across more than 100 countries to highlight the many benefits of eggs for health, culture and livelihoods.

The origins of World Egg Day trace back to Vienna



Austria, where the IEC first declared a day dedicated to eggs during its conference nearly three decades ago.

The idea was simple but powerful – create an annual occasion to champion eggs as a vital

source of nutrition, an accessible and affordable protein and an agricultural product that sustains millions of farming families worldwide.

Since then, each year celebrations have grown, with events ranging from

farm open days and school education programs to cooking competitions, charity donations and international campaigns.

Eggs have long held a special place in human history.

Archaeological evidence shows they were consumed as early as 1400 BC in parts of Asia and Africa, with domesticated chickens spreading across Europe and eventually to the Americas.

In many cultures, eggs have symbolised life, fertility and renewal – appearing

continued P2



ACMF chief executive officer Dr Mary Wu joined international experts to discuss sustainability, animal health, biosecurity and the evolving expectations of consumers.



**Big Dutchman.**



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## Poultry Industry Calendar of Events

### 2025

**NOV 26-28** – Poultry India, Hitec City,  
Hyderabad, India. <https://www.poultryindia.co.in/>

### 2026

**JAN 27-29** – IPPE 2026, Atlanta, Georgia.  
<https://www.ippexpo.org>

**FEB 9-11** – APSS 2026, Sydney, Australia.  
<https://www.apss2026.com.au>

**APR 22-24** – International Conference on  
Poultry Intestinal Health, Istanbul, Türkiye.  
<https://icpih.com>

**MAY 12-14** – Food with Purpose - PIX,  
AMC and APL event, Gold Coast, Australia.  
<https://www.pix.au/conf26>

**JUL 10-13** – Poultry Science Association  
Annual Meeting, Toronto, Canada. [https://  
www.poultryscience.org/opportunities/  
conferences](https://www.poultryscience.org/opportunities/conferences)

**JUL 14-17** – World's Poultry Congress,  
Toronto, Canada. [https://www.  
wpc2026toronto.com](https://www.wpc2026toronto.com)

**JUL 28-30** – American Association of Avian  
Pathologists Annual Meeting, Orlando,  
USA. [https://www.aaap.info/future-annual-  
meetings](https://www.aaap.info/future-annual-meetings)

#### How to supply event details:

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ACMF's participation at the FAO Global Conference demonstrated Australia's growing influence in shaping the international dialogue on sustainable poultry production.

## Australian chicken meat industry showcased on global stage at FAO

from P1

an opportunity to showcase the Australian Chicken Meat Sustainability Framework, launched in partnership with AgriFutures Australia in 2022 – the first poultry framework of its kind globally.

Developed in close collaboration between industry and AgriFutures, the framework reflects the sector's long-

term commitment to sustainability across four key pillars – chicken, planet, people and community.

It demonstrates progress in reducing environmental impacts, including lowering emissions, improving land and water use efficiency and sourcing deforestation-free soy by 2025.

Dr Wu also highlighted the importance of responsible

production that balances animal welfare, environmental performance and affordability for consumers.

Meeting growing global demand for food will require the livestock sector to continue innovating to produce more with less.

She highlighted that chicken is one of the great global success stories in livestock transformation, de-

spite chicken meat having the lowest environmental footprint of all major livestock proteins, the industry continues to evolve through research, innovation and responsible stewardship to meet future protein needs sustainably.

ACMF's participation at the FAO Global Conference demonstrated Australia's growing influence in shaping the inter-

national dialogue on sustainable poultry production.

Dr Wu's presence on the panel reflected the Australian industry's proactive approach to addressing biosecurity, sustainability and consumer expectations and its commitment to contributing meaningful solutions to global food security challenges.

ACMF

## Celebrating World Egg Day and nature's perfect protein

from P1

in spring festivals, religious traditions and even art.

Beyond symbolism, their practicality has ensured eggs remain a household staple – quick to cook, adaptable in recipes and a reliable source of 13 essential nutrients.

Nutritionally, eggs are celebrated for being a natural 'complete protein'.

They provide all nine essential amino acids in a highly digestible form, along with key vitamins and minerals such as vitamin D, vitamin B12, selenium, iodine and choline, which is particularly important for brain development.

As populations grow and the global demand for sustainable high-quality protein rises, eggs continue to stand out as one of the most efficient and affordable solutions.

For Australian egg farmers, World Egg Day offers an op-

portunity to connect with the community, dispel myths and celebrate the work of family-run farms that supply fresh eggs daily.

Australia is home to more than 21 million laying hens, cared for by dedicated farmers who prioritise animal welfare, food safety and innovation.

These farmers work

tirelessly to ensure eggs are produced sustainably and affordably, with systems in place to meet diverse consumer choices – from free-range and barn-laid to organic and cage production.

Each year, the IEC sets a theme to guide World Egg Day celebrations.

These themes high-

light important aspects of eggs, from their role in nutrition and sustainability to their ability to tackle food insecurity worldwide.

While the details vary, the message remains consistent – eggs make a difference.

As chief executive officer of Egg Farmers of Australia, I am

proud to join farmers, industry colleagues and communities across the globe in recognising the humble egg.

On World Egg Day, we celebrate more than a food item – we honour an industry, a farming tradition and the vital contribution eggs make to nourishing families everywhere.



Their practicality has ensured eggs remain a household staple. Photo: Suzy Hazelwood

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# A guide for farm preparation, chick quality, placement, behaviour, brooding setup and chick start assessment

THE following is an edited and abbreviated version of *Aviagen's Broiler Management Handbook 2025*, Section 2: Chick Management.

## Introduction and principles

To ensure optimal growth, uniformity, welfare and meat quality in broiler chickens, early chick management must focus on the early adoption of feeding and drinking behaviours.

It is important to minimise the time between hatching and placement, providing immediate access to feed and water, and maintaining ideal brooding conditions.

Though newly hatched chicks rely initially on their yolk sac for nutrients and immunity, swift transition to external feeding is critical.

A well-managed early environment that covers temperature, humidity, air quality and litter supports healthy physiological development.

Successful early management should produce a seven-day body weight that is at least four and a half times the chick's hatch weight, a benchmark consistently linked to improved flock performance and reduced early mortality.

## Chick quality and broiler performance

Optimal broiler performance and profitability depend on delivering high-quality chicks and managing them effectively from hatch to placement.

Chick quality is influenced by parent stock health, nutrition and incubation practices, together with sufficient planning to ensure appropriate delivery and readiness of the brooding environment.

Ideally, chicks from parent flocks of similar age should be placed together to minimise performance variation, chicks from younger flocks may require higher brooding temperatures and additional support.

## Transport of chicks and quality check

The transport system must maintain appropriate temperature, humidity, ventilation and carbon dioxide levels to prevent stress and maintain chick quality.

A good-quality chick is active, well-formed and has a healed navel and retracted yolk sac. Proper early nutrition and brooding management enable chicks to reach target weights uniformly.

Any deviation in chick quality should prompt

immediate feedback to the hatchery, as issues during holding, transport or placement can exacerbate underlying problems.

## Farm preparation and biosecurity

Farm and house preparation is critical for broiler health, welfare and performance.

An 'all-in/all-out' system where birds are single age allows for more effective cleaning, vaccination and disease control.

Thorough cleaning and disinfection of housing, equipment and surrounding areas must be completed and verified at least 24 hours before chick arrival.

Entry protocols, such as vehicle and visitor disinfection, are essential to prevent pathogen introduction.

## House preparation and layout

Chicks are unable to regulate body temperature in the first days and therefore require preheated stable environments with recommended floor (28-30C), air (30-32C) and litter (28-32C) temperatures and 60-70 percent relative humidity.

Litter should be evenly spread (2-4cm depth) to ensure easy access to feed and water.

Clean and appropriately warmed water (18-21C) must be available from well-maintained drinkers, with flushing to maintain flow and hygiene.

Feed should be offered in crumble form on trays or paper covering 70 percent of the brooding area to encourage intake, and chicks should not have to travel more than 2m to reach it.

Lighting should be maintained for 23 hours after placement with 30-40 lux intensity, gradually transitioning to 4-6 hours of darkness by day seven.

Brooding rings should be expanded gradually and removed based on conditions and housing type.

Where partial brooding is used, automated systems in unoccupied areas must be ready before expanding chick access to ensure seamless transition and feed freshness.

## Brooding setup

Broiler chick brooding commonly employs two temperature control systems – whole-house and spot brooding.

In whole-house brooding, a large centralised heat source warms the entire house uniformly, limiting chicks' ability to choose their preferred temperature zone.

Though only part of

the house may be used initially, full-house heating is necessary to encourage chick movement before full release around day seven.

Energy-efficient heat exchangers are increasingly used in this setup.

Spot brooding uses localised heat sources – for example, radiant or canopy heaters – allowing chicks to move toward or away from heat, enabling self-regulation of body temperature.

Brooding rings may be used early on to manage movement.

Typical density is 40 chicks/sq m, with equipment scaled to match chick numbers and heating capacity.

Spot brooding creates temperature gradients, requiring careful placement of brooders per manufacturer specifications.

Other methods include underfloor heating, hatch-brooding and hot water systems, all of which must be managed per manufacturer instructions and chick behaviour.

Regardless of system, consistent temperature and humidity, and early stimulation of feeding and activity are all vital for optimal broiler development.

## Chick placement and environmental control

Before chicks arrive, ensure feed and water are properly distributed.

Upon delivery, chicks must be placed promptly and gently onto paper to avoid stress, dehydration and impaired growth.

Allow 1-2 hours for acclimation, followed by checks for feed and water access, and appropriate environmental conditions.

Adjustments should be guided by chick behaviour, crop fill and vent temperature.

Optimal relative humidity – ideally 60-70 percent – for the first three days reduces dehydration risk.

Spot brooding systems naturally support higher RH, while whole-house brooding may require active humidity control.

Low RH (<50 percent) can lead to dehydration and respiratory issues – it can be increased with foggers or manual misting.

From day seven, RH should decrease to prevent wet litter.

Temperature and RH interact to influence chicks' perceived (apparent) temperature.

High RH raises apparent temperature, while low RH lowers it.

Therefore, environmental adjustments

must consider both RH and dry bulb temperature, always ensuring proper minimum ventilation to maintain air quality and moisture balance.

Ventilation is essential during brooding to manage temperature, RH and air quality.

It must avoid drafts, especially for young chicks with high surface area-to-volume ratios, which are more vulnerable to heat loss.

Air speeds at chick level should not exceed 0.15m/s.

Monitoring is critical – temperature and RH should be recorded at least twice daily during the first five days.

Sensors must be placed at chick level, evenly distributed and positioned away from heat sources and air-flow inlets.

Their accuracy should be regularly cross-checked with conventional thermometers and recalibrated each flock.

Proper environmental control supports welfare, uniformity and performance.

## Monitoring chick behaviour

While temperature and humidity should be monitored daily, chick behaviour remains the most reliable indicator of proper brooding conditions.

In spot brooding, evenly distributed chicks indicate an appropriate temperature.

Clustering or avoidance signals discomfort due to cold, heat, drafts or poor air quality.

In whole-house brooding, behavioural cues are subtler, as heat sources are not localised.

Vocalisations and social patterns such as small active groups of 20-30 chicks moving between feeding and drinking indicate well-being.

Air quality also influences behaviour – elevated levels of carbon dioxide (>3000ppm) or carbon monoxide (>10ppm) can cause lethargy and reduced feeding.

Regular air quality checks and observation of chick behaviour are essential for timely environmental adjustments.

## Chick start assessment

Effective chick start assessment relies on early monitoring of crop fill, vent temperature and body weight.

Crop fill evaluations during the first 24-48 hours post-placement are critical to confirm that chicks have accessed both feed and water.

A full soft rounded

crop indicates proper intake – an empty crop suggests insufficient water.

Assessments should be made at 2, 4, 8, 12, and 24 hours using samples from various locations in the house.

Vent temperature – ideally 39.4-40.5C – is a reliable indicator of whether environmental conditions support optimal chick thermoregulation.

Measurements should be made using a calibrated thermometer, in conjunction with behavioural observations, and may also reveal transportation issues.

Body weight and uniformity should be recorded at placement and again at seven days to assess early growth and the effectiveness of brooding practices.

Declines in CV percentage over this period reflect improved uniformity and successful early management.

Download the 2025 Broiler Management Handbooks in full by scanning the QR codes below.



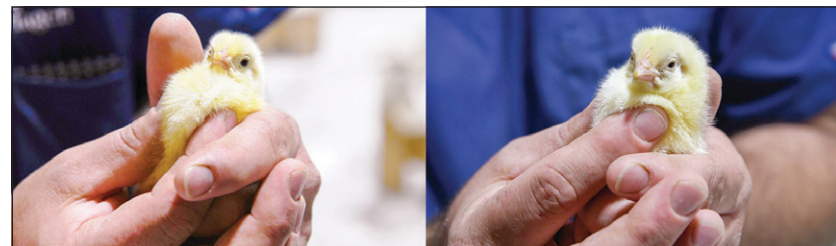
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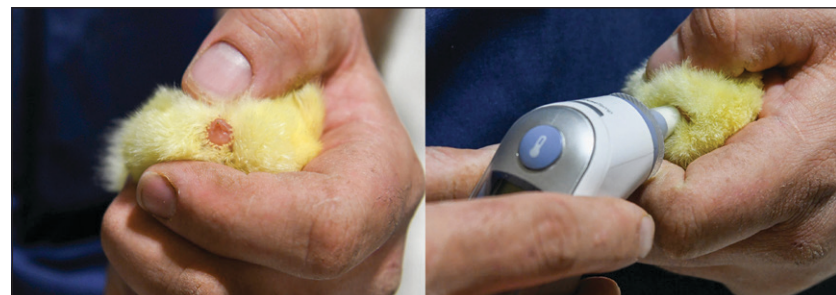
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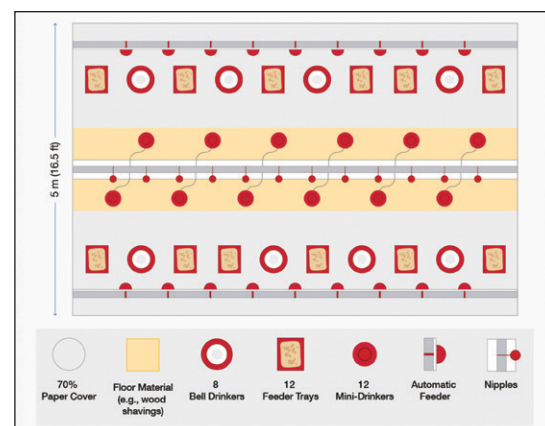
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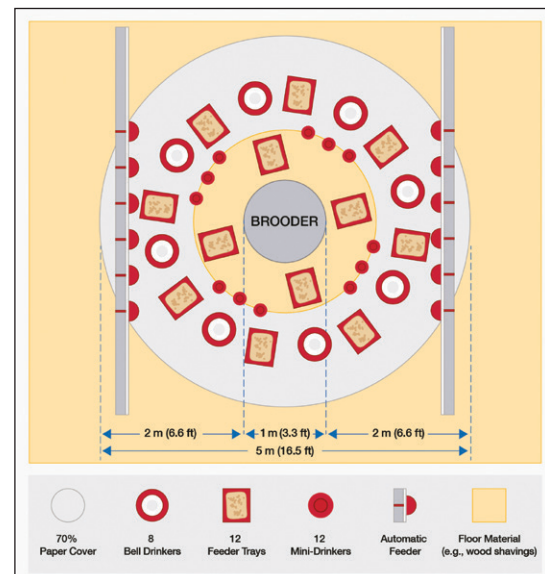
Crop fill after 24 hours. The chick on the left has a full rounded crop, while the chick on the right has an empty crop.



Taking chick vent temperature.



Typical layout of a whole-house brooding system (1000 chicks).



Example of a typical spot brooding layout (1000 chicks).



Good house cleaning practices. Power washing the house (most effective with hot water), testing the house for bacterial contamination and disinfecting the exterior with lime.



# How to raise animal welfare standards

## ■ Better Chicken Australia asks could a tiered approach work

AT Better Chicken Australia, we're calling for higher animal welfare standards in the Australian chicken meat industry, in particular, a switch to slower-growing higher welfare breeds.

Key to increasing uptake of higher welfare product – from both commercial buyers and the public – is having a clear mechanism for distinguishing between what does and does not meet a particular standard.

This is where animal welfare certification and labelling schemes come in.

We want all chickens raised to the standards of the Better Chicken Commitment.

But in the meantime, the larger the market share of the BCC, the less chickens suffer.

A tiered certification scheme may be a gateway to overcoming the biggest barrier – achieving significant market share.

### Tiered certification and labelling schemes

The goal of an animal welfare standard is to attract as much compliance as possible.

When it comes to opt-in certification and labelling schemes, there is a mutual benefit – the issuing body gets the improved animal welfare outcomes it wants, and the producer and its commercial clients get a



market advantage.

In Australia, most animal welfare labels are binary schemes – either you get the label or you don't.

If we look to international labels, many certifiers use tiers (levels or grades) to certify increasingly higher animal welfare standards.

Tiered labels are not a novel concept to Australian consumers.

For example, we have tiered certification and labelling schemes for nutrition (the Health Star Rating System) and for home appliance energy and water efficiency (the Energy Rating Label and the Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards schemes).

### Animal Ask research on tiers

Dr Ren Ryba from the research organisation Animal Ask recently published a report on the efficacy of tiered certification schemes for increasing the market share of slower-growing chickens.

This focus on breed is because it is the most significant as-

pect of the Better Chicken Commitment in terms of both animal welfare and investment from industry.

In this paper, the organisation examined case studies of various international schemes that included at least one tier requiring slower-growing breeds where data were available on market share.

They found that a "well-designed" tiered labelling scheme could reasonably be expected to achieve initial market shares of between 10-25 percent for slower-growing chickens (that is, the higher tier of a tiered scheme), increasing over time.

This was based on analysis of existing schemes under normal market conditions in countries such as Germany, France and Denmark.

However, poorly designed and poorly promoted schemes may achieve a lower market share (for example, 3.5 percent in the United Kingdom).

On the other end of the spectrum, well-

supported schemes such as the Beter Leven in the Netherlands, where all tiers require slower-growing breeds, can achieve high market shares (55-60 percent).

### Consumer attitudes and behaviours

Scientific studies into consumer awareness and motivation have found that consumers are willing to pay higher prices for products labelled with higher tiers of animal welfare labels, and that consumers find these labels helpful and, where well designed, able to correctly distinguish between multiple levels.

Studies also suggested that a tiered system could improve product market share overall, compared to binary labels (when compared to market share of labelled versus unlabelled products).

Consumers like more choice.

We can reasonably expect that the Australian market would respond similarly to markets in high-income countries – so this report is a useful comparison and opportunity to learn from the successes and failures of tiered certification schemes abroad.

While psychology and economics research generally shows that practice tends to be lower than stated consumer preference, the opposite is true for animal

continued P5



The Lilydale brand carries an example of the current Australian chicken welfare labels.

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## Haltungsform



### Außenklima

haltungsform.de



International chicken welfare labels with tiers. At the top are Germany and Denmark, and the bottom two are the Netherlands and France.



# How to raise animal welfare standards

from P4 welfare labels.

It's also important to note that consumer preference is not the only factor influencing success.

## Label design is key

Visual design is key for a successful tiered labelling scheme.

Good design makes it easy for consumers to quickly understand which level a product is certified to, and where it sits in the scheme's tier range.

This also ought to be accompanied by strong marketing.

This can be the difference between success and failure for market growth, regardless of other factors.

Any product label has very limited time to capture attention and influence consumer decision-making.

The report identifies the key components to successful design as:

- Colour coding, especially when it's symbolic – for example, a traffic-light system

- Simple and standardised, lettered or numbered grades – labels must be extremely clear as to where on the tier the

product sits, as shoppers are making time-limited decisions, any descriptive text of the standard ought to be brief

- Brand awareness – strong marketing, such as advertising and shelf placement – consumers need to be told why the labelling system is important and what each tier means.

As the point of a tiered system is to compare products, the labels must highlight some method of comparability on a scale.

## Tiers and pricing

When consumers are willing to pay a particular price to move from the lowest to the next level up, they're generally less willing to pay more to move to the next highest.

This is demonstrated in studies on demand for higher welfare meat products in Western Australia, Germany and Sweden.

However, another recent German consumer study did not find this trend.

While it's thus unclear whether or not diminishing marginal willingness to pay is a universal trend, the

research does suggest that a scheme with three or more levels may benefit from a smaller price gap between the top few levels, compared to the price gap between the bottom few.

## Impacts on retail versus market prices

In terms of retail price, chicken that meets a tiered standard requiring slower-growing chicken could be expected to cost an additional 27 percent to 110 percent.

This is consistent with a European Commission study that found a price increase range of 18-94 percent.

However, evidence suggests that this is more likely the outcome of retailer pricing strategies, supply chain dynamics and market demand rather than production costs.

In other words, retailers tend to charge a higher price premium for slower-growing chicken products than is reflected by actual increases in production costs.

This means that looking at shelf prices does not tell producers, wholesalers or commercial buyers

what the impact may be on their costs – it's most likely to be lower.

## Key takeaways

The most successful tiered certification and labelling schemes for chicken require slower-growing breeds at all tiers.

Looking at mid-range performers, a new well-designed scheme in a high-income country could expect to achieve an initial market share in the 10-25 percent range.

This would then increase over time – all schemes evaluated in the report had a history of gradual market share growth.

The likely additional retail price for slower-growing chicken breeds has a relatively wide range but this is more strongly influenced by retailer pricing strategies than by production costs.

Good design and brand awareness are critical to success of a tiered certification and labelling scheme.

In other words, tiered animal welfare labels can work, though only if done well.

**April Broadbent  
Better Chicken  
Australia**



Examples of current Australian chicken welfare labels on Coles brand products.

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A roadside egg seller at Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe.



A happy Zimbabwe bush camp cook was all smiles as she made delicious fresh breakfast eggs every which way – omelettes on this day.



Safari scrambled egg brekky.

# Shell shocked out of Africa

EGGS done every which way were breakfast staples during the three fabulous weeks I spent in African bush camps on safari recently in Zimbabwe and Botswana.

While camp cooks happily encouraged us all to choose any cooking options – be that fried, poached, boiled, scrambled or omelette, all cooked from scratch with fresh eggs – it was clear they also had a personal passion for eating the world's best compact protein package.

Indeed, I observed a few of our guides

**Cant Comment**  
by BRENDON CANT



and trackers tucking boiled eggs into their pockets and backpacks to be joyfully eaten mid-morning as a snack several hours after moving out slightly after sunrise.

With World Egg Day 2025 only a few days away as I tap this keyboard, it got

me thinking what a universally loved food eggs are.

Celebrated on the second Friday of October each year, World Egg Day invites people from all backgrounds to appreciate and honour the exceptional contributions eggs make

to diets and health worldwide.

And this year's theme really hits home – 'The mighty egg: packed with natural nutrition' celebrates the egg's unique ability to deliver essential nutrients in a simple and accessible form.

Oh so true. Naturally rich in essential nutrients and accessible worldwide, eggs are a humble yet mighty wholefood supporting health and wellbeing at every stage of life.

Beyond their nutritional value, eggs

continued P7



Bush camp fried egg breakfast.



# Shell shocked out of Africa

from P6  
are a key part of diverse culinary traditions and diets, reflecting their versatility and cultural significance across continents.

Naturally packed with 13 essential nutrients, eggs support health at every stage of life, from brain development in early years to muscle maintenance and bone strength as we age.

Eggs are minimally processed, widely available and incredibly versatile, making them a powerful wholefood for many families, cultures and communities across the world.

I understand Zimbabwe's egg industry is a significant source of income, particularly for the country's rural smallholder farmers who are increasingly adopting layer chicken farming, with a growing demand for organic and free-range options.

Despite challenges such as previous bird flu outbreaks – which reduced chicken populations – the industry

is growing, with increased demand for nutritious food and expanding online marketplaces for local producers.

Efforts are ongoing to support farmers with training, access to resources and organisation into clusters such as 'Egg to go' to meet the market's needs.

Table egg supply in Zimbabwe has hovered near 6 million dozen per annum.

Botswana, on the other hand, has an annual table egg supply of about 20 million dozen.

Though Botswana's human population of close to 3 million is tiny compared to Zimbabwe's 17 million, Botswana's population is much more urbanised.

Zimbabwe's people are largely rural based.

It became quite clear during my time in Botswana that it has a much stronger economy than Zimbabwe, due largely to stable government and low inflation.

Conversely, Zimbabwe struggles with currency instability, political and

economic mismanagement, sanctions and international isolation.

Indeed, Botswana is often praised as one of Africa's most well-governed economies.

Meanwhile, Zimbabwe, despite having rich natural resources, has suffered decades of economic decline and instability.

Aside from these obvious differences, the local people in both Zimbabwe and Botswana who I shared time with were all happy, humble, proud and hard working.

The experience of sharing time with the people and of course the unique wildlife of Africa is something I will treasure forever.

The world needs to look out for and care for the people and wildlife of this continent because both face seemingly overwhelming challenges.

Dare I say it, the great majority of those challenges are inflicted on them by the world's most dangerous animal – humans.



Live and dressed chickens for sale at Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. The price shown was equivalent to about \$A10. As I didn't have time to enquire, I'm not sure what that price related to.

# Aussie Pumps' two for one solution

WHEN it comes to high-pressure jetters, it's no secret that Aussie Pumps is favoured for any application for drain cleaning and high-pressure washdown.

In fact, Aussie has even combined the two, in its latest King Cobra 5000psi Class A drain-cleaning Jetter.

The heart of the machine is a 'Big Bert' Bertolini 5000psi pump, driven through a 2:1 gearbox by a Honda GX630 23hp twin-cylinder industrial engine.

The machine's frame is an elegant stainless-steel design, based on the original Scud-style model.

Aussie Pumps chief engineer John Hales said, "We took the best ideas from our world-beating Scud stainless-steel design and transferred that concept into a mobile trolley-style jetter."

"The jetter carries 60m of high-pressure drain cleaning

hose and comes with a washdown gun as well."

The company also supplies a jetter nozzle pack that includes standard drain-cleaner style nozzles along with a unique turbo nozzle, which Mr Hales calls the 'root mulcher'.

That's right, it smashes its way through tree roots, or any other obstacle for that matter.

The machines are export award winners, with the company exporting them to Hong Kong, where they have found terrific support.

"You can imagine with the demographics of Hong Kong, drain cleaning is a big problem to help in the war of unsanitary conditions," Mr Hales said.

The advantage for poultry farms is the King Cobra Jetter can also function as a very high-performance pressure cleaner.

It's two in one.

## Safety alert

Aussie Pumps provides a free pressure cleaner safety training program.

It's a must for poultry farm operators.

High-pressure water blasters can be dangerous, and it encourages everyone in the business to avail themselves and their operators of Aussie's free Safe Operator Program.

"We're delighted with the response we're getting from not only in Australia but all around the

world," Mr Hales said.

Aussie Pumps has a huge appreciation for the poultry industry.

Its respect reflected in special pricing for poultry producers.

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Scan for Safe Operator Program.



Aussie Pumps' drain-cleaning state-of-the-art jetter test room.



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## Stir Fan

FH800/0.37kw/4 blade/1ph/3ph EC (variable speed 200 rpm – 1000 rpm)



ORIGINAL Stir Fan available ON/OFF 1ph/3ph



## Wall Mounted Fan

WM1220/1.1kW/3B/3Ph/Direct Drive Part Number: PF8125



Height: 1380mm

Width: 1380mm

Depth: 820mm

Spare parts readily available

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# French La Flèche, Marans and Bresse Gauloise fowls



The La Flèche is standardised in one colour variety – the black.



The French Marans comes in a variety of colours, some of which are unheard of in other standardised breeds, including the black copper and blue copper varieties.

THE French had a reputation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries for producing the finest table fowls in Europe.

This led to several of the more prominent breeds of French origin being imported into both the United Kingdom and Australia at that time.

Of those, the Houdan, the Faverolles and the Crèveœur are the most notable.

Three other French breeds are also present in Australia, all with a much later record of importation.

Reports indicate that the breed known as the La Flèche was imported into Australia around 1897, but no studs of the breed ever became established.

This breed is characterised by a comb which has the appearance of a double spike, standing almost upright, with smaller spikes in front.

Unlike many other French breeds, the La Flèche lacks any other facial or head adornments.

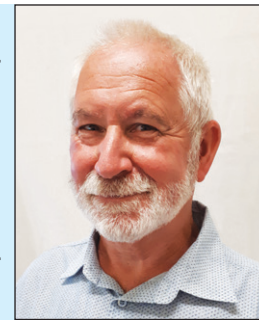
The La Flèche is standardised in one colour variety – the black.

Newspaper articles from the late 1800s onwards were glowing in their praise for the table qualities of the La Flèche, so it is something of a puzzle as to why the breed never caught on both here and in England.

Nevertheless, the

## Rare Breeds

by GRANT ANDREWS



breed was among several rare breeds that were imported into Australia in 2015 by AvGen Poultry.

It would not be too unkind to say that the La Flèche has gained very few admirers since its reimportation and, while it may not have died out yet, it is certainly fading into obscurity.

Noted for their dark brown eggs, the Marans is something of an enigma.

The Australian Poultry Standards recognises both an English version and a French version of this breed.

The English version has the distinction of having non-feathered shanks and is standardised in a very limited range of colours – dark cuckoo, silver cuckoo, gold cuckoo and black.

On the contrary, the French Marans has feathered shanks and comes in a variety of colours, some of which are unheard of in other standardised breeds, including the black copper and blue copper varieties.

Early in the twenty-first century, there

was a great upsurge of interest in breeds of fowl that laid eggs with unique shell colouring.

The dark chocolate brown eggs laid by the Marans saw a flurry of activity among local egg fanciers, wanting to produce a bird that was capable of laying eggs of that colour and which approximated the standard for the Marans in appearance.

Initially, the wheaten coloured variety was the one aimed for, and it was obvious that some of the commercial hybrid layers that laid eggs of a dark brown colour were included in the mix to produce these birds.

The efforts of local fanciers were boosted dramatically when pure bred stock from the UK was imported in 2014.

As well as being popular among its supporters for their dark brown eggs, they are frequently used to cross with breeds that lay a blue egg to produce birds that lay eggs of a deep olive colour.

Another recent im-

port into Australia is the breed known here as the Bresse Gauloise.

This is essentially the breed known in France to produce the poulet de Bresse, which has the distinction of having Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée, defining the geographical area in which production and processing of this table chicken can be carried out.

A rather unnoteworthy looking bird with white plumage and blue legs, it produces a carcass that is esteemed in France as being the finest available.

Production is limited by government edict and birds that are marketed as poulet de Bresse have an identifying leg ring to prove their authenticity.

It is interesting to note that both the legs and the head are left on the dressed bird, and much is made of the blue legs, white body and red head in the marketing of this product.

Due to problems associated with marketing the dressed bird as Bresse chicken, it has been standardised here as Bresse Gauloise.

True to the French purpose for developing this breed, it is not one that will ever be popular on the show bench, and whether Australians will take to it as a high-end table fowl remains to be seen.

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The dark chocolate brown eggs laid by the Marans saw a flurry of activity among local egg fanciers and initially the wheaten coloured variety was the one aimed for.



# A call to ensure our humble eggs remain accessible for all

THIS World Egg Day, we honour not only the humble egg but also the tireless work of egg producers, who continue to deliver one of nature's most complete, affordable and versatile sources of protein.

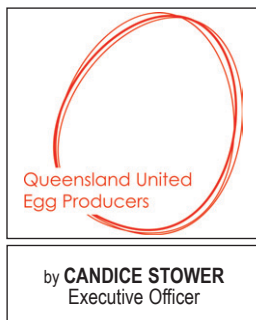
We also celebrate the people who buy and consume eggs.

Eggs are indeed a popular protein, and in October, the Queensland Government released its value of production estimates for 2025 across Queensland's agricultural commodities.

The value of egg production is up \$58.6 million – or 15.64 per cent – to an estimated value of \$433.63 million.

This follows the 10-year high of Australian egg producers, producing 6.98 billion eggs in 2024, roughly 266 eggs per person.

While this growth is good news for the egg industry, it would be remiss of me not to mention the challenges for producers producing, and consumers



accessing, affordable eggs.

In the macroeconomic environment, with consumers facing real cost-of-living crunch points, more Australians have turned to eggs as their choice of protein.

The irony is that the shortages have affected accessibility and affordability, with purchase limits implemented across major retailers coupled with increased costs at the checkout.

There are two key factors at play in the face of accessibility and affordability issues.

First, there are the consequences of the recent avian influenza outbreaks in 2024 across Victoria, NSW

and ACT, as well as the 2025 outbreak in Victoria.

Producers are having to work harder and spend more to ensure their farms are in the best possible position should Australia have a HPAI H5N1 incursion.

These efforts are even greater in a free-range environment where contact with wild birds is an inherent risk to be mitigated in the business model.

Second, we are seeing and feeling the consequences of the impending legislative processes to implement the Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Poultry across Australian states and territories, which will phase out

conventional cage egg production.

When you consider that cage egg production accounts for roughly 20 per cent of supermarket egg purchases in Australia, the combined impact of these standards in addition to the consequences of the industry preparing for and managing through avian influenza outbreaks creates a very real domestic food security issue for Australians.

These shortages have highlighted the fragility of our supply chain and the critical role that eggs play in everyday nutrition.

For families, cafes, schools and health services alike, the absence of eggs on shelves isn't only an inconvenience, it's a reminder that food security requires thorough consultation, coordination, investment and forward-thinking policy.

Looking at supply chain disruptions holistically is critical.

Egg farmers have shown incredible resilience, adapting to

changing regulations, rising input costs, responding to biosecurity threats and shifting consumer expectations.

To safeguard the future of local egg supply and ensure eggs maintain their status as nature's most complete, affordable and versatile sources of protein for consumers, government and industry must continue to work together.



While growth is good news for the egg industry, there are challenges for producers producing, and consumers accessing, affordable eggs.

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Our biosecurity is about proactive measures to prevent the entry and spread of pests and diseases.

# Australia's biosecurity and why we love it

BIOSECURITY is everyone's responsibility.

Egg Farmers of Australia, as with all in our industry, use every opportunity to explain biosecurity to those in the community who may be less familiar with the reason for it and why we need to have a high level of security in Australia.

We are so fortunate to have strong biosecurity policies and regulations in Australia, and we should be proud of the efforts that are made and the outcomes we have achieved.

Remember, biosecurity is about proactive measures to prevent the entry and spread of pests and diseases. Below is a list of poultry diseases that we don't have in Australia.

We need to continue high biosecurity to keep them out.

- Highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1, Clade 2.3.4.4b strain

- Exotic Newcastle disease (exotic virulent strains – sometimes called 'Exotic NDV', vNDV or 'velogenic NDV')

- Infectious bursal disease (very virulent strains, vvIBDV)

- Turkey rhinotracheitis (avian metapneumovirus, aMPV)

- Duck viral hepatitis (type 1)

- Duck viral enteritis (duck plague)

- Mycoplasma iowae

- Fowl typhoid (salmonella gallinarum)

- Pullorum disease (salmonella pullorum)

- Exotic salmonella serovars of significance (many are absent due to strict monitoring).

And many other diseases, such as psittacosis (chlamydia psittaci) and avian leukosis virus

subgroup-J (ALV-J), which are rare in commercial poultry flocks in the modern day.

Poultry diseases present in Australia and the risks they impose can vary from farm to farm based on farm history, geographic region and other factors.

Consider that animals can be silent carriers of pathogens without necessarily showing symptoms.

Let's work together to keep Australia's poultry industries free from disease by following simple but essential biosecurity practices.

## After overseas travel

If you have visited a farm overseas, clean clothes and shoes before returning to Australia and do not enter an Australian farm until after the biosecurity stand-down period required

by that farm.

## Footwear and clothing

Never wear the same shoes or clothes worn at one company's farm to another.

Use the boot covers and personal protective equipment provided.

## Hygiene facilities

Always shower between farm visits and use shower-in and shower-out facilities where available.

## Health monitoring

Speak with your veterinarian about any local disease or flock health concerns and ensure your vaccination programs remain up to date.

With thanks to JR of Scolexia – animal and avian health consultancy and project management – for his technical input in developing this article.

**Melinda Hashimoto**  
CEO Egg Farmers of Australia

# New research targets aerosol spread of avian influenza during outbreak response

AUSTRALIA'S layer egg industry is facing increasing challenges from highly pathogenic avian influenza, with six outbreaks since 2020 affecting farms in Victoria, NSW and ACT.

Emerging evidence from some of these recent outbreaks suggests that aerosol spread may on occasion contribute to virus movement from infected sheds to neighbouring farms.

There is industry concern that control measures on infected poultry farms during outbreaks of HPAI, particularly during disposal and destruction, may inadvertently generate AI virus aerosols, potentially contributing to farm-to-farm transmission.

In response, a new research project funded by Australian Eggs and led by the University of Sydney has commenced to investigate the potential for aerosol generation during disposal and destruction and its role in HPAI spread.

This multidisciplinary initiative brings together experts in veterinary epidemiology, virology, poultry health and atmospheric science from four leading institutions – the University of Sydney, CSIRO's Australian Centre for Disease Prepared-

ness, NSW Department of Primary Industries and Queensland University of Technology.

The project comprises three integrated studies:

- Survey of poultry veterinarians and layer farmers – to benchmark current shed designs on layer farms along with end-of-production bird and manure management practices, for information to direct recruitment of farms with common shed types for the on-farm study

- On-farm study monitoring dust – real-time fine particulate monitoring (PM2.5) will be conducted during routine end-of-production culling to quantify fine dust aerosol concentrations and identify conditions that favour aerosol generation

- Laboratory study on virus viability – researchers will spike layer shed manure samples with low pathogenicity AI virus to assess AI virus viability in manure under varying temperature and moisture conditions.

## Modelling aerosol spread using Spread-HPAI

Application of the Spread-HPAI framework informed by the data generated by the survey, laboratory study and on-farm study will provide new knowledge about

the potential for AI aerosol generation and the factors influencing it.

This project will provide evidence-based estimates of HPAI aerosol generation during depopulation and disposal and, by identifying the conditions that favour aerosol generation, it is expected to provide recommendations for practical actions that can be implemented during this process to minimise aerosol generation.

This research represents a proactive step toward strengthening outbreak management and reducing the economic impacts of HPAI outbreaks in Australia, along with protecting poultry, human and wildlife health.

Findings will be shared through industry presentations, scientific publications and a final stakeholder workshop, ensuring practical relevance and industry engagement.

**Jenny-Ann Toribio**  
University of Sydney



The KOALA brochure is available for download by scanning the QR code.



University of Sydney research assistant Sue Ball and QUT postdoctoral research fellow Dr Robert Groth installing a KOALA – knowing our ambient local air – monitor at University of Sydney Camden Campus, as part of the on-farm dust monitoring study.

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## 37th Annual Australian Poultry Science Symposium

► [www.apss2026.com.au](http://www.apss2026.com.au)

9-11 February, 2026



# Countdown on for APSS 2026

WITH only a few months until APSS 2026, planning for the thirty-seventh annual Australian Poultry Science Symposium is progressing smoothly.

Next year's event will return to the University of Sydney Business School – Belinda Hutchinson Building (H70) on the Camperdown Campus, and we're excited to once again welcome delegates for two and a half days of presentations, posters, networking and industry engagement.

The theme for APSS 2026 is 'Poultry production through a futuristic lens', reflecting the growing interest in innovation and future-focused solutions across the poultry sector.

From advancements in gut health, welfare and nutrition to cutting-edge discussions around antimicrobial stewardship, artificial intelligence and production technologies, APSS 2026 will offer something for everyone.

We are pleased to confirm an outstanding line-up of nine invited speakers – some local and others from across the globe:

- Michael Kidd – University of Arkansas, USA
- Tina Widowski – University of Guelph, Canada
- Richard Ducatelle – Ghent University, Belgium
- Kirsty Short – University of Queensland, Australia
- Aaron Cowieson – DSM-Firmenich, Scotland
- Neamat ElTazi – PoultrySync, Egypt
- Peta Taylor – University of Melbourne, Australia
- Mike Persia – Virginia Tech, USA
- Mehdi Toghyani – University of Sydney, Australia

With almost 100 papers submitted over the past three months,

the scientific program will likely include over 40 short oral presentations and 40-50 poster presentations, sharing the latest research findings and reviews from across the global poultry science spectrum.

The symposium will commence at 12pm on Monday February 9, 2026 and will run through to late afternoon on Wednesday February 11.

As those who attended last year will attest, the University of Sydney venue offers a modern 500-seat lecture theatre, expansive breakout areas and a range of private rooms, making it an ideal setting for formal sessions, networking breaks and industry meetings.

A selection of dedicated spaces will again be made available to our sponsors for side meetings and discussions throughout the symposium.

Building on its success over the past few years, the student and early career researcher mentoring session – coordinated by Agri-Futures Chicken Nutrition and Gut Health and Poultry Hub Australia – will return in 2026 on the Monday morning prior to the start of the conference.

This initiative has become a valuable part of APSS, and we encourage early career attendees as well as those experienced in the industry to take part.

Further details will be shared closer to the event, and you can indicate your interest to attend during online registration.

Online registration opened on October 1, 2025, with early bird discounts available until December 15, 2025 for those who completed pre-registration.

Accommodation options – including our preferred hotel Four Points by Sheraton Sydney, Central Park –

will again be available via the APSS website, and we are also working on a more regular schedule for the morning and afternoon shuttle service.

As per 2025, to accommodate those arriving early and keen to get some pre-event networking in, we will again be holding an 'informal' welcome drinks, which this year is proudly sponsored by Ruth Consolidated Industries.

We have reserved the Dizzybird, located at Four Points by Sheraton from 3-5pm.

Those attending will receive a beverage on arrival plus a light afternoon snack.

In 2026, the symposium dinner will make a much-anticipated return to one of our most iconic venues – the Starship Sydney Harbour Cruise – for the first time since before COVID.

This unique floating venue offers delegates a spectacular evening of fine dining, networking and celebration, all set against the stunning backdrop of Sydney Harbour.

With panoramic views of the city skyline, the Opera House, and Harbour Bridge, the cruise has long been a favourite among past attendees.

We're thrilled to bring this tradition back in 2026 and look forward to sharing an unforgettable night with all delegates on board.

Finally, we extend our heartfelt thanks to all of our generous sponsors.

Each year, the poultry industry continues to show incredible support for APSS, and 2026 has been no exception.

Within two weeks of opening the sponsorship portal, 21 organisations had committed to supporting this internationally recognised event.

Their ongoing involvement plays a vi-

tal role in making the symposium the success it is year after year.

We're excited to welcome both returning and new delegates to Sydney in February 2026, and we're aiming to continue the strong growth seen in recent years with a target of over 360 attendees.

Be sure to mark your calendars, register early and book your accommodation as soon as possible to secure a spot in our popular package deals – availability is limited due to block room allocations at nearby hotels.

Help us spread the word and be part of another record-breaking year for APSS.

For more details, visit [apss.sydney.edu.au](http://apss.sydney.edu.au)

**Benjamin Geist**  
APSS

## Driving innovation and integrity in Australia's feed industry

AUSTRALIA'S feed industry is undergoing a transformation, driven by innovation, sustainability and a commitment to quality.

At the forefront of this evolution is the Stock Feed Manufacturers' Council of Australia, the national body representing over 90 percent of the country's compound feed manufacturers.

### A unified industry voice

With more than 185 manufacturing sites producing over 10 million tonnes of feed annually, SFMCA plays a critical role in supporting sectors ranging from poultry and dairy to aquaculture and equine nutrition.

Its structure – comprising state branches and a federal council – enables coordinated action on national priorities, such as ingredient supply, regulatory compliance and environmental stewardship.

Membership in SFMCA requires adherence to FeedSafe, the industry's integrity accreditation program, which enforces rigorous standards in manufacturing, sourcing and delivery.

### A new benchmark

In May 2025, SFMCA co-hosted the in-

augural Advancing Milling and Nutrition Conference in Melbourne.

The event attracted 330 delegates from 11 countries and featured over 100 technical presentations across four streams – milling and nutrition, animal nutrition, equine science and flour milling.

Keynote speakers, including Professor Robert van Barneveld and Dr Geoffrey Anison, addressed emerging trends in protein production, gut health and consumer-driven nutrition.

The conference also introduced the AMN Innovation Award, celebrating practical non-commercial innovations in feed manufacturing.

### Sustainability in action

SFMCA is actively developing a sustainability framework to guide the industry's environmental and ethical practices.

Initiatives include:

- BagMaster stewardship program for responsible packaging disposal
- Sustainable and deforest-free soybean standards
- Collaboration with the Feed Ingredients and Additives Association of Australia to

reduce antimicrobial resistance through a targeted stewardship program.

These efforts reflect the council's commitment to aligning feed production with broader agricultural and environmental goals.

### Feedsafe raising the bar

The FeedSafe program, endorsed by the Agriculture Ministers' Forum, remains central to SFMCA's quality assurance strategy.

It mandates annual third-party audits and compliance with a Code of Good Manufacturing Practice, covering everything from raw material sourcing to customer complaint resolution.

### Looking ahead

With feed demand surpassing 10 million tonnes in 2024 and the poultry sector leading growth, SFMCA's role in ensuring quality, safety and innovation is more critical than ever.

As the industry navigates challenges such as labour shortages and climate variability, the council's collaborative approach with government and industry partners will be key to sustaining momentum.

**David Bray**  
SFMCA

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Throughout the meat supply chain, integrated processors retain ownership of chickens.



Australia's most purchased meat is chicken.



If growers continue to leave the industry, consumers could pay more for chicken.

# Risk to supply and price after chicken industry review exposes power imbalance

AUSTRALIA'S chicken meat sector is under serious pressure, with a new independent review warning that systemic issues in the industry are driving growers out and could push prices at the checkout up.

Commissioned by the Federal Government, the Australian Chicken Meat Industry Review has found that deep-rooted market failures – including a lack of transparency, stalled investment and a concentration of power among only a few major players – are threatening the future of the industry.

According to the interim report, the chicken meat market is now “more concentrated than the supermarkets,” putting growers at a severe disadvantage when it comes to contracts and business negotiations.

For many in the industry, the review confirms what they've been saying for years.

Australian Chicken Growers Council chief executive officer David Inall said, “Producers fear to argue or demand changes to contracts.”

“What we really want to see is a move away from ‘take it or leave it’ contracts, which growers often find themselves in at renewal.”

## Growers speaking out

The review reveals a clear disconnect between how growers and processors view the state of the industry.

Growers told the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences they felt they had little to no bargaining power and faced pressure or even retribution for trying to negotiate fairer contract terms.

In contrast, processors painted a far rosier picture, insisting that grower relationships

were “strong and positive” and that growers were satisfied with their current commercial arrangements.

ABARES executive director Dr Jared Greenville said: “There are vastly different viewpoints across the industry participants around these arrangements.”

Adding that, on balance, growers across

the country were saying there were issues that primarily stem from the concentrated nature of the market.

Two companies – Baiada and Inghams Enterprises – now supply about 70 percent of Australia's chicken meat, giving them significant control over production, pricing and supply chains.

continued P13



Jared Greenville said there were vastly different viewpoints across the industry participants around contract arrangements.



# Risk to supply and price after chicken industry review exposes power imbalance

from P12

Unlike other farming industries where producers own and sell their livestock, chicken growers typically own their sheds and farms but the processors control everything else – from genetics and day-old chicks, to feed, medications and final processing.

“As a grower, you own the sheds and your farm, but around that the integrated producer owns the chicken the whole way through,” Dr Greenville said.

## Contracts locking growers in

The review also found that some growers were being locked into unfair contracts, with limited ability to leave or renegotiate.

These deals often don't include proper compensation clauses or dispute resolution mechanisms and can even stop growers from selling their farms.

NSW Farmers' principal economist Samuel Miller said, “They can't defend

themselves in court, collective bargaining isn't working, so more needs to be done.”

“It's got to have protections for good faith dealings, it's got to eliminate unfair contract terms, ensure that contract price increases reflect input costs, and address the commercial retribution for attempting to negotiate or challenge these processors on their contracts.”

## Possible outcomes

Chicken remains the most consumed meat in Australia, with 54kg per person expected to be eaten in the 2024-25 financial year.

But if the current issues aren't addressed, the industry could see more growers walking away, supply drying up and prices rising for consumers.

Australian Competition and Consumer Commission deputy chair Mick Keogh said: “That ultimately leaves consumers worse off because that means higher prices in the longer run.”

The ACCC has said a mandatory code of

conduct, similar to the one used in horticulture, could help fix the problems.

ABARES was accepting submissions on its interim findings until October 24, to give growers and others in the supply chain a chance to have their say before final recommendations were made.

Scan the relevant QR code below for the interim report and timings on the final report.



Scan for the interim report.



Scan for the final report timings.



Ingham's is one of two integrated producers that together supply 70 percent of Australia's chicken meat.



Baiada processes chickens for Lilydale and Steggles.

# UK egg producer's white-egg cage-free debut a success

AFTER 15 years of producing brown eggs, UK free range egg farmer Alex Woollam made the decision to switch to white egg production and, thanks in no small part to Hy-Line's W-80, it's a decision he hasn't regretted.

Alex, who has 94,000 layers, explained why he made the change to white.

“Looking at the data on the white birds, it was clear they were prolific layers with an extended laying cycle, very feed efficient and easy to manage.”

“The ease of management was a big consideration – we have six sheds to get around, with limited labour, and a small problem can quickly become a big problem.”

“Labour availability is an ongoing challenge, so if we have a bird that does the right thing, it makes life so much easier.”

As for the aspects that make white layers easier to manage, Alex said it was evident from day one.



“On unloading the birds, they went up into the system in a way brown birds don't.”

“They hadn't been aviary reared – which is not uncommon for pullets in the UK – yet they very quickly adapted to our multi-tier laying houses.”

“The first day, the floor was covered with birds but, as the lights started dimming, they were quickly into the system, effortlessly reaching the upper tiers.”

“They also found the nests easily.”

But it hasn't all been plain sailing, with Alex experiencing some ‘crowding’ in the first flocks, but he is quick to acknowledge the help and support he had from the Hy-Line technical team, both in the UK and internationally.

“There's such a wealth of experience

that can be tapped into and, with the advice we received, we managed our way out of the situation.”

In fact, it was this technical support that steered Alex toward the W-80 when making a decision on breed choice.

“We'd had excellent support from Hy-Line when we had brown birds and this was a major consideration when choosing which white bird to opt for.”

“Our first intake of whites, which was in October 2023, included a competitor breed.”

“However, such was the performance of the W-80s, we've gone 100 percent W-80 this time around.”

Alex cites help from Hy-Line International nutritionist Marcus Kenny as being instrumental in the performance success.

“Marcus has such a global perspective

and has been involved feeding W-80s elsewhere in the world, where white birds are more prevalent.”

“It's all a bit new to us in the UK and his help in formulating rations has been invaluable.”

Alex's first flocks of W-80s were taken to 94 weeks, a depletion age based somewhat on the unknown.

“At the time, we really weren't sure how long we could take them on, and 94 weeks was significantly longer than we'd been taking brown birds to,” he said.

“It was our first time with whites, so we wanted to make sure we got it right, but in hindsight we should have gone to over 100 weeks.”

“When we had brown birds, as a bit of a target, if we could cling on to 90 percent until 60 weeks, we were on to an absolute barnstormer.”

“Whereas with the W-80s, they'd just dropped short of 90 percent by 90 weeks.”

“So that's where my

new target is, over 90 percent at 90 weeks with the latest flocks, and hopefully with what we've learned we'll be able to do that.”

According to Alex, late lay shell quality was impressive, resulting in a low level of seconds and achieving egg size wasn't a challenge.

“We got up to over 65g in late lay,” he said.

“That was higher than where we needed for the contract we were on, but again it was a learning curve, and we'll be aiming for lower egg weight with the current flocks.”

Alex's flock did 475 eggs per hen housed to 94 weeks and if they had been taken to 100 weeks, they were on target to comfortably pass the magic figure of 500 eggs.

With Alex now being a ‘white bird convert’, we're sure he'll be surpassing this figure going forward.

Hy-Line International



UK free range egg farmer Alex Woollam.



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Professor Rocio Crespo addressed specific ways to assess and improve poultry welfare in small flocks at a recent convention. Photos: North Carolina State College of Veterinary Medicine



Veterinarians should counsel owners on proper feeding of their birds in order to maintain optimal body condition.

# Vet highlights small flock poultry welfare at AVMA

SEVERAL continuing education sessions at AVMA Convention 2025 focused on animal welfare, including the veterinarian's role in livestock production, according to a recent news release from the American Veterinary Medical Association.

Professor of poultry health management at North Carolina State University College of Veterinary Medicine, Rocio Crespo presented 'Welfare considerations and assessment in small poultry flocks' at the convention, held in conjunction with the fortieth World Veterinary Association Congress in Washington DC.

Prof Crespo addressed specific ways to assess and improve poultry welfare in small flocks, such as types of feed to nesting arrangements and

bowl placement, noting that – unlike for many larger commercial facilities – there may not be supply chain required audits for 'backyard flocks'.

"We, as veterinarians, can be the auditors," Prof Crespo said.

"We can say 'focus on certain areas' and hopefully through the years they can improve those areas."

She referred to the AVMA's animal welfare policy on laying hen housing systems, which states they must provide feed, water, light, air quality, space and sanitation that promote good health and welfare for the hens.

Further, housing systems should also provide for expression of important natural behaviours, protect the hens from disease, injury and predation and pro-

mote food safety, and participation in a nationally recognised third-party audited welfare program is strongly advised.

Prof Crespo also discussed the five freedoms:

- Freedom from thirst, hunger and malnutrition
- From discomfort
- From pain, injury and disease
- From fear and distress
- To express normal behaviour.

She compared that with the five domains model, a more recent framework for assessing animal welfare that focuses on creating opportunities for positive experiences in addition to mitigating negative ones across nutrition, environment, health, behaviour and mental state.

Prof Crespo, who launched the NCSU

veterinary college's ambulatory poultry clinic in 2019, provided specific examples, such as a higher incidence of pododermatitis in small poultry houses that have narrow sleeping roosts or perches.

With poultry, she stressed the importance of ensuring that birds have easy access to key resources, such as feeders, drinkers, perches and roosts.

During her presentation, Prof Crespo recommended a few practical tips to improve small flock poultry welfare:

- Easy access to quality feed that is not contaminated by mould, pests, or faeces
- Feeder height level with the shoulder of the shortest bird
- Ready access to clean water at an appropriate height – ei-

ther under the chin for troughs or above the comb for nipple waterers

- Appropriate level of privacy across nesting arrangements for breeding hens

- Protected shelter from the elements with good ventilation.

Adding that nest sizes should change as chicks grow, giving the analogy of bed sizes from childhood to adulthood – from a crib to a twin to a double then a queen or king bed.

Prof Crespo noted some owners may make their own feed or give kitchen scraps and emphasised the importance of proper nutrition, noting fatty liver haemorrhagic syndrome and obesity are common causes of death in small flock poultry.

"The high frequency of metabolic and nutritional condi-

tions present in small flocks are concerning because it indicates a general lack of knowledge among owners about proper poultry nutrition," she said.

"Veterinarians should counsel owners on proper feeding of their birds, in order to maintain optimal body condition."

She urged focusing

on one area to improve each time and educating small flock producers on welfare standards.

"We have to measure it, not just a gut feeling," Prof Crespo said.

"But don't try to achieve everything at once."

"Welfare needs to be assessed regularly."



Professor Crespo stressed the importance of ensuring that birds have easy access to key resources, such as feeders, drinkers, perches and roosts. Photo: Steven Van Elk

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