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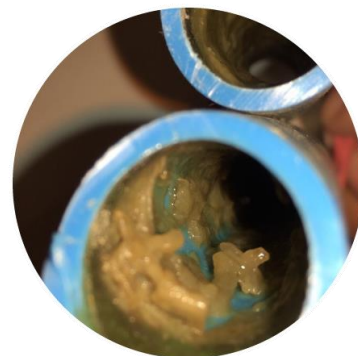
Welcome to our first newsletter of 2021 which focuses on disease prevention. Even if you feel you have a good cleaning and preventative strategy in place it is worth a read – a few small tweaks can sometimes make a big difference to the overall health, welfare and production of a site!

Water quality

The importance of a clean, potable water supply is often underestimated and yet is essential to maintain the health of any animal. Consequently, regular maintenance and testing of all areas of the water supply is vital:

- **Source** – mineral analysis and cultures should be carried out (on borehole water in particular) to check suitability as drinking water and also to inform water sanitiser choice.
- **Header tank** – must be covered to prevent contamination.
- **Drinker lines** – degrade over time, ideally replace every 8 years. Biofilm consisting of bacteria, fungal growth and limescale can build up very quickly.
- **Dosatron** – clean after every use.
- **Stock solution container** – residues of medications and disinfectants can affect vaccine efficacy and the solubility of some antibiotics. Clean and then rinse thoroughly before use.

Water cultures - we advise that samples from the source (if it is borehole), the header tank and the end of a drinker line are cultured regularly to ensure cleanliness. Cultures of swabs taken from the inside of the drinker lines are also very useful to assess presence of biofilm and composition. We can carry all of these out in our own lab.



Water sanitisers – biofilm tends to be a problem in all drinker lines and therefore we would recommend a suitable water sanitiser is used throughout each crop / flock as well as for cleaning purposes following depopulation. The choice of product depends on water hardness, biofilm presence and composition and if it is to be used at turnaround or when the birds are in.

Cleaning of sheds

As well as ensuring the drinker lines and cups are cleaned at turnaround, careful consideration should be given to which products are used to clean the shed. A detergent must always be used first to remove grease and dirt as this allows the disinfectant to then penetrate much more effectively. Resistance to disinfectants can develop over time so it is important to vary the product used and also to consider its spectrum of activity – some are better for viruses, some for bacteria and only a few will kill coccidial oocysts. The manufacturer's instructions should always be followed exactly - contact time is very important.





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Worming

Something easily forgotten, but worm burdens can lead to decreased egg production and exacerbate other health issues in layer flocks. Worming still needs to be considered even with the current housing order as if birds were out on the range before the order came into force they are likely to have a burden which will contaminate the litter indoors. Also, earthworms and beetles can act as vectors for worm transmission so there is still a risk even in birds which have never been out. Frequency of worming depends on the site. Monitoring of worm levels via faecal worm egg counts and looking for worms in any dead birds can give an indication as to when worming is required.



IB vaccinations

Due to the frequency with which we have seen IB challenges (including the IB QX strain) over the past few months we now advise that layer flocks are vaccinated every 8 weeks with IB4-91 and Ma5 vaccines, this can be increased to every 6 weeks on sites with recurrent challenges. IB vaccination for broilers depends on when challenges occur, for most sites Ma5 at the hatchery and 4-91 at 7-10 days works well but this may not be the best protocol for everyone. Testing via bloods and PCR from cloacal swabs can help inform decision making.

Red mite

With over 80% of laying units being affected by Red Mite and infestations generally leading to a 10% reduction in egg production across the flock it is well worth monitoring mites on your farm. This allows you to target your treatment and prevention measures in a strategic and cost effective way.

Often low to moderate infestations go unnoticed, but these are still costly, typically quoted at 50p per bird. High infestations can cost £2.50 per bird.

Mites not only cause anaemia, but cause stress and can spread many diseases including E.coli and Mycoplasma.



Controlling Red mites is very difficult, particularly with increasing mite resistance to chemicals.

We have been using red mite surveillance and monitoring traps on farm and seen some interesting results. Some sites with no known mite problems have shown to have reasonably high mite infestations, often concentrated to certain areas of the shed.

We would be very happy to discuss any of the above topics in relation to your individual site and develop a tailored prevention plan - please phone the practice on 01845 578710. A visit can often help with this and is also useful for disease investigation purposes. We have an ATP machine which gives an instant measurement of water cleanliness, a gas detector, a laser temperature probe and also now red mite traps which can be used as necessary to assist with the investigation process.