

Let consumers know your standards, broiler-breeders told

In the face of increasing imports of poultry meat, the UK broiler industry should make greater efforts to improve its image with the general public. Consumers should be informed about the high standards of production – superior levels of welfare, strict health controls and stringent food safety standards – which apply to British farmers, Matthias Mangels, head of vaccine sales, Europe, for Lohmann Animal Health, told a Shropshire gathering of the county's top broiler-breeders.

“The industry continues to face massive competition from cheap imports amounting to 466,019 tonnes of chicken meat in 2004 alone,” he declared. “This pressure is unlikely to let up, despite the fact that broilers are often not reared to the same standards required by producers in the UK and some other parts of Europe.

“This is worrying because our industry is being increasingly burdened by legislation, requiring higher and higher standards. The British Poultry Council lists no less than 15 main headings relating to legislation,” he pointed out.

He said that one action the industry could take, however, was to ensure that its ultimate customer, the consumer, knew just what high standards to which their food is produced in the UK. The industry should make a virtue out of necessity and turn it to its advantage. If consumers demanded that their food was produced to a certain standard then the supermarkets and food processors would have to respond.

He pointed out that the UK broiler-breeder industry had an exemplary health record. Taking salmonella as an example, he said: “It is interesting to note that since our salmonella vaccines – TAD Salmonella vac E and TAD Salmonella vac T – were licensed for use in breeding chickens, in 2002 and 2003 respectively, there had been a massive uptake in the broiler-breeder flock. We estimate that over 70 per cent of the UK’s broiler breeder flock has now switched to these vaccines which, besides being safe and effective, offer considerable welfare benefits because of their oral administration route, rather than injections.”

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Caption:

Some broiler-breeders who attended a meeting organised by Lohmann Animal Health took part in a clay pigeon shoot at the West Midlands Shooting Range, Hodnet, Shropshire. Pictured (left to right) are Joe Lawson, Moy Park Ltd; Ian Burgess, P D Hook (Breeders) Ltd; Chris Durrant, Faccenda Group Ltd; Steve MacDonald, Sun Valley Foods Ltd; Rob Harrison, Scitech Laboratories, David Hodson, Hatchery Healthcare Ltd; Adam Goddard, Lohmann Animal Health, David Beavis, Grampian Country Chickens (Rearing) Ltd; Matthew Ward, Crown Chicken and Matthias Mangels, Lohmann Animal Health.

