

In the beginning – dividends from high security breeding farms

Quality starts in the breeding division and then percolates down through the hatchery, growing farms and, ultimately the processing plant. The quality of the end product is input dependent and, because of this, Bangkok Ranch Public Company Ltd place a lot of emphasis on quality production throughout the company.

These are located in two distinct areas of Thailand – one group of breeder farms is located in the mid north of the country and the other group is located in the east of Thailand.

Both regions operate autonomously other than the fact that they source their breeder feed from the same mill and their eggs go to the same hatchery. Otherwise, the two clusters of breeder farms are, in effect, biosecure compartments and each farm also operates to the highest of biosecurity standards.

Biosecurity at three levels

Farm biosecurity starts with people control and then goes on to consider and manage the risks associated with anything and everything that goes on to the farm. Biosecurity operates at three levels – the site, the farm and each duck house.

To enter the site a visitor, and these are kept to a minimum, must have three days poultry freedom and then they have to go



A modern breeder farm. Note the security wall in the background.

though a disinfectant race. To enter the farm a thorough shower is obligatory and then company provided clothes and boots are worn.

Should a visitor need to enter a breeder house then there is a boot changing and hand washing and sanitisation procedure that has to be adhered to.

Staff live on the site, not the farm, and so every time they go onto the farm and into a breeder house they have the same processes to go through.

Anything else going on to the farm is closely monitored and only things that are essential to the working of the breeder farm actually go on to it.

These must pass through a UV light box or, for larger items, a fumigation cabinet. Both these processes are regularly validated by microbiological testing carried out in the company's own laboratory and results show both these processes to be very effective at sanitisation.

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A breeder house. Note the fans which control the environment.



Inside a breeder house.



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Breeding stock is sourced from the world's two leading duck breeders – Cherry Valley from the UK and the French company, Grimaud Frères.

These are specialist breeding companies that provide Bangkok Ranch with the breeding stock from which they produce the growers that satisfy the discerning needs of the grower and the customer/consumer.

They give the farmer high livability coupled to good growth with an excellent FCR and give the customer/consumer a quality carcass with a good meat yield and exceptional meat quality.

Double checked on arrival

Day old breeder ducklings are flown from Europe to Bangkok's international airport where they are checked by government and Bangkok Ranch veterinarians before they are onward shipped to the breeder farms. Here they are placed in houses that have been pre-prepared for them.

During the first week, attention to stockmanship and detail are the order of the day so that the ducks reach the desired seven day weight with optimal uniformity. First week mortality is well below 0.5%!

Throughout their lives the ducks have continuous access to water – firstly, via font drinkers and then by water troughs that are located over slats.

High quality starter feed

In the first week or so the ducklings receive a high quality duck starter feed before going on to rearer and, ultimately, layer feeds.

These feeds are antibiotic free, but do contain products that are an integral part of the company's salmonella control programme.

Effective health management is to the fore and any unacceptable mortality is examined by the veterinarians to determine the cause of death. Occasionally ill health is encountered but accurate diagnosis coupled to prompt treatment ensure that this is controlled quickly.

There are still some traditional breeder houses in the company, but most of the breeder housing is of the tunnel ventilated variety with cool pads.

These provide a cooler environment for the ducks who, in turn, respond with better productivity. As a consequence it will not be too long before the whole breeder division has this modern type of housing.

Optimising body condition

As the ducks approach the point of lay, management focuses strongly on body condition and uniformity so that the ducks are ready for the physiological challenges of the forthcoming laying season which is often of a



Egg store temperatures are regularly checked.

year's duration. The success downstream from the breeder farms is dependent on those farms receiving healthy, quality ducklings and so breeder nutrition and egg management are two aspects of breeder management that receive a lot of attention.

Eggs are collected frequently and taken to the on-farm egg processing and grading facility where they are first of all washed in a chlorine solution to remove their cuticles. If this is not done the efficiency of the incubation process is impaired.

Tight egg grading

All eggs are tightly graded with only the best eggs being forwarded to the hatchery for incubation.

Eggs are stored in purpose built egg stores on each farm at 18°C and a relative humid-

ity of 65% and two times a week they are onwards shipped to the hatchery.

The journey of the egg from the duck to the nest box to the egg processing and grading facility and, ultimately, to the hatchery is closely monitored. Thailand is a tropical country and in this process special emphasis is placed on temperature and the avoidance of sweating.

Each farm has a dual staffing structure with a workforce dedicated to getting the job done and a husbandry team that is responsible at all times for the well being, health and productivity of the ducks.

Each region has its own dedicated veterinary team and autonomous management who support both the on-farm teams.

All the hard work and attention at the breeder farm level ensures that the hatchery receives top quality hatching eggs to produce grade A ducklings. ■

Aeration purifies waste water.

