

Ten years to achieve 10% of South African broiler day old market!

Eagle's Pride in South Africa was established in 2001 by Arend Kuipers with a capacity of a mere 150,000 day old broiler chicks per week.

An intense expansion programme brought the total capacity to almost two million chicks per week.

Recently, International Hatchery Practice visited Eagle's Pride to find out more about this progressive independent that produces close to 10% of South Africa's day old broiler chicks and, as such, is the largest independent supplier of day olds in South Africa.



The Eagle's Pride hatchery.

Minimising transport costs

We visited their hatchery at Kameeldrif which produces close to 600,000 day olds and is one of four hatcheries run by the company. The company operates this way to minimise transportation costs of eggs and day olds which is an expensive cost in this country.

Hatcheries are kept close to their supply flocks and day old markets and their customers range from large independent broiler growers down to small farmers who maybe only take 50 or 100 day olds.

Some of the latter collect their day olds from the hatchery, while others get their chicks from distributors who buy a truck

load of chicks and then break the lot down into smaller lots which are then sold on to the small farmers.

Eagle's Pride is self-sufficient when it comes to sourcing hatching eggs and the farms supplying these eggs are managed by co-owners and shareholders including Namajaca Broiler Breeders, Uitzicht Pluimveeplaas, Redrock Broiler Breeders, African Ranchers, Westwood Poultry, Kroon Henne and Eagle's Pride's sister company, Koster Breeders.

Point of lay broiler breeders are reared and supplied by Jura Poultry, Redrock Broiler Breeders and Rooykop Farm and these ready to lay hens are then distributed to the different laying farms.

Currently, Cobb and Ross 308 eggs are set with about 40% being of the former type but this figure is now rising because of customer demand.

The Kameeldrif hatchery sources most of its eggs from two large layer complexes of some 150,000 or so layers. Each of these complexes has four farms and each farm has five houses, each of which houses 7,200 breeder hens making a total of 36,000 breeder hens per farm.

Eggs are graded, fumigated and stored on farm prior to being shipped daily to the hatchery. Eggs are closely inspected on receipt, but a formal second grading is not needed and does not occur.

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The water cooling system that has a capacity of 200,000 litres and, right, the egg store.





The AirStreamer setter room (left) and hatcher room (right).

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Every week management statistics, including percent upside down eggs, percent cracks and mean weights (with %CV) are produced for management.

A regular dialogue occurs between hatchery and supply flocks on a whole host of management and hatching egg quality issues.

Traceability is such that every tray of eggs can be traced back to the farm, house and the member of staff involved in their packing. This last point enables management to quickly identify a worker whose grading has

slipped. Eggs are then stored at the hatchery in a purposely designed egg store until they are required for setting. In addition, the eggs on every tray of every trolley are identified by source as part of the company's comprehensive traceability system that traces eggs back to farm, house, day and collector/packer. Six sets of 115,200 eggs are set each week.

A good history

The eggs are set in Petersime AirStreamer setters of which there are 36 machines of 57,600 eggs capacity. These were chosen because the company has had a good history with Petersime. This was reinforced when after installation the company had teething problems with the incubators which turned out to be mainly altitude related – the hatchery is almost 1,600m above sea level. Petersime sent technical staff out from Belgium to help overcome the issues and fine tune the AirStreamers, with the result that hatchability went up some 5%.

Egg weight loss is regularly monitored to check the system

The AirStreamers are now performing

well and chick quality coupled to good seven day weights is now the norm.

Typically, broiler flocks are being processed at 33 days at 1.75-1.85kg and an FCR of just over 1.50. EPFs of 350 are being achieved. Now both downgrades and culls are at low levels and in some batches can have a combined value of <0.5%.

Vaccination is according to customers' request with Newcastle dead and/or live vaccines being administered plus infectious bronchitis and Gumboro disease vaccines are given to most orders of day olds.

Currently CEVA (Transmune) and Merial (Vaxxitec) vaccines are the ones commonly asked for. This is all good news for Eagle's Pride because when things go right the bush telegraph soon lets everyone know!

So, what about the future? In relation to chick customers this is seen as being centred around consolidation and customer loyalty and smoothing the peaks and troughs out of chick prices.

At breeder level well under 1.5% eggs are typically downgraded and hatch of set figures of 91-92% are being achieved.

This has Eagle's Pride soaring with the best as they are in the top quartile of flocks globally! ■



Chicks being pulled (left) and setting up for vaccination (right). Above, left, the vaccine storage facilities.

