

HatchTech philosophy adapts well for pedigree hatching

In November 2011 the Cobb pure line operation at Herveld in Holland opened its new pure line hatchery. International Hatchery Practice recently visited the hatchery to find out more.

The pure line farm at Herveld was established in 1985 by Euribrid for their layer breeds and in 1994 the facility switched over to Hybro broiler pedigree stock and was expanded. This expansion included the addition of a hatchery.

In 2007 the facility was acquired by Hendrix and the following year moved to Cobb when that company acquired the Hybro genetic stock.

The facility now contains Cobb's European breeding programme that supplies product for Cobb's European customers and, as such, is likely to see further expansion in the near future.

With this in mind it was decided to renew the old hatchery and, in so doing, design it so that it could accommodate any future expansion. It was decided to keep the hatchery on the farm because the farm already had its 'Dutch permit' and such permits are extremely difficult to acquire for new sites in the Netherlands.

Pedigree baskets in a hatchery.



Incubators in Cobb's Dutch pedigree hatchery.

The move was to give the hatchery facility an uplift and improve its quality with the expectancy that this would ultimately benefit day old chick quality.

Being a pedigree hatchery single stage incubation has always been the norm and will continue to be. After some deliberation Cobb chose HatchTech machines.

The reasons for this choice was that HatchTech were close by, so co-operation on technical issues would be easy, and the company could also provide a purpose designed small single stage machine – another prerequisite for pedigree incubation.

In addition, Cobb wanted a single supplier for the hatchery project and HatchTech ticked all the right boxes when it came to flow patterns, biosecurity and hygiene.

Cobb liked their thinking on ventilation which utilises laminar airflow technology and for all practical purposes makes each machine a standalone unit that is serviced by a pre-humidifier after air handling, thereby controlling its air temperature and humidity. A filtering of incoming air enhances its biosecurity status.

Sprays within the machine are not favoured because it is felt that the evapora-

tion of micro-droplets could have a chill effect on newly hatched chicks. Similarly, under the old system it is felt that heating cold air reduces the humidity which could possibly be detrimental. In essence, each machine receives fresh air.

When it comes to biosecurity Cobb believe that good staff attitude to biosecurity related issues goes a long way towards achieving high standards.

Benefits of remote control

Another positive feature of the new hatchery is that it can be managed from a distance because all kinds of data are available and remote fine tuning of individual incubators can be easily undertaken.

In addition, data can be used to compare and contrast to further help in the fine tuning process.

Finally, the remote access can be used to check alarms without having to go through the strict entry protocols that are an integral part of the hatchery's biosecurity system.

The alarm and management systems are operated independently of each other and

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both systems provide Cobb with information that is free of human errors such as misreading or transcription errors.

This is a pedigree hatchery and so each hatcher basket is full of small pedigree baskets so that the source of every chick can be defined in terms of its parentage.

At the time International Hatchery Practice visited this hatchery it had been operating for six months and incubation cycles were still being fine tuned for individual pedigree lines as their embryos have subtle differences in terms of heat output.

Ideally, the goal is one line per machine as this means that the incubator can focus on that line's own particular needs and this is



Inside an empty setter.

ultimately reflected in better chick quality. In practice, this is achieved by two temperature profiles – one for male lines and the heavy female lines and a second for the lighter female lines. Currently a dozen 7040 setters and four similar sized hatchers are installed in this hatchery.

The Herveld facility is a closed facility that has a hatch every two weeks. Chicks are all wing tagged at hatch, broilerised for their first few weeks on the farm and then selected. Some two thirds of each placement leave the farm at this point.

The processing of some 5-6,000 chicks each hatch day occupies eight staff for somewhere near eight hours. In addition to all the sorting, tagging, sexing and recording, each chick also receives a shot of Marek's disease vaccine. Thereafter, a fairly normal vaccination programme is followed.

At the other end of the operation a hatch every two weeks means that eggs are stored for at least 14 days. Special storage conditions for older eggs are not possible because the practice is to store eggs by their hen of origin. The breeder flocks are screened weekly for salmonella, mycoplasma and avian influenza.

With the data generated from the hatchery Cobb can make real decisions and, more importantly, they can monitor the consequences of those decisions! ■

Inside a setter with one trolley in place.

