

# A novel way to get the best possible start

**T**he traditional way of hatching chicks subjects those chicks to a variety of stresses in the hatchery, during transportation to and placement on the farm. So, why not deliver the bird to the growing house without all these stresses?

This is just what Vencomatic have done with their new Patio system which they introduced at the recent VIV Europe.

With this system pre-hatching eggs are taken from the hatchery and placed in the Patio unit.

Here the unit first acts as a hatcher and then continues as a 'brooding facility' and is able to hold the birds up to about 7-10 days of age when they are then transferred to traditional broiler housing.

## One day's growth benefit

Yes, there may be a little stress associated with this process, but Vencomatic are confident that chicks produced this way are a day or so ahead of traditionally hatched chicks by the time they are established in the broiler house.

This is because the compactness of the Patio system gives much better control of the environment for the chicks.

The eggs are placed on a belt in the system



**Young chicks that have recently hatched out in the Patio system. These hatched out on the belt at the top of the photograph.**

and as soon as they hatch the chicks have access to feed and water.

So, immediately here is a benefit of the system in that the chicks do not have to wait for all their hatch mates to hatch, all the

processes of the hatchery, the duration of the journey to the farm and the placement process to be completed before they start to eat and drink.

As soon as they want feed and water they can start to consume it!

In addition, this system means that the actual broiler houses are not needed for the first week or so of the flock's life and so, with careful planning, Vencomatic expect this to convert into an increase in some 25% of the output of a broiler farm.

## A fortnightly cycle

The actual Patio unit can be used once a fortnight or so – three days for the hatching process, 7-10 days for the chick growing phase and four days for thoroughly cleaning and preparing the system for the next batch of eggs.

Taking all this in to account, an operator who currently produces 1.36 million birds a year can, just by investing in a Patio system for 100,000 chicks, increase his production to 2.12 million birds a year without having to increase his traditional broiler housing stock.

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**The Patio system. Note how chicks are managed on several tiers.**





**The benefits of constant access to feed and water.**

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So, what does this innovative system actually bring to the proverbial table?

Firstly, it takes the hatching process out of the hatchery, which will obviously give the hatchery benefits in terms of hygiene and workload. Secondly, it allows the chicks to do what nature intended – to grow and not suffer any of the checks in growth that chicks invariably encounter in the traditional production system.

### **Better growth rates**

This it does by firstly removing the stressors previously highlighted, but also by providing a better controlled and more easily controllable environment for the chicks in their first week or so of life.

The benefits of this are manifested in better growth rates and livabilities which are then carried through the flock's life.

It is much easier to provide chicks with a beneficial elevated humidity in their first week 'on the ground' and, at the same time, reduce energy costs.

The system also ensures a better litter quality in the first week and later on in the broiler houses.

Vencomatic are to be praised for their innovation and we must all wait to see if the system realises its early promise and brings real benefits to broiler farmers.

This should not be too long away as a Patio system has already been installed at Het Spelderholt, the Dutch Agricultural Research Centre for commercial evaluation and results should soon be forthcoming.

These are awaited with interest. ■

### **Broilers that are about ready to be moved into a traditional broiler house.**

