

Hy-Line's South African success story

Recent years have seen real improvements in South Africa and this has been reflected in a raised level of confidence in that country's poultry sector.

To see what is happening at the layer breeder level in South Africa, International Hatchery Practice recently visited Hy-Line South Africa (Pty) Ltd to see why this international table egg layer breeder has almost 50% of the South African market for egg laying stock.

We spent the day visiting their farms to the east of Pretoria and Johannesburg and discussed the South African scene with Hy-Line South Africa (Pty) Ltd's managing director, Jimmy Murray.

Random Sample Test success

The roots of Hy-line in South Africa go back to the mid 1980s when their stock first featured in that country's Random Sample Tests and, subsequently, local entrepreneur, Neil Malan, brought the first Hy-Line breeding stock into the country in 1988.

This association between Neil and Hy-Line continued until the late 1990s when National Chicks, a then major supplier of broiler chicks in South Africa, acquired 50% of the business and created Hy-Line Chicks.

Neil retained 25% and local agribusiness group, OTK, took the remaining 25%.

Neil Malan subsequently sold his 25% to Hy-Line International and shortly after that in 2002 they acquired the remaining equity and renamed the company as Hy-



New houses at Balmoral farm.

Line South Africa (Pty) Ltd. This company now operates as a wholly owned subsidiary of Hy-Line International and Jimmy has been at the helm for almost two years.

Strong market position

Today Hy-Line has 47% of the South African market and some 70% of the 'free market' and virtually all of their business focuses on the Hy-Line Brown and the Hy-Line Silver Brown.

The former is favoured in the free range sector and with some of the more discerning producers as it produces a slightly heavier egg.

However, many producers use a mix of both brown layers in order to get the optimal egg grade out for the major South African retailers. The Hy-Line Silver Brown is preferred by producers in the ungraded sector as it produces a few

more eggs. In addition, there is an active and profitable market for live end of lay birds in South Africa and this market likes white feathered birds.

Thus, the Silver Brown with its white feathers has a significantly higher end of life carcase value and, needless to say, this is important to many egg producers.

Both birds are robust and perform well in the variety of conditions that are found in South Africa.

In addition, the Hy-Line Brown is renowned in South Africa for its calm temperament. Currently 75% of sales are of the Silver Brown and 25% are of the Brown.

Every 22 weeks Hy-Line South Africa (Pty) Ltd receives a shipment of grandparent day old chicks from the USA that

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The grandparent farm. Note the double barrier fencing and, right, how biosecurity is maintained when feed is delivered.





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will produce the parents that will, in turn, produce the commercial day old layer chicks.

These are accompanied by a small number of W98 parent day olds so that the company can supply the limited market (less than 1%) for white egg layers.

All imported stock goes into quarantine in the company's own Orchards Quarantine Farm and that stock remains under the control and supervision of the South African Government until the results of the six week blood test are known to be satisfactory.

During this quarantine period all deaths are examined by post mortem

examination. Typically flocks are released from quarantine by eight weeks of age.

To be released from quarantine the birds must be free of all salmonella serotypes, *Mycoplasma gallisepticum*, *M. synoviae*, bacillary white diarrhoea, epidemic tremor, avian influenza, Newcastle disease and infectious bronchitis.

Prior to being moved into their laying accommodation each grandparent flock is again blood tested to confirm the absence of the two mycoplasmas and bacillary white diarrhoea and for confirmation that the vaccinal titres for EDS76, Newcastle disease and infectious bronchitis are adequate.

Comprehensive vaccination

At grandparent level the birds are vaccinated against infectious bronchitis, Newcastle disease, Gumboro disease, infectious laryngotracheitis, EDS76, epidemic tremor, pox, coryza and *M. gallisepticum*.

In the case of the last of these, Intervet's 6/85 vaccine is used because this does not give a reaction to the blood tests that are used for screening purposes.

Some customers wish to receive parent stock chicks from SG9R salmonella vaccinated flocks and in order to facilitate this all flocks receive this particular vaccine.

During lay birds are tested monthly for *M. gallisepticum* and *M. synoviae* and the vaccinal titres for Newcastle disease and infectious bronchitis are reviewed at this time.

As far as vaccination in lay is concerned a live Newcastle disease vaccine is given monthly, but infectious bronchitis vaccination only occurs when titres indicate that a booster dose would be beneficial. All the testing is undertaken at the University of Pretoria.

Good salmonella status

Salmonella testing is focused on the hatcheries and, at the grandparent level, this involves the testing of pooled fluffs and meconia together with five dead-in-shell eggs from each flock on a regular basis. Since this intensive monitoring programme was instigated some two years ago no salmonella have been isolated at the grandparent level.

In addition, water samples are tested every six weeks for coliforms and faeces from all flocks are tested for coccidial oocysts and worm eggs. Birds are also screened for external parasites.

At the parent level a similar vaccination programme is adopted except that the ts-



Short grass minimises vermin ingress. The three flags depicts Hy-Line's roots.

11 M. gallisepticum vaccine and a dead M. synoviae vaccine are given at eight and 13 weeks.

Needless to say, this strategy negates the value of mycoplasma blood testing to confirm mycoplasma freedom as this vaccine gives a positive blood test result and so every six weeks dead, pipped eggs from all flocks are extensively swabbed (yolks, tracheas etc).

These swabs are pooled by flock for examination for mycoplasma by PCR testing.

On the various parent stock farms there is an on going building and refurbishment programme that involves further upgrading the company's already high biosecurity standards.

When this is complete the policy of vaccinating breeders against mycoplasma will be reviewed.

Regular collections

Typically, eggs are collected at least four times a day on the breeder farms and at least five times a day at peak.

These eggs are then stored in temperature controlled on

farm egg stores before daily shipment to the appropriate hatchery.

At the commercial hatchery, which produces pullet day olds, eggs are set in either Chick Master or Petersime machines. The latter have been a reasonably recent addition to the hatchery.

There are four hatches a week each of a maximum of 42,500. Typically 33.5 pullet day olds are obtained from each 100 eggs set.

The resulting day old commercial pullet chicks are then shipped over the whole of South Africa with the exception of the

Western Cape. Occasionally, the hatcheries help out Hy-Line franchisees in the neighbouring countries by providing top ups when demand exceeds their ability to service their own customers from their own flocks.

Single shot of Marek's disease vaccine

All day olds receive a single shot of Rispen's Marek's disease vaccine. The company openly discourages other customised vaccinations because they feel that these further stress the chicks and delay shipping.

In most cases they feel it is better for the chicks if such additional vaccinations are given on the farm.

This does not mean that the company will not help a customer who needs to have his chicks vaccinated at the hatchery for a specific bona fide reason.

So, what is being achieved at the commercial level? To find this out Hy-Line South Africa (Pty) Ltd has recently initiated its 'Recognition Awards'.

This system provides com-

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Insider a breeder laying house.

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mercial egg producers with a framed certificate confirming their achievements if they share their results with the company.

Typically the best Hy-Line Brown table egg flocks are achieving 254 eggs at 60 weeks of production (88.9% average production) and this increases to 298 eggs at 69 weeks (87.8%).

This is coupled to 24 weeks of production at over 90% and 48 weeks over 80%!

Currently, the company takes its orders a year in advance so that it can predict the ratio of Hy-Line Browns to Silver Browns that it needs in its forthcoming breeding flocks.

All the indications from this source

reveal that there is a solid demand for these two Hy-Line layers in South Africa and the future really does look good.

People really matter!

Finally, Jimmy and his team really do think that people matter – be it their own staff or their valued customers.

Couple this to a market place where per capita egg disposable income is increasing and where for many this translates into greater meat and egg consumption and all the signs point to a healthy future for Hy-Line South Africa (Pty) Ltd. The coming years will surely see this company build on the firm foundations that they now have in place. ■

Inside the commercial hatchery.

