Guaranteeing the productivity of commercial ducklings

Vaccination and control of the environment, feed and drinking water of the parent stock allows Grimaud Frères to continuously improve the health and thus the productivity of their commercial ducklings sold around the world.

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Parental health directly influences the health quality and therefore the productivity of commercial ducklings. This can be explained partly by the vertical transmission of maternal antibodies to ducklings, but also by the quality of the components of the egg (shell, yolk) that depend on many environmental factors, such as the choice of feed components and drinking water quality.

Harnessing a vast experience of vaccination

Vaccination is a major issue in the preventive medicine of parent stock because it prevents many pathologies developing and thus maximises the quality of their offspring, while reducing the use of curative products. In order to optimise its effectiveness, Grimaud Frères raises parent stock in the most appropriate conditions.

As for commercial ducklings, treatment of the beak and claws at one-day-old optimises vaccination of the parent stock (see explanation in box). To ensure the best vaccine intake and maximise maternal antibody levels, vaccines are not administered during stress periods such as transfers to breeding buildings and/or changes of feed.

Vaccines are always administered at least eight days after the animals are transferred to a new building. The prophylaxis plans of parent stock batches include regular vaccination boosters against Muscovy duck parvovirus, a leading duck-meat farm disease.

In addition, the batches are regularly tested throughout the laying period to confirm that sufficient immunity against the disease is maintained and that maternal antibodies are transferred to the ducklings that will hatch. For batches of Pekin or Mule breeding ducks, a specific vaccination plan for viral hepatitis and Derzsy disease is produced and the geese batches are vaccinated against HNEG.

At the same time, the company provide preventive prophylaxis which is tailored to their livestock and production areas, mainly through the use of autovaccines. This allows them to fight regional and recurrent diseases (colibacillosis, erysipelas, pasteurellosis, etc) on certain farms more effectively and thus to meet antibiotic use reduction goals and provide the animals with improved living conditions.

Beak and claw treatments at one-day-old for vaccination against parvovirosis

Usually, ducklings receive a first vaccination in the hatchery at one-day-old and then a booster between day 15 and 18 on the farm. Thanks to its single treatment of the beak and claws at one-day-old, Grimaud Frères helps to avoid this second vaccination being carried out at the same time (manual or mechanical). Indeed, this procedure on farm is stressful for young birds and may reduce the immune response to the vaccination booster and no longer provide effective protection against parvovirosis. In addition, during these procedures the risk of contamination by bacteria in the environment is high and may require antibiotic treatment.

Continuously improving the quality of the environment of parent stock

All the components of the environmental quality of the animals are monitored, in particular effluent management (slurry, litter and air quality). To ensure this, Grimaud Frères first seeks to reduce the amount of slurry produced (viewed as a reservoir of bacteria and viruses) and takes great care to ensure comfortable living conditions for the animals (control of ventilation and litter quality for example). Thus, Grimaud Frères uses probiotics and/or prebiotics, as well as digestive flora orientors such as vegetable essential oils and bacterial flora.

Food and water, the mainstays of parent stock health

Good nutrition of parent stock ensures better animal health (skeleton and tissue formation) and therefore better immunity. Good diet of the female ducks also means better formation of the egg and embryo and so better immunity and viability of the ducklings. A duck drinks three times more than it eats, so drinking water (whose bacteriological and chemical quality is in line with human standards) is necessary to guarantee the digestive comfort of the ducks and avoid disease. These efforts to control the living conditions of the parent stock and preventive prophylaxis partly explains why 92% of customers are satisfied with the health and quality of the one-day-old ducklings delivered by Grimaud Frères. ■

References are available from the author on request

Did you know?

Dietary deficiencies of parent stock (calcium) may result in thinner shells permeable to bacteria and a weakening of the duckling from birth.