Designed to satisfy layer (and consumer) needs

When it comes to alternative housing systems for layers, the Dutch company Vencomatic BV is well to the fore when it comes to experience and expertise.

This company grew from being a very successful producer of nesting accommodation into a provider of total systems that are now used in countries around the world.

Recently, International Poultry Production visited a new free range table egg layer unit in Holland that had installed Vencomatic's equipment and been using it successfully for some time.

A new, purpose built, free range unit in Holland. Note the size and frequency of poop holes down the whole length of the side of the house in order to facilitate easy bird exit with a minimum of land poaching.

The Vencobelt egg conveyor system transports eggs to a central collection point for packing. The design of this belt means that eggs can be carried up or down slopes and round corners of up to 180º.

Rather than using thousands of words to explain the many benefits of the system, we will let these pictures tell you the story!

Most of Vencomatic's free range systems are in their Red-L system, which is a welfare and environmentally friendly system for laying hens.

This system's name is really an acronym that encapsulates its key features of Resting, Eating, Drinking and Laying. Special attention has been given to these four key requirements of the table egg layer.

However, in addition special attention has been given to ensure that the space available in the house is used in the best and most economical way.

This is especially important in those countries where existing housing has to be utilised because the possibility of obtaining planning permission for a new house is unlikely.

This is achieved by having floor space at several levels so that the total floor space available is significantly more than the actual floor area of the house.

In addition, the design of the equipment minimises obstacles in the house

Continued on page 8

Left, the reverse, road side, aspect of the house allows easy access for feed and egg lorries and, right, inside the house. Note how the birds have access right underneath the equipment and can be at several levels.

Left, looking down the house at eaves level. Note the back to back Vencomatic nests and the frequency and distribution of the lights. Right, numerous perching opportunities are provided.

Continued from page 7

and this maximises natural group behaviour and minimises stress in the bird.

The system is based around the proven Vencomatic nest and manure is extracted by belts.

Thus, a manure aeration system can be fitted if required so that the manure leaving the unit is drier and has less environmental impact.

Manure can be removed frequently, for example, weekly.

EU and KAT regulations can easily be met with this system.

These regulations focus on standards such as nine birds per m^2 of available surface, the maximum number of levels permissible (four for EU and three for KAT), 250cm^2 per bird of scratch area, litter based on natural materials, 15cm of perch space per bird, one nest per seven birds, minimum light intensity of 20lux, 4m^2 of free range space per bird and poop holes (one per 1,000 birds) that measure a minimum of 40 x 35 x 2000cm. ■

Left, birds at more than one level. Again note how perches are used wherever practical. Right, a typical poop hole which allows easy bird entry and exit.

Belts are used to remove manure and note how the area underneath the belt is used to provide more space for the birds.