



AVIAN INFLUENZA - A SALUTARY TALE

The country remains gripped by a catastrophic outbreak of Avian Influenza. Not only is this devastating for poultry flocks, it can have a major implication to the whole farming business.

Richard Tomlinson and his father Brian farm a 350-acre mixed unit just north of Preston. They run 150 dairy cows, 100 youngstock, 300 breeding ewes along with rearing and selling 1500 Christmas turkeys.

Devastatingly the turkeys contracted High Pathogenic Avian influenza in November, which in turn led to a series of knock-on effects impacting throughout the whole farm operation, none of which were foreseen.

Those knock-on effects were similar to those experienced during the foot and mouth epidemic. Licences had to be obtained for any deliveries and collections from the farm along with an attempt to identify all the people who have been on the farm in the past three weeks.

The entire farm site had to be divided into several zones. The high-risk Infected area included the high-risk turkey sheds while the low-risk Infected zone included the lambing shed adjoining one of turkey sheds, as well as the straw shed where some of the dead birds had been taken. Given that lambing was just round the corner, having the straw shed and the lambing shed in the infected zone was an unwelcomed complication.

Thankfully the dairy buildings were in the uninfected area and fortunately, just as lambing was about to start the lambing shed was moved out of the low-risk infected zone into the uninfected zone. However, the straw sheds which double up as the turkey sheds are still unable to be used for housing ewes and lambs. Cleaning the site was a huge undertaking which the family took on themselves. The roof beams, purlins, gutters and every aspect of the buildings had to be thoroughly washed down and disinfected. Cherry pickers were hired in along with high pressure washers. Disposal of the waste water from washing has also presented a major challenge.

To date Richard still can not take any animals to market, meaning they can only sell direct to slaughter. The effects which are still on-going have been far reaching for the family, both emotionally and financially.

What can you learn from this experience?

If you keep any poultry, whether chickens, turkeys or ducks it is vital you do not let your guard down when it comes to AI and the impact it could have on other enterprises on your farm.

The effects can be devastating for your entire operation.

Consider how an outbreak of AI might affect all enterprises on the farm, plan ways to minimise the contact your poultry have with other parts of the farm and take action to reduce the risk to your businesses.

Keep your eyes peeled for any signs of AI such as unusually high mortality and, act quickly.



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DON'T LEAVE WORMING BIRDS UNTIL IT'S TOO LATE?

Worm burdens present a constant challenge to all poultry producers, but unless you know which worms you are dealing with, it is difficult to implement a robust worming programme.

Intestinal worms are the most common internal parasite affecting chickens, and free-range birds are at constant risk of developing an infestation due to exposure to their own faeces both indoors and outdoors. Due to the number of different species of worms and current housing systems, the risk of infection by these damaging parasites is inevitable*.

There are four key worm species which impact bird health and performance: large roundworms, hairworms, caecal worms and gapeworms.

While a heavy burden of any of the four main species can lead to disease and, at worst, death, *Capillaria* carry the greatest risk. The *Capillaria* species is also known as the "hairworm" and can be found in the

stomach and intestines of chickens*. At around 1.5cm long, these worms are the smallest species affecting chickens, and are almost invisible to the naked eye due to their thread-like appearance*. However, despite their small size, these worms are often considered the most dangerous*, as even small burdens can be fatal for birds*. The symptoms of *Capillaria* can be varied but often include reduced egg production, weight loss, reduced food intake, diarrhoea, anaemia and death. Another symptom is birds looking stressed and generally unwell, appearing dull and hunched. Like all intestinal worm species, the lifecycle starts with eggs being passed out in the faeces, which are ingested by other hens. It then goes through several larval stages within the bird before becoming an adult, which can produce eggs and start the cycle again. In favourable conditions, the worm's lifecycle can take just a few weeks.

However, it should be assumed that there are several lifecycle stages present in birds at any one time and it's necessary to control all stages to get on top of an infestation. There are a number of treatments available for worming poultry, but options are limited when it comes to controlling *Capillaria*. "Flubenvet"™ is a broad-spectrum product that controls all major species of worms at all stages, including *Capillaria*, and has a zero-day withdrawal for chicken eggs. With the compulsory housing due to end in March 2022, now is a good time to start thinking about worm control for when your birds are let back on the range. To find out more about how a preventive programme could support flock health and protect your profits, please contact your Poultry Specialist.

(Article kindly supplied by Elanco Animal Health)

*References available on request



RAW MATERIALS UPDATE

At the time of writing the raw material market has gone into an unprecedented situation as a consequence of Russia invading the Ukraine.

From 21st February to 1st March, London May wheat futures had increased from £223 - £303 per tonne with a premium of £25 per tonne for delivered into the mills. Prices have continued to increase.

Exports from the Ukraine have stopped with ships half-loaded and stranded. Going forward material will only come out again when hostilities have ceased which does not seem to be imminent. This will cause issues for the UK with reference to supplies of wheat, maize and sunflower.

Going into the spring, UK cereal prices will be governed by the demand for raw materials at these high levels, and whether the UK has enough wheat to get through to harvest. If old crops are carried over, traders will be looking to move these on first before trading new year crops

Summer hipro soya is trading at over £500 per tonne into the mills, due to the high additional requirement for soya oil now that Ukrainian sunflower oil is not available.

Other bullish factors keeping them high are the current weather conditions and the on-going commodity meaning the market for soya is currently volatile.

Fuel for transport and production is also going to be a continued issue going forward with oil prices continuing to hit record levels.

It's been a pretty rough period recently, just when things were actually starting to show some signs of improvement.

In the current turbulent market we are not able to offer contracts and will only quote prices for one month in advance.



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