

# Egg Industry

News for the Egg Industry Worldwide

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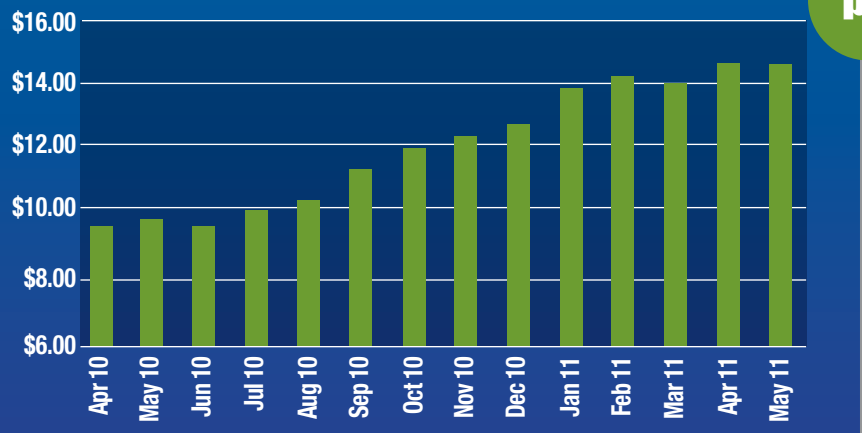
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Record-high feed costs create a game of chicken for egg producers. Can they survive at current production levels until prices rise enough to cover costs?



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Pest control programs and other biosecurity steps taken to keep *Salmonella enteritidis* out of layer flocks can also improve health and performance of birds.

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## EDITORIAL

BY TERENCE O'KEEFE

# Can egg producers survive record high feed costs?

*The cost for feeding layers in the U.S. reached a record high of \$14.92 per hundred pounds for the month of May*

The estimated average cost for feeding layers in the U.S. as calculated by the Egg Industry Center reached \$14.92 per hundred pounds for the month of May. This is the highest monthly average feed cost since calculations began in January of 2000. The May 2011 average feed cost was 52.1% higher than it was in May of last year.

At the same time that estimated total cost of production was up \$0.196 cents

\$8.00 per bushel on the Chicago Board of Trade.

### Dangerous time to play chicken

These are dangerous times for all involved in animal agriculture. Long-time broiler integrator Allen's Family Foods recently filed for bankruptcy protection and has announced that it will cease operation in July.

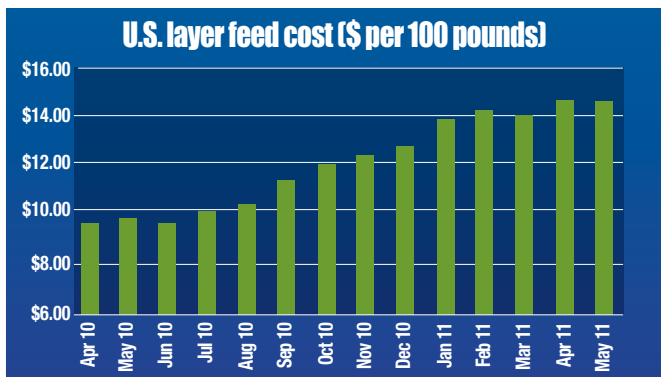
Egg producers must take a serious

look at what market price they will need to receive for eggs to cover the cost of \$8.00 per bushel corn in their rations. With this information in hand, egg producers must determine how long they can hold out before egg prices can reasonably be expected to rise to a level that will cover these higher feed costs.

It would be sheer folly for anyone in animal agriculture to assume that prices for meat and eggs will rise to cover record-high costs of production without cutbacks first being made in supply. The next few months will give producers the opportunity to engage in a very dangerous game of chicken.

Terence

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Record-high feed costs create a game of chicken for egg producers. Can they survive at current production levels until prices rise enough to cover costs?

per dozen eggs from last May, the egg price was only \$0.181 cents per dozen eggs. The Egg Industry Center estimates the industry average loss per dozen eggs in May was just over 17 cents.

Corn crop estimates released by the USDA in early June brought more bad news for corn buyers with the expected harvest being reduced by 2.3%. On this news, July 2011 corn futures reached a three-year high, with prices approaching

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# California egg producer moving forward after Proposition 2

*JS West asks judge for ruling on enriched colony housing and prepares for 2015 and beyond*

By Terrence O'Keefe

**C**alifornia Proposition 2, which passed in November 2008, takes effect on January 1, 2015. In essence, Proposition 2 states a bird must be able to sit down, stand up, turn around and extend her limbs without touching another bird or the sides of an enclosure, according to Jill Benson, vice president of JS West & Companies.

By January of 2015, all shell eggs sold in California will have to meet Proposition 2 requirements for rearing of the hens. The problem is that the state has not said what housing systems meet the standard.

## Asking the judge

In July of 2010, JS West placed its first flock of around 150,000 hens in a purpose built house with a Big Dutchman enriched colony housing system. American Humane Certified announced that this enriched colony housing meets its science-based standards for humane housing and it can be certified. Enriched colony systems provide



**JS West installed enriched colonies in a purpose built building on one farm in an attempt to comply with California Proposition 2.**

hens with a wide range of behavioral opportunities such as perching, nesting and dust bathing.

Because of inaction by the state of California, JS West

**Learn more about the performance of JS West's first flock in the enriched colony cages at [www.WATTAgNet.com/22634.html](http://www.WATTAgNet.com/22634.html)**

**Live video of hens in JS West's enriched colony cages can be viewed at [www.jswest.com](http://www.jswest.com)**



**Jill Benson, vice president of JS West, said, "We believe that California consumers will always want a California egg, and whatever that egg turns out to be, we hope to care for the hens that lay them."**

decided that it needed to take legal steps to get a decision on whether or not its enriched colony housing systems will comply with Proposition 2. "JS West filed a lawsuit against the state of California and the Humane Society of the United States to get a declaratory judgment from the judge to say that the enriched colony barn that they built will comply come 2015," said Benson. "The judge will not set a standard per se, but will look at the specific housing system and come to a decision on whether or not it complies with the vague verbiage of Proposition 2. The judge will also share how he

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**Enriched colonies provide opportunities for hens to exhibit all natural behaviors, like perching.**

came to that decision, which will allow other egg farmers to know what will comply or not.”

Benson said that JS West, which has 1.8 million layers in California, is committed to navigating its way through the regulations and uncertainty and staying in the egg business.

“We believe that California consumers will always want a California egg, and whatever that egg turns out to be, we hope to care for the hens that lay them,” said Benson. “That is why we have taken such an active role in trying to determine our future.”

### Investment in the future

The enriched colony housing system gives birds more room and it takes up more space per bird in the layer house. United Egg Producers Certified standards call for 67 square inches per bird; the enriched colony system employed by JS West provides 116 square inches per bird. Benson said that the system was selected because it meets the EU layer housing requirements that take effect next year. The total cost for the house and equipment was \$3.6 million.

Converting existing housing to enriched colony systems will likely require additional housing square footage to house the current number of hens. Benson said that if a producer has a deep pit house, they might be able to install two floors of enriched colony enclosures with manure belts and then might be able to house roughly the same number of birds as they did in this house with battery cages. But most producers would have to build additional houses to produce the same number of eggs when converting from battery cages to enriched colony housing.

It takes time to build new buildings and install equipment, and it isn’t just the time it takes for bricks and motor work. “Trying to get permitting today for new barns is an arduous process and sometimes unsuccessful,” said Benson. “There are so many roadblocks even in agricultural zones, particularly in the southern part of the state.” Producers outside of California who wish to sell shell eggs in the state must also

comply with Proposition 2. There could be a lot of new housing built both inside and outside the state.

### Comfort Coop brand

JS West sells its eggs through a marketing cooperative. The enriched colony eggs are being marketed under the Comfort Coop label. Benson said that this is being done on a limited basis since there are only 150,000 hens. She said they are working with the retailers to try and keep relatively low the price spread between Comfort Coop eggs and traditional eggs.

Benson said that JS West has been able to get a small premium for enriched colony eggs, “barely enough to cover our costs.” She said that they need to have three or four flocks through the colony house to really know what the costs are compared to regular cages,



**The nesting area of the enriched colony provides a secluded, private area for birds to lay eggs.**

but that feed costs are higher for the colony house so far.

### Operating costs

Because of the additional square footage per bird and per cage, there will always be a higher capital cost for enriched colony housing when compared to battery cage housing.

But, Benson hopes that at some point the enriched colony produced eggs will be produced at something close to the cost of battery cage eggs when it comes to non-capital input costs.

Benson is happy with how the colony housing has performed overall. “We are very impressed with what we have seen so far,” she said. One part of the colony system that could use some work according to Benson is the scratch area. There is an

**► Because of inaction by the state of California, JS West decided that it needed to take legal steps to get a decision on whether or not its enriched colony housing systems will comply with Proposition 2.**

auger that brings a little feed over to the scratch area to entice the birds to use the scratch pad. Benson said that the feed does bring the birds over but it leads to some wasted feed. She also said that putting more holes in the scratch pad might help to keep it clean.

The hens have so much room and do so many activities in the colony cages that they are eating more, according to Benson. The combination of the increased feed consumption and feed wasted in the scratch area means more feed per dozen eggs when comparing colony and battery housed hens. **EI**

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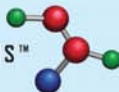


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# Salmonella control programs may improve flock health

*Pest control programs and other biosecurity steps taken to keep Salmonella enteritidis out of layer flocks can also improve health and performance of birds*

By Terrence O'Keefe



In the broiler and turkey industries, it is not uncommon to see average flock health and performance improvements following an outbreak of infectious disease in a region. At least part of the improvement in bird health and performance can be attributed to heightened biosecurity measures that are adopted to isolate affected farms from others to prevent spread of the disease and to end the outbreak. Everyone in the poultry industry has biosecurity measures and pest control programs that are supposed to be followed all of the time, but experience has shown that these things are sometimes allowed to slip when bird health is good or if budget cutbacks are required.

Implementation of FDA's Egg Safety Rule last summer to control *Salmonella enteritidis* has served as a catalyst for the layer industry to refocus its attention on biosecurity, pest control, and cleaning and disinfection. Dr. Darrell W. Trampel, poultry extension veterinarian, Iowa State University College of Veterinary Medicine, believes that the Egg Safety Rule and the FDA's on-farm inspections are having a positive impact on flock health. "Happily, at this time there are no health issues of concern beyond those which cause 'typical' mortality in pullet or layer flocks. The biggest health-related issue is associated with FDA's inspection of farms to ensure compliance with provisions of the Egg Safety Rule," Trampel said.

## Passing the exam

The FDA is in the process of inspecting the nearly 600 egg farms that have

**Good fly control can reduce the risk of disease and improve relations with neighbors.**

50,000 or more layers for compliance with the Egg Safety Rule. This is the first time the agency has undertaken a task like this in the egg industry. Many people get anxious when an agency of the federal government announces plans to come on their property to inspect something, and egg producers are no different than anyone else in this regard. Let's face it, the words "I'm from the government and I'm here to help" will send a shiver up most spines, but could these FDA inspections really be good for the industry? The saying "what gets measured gets fixed" conveys the truth that people will pay attention to things that the organization and their bosses actually look at and consider to be important. Every egg farm might have already had a pest control program in place before the Egg Safety Rule, but

► ***Inspections may give the prod the industry needs to keep on track with biosecurity measures and pest control programs.***

were all aspects of the program checked on a routine basis and was this all documented? The simple acts of insisting that workers document activities and management following up and checking the documentation can increase the likelihood that all of the activities prescribed in the control program are completed. In school, how much would we have studied if there were no exam? Did we do all of our math homework problems if we knew the teacher wasn't going to check our work? Inspections may give the prod the industry needs to keep on track with biosecurity measures and pest control programs.

The United Egg Producers 5-Star Egg Safety Program has been revised to include an audit component to verify compliance. In the future, 5-Star audits can serve as the exam that stimulates the industry to keep pest control and biosecurity measures on the farm as must-do items.





## Egg safety equals flock health

At first glance it may not seem logical that a food safety program could improve flock health, particularly since we all know that SE doesn't make layers sick, but a closer look shows how logical it is. The bedrock of any program to exclude infectious disease from a farm will be to provide a means of controlling the movement of disease vectors on and off the farm. These vectors will include wild animals and birds, rodents, insects, people and equipment. A good farm biosecurity program will take effective steps to control the movement on and off the farm of these vec-



tors with cleaning and disinfecting steps taken when movement is unavoidable. Whether the disease in question is exotic Newcastle, avian influenza, infectious laryngotracheitis or fowl cholera, most of the biosecurity steps will be the same and they will be just like many of the actions taken to exclude SE from the farm.

## Pest management

Fly control is an important part of a program to exclude SE from the layer house. Controlling flies requires good manure management, either keeping the manure dry in the house or removing it on a regular basis. If manure is kept dry, fly larvae cannot develop. Dry litter also reduces bacterial activity in the manure, which means there is less ammonia in the layer house. Ultimately, lower ammonia concentrations in the air the birds breathe can lead to better health and performance.

Keeping rodents out of the layer or pullet house clearly reduces the risk of disease being introduced into the flock, but a good rodent control program can do more than this.

Rodents don't just come into poultry houses because the temperature is comfortable; they are in the house looking for food. Rats and mice can eat a tremendous amount of feed, and excluding them from the house does save feed. With grain prices where they are now, the chickens need to be eating the feed, not the rodents. **EI**

**Rodents like this rat can serve as disease vectors, and the feed they consume increases production costs.**



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# Layer housing research facility needs more funding

*Commitments for additional funds are needed by end of July if facility is to be built as originally designed*

By Terrence O'Keefe

The proposed laying hen alternative-housing research center at Michigan State University is inching closer to reality, but more money still needs to be raised by the layer industry, according to Dr. Darrin Karcher, poultry extension specialist at Michigan State.

Equipment vendors have committed to provide housing systems, including feeding and watering systems, but it is up to the layer industry to commit the funds for construction of the 33,000 square foot building. As of early June, the fund raising effort was around \$750,000 short of the \$2.75 million goal.

## Proposed aviaries

Karcher said that currently there is no facility in the U.S. that has conventional cages, aviary systems and enriched colonies. The aviaries proposed for the Michigan State facility will provide 144 square inches per hen in cage-free, stacked deck aviaries. The enriched

colonies provide 116 square inches per bird and provide opportunities for birds to perform all natural behaviors. The facility will have four rooms set aside for battery cages, 12 for enriched colonies and four for 1,000 hen aviaries and four for 500 bird aviaries. The battery cage and enriched colony rooms will all house 500 birds each.

The facility will measure layer performance in the three housing systems with emphasis on behavior and welfare, environmental stewardship, food safety, nutrition and health, and economics. "I am hoping what we are able to do with this facility is to look at the production data as we have in the past, and also bring in the aviary and environmental element as well. This will allow us to see the tradeoffs in production and in the environment," said Karcher.

## Research to benefit the industry

Research grants have already been awarded for studies that will be conducted at the facility when it is completed, but the grants fund the cost of operating the facility, and not for constructing it. The Coalition for Sustainable Egg Supply has awarded a \$6 million grant to Michigan State and the University of California-Davis to study the sustainability of various layer housing systems as well as looking at the trade-offs among food safety, worker safety,

Read more about hen housing systems and egg safety at [www.WATTAgNet.com/18559.html](http://www.WATTAgNet.com/18559.html)

environmental impact, hen health and welfare and food affordability.

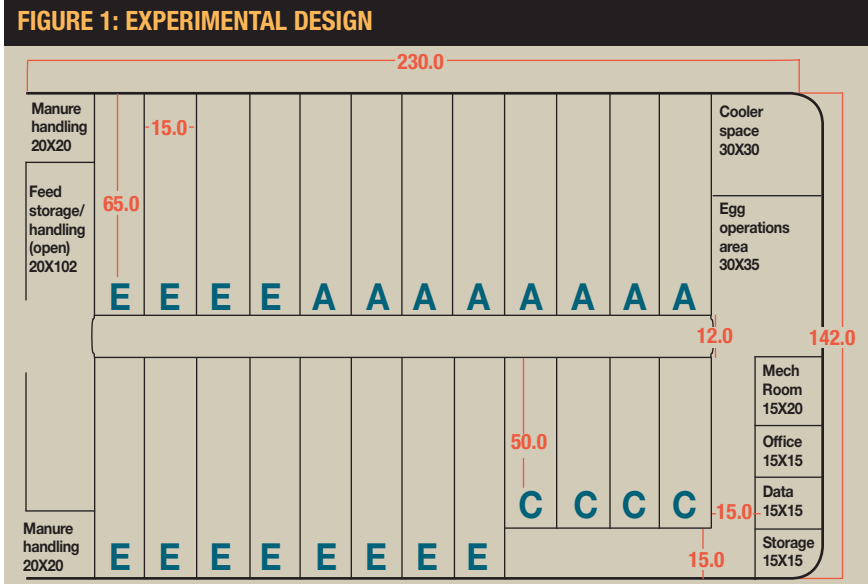
Karcher said that while this facility is designed for comparing three housing options of today, it will likely be updated down the road as housing system designs continue to evolve.

If one housing type becomes obsolete it would be replaced with another type of housing system. "Within 10 years you will probably gut the entire building so that you can continue to conduct meaningful research that will benefit the industry," said Karcher.

## Funding construction

The proposal for constructing the facility will be presented to Michigan State's board of trustees by the first of August and financial commitments to fund the construction will need to be in place by then, according to Karcher. He said that if the full \$2.75 million is not committed then the project will be scaled back, but the hope is that additional commitments will be forthcoming and the project can proceed as planned.

Karcher said that if the board approves the project this September, birds should be placed in the building in the fall of 2012. **E**



Proposed layout for the laying hen housing research facility at Michigan State University. E stands for Enriched Colony enclosure, A for Aviary Systems and C for Conventional Cages.



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**American Egg Board launches  
egg website for scientists,  
formulators**

The American Egg Board has launched a website, [www.FunctionalEgg.org](http://www.FunctionalEgg.org), which provides educational information about eggs and egg products geared towards food scientists and food product formulators.

The information is “designed to supplement college and university food science courses to explain the science behind the functional properties of egg products,” according to Elisa Maloberiti, director of egg product marketing at the American Egg Board. A number of videos on the site cover such topics as “Controlling Crystallization,” to help manage crystal formation in ice cream and other frozen foods, and “Coagulation in Refrigerated Desserts,” using egg products to create gels. The primary video narrator is Shelly McKee, Ph.D., associate professor in the Department of Poultry Science at Auburn University.

In addition to the videos, a series of quizzes allows food technologists to earn a continuing education certificate, and a personal record log helps view-

ers keep track of their progress through the series. Other features include a frequently asked questions section and a conversion table for the various egg products available in liquid, solid (dried powders) or shell.

**USDA: US corn harvest estimate  
down due to Midwest storms**



The U.S. corn harvest may be 2.3% smaller than originally forecast due to excessive storms in the Midwest, reaching a total of 13.2 billion bushels (as opposed to the initial estimate of 13.505 billion bushels), according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The USDA estimate of inventories before the 2012 harvest is down to 695 million bushels, a 23% decrease from the 900 million bushels estimated in May. In response to the new numbers, corn futures for July reached a three-year high, hitting \$7.84 a bushel — a 2.6% increase — the morning of June 9 on the Chicago Board of Trade.

In spite of the report, Geoff Cooper, vice president of research and analysis at the Renewable Fuels Association, said it’s too early to necessarily take the numbers at face value. “It is extremely early in the season and much will change between now and harvest,” said Cooper. “Historical data has shown that the weather in July and August is a much more important factor in determining final yields than the planting date.” He said the June 30 acreage report will provide a better picture of actual corn acreage, once estimates of acres lost to flooding or abandoned due



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to prevented planting are taken into account.

### Timing, delivery vital in poultry vaccine effectiveness

The effectiveness of Infectious Laryngotracheitis Virus Recombinant Vaccines depend on the age of the embryo at vaccination and proper vaccine deliv-

ery, according to a study funded by the U.S. Poultry & Egg Association.

Research was conducted to determine the degree and onset of protection induced by ILTV when applied in ovo and subcutaneously; to determine if shedders are produced in recombinant vaccinated chickens; and to improve detection of antibodies produced fol-

lowing vaccination.

Embryo vaccination at 18-19 days is the optimal age for vaccination, according to the study, and optimal efficiency of recombinant vaccines strongly relies on proper vaccine delivery — namely, precision and consistency of equipment utilized. Compared to traditional vaccines, ILTV provided partial protection against laryngotracheitis, but did not stop replication of the challenge virus in the upper respiratory tract.

### US poultry, egg council elects chairman of the board

The USA Poultry and Egg Export Council elected Thierry Murad as chairman of the board for 2011-2012.

As chairman, Murad will head an eight-member executive committee that sets USAPEEC policy regarding its efforts to promote increased exports of U.S. chicken, turkey, duck and eggs. Murad, global product manager of poultry at AJC International, was elected to succeed outgoing chairman Joel Coleman of Butterball, at USAPEEC's 22nd annual meeting in West Virginia. Other USAPEEC members elected at the meeting include Duane Rhodes, senior vice president of international sales at Tyson Foods, as first vice chairman of the board, and Chaz Wilson, vice president of Grove Services, as second vice chairman. Jim Hoben, vice president of poultry at Interra International, was re-elected to serve as secretary-treasurer.

### Food safety service provider changes name to NSF Agriculture

NSF Davis Fresh, a unit of NSF International, has changed its name to NSF Agriculture to more accurately reflect new services that include GlobalGAP certification and food safety services for livestock, poultry and egg production operations.

NSF Agriculture recently implemented new programs that include expanded GlobalGAP certification, as well as food safety, quality, animal welfare, organic and sustainable agriculture auditing, and certification for livestock, poultry and egg producers. **EI**



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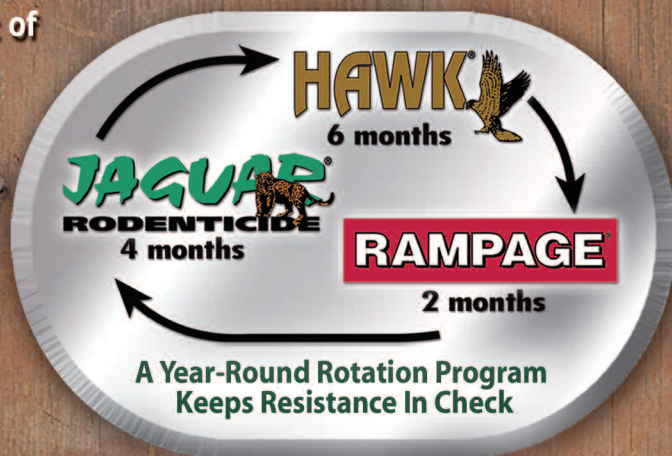
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  - Full complement of bait stations & mechanical traps for complete control
  - More technical field reps & industry expertise



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## DSM Nutritional Products Cylactin ME20 plus

DSM Nutritional Products offers the probiotic feed additive, Cylactin ME20 plus. Cylactin ME20 is a live probiotic that produces lactic acid, according to the company. Cylactin ME 20 plus is available as a microcapsule, for broilers, sows, piglets and feeding pigs, and for inclusion in milk replacers.

[www.dsmnutritionalproducts.com](http://www.dsmnutritionalproducts.com)

## Zinpro Performance Minerals Zinpro E

Zinpro Performance Minerals offers Zinpro E. Zinpro E is a zinc-methionine complex, designed to be used as a nutritional feed ingredient for livestock and poultry, according to the company. The product is a water-soluble tan powder that comes packaged in a 25 kg bag.

[www.zinpro.com](http://www.zinpro.com)

## Chore-Time Egg Production Systems manure drying system



Chore-Time Egg Production Systems offers a manure drying system. The system has a maximum size of 350 feet long by 14 tiers high, with crossbars support belts on all tiers. The loading system has a thick belt and uses a single auger

to spread manure evenly over the entire top belt, according to the company. The system has an emergency stop switch for operator safety and an air bypass to control static pressure.

[www.choretimeegg.com](http://www.choretimeegg.com)

## Smart Motion Robotics Inc. SmartTopper

Smart Motion Robotics Inc. offers the SmartTopper. The company says that SmartTopper is a robotic egg flat and packed case flat topper. The topper uses advanced vision to determine case contents or to locate flats on a moving belt prior to overwrap and can be configured with barcode recognition, according to the company. SmartTopper can place tops on flats prior to an overwrap or flats on 15 dozen or 30 dozen cased flats.

[www.smartmotion.com](http://www.smartmotion.com)

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## Motomco AGRID3 Chunx and Pellets

Motomco offers AGRID3 Chunx and Pellets. AGRID3 is OMRI-listed for fighting rodent infestation on certified organic operations and EPA-registered for use in and around agricultural buildings, the company says. The active ingredient in AGRID3 is Vitamin D3. AGRID3 Chunx has a melting point of 200 F, according to Motomco, and comes as a 1-ounce extruded block.



[www.motomco.com](http://www.motomco.com)

## Check-Points Premi test for Salmonella

Check-Points offers the Premi test kit for *Salmonella*. The company says the Premi test can identify 100 different serotypes in one day, is easy to use and is certified by the AOAC Research Institute (certificate nr. 121001). The Premi test can provide results from *Salmonella* testing in three days, according to Check-Points.

[www.check-points.com](http://www.check-points.com)



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Niman Ranch offers a cage-free liquid egg product available in 20-pound box and 2-pound carton foodservice sizes. This product joins the original cage-free egg line of foodservice shell 15-dozen loose case packs and one-dozen retail packs. The 25 independent farmers who raise Rhode Island Red hybrid laying hens for Niman Ranch's egg production adhere to low density housing protocols and other additional humane care practices.

[www.nimanranch.com](http://www.nimanranch.com)

### Tetra Americana LLC Tetra Amber

The Tetra Americana LLC Tetra Amber is a white, with some brown, feathered, brown egg layer which has the ability to meet the expectations of a variety of egg producers with different objectives. She is the bird of choice for many alternative production operators who expect a docile, easily adaptable bird with excellent livability. The Amber's brown egg color and good feathering throughout the lay makes her a preferred product.



**TETRA AMBER**

[www.tetraamericana.com](http://www.tetraamericana.com)

### Spectrum Technologies Inc. WatchDog 1000 Series Micro Stations



Spectrum Technologies Inc. offers WatchDog 1000 Series Micro Stations. The WatchDog 1000 Series Micro Stations combine a data logger with pre-packaged sensors specific to the micro-environment need, the company says. WatchDog 1000 records, monitors and stores data on multiple environmental conditions.

[www.specmeters.com](http://www.specmeters.com)

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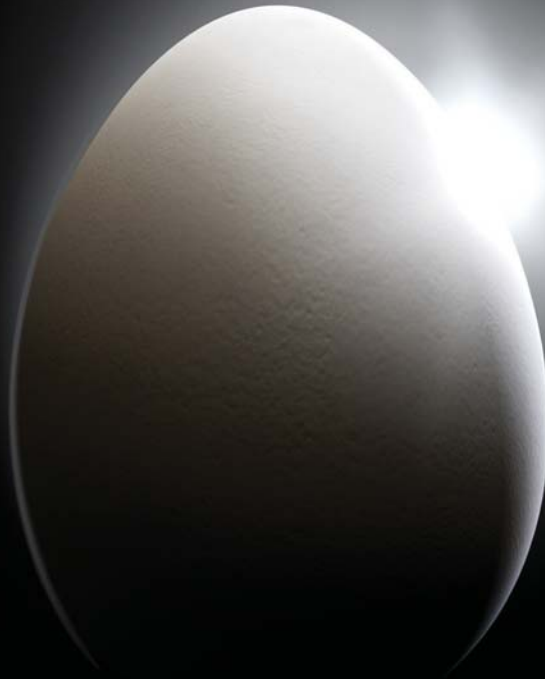


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