

Egg Industry

News for the Egg Industry Worldwide

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Egg farm has surprising grain price advantage

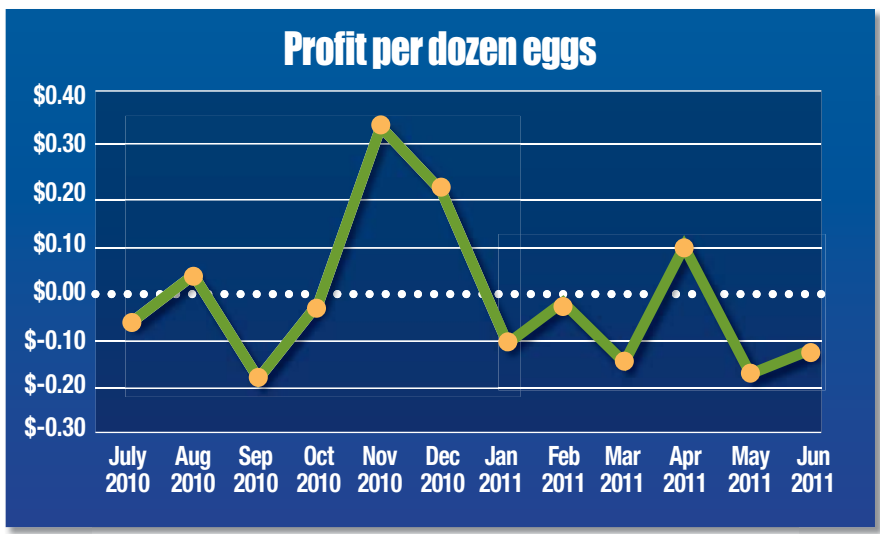
Rich black soil, an eager workforce and an agricultural heritage combine to make Hyde County a good home for Rose Acre Farms.



Poultry breeders see paradigm shift with genomic selection

p8

More rapid improvement of economically important traits may be just around the corner for the egg layer and broiler industries.



Egg prices have not been high enough to offset record high feed costs.
Source: Egg Industry Center

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EDITORIAL

BY TERRENCE O'KEEFE

Layer housing agreement: a win-win deal?

I wasn't at the press conference in Washington, D.C., where the agreement between the Humane Society of the United States and the United Egg Producers to move layers



Terrence O'Keefe

out of traditional cages and into enriched colony cages was announced. But, I was listening to Wayne Pacelle, president and CEO, HSUS, Bob Krouse, chairman of UEP, and Gene Gregory, president and CEO, UEP, over the telephone, and they all seemed to be singing from the same hymnal. Both sides sounded so positive about the agreement, it made me wonder, could this really be a win-win deal for animal welfare activists and the egg industry?

Finding common ground

In a statement released after the press conference, the air of cooperation was reinforced by statements from both sides. Pacelle said, "It is always our greatest hope to find common ground and to forge solutions, even with traditional adversaries. We are excited about a new and better pathway forward, and hope the Congress seizes the opportunity to embrace this sort of collaboration and mutual understanding. We extend our thanks to the producers within the industry for agreeing to make the needed

investments to upgrade their housing and to improve animal welfare in a meaningful way."

"America's egg producers have continually worked to improve animal welfare, and we strongly believe our commitment to a national standard for hen welfare is in the best interest of our animals, customers and consumers," said Krouse.

Passing on the cost

National legislation that would gradually transition the layer industry out of traditional cages and also slowly reduce cage density should provide a mechanism for passing on the increased housing costs to consumers without a major disruption in supply of eggs. It will be interesting to see if major purchasers of eggs see it this way or if they will fight this legislation.

If one accepts that argument, that traditional cage housing is on the way out, no matter what, and that enriched colonies offer a viable alternative for the industry and floor pens or free range do not, then it can be argued that this agreement is a "win" for consumers. Call me

It will be interesting to see if major purchasers of eggs see it this way or if they will fight this legislation.

a skeptic, but I think the only time everyone is a "winner" is in T-Ball when they don't keep score.

Terrence

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Egg farm has surprising grain price advantage

Rich black soil, an eager workforce and an agricultural heritage combine to make Hyde County a good home for Rose Acre Farms.

By Terrence O'Keefe



Rich dark soil has helped local farmers to supply all of the grain needs for the Hyde County complex.

Rose Acre Farms was looking for an ideal location for a new complex that could fulfill a number of requirements, including access to grain and finding a locale in the Eastern U.S. with an animal agriculture friendly culture that needed jobs. It succeeded with its Hyde County complex in North Carolina.

Located just a few land miles from North Carolina's Pamlico Sound, Rose Acre Farms' Hyde County complex initially seems a rather unlikely home for around 3.5 million laying hens.

Decades of road improvements have made this part of the North Carolina coast more accessible, but it still remains quite a bit off the beaten path.

Before the Hyde County complex was built, Rose Acre was looking for a location that could fulfill a number of requirements, according to John Brinn, complex manager. North Carolina remains deficit for corn, but this part of the state has a lot of acreage that is great for growing corn. Farmers in this area have always been challenged to find customers for their grain close by, and Rose Acre saw locating the layer complex here as a win-win situation for the company and local farmers.

Hyde and neighboring Washington and Tyrell counties have a history of significant row crop production. Production of cotton has declined, but it has been replaced by corn. Since the

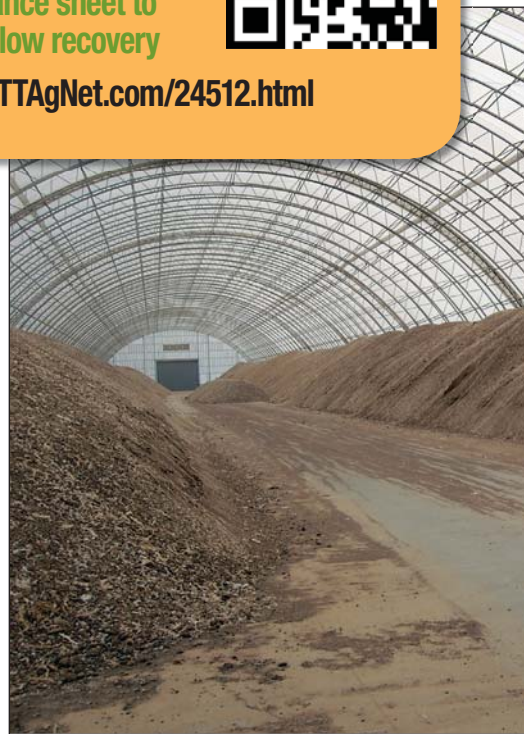
complex was opened five years ago, all of the grain for hens has been sourced locally. Soybeans are processed into meal at nearby facilities as well.

In addition to access to grain, Brinn said that Rose Acre wanted a location in the Eastern U.S. with an animal agriculture friendly culture that needed jobs. Brinn, whose father once farmed land adjacent to the complex, said that unemployment is chronically high in

To hear more about the economic challenges the industry faces, watch: Poultry industry needs deep balance sheet to ride out slow recovery



www.WATTAgNet.com/24512.html





There are 12 identical high rise barns at the complex which house 280,000 layers each.

the area and that the complex has been embraced by the local community.

Ethanol production has really changed the landscape for sourcing corn in the U.S. Brinn said that over a decade ago, when Rose Acre expanded in Iowa, it was done largely because of the state's corn surplus and relatively low corn prices. Now, with the expansion of the ethanol industry in Iowa, it can be more economical to source corn in Hyde County, N.C., than it is in parts of Iowa.

100% composted

The Hyde County complex is permitted for up to 4 million hens. There are 12

identical high rise barns at the complex, which house 280,000 layers each. The complex's solid waste permit requires that 100% of the manure generated at the complex be composted, and done so to specific standards for temperature and time.

All of the manure from the layers, pullets and the mortalities is composted on the layer farm in two large buildings. The manure is windrow composted and water is added during the process to get the moisture content high enough for composting. Around 30,000 tons of compost are produced annually; Brinn said it is all sold locally, mainly to row crop and vegetable farmers. Compost prices vary depending on com-



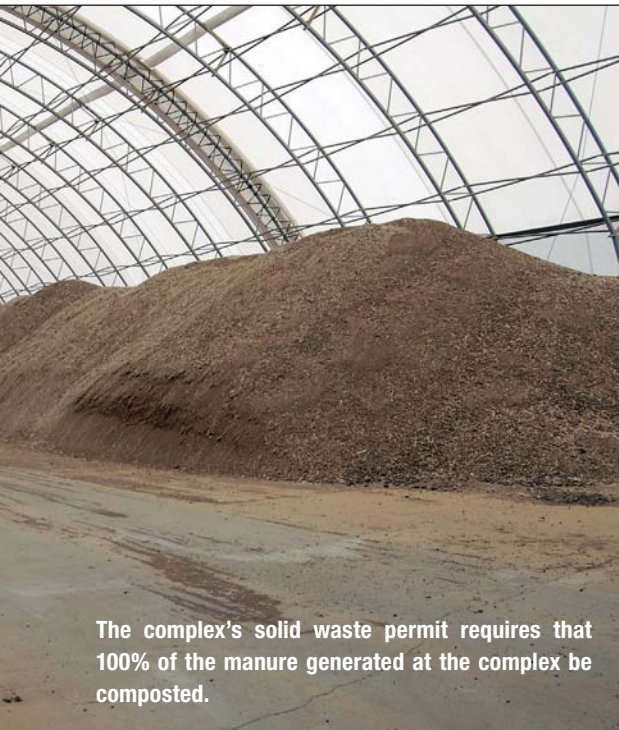
The Hyde County egg packing plant can clean, grade, pack and chill around 1,000 cases of shell eggs per hour.

mercial fertilizer prices, but it was selling for around \$38 per ton in June.

The high rise houses allow for a year worth of manure storage in the barns, but Brinn said that the manure is removed from the houses several times during the course of the laying cycle. Removing manure more frequently helps to keep the composting operation busy year round, and it also helps with rodent control.

1,000 cases per hour

Six layer houses sit on either side of the egg packing plant. Eggs are conveyed from the houses to two packing



The complex's solid waste permit requires that 100% of the manure generated at the complex be composted.

A robot is used on one packing line to stack off cases onto shipping pallets.



lines in the plant. This is not a breaking facility, so emphasis is placed on maximizing pack out of shell eggs. Eggs with cracks are shipped to another Rose Acre facility for breaking, and broken eggs are separated from shells onsite and shipped for use in pet food.

The plant can clean, grade, pack and

chill around 1,000 cases of shell eggs per hour. The complex's output can be packed on one shift per day, seven days per week. Shell eggs are packed in a wide variety of cartons for a number of customers, primarily on the East Coast. Surplus shell eggs are packed for export in refrigerated containers,

which are then trucked to Norfolk, Va., or Brunswick, Ga., for shipping. Brinn stated that the complex has shipped shell eggs to customers in the EU, Hong Kong and Dubai.

People make it happen

A total of 155 employees work at the complex, including employees who work in the pullet houses that are lo-

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The Hyde County plant is not a breaking facility, so emphasis is placed on maximizing pack out of shell eggs.



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cated around one quarter mile from the main farm. There are separate crews of employees who care for the birds, work in the packing plant, clean the packing plant, move birds and clean houses.

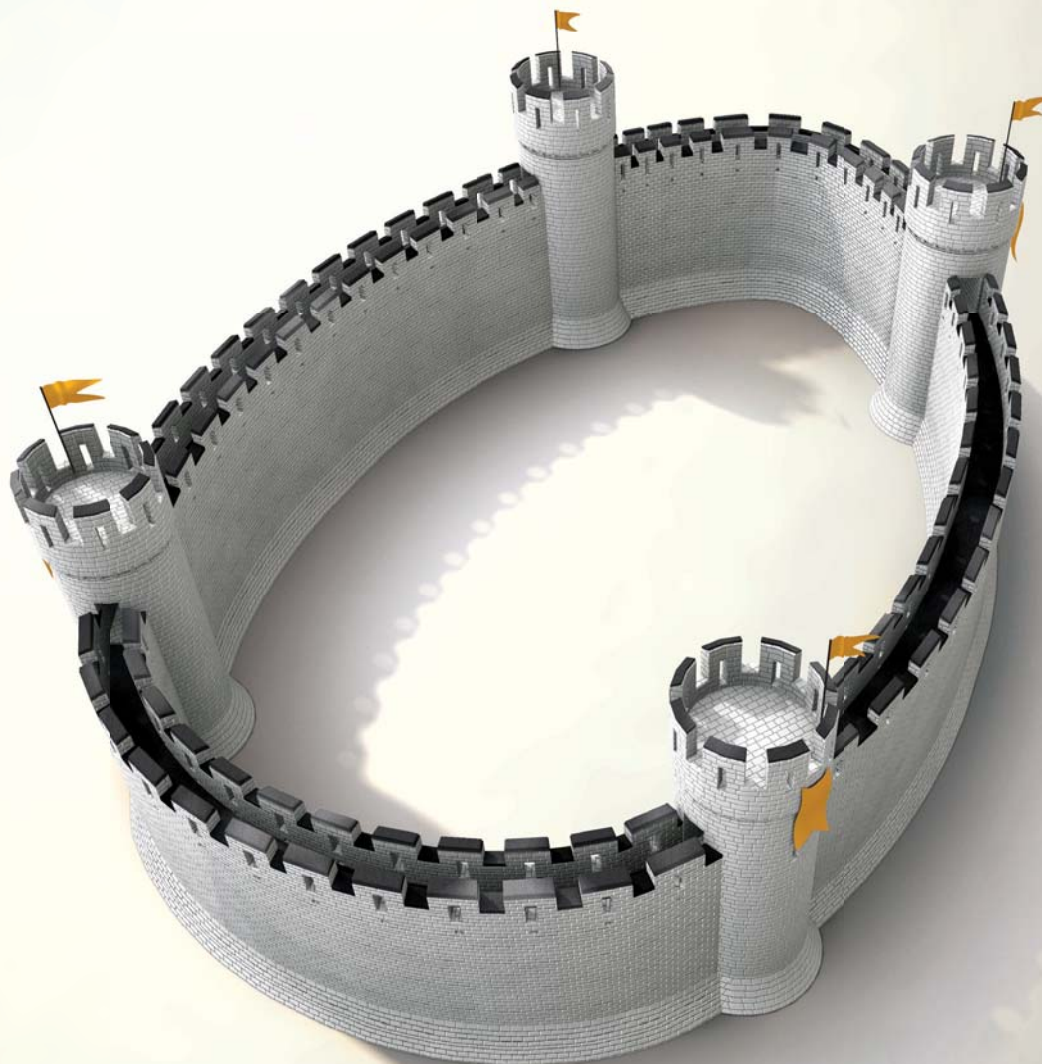
For biosecurity reasons, in-house crews move the birds from the pullet house to the layer houses and remove spent layers from cages for shipment to a processing facility. A second shift sanitation crew cleans the egg packing plant, and there are some personnel who monitor the houses and provide sight security during off hours, but the rest of the staff works on day shift. Employees work five days out of seven each week on a rotating schedule to give coverage 365 days per year; the hens don't take holidays off. **EI**

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Poultry breeders see paradigm shift with genomic selection

More rapid improvement of economically important traits may be just around the corner for the egg layer and broiler industries.

By Terrence O'Keefe

Advances in DNA sequencing technology, the chicken genome project results, and a lot of hard work by researchers and geneticists are being combined by poultry primary breeders to change the way selection

international, said, "Over the course of the next decade you will be able to see that the incremental rate of genetic progress will increase." Genomic selection works, according to Dr. Gerard Albers, director of research and tech-

nology, Hendrix Genetics, which owns ISA. "We have verified that the theoretical predictions are pretty close to reality," he said.

The consensus among the primary breeder companies is that the rate of improvement in traits will increase



Read more about poultry primary breeders and genomic selection at www.WATTAgNet.com/11409.html

somewhere between 30% and 50% faster than they have historically. All traits respond positively to genomic selection, but not at the same rate.

O'Sullivan called genomic selection a paradigm shift for poultry breeders. He explained that in independent studies, egg production now increases at just a little more than three eggs per year. "With genomic selection we should go to around four eggs per hen and if we get really lucky, 4.5 eggs per hen," O'Sullivan said.

Results of tests run on a pedigree bird's blood are used to determine a genomic breeding value for the animal. Photo courtesy of Hendrix ISA

is done in pedigree flocks. Research projects involving pedigree lines from poultry primary breeders are demonstrating that genomic selection can increase the rate of progress in all traits, including economically important ones. The amount of the increase will vary depending on the trait, but the consensus is that the industry will notice more rapid progress.

Dr. Neil O'Sullivan, director of research and development, Hyline In-

Table 1.	
Paradigm shifts in poultry breeding	
1.	Hybridization – Just before WWII
2.	Indexed selection - post WWII
3.	Best Linear Unbiased Prediction (BLUP) - in the 1960s and 1970s
4.	More marker assisted selection - in the 1990s
5.	Genomic selection – today

Genomic selection is the latest paradigm shift for poultry breeders which have allowed genetic progress in selected traits to be made at a more rapid rate. Source: Dr. Neil O'Sullivan, Hyline International

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Genomic selection benefits

Roosters don't lay eggs, so no phenotypic information on egg laying can be gathered for males. With regard to egg production, males have been selected for use as breeders using family based selection. Data on how a male's female relatives perform as layers was used to determine a male's breeding value for egg laying. With family based selection, full brothers have the same breeding value assigned to them. Each brother got half of his genes from mom and half from dad, but not the same half. With genomic techniques, it is possible to select among the brothers to find the one carrying the single nucleotide polymorphisms most likely to positively affect egg laying in the progeny.

Selection for any trait that has relied on family based selection can be improved with genomic selection. "Traits like feed conversion and gain per day are relatively easy to measure for individual birds," said Dr. Rachel Hawken, director of biotechnology, Cobb-Vantress. "But traits like improved livability can't be measured on an individual level."

Hawken explained that genomic selection opens new opportunities for improving the rate of progress on traits like livability. At hatch, breeding companies can place pedigree stock in "challenging environments." Data on the performance of birds under challenging conditions would be correlated with their SNP data and this information can be used to select sires and dams from the birds raised on the pedigree farms.

How it works

Chickens have hundreds of thousands of SNPs in their genome. Phenotype information like growth rate, feed conver-

sion and rate of lay is gathered from individuals within pedigree populations, and this is correlated with the individuals' SNPs. With the use of statistics, an individual's SNPs can be compared to information in the database and a genomic breeding value can be assigned to the animal.

One drawback of genomic selection has been the cost of running the genetic tests. Breeders developed gene chips which tested up to 60,000 SNPs

per bird, but a statistical technique, imputation, offers the potential for cost savings. Imputation allows the breeding company to test for a smaller number of SNPs and then use statistics to fill in the blanks in between. Hawken said, "We have figured out that we don't have to do all 60,000 SNPs on every animal. We test for a smaller number of SNPs, say 3,000. The cost per test has been reduced from hundreds of dollars per test to tens of dol-

lars per test. You lose some accuracy, but the test cost is dramatically reduced." She said that this technique is used heavily by dairy breeders. "This has increased our ability to implement genomic selection by reducing the cost," Hawken said.

Balancing speed and accuracy

Analysis of an individual's SNPs can allow selection to take place earlier in the life cycle of the animal. Albers explained that every breeding program has to balance speed and accuracy of selection. For chickens, you would like to make the selection at the time of the hen's first egg. For traits that are expressed later in life than at time of first lay, genomic selection can cut the generation time down, which speeds the rate of progress.

"In a layer program, the traits that we are concentrating on today are egg production, egg quality and life span of the birds. We have extended the performance collection period of our candidates to 100 weeks of age. We are selecting for the chicken that produces for 100 weeks and lays 500 eggs," said Albers.

With genomic selection, SNP data is correlated with good egg production out to 100 weeks. Breeder candidates are then selected at time of first egg based on how

What are SNPs?

Single nucleotide polymorphisms, or SNPs (pronounced "snips"), are DNA sequence variations that occur when a single nucleotide, adenine (A), thymine (T), cytosine (C), or guanine (G), in the genome sequence is altered. For example, a SNP might change the DNA sequence AAGGCTAA to ATGGCTAA. For a variation to be considered a SNP, it must occur in at least 1% of the population.



Genomic selection provides breeders a method of distinguishing difference in the breeding value for female expressed traits like egg laying between full brothers. Photo courtesy of Hendrix ISA



Measured phenotypic traits like egg shell strength, egg weight and feed conversion are correlated with an individual's SNPs and this data is used to determine breeding values for individuals where SNP data is available but phenotype information is not. Photo courtesy of Hendrix ISA

their SNPs correlate with the hens that had good late performance. In this manner, progress can be made on late egg production with each successive generation even though the candidates are selected early in the lay cycle.

Genomic selection can also improve population structures so genetic variation is maintained over time. O'Sullivan explained that genomic selection allows females to be mated to more than one male, because the genomic testing establishes the pedigree. "With the same population size there are many more

birds with different relationships than in the past," he said.

Coming soon

Pedigree birds of today will produce grandparents of commercial layers and the

The consensus among the primary breeder companies is that the rate of improvement in traits will increase somewhere between 30% and 50% faster than they have historically.

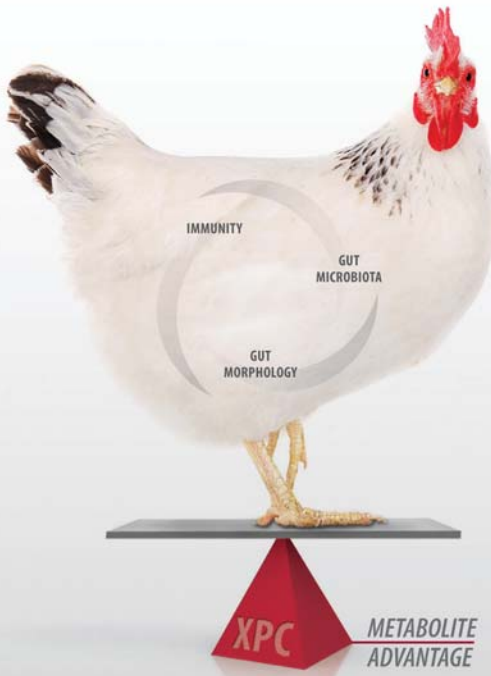
great grandparents of commercial broilers. It can take four or five years for advancements to work through the pipeline from pedigree to commercial farms.

None of the primary breeders con-

tacted for this article had a set date when birds whose relatives were selected at least partly based on genomic testing would arrive at their customers' doorsteps. All breeding companies stressed that more traditional methods of selection are still being employed and that while genomic selection offers tremendous advantages, it will always be used in conjunction with other selection methods.

Given the start dates for the various genomic selection initiatives under-

taken by the poultry primary breeder companies, performance curves for commercial birds could be expected to start curving upward at slightly larger angles as soon as 2012 or 2013. **EI**



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Egg producers, humane society reach agreement on layer housing standards

Both organizations pledge to lobby Congress for legislation setting a timetable to transition the industry from battery cages to enriched colony houses.

By Terrence O'Keefe

The United Egg Producers and the Human Society of the United States have not agreed on much over the years, but the two organizations were able to find common ground recently and have come to an agreement on a plan that would change the way that most hens in the U.S. are housed.

In July, representatives from the two groups signed a memorandum of understanding, which outlines standards for housing and care of hens in the U.S., and commits both groups to petition Congress to pass legislation establishing these as national standards.

Both UEP and HSUS intend to work with Congress with the goal of having the law in place by June 30, 2012, and the transition being fully implemented by December 31, 2029.

National legislation

If passed by Congress, the legislation would supersede state laws including

If passed by Congress, the legislation would supersede state laws including those that have been passed in Arizona, California, Michigan and Ohio.

those that have been passed in Arizona, California, Michigan and Ohio. In recognition of ballot Proposition 2 passed



The United Egg Producers and the Human Society of the United States have come to an agreement and signed a memorandum of understanding, which outlines standards for housing and care of hens in the U.S.

by voters in California in 2008, UEP and HSUS will ask Congress to require California egg producers to eliminate conventional cages by 2015, the date Proposition 2 is scheduled to go into

phasing in over the next 15 to 18 years. These requirements will also apply to the sale of all eggs and egg products in California under the proposed federal legislation.

Gene Gregory, president and CEO of UEP, said that the legislation is necessary in order to protect UEP's customers and the marketplace from any disruption that could occur if a patchwork series of state laws and regulations regarding hen housing were implemented. "With 24 states having the ballot initiative process, we could continue to see numerous

efforts by HSUS to use voter referendums to legislate a transition to cage-free production, which we believe would not be a sustainable egg industry. A few months ago, UEP became aware that HSUS was recognizing the benefits of the enriched colony cage housing systems and would be receptive to discussions about national legislation,” Gregory said.

“We believe it is far better to have one single, national standard in federal legislation for the production of shell egg and egg product markets without state trade barriers for our customers, and one that is phased in over several years to minimize any marketplace disruption. This is especially important for our retail customers that have stores in multiple states,” Gregory continued.

The proposed legislation would provide for the following:

- ▶ Replacement of conventional cages, through a phase-in period, with enriched housing systems that provide each hen 124 or 144 square inches for white and brown egg layers, respectively
- ▶ Enriched housing systems will allow hens to express all natural behaviors
- ▶ Labeling on all egg cartons nationwide will inform consumers of the method used to produce the eggs, such as “eggs from caged hens,” “eggs from hens in enriched cages,” “eggs from cage-free hens,” and “eggs from free-range hens”
- ▶ Prohibit feed- or water-withholding molting to extend the laying cycle, a practice already prohibited by the UEP Certified program
- ▶ Only American Veterinary Medical Association approved means of euthanasia to be used on farms
- ▶ Excessive levels of ammonia in hen houses are prohibited
- ▶ Sale of eggs and egg products nationwide that don't meet these requirements is prohibited

No more ballot initiatives

HSUS has agreed to not file the signatures for qualification for Washington state's ballot initiative in 2011, and to not further pursue ballot legislation in Oregon in 2012. UEP and HSUS have agreed not to initiate, fund or support any state legislation or ballot initiative measures concerning space requirements for housing of laying

hens. HSUS and UEP have also agreed that they will not initiate, fund or support litigation against, or investigation of, either party or UEP members while this agreement is in force.

Neither HSUS nor UEP will fund or support any other organization for the specific purpose of achieving a result contrary to the provisions of this agreement. **EI**

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Pork, cattle groups against UEP-HSUS agreement

The National Pork Producers Council and the National Cattlemen's Beef Association have both spoken out against the agreement between the United Egg Producers and the Humane Society of the United States to work together toward the enactment of federally mandated egg production standards, citing concerns about setting precedents for government interference in the industry.

"Cattlemen are rightfully concerned with the recent UEP-HSUS agreement to seek unprecedented federal legislation to mandate on-farm production standards," said Colin Woodall, vice president of government affairs with the NCBA. "More than two decades ago, cattlemen adopted voluntary pro-

duction practice guidelines. The cattle industry's successful programs were not the result of a government mandate. They were developed by industry for industry to ensure cattlemen constantly improve handling and management techniques."

According to Woodall, the industry will continue working to ensure its standards are based on the latest knowledge. "Unlike the UEP-HSUS agreement, our cattle care programs should never be weakened by being misused or construed as the basis of a regulatory or government mandated program," he said.

According to the NPPC, legislation preempting state laws on egg production systems would set a dangerous precedent for allowing the federal government to dictate how livestock and

poultry producers raise and care for their animals, Infoworld inject the federal government into the marketplace with no measurable benefit to public or animal health and welfare.

"The NPPC is gravely concerned that such a one-size-fits-all approach will take away producers' freedom to operate in a way that's best for their animals, make it difficult to respond to consumer demands, raise retail meat prices and take away consumer choice, devastate niche producers and, at a time of constrained budgets for agriculture, redirect valuable resources from enhancing food safety and maintaining the competitiveness of U.S. agriculture to regulating on-farm production practices for reasons other than public health and welfare," said the organization.

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US egg products up 3% from 2010

As of the most recent report, the cumulative total of edible products from U.S. eggs broken in 2011 is 1.103 billion pounds, up 3% from 2010, according to the latest Food Safety and Inspection Service report.

U.S. shell eggs broken totaled 175 million dozen during May 2011, up 2% from May 2010 and 7% above the 164 million broken in April. During the calendar year 2011 through May, shell eggs broken totaled 844 million dozen, up 3% from the comparable period in 2010.

US corn harvest may reach 13.759 billion bushels

Analytics firm Informa Economics predicts U.S. farmers will harvest 13.759 billion bushels of corn and 3.203 billion bushels of soybean crop in 2011, according to reports.

Informa estimates corn yields at 162.5 bushels per acre, based on harvested acreage of 84.7 million acres. The firm's 2011 harvested corn area predictions are 200,000 acres short of June estimates from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Estimates for soybean yields are 43.1 bushels per acre, based on harvested acreage of 74.3 million acres. Estimates for U.S. wheat harvests in 2011 are 2.095 billion bushels from 47.2 million acres, a wheat yield Informa projects to be 44.4 bushels per acre.

Livestock, poultry groups comment on ethanol tax 'compromise'

A coalition of livestock and poultry groups released a statement regarding the proposed "compromise" on abolition of the Volumetric Ethanol Excise Tax Credit and the protective tariff on imported ethanol. Groups issuing the statement include: American Meat Institute, California Dairies Inc., National Cattlemen's Beef Association, National Chicken Council, National Meat Association, National Pork Producers Council and National Turkey Federation.

"We appreciate the work done by Senator Dianne Feinstein in her effort to end the VEETC and tariff," the coalition statement said. "However, the resulting compromise still provides new federal funds for corn-based ethanol, money that would be better

spent reducing the deficit or encouraging the development of energy sources that do not compete with feed needs."

US drought may increase corn prices

Corn prices may reach a record \$8.75 per bushel before the harvest if the current drought in the southern U.S. reaches the Midwest, according to Jack Scoville of Price Futures Group in Chicago.

On the other hand, if the crop is not harmed by extreme weather and production is "very good," prices may drop to \$4.50 per bushel. "A lot will depend on what we see in the weather forecast the next few weeks," said Scoville. If it's dry, "you can probably throw some of these lower ideas out the window and look for significantly higher prices, as the U.S. market tries to regulate demand against the potentially available supply." **EI**

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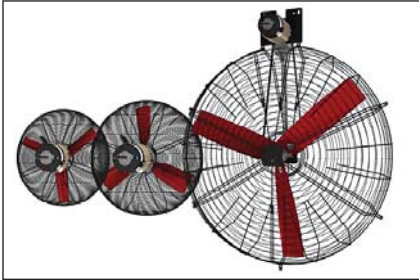
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www.vostermans.com

Chakra India debeaker

Chakra India makes a debeaker for chicks and hens. The debeaker, according to the company, prevents incidences of cannibalism, pecking, feather pulling, egg damage and improves livability. The debeaker has a foot-operated switch and is available at 220 V AC or 110 V AC, with a weight of 22 pounds.

www.chakraindia.com

Thermo Fisher Scientific Inc. Xpert C400

The Xpert C400 from Thermo Fisher Scientific Inc. is a next-generation X-ray system for contaminant detection and product inspection. The Xpert C400 detects metal, glass, dense plastics and other contaminants in packaged food. The system can also analyze an X-ray image to estimate weight or fill, as well as count or



assure that objects are inside a packaged item. The system's detectors are available in multiple resolutions (0.8/0.4mm) and operates over a temperature range of 5 C to 40 C.

www.thermofisher.com



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www.bocmpauls.co.uk

bioMérieux VIDAS UP *Salmonella* (SPT) assay



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www.biomerieux-usa.com

Manure Safety Solutions LLC Klasp Litter Amendment

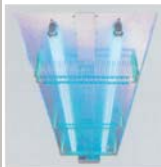
Manure Safety Solutions LLC offers Klasp Litter Amendment. The company says Klasp Litter Amendment is a non-toxic, dry, granulated form of ferric sulfate containing approximately 20% iron. Klasp Litter Amendment reduces ammonia, isolates phosphorous and nitrogen, and lowers litter pH while providing a drier house environment, according to the company.

www.manuresafetyolutions.com

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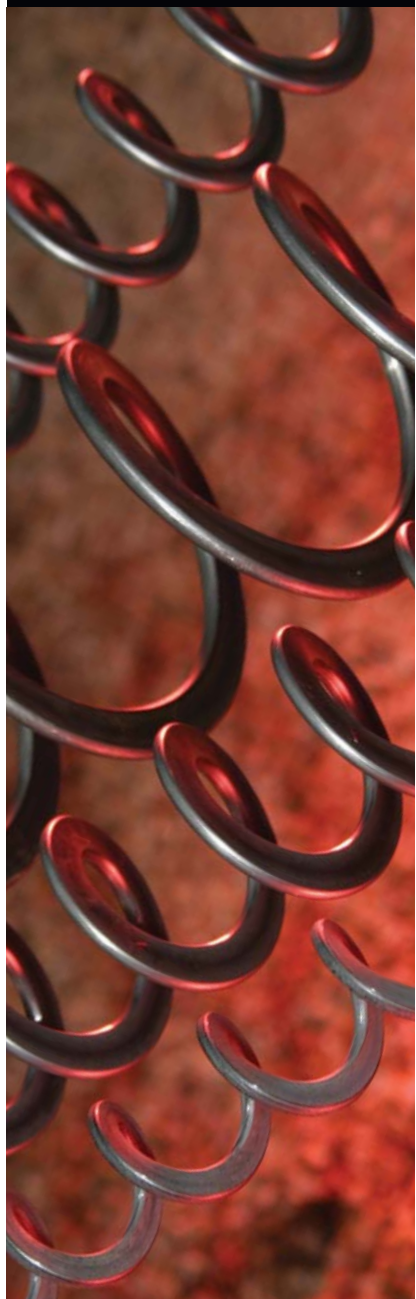
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www.ska.it

Orbis Corp. Stack'R pallet

Orbis Corp.'s Stack'R pallet is designed for stacking and lightweight racking applications. The 40-by-48-inch



Stack'R is made of plastic and is 100% recyclable, according to the company. The Stack'R features open or closed deck design; multiple styles, with edge racking capacities from 750 to 1,500 lbs.; optional lip or factory-installed grommets; and contoured corners and

surfaces to reduce product damage.

www.orbiscorporation.com

Agroin Biopowder

Agroin offers the feed additive, Biopowder, for control of odors, ammonia and other gas emissions around livestock and poultry. The company says Biopowder is a free-flowing powder made with 100% natural Yucca schidigera. Biopowder is air dried and produced with mechanical methods for inclusion of all saponins and glycocomponents of the real Yucca schidigera plant.

www.yucca.com.mx

➤ MARKETPLACE

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