



British Egg Industry Council Newsletter

CHRISTMAS 2022

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2022

As an industry we have faced considerable challenges this past year, with the industry facing unprecedented pressures.

We continue to face a labour crisis, mainly as a result of government migration policy. In addition, production costs have rocketed and many have had to face the stark choice of losing money on every egg they produce, or even taking the difficult decision to cease production. On top of that we have the ongoing transition away from enriched cages to meet retailers' 'cage-free' commitments in 2025, and an ongoing threat from avian influenza. All this has led to the current supply shortages.

A Round Table hosted by the Food and Farming Minister, Defra earlier this month brought the constituent parts of the supply chain together to discuss the challenges that the egg industry is currently facing. It also included its causes and importantly what needs to be done to address them.

What is very clear and is exactly BEIC's position, is that we need a supply chain that benefits all parts, with each part profitable, to enable future investment to take place.

The announcement of additional support for British egg farmers by some retailers has been a welcome step in the right direction, however, there is still progress to be made.

The effective functioning of any market is for supply and demand to be in equilibrium. A vital part in achieving this is confidence. This continues to be lacking with producers terrified of an AI incursion, with many experiencing difficulty in obtaining / renewing insurance cover.

The pressure on supply has been huge but throughout all of this, the industry continues to maintain its world-leading standards, supplying consumers with the eggs they want and expect, and that is something that we should be extremely proud of.

Avian Influenza

With 150 cases of H5N1 HPAI to date across the UK since 1st October, we are approaching the total of 158 that we saw during the whole of the last AI season (October 2021 to end September 2022). This is unprecedented. In terms of bird numbers, since 1st October, we have lost 60k pullets, 447k enriched cage, 32k barn and 528k free range birds. 20 of the 150 cases have affected the egg sector.

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- Parliamentary
Debate – Avian
Influenza
Outbreak

Better news is that the multiple number of positive cases seen each day during October and November has slowed to a case every few days, but even one more is one too many.

The (almost) daily updates we provide on AI provide the detail of the situation.

The special PHWG/government meeting on AI, held in Cambridge in November, led to a number of action points.

On AI vaccination, we believe this must be the way forward. This is being progressed by Defra setting up a Task Force with industry representation. The key points to making vaccination a reality include: the need for a range of effective vaccines; which can be easily administered; with a proper cost-effective surveillance programme in place; which will serve to avoid trade barriers, which is by far the largest barrier to vaccination.

A crucial point is that vaccination can never be a substitute for good biosecurity, which must always come first. The newly amended Lion Code biosecurity standards are now bedded in and are aimed at strengthening a site's defenses against AI.

On insurance for AI, we have been asking government to meet insurance underwriters to provide an assurance that when a site becomes an infected premises, government will ensure that birds are culled without undue delay. We know that when APHA were under particular pressure, due to multiple cases a day during October/November, it was taking many days to cull, resulting in most birds dying from the disease. This meant government paid little compensation for any healthy birds remaining, with insurers left to pick up the bill.

Another issue is that of compensation, with the current scheme not fit for purpose. Whilst government has agreed to assess for compensation at the start of culling (as opposed to the end) it does not go far enough. It is simply not fair that the poultry sector is only compensated for healthy birds. Any delays in APHA culling an infected premises means that a larger number of birds die of the disease. We continue to press ministers, but it is unlikely that government will want to amend the Animal Health Act 1981 in the short term.

The issue of AI is also of significant concern to many backbench MPs, having held a debate on the AI outbreak, the causes, the problems it has created, along with solutions – including vaccination. We engaged with MPs to ensure the points of concern for our sector were raised.

Parliamentary Debate – Avian Influenza Outbreak

A debate in Westminster Hall, Houses of Parliament, took place on 30th November on the outbreak of Avian Influenza. The debate had been moved by Sir John Whittingdale MP (Conservative, Maldon).

The BEIC identified several MPs ahead of attending the debate and provided them with a briefing document. Between these MPs, all the key points we made within the document had been raised, particularly reform of the compensation scheme. The topic of vaccination also featured heavily, and MPs took note that approval of their use must be accompanied with adequate surveillance systems and attention paid to overcoming any potential trade barriers. The issue of devolved

governments taking differing approaches was also raised, in which the importance of better collaboration must be developed on AI in the future.

The debate was also attended by Mark Spencer MP (Minister of State, Defra). The Minister acknowledged that the compensation scheme needed reform but said it was unlikely to be changed radically any time soon. However, the Minister has said that it will be Defra's policy to aim for vets to attend farms within 24 hours. On vaccination, the Minister said careful attention would be paid to which countries are likely to accept products from vaccinated birds, and every effort would be made to bring everyone along the journey to vaccination.

The BEIC had met with the Minister of State some weeks earlier to brief him on the UK supply chain issues for eggs, the Minister took on these points and commented that the supply issues were largely down to commercial decisions of producers due to rising cost of inputs such as feed, energy (Ukraine situation), but sadly did not mention the availability of labour.

If you would like a copy of the BEIS Avian Influenza briefing document, please email morgan.brobyn@britisheggindustryCouncil.com

You can watch the debate in full here:

<https://parliamentlive.tv/event/index/b83cdca4-b7bc-4e34-ad9b-9da2397d631a?in=09:30:10>

Biosecurity

The following article is provided by Ian Lowery BVetMed PGCert ILHP MRCVS (BEIC's consultant vet).

"In December last year, I wrote urging all producers to avoid the trap of complacency in our collective fight against Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza.

Cases continued despite a prolonged spell of hot dry weather during the summer (which would usually be associated with reduced survival of the virus and the end of an outbreak), and huge numbers of wild birds have also been infected.

The poultry industry has always been forward thinking and quick to adapt. And adapt we must. The H5N1 which has been circulating across Europe has demonstrated a number of unusual features: its ability to infect commercial poultry, its ability to cause clinical signs in ducks which are usually not considered indicator species for HPAI, and its persistence in wild bird populations.

In response to this, BEIC introduced updated biosecurity standards. Site operators must ensure that infrastructure and procedures are reviewed to ensure that your unit does not become the next case of HPAI.

Act now to ensure that as we are truly in winter (cold and wet), your unit is suitably armed for the fight.

Wheel washing equipment must be properly located at the start of the biosecure area and must be sufficient to properly wash and disinfect wheels (e.g., wheel wash stations must have a plentiful supply of water at reasonable pressure to effectively clean wheels). Knapsack sprayers located at a significant distance from the poultry house are not good enough to achieve this.

Biosecurity

The area between the wheel wash and the poultry house should not allow recontamination of wheels e.g., it must be washable, hardstanding and not be a rutted pot-holed muddy track.

A proper biosecurity barrier should be present at the access to the service area.

The key is to ensure that there is no cross-contamination between outside footwear and shoes worn within the service area. Dedicated site-specific footwear should be provided at this location. The soles of plastic overboots tear through rapidly and therefore do not offer sufficient protection in preventing virus from outdoor footwear being walked into the house. A further barrier should also be present at the entrance to the bird accommodation area from the service area, again with the provision of dedicated site-specific footwear. When changing footwear at this location it is also important to ensure that no cross-contamination between the service area and bird area occurs.

Building maintenance must be ensured. AIPZ requirements demand that houses are well maintained, guttering does not leak, and that ranges are managed to be free of standing water, and efforts are made to dissuade wild birds. A lot of effort has focused on biosecurity at the front of the poultry houses. Please don't forget that biosecurity breaches can also happen at the back of houses. In particular, it is important to ensure that back doors are watertight and do not allow water ingress into houses after heavy rain.

Egg collections, feed deliveries and muck collections should be managed and proceduralised to ensure that they minimise the risk of introducing infection.

I recognise that maintaining high standards of biosecurity and preventing HPAI infections is expensive and demanding on staff and business owners. However, please believe me, the alternative, becoming an infected premises, is worse, it is more expensive and more demanding.

Take heed of the significant amount of advice available to you, act NOW and make sure that your farm does not become the next victim of this horrible disease".

- International Trade Agreements

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In terms of international trade, we continue to engage with government on behalf of the sector and continue to keep a watching brief on developments with trade negotiations, as well as existing agreements that the UK is looking to amend. We will vigorously defend the British egg industry at every opportunity, should there be a threat of imports of eggs/egg products from hens kept in sub-UK standard animal welfare conditions, undermining our farmers and betraying our consumers.

If you have any comments on possible risks or opportunities for trade with the following countries, please send your comments to morgan.brobyn@britisheggindustryCouncil.com.

- South Korea
- Switzerland
- Turkey

The BEIC will be taking part in several working groups, and meetings to discuss agri-food trade with these countries.

- Labour shortages in the food and farming sector Report: Labour Availability Crisis – Call to Action (MP Letters)

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We urge all those involved in the egg industry that have experienced operational difficulties on farms and in packing centres to document the issues with as much detail as possible and to write to their local MPs.

The BEIC can provide guidance on how to draft these letters, as it is important that the letters are as bespoke as possible.

We also have a ready template available that only requires a few changes by the sender, these are available by contacting:

morgan.brobyn@britisheggindustryCouncil.com

- The Lion Training Passport – the official training programme of the UK egg sector

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The Lion Training Passport scheme was established to create a formal training standard that can be delivered consistently across the sector.

For more information on Lion Training Passports, including details of approved training providers and how to apply, visit: www.liontrainingpassport.co.uk

The course requires those taking part to complete 1 course per calendar year as a minimum.

- BEIC Petition:

BEIC Petition: Supermarkets should use British eggs for foods and STOP IMPORTING EGGS – over 40,000 signatures

The petition calling on supermarkets to stop using imported eggs in their pre-prepared foods such as quiches, cakes, salads, or egg sandwiches, that do not meet British Lion safety standards, has reached over 40,000 signatures.

This is a huge step in demonstrating the importance consumers place on buying British produce and highlighting that they desire transparency around their purchasing choices.

Please see the petition here: www.change.org/p/aldi-supermarkets-should-use-british-eggs-for-foods-made-in-britain-and-stop-importing-eggs

- BEIS Update

BEIS Update

British Egg Week gets the nation crackin'

British Egg Week was a cracking success led by our diving superstar and foodie ambassador Tom Daley OBE, and celebrity chef Dean Edwards, who both smashed it by sharing their passion for British Lion eggs. More than 14.5 million

people were reached to help celebrate how versatile, healthy and affordable eggs are and to look for the British Lion.

Tom Daley sprang into action with a video sharing three inspiring #BritishEggWeek recipes, generating **322k views** across [YouTube](#) and [Instagram](#). On World Egg

Day, which falls in the week, Dean Edwards hit the airwaves generating more than 1,300 pieces of coverage for his mealtime hero, across 270 TV and radio stations.

British Lion take over Metro

British Lion eggs have been starring on Metro's website with a digital advertising campaign to showcase the role of eggs for young millennials and families. With more than 3.5m projected impressions, the recipe led content and Look for the Lion call outs, is helping to provide inspiring and nutritious meals for all occasions on a budget.

60 million eyes on

British Lion eggs generated national media coverage highlighting the positive health benefits of eggs, reaching more than **60 million readers**. Research around the benefits of consuming five eggs a week was published in [The Daily Mirror](#) and [The Daily Express](#), highlighting that regular egg consumption should be part of a healthy balanced diet and could actually lead to lower BMIs and slimmer waistlines.

Lion roaring with The Grocer

The benefits of stocking British Lion eggs have been a hot topic for readers of *The Grocer*. In a partnership with the leading retail trade publication, extensive content highlighting the food safety benefits of British Lion eggs, as well as consumer demand, has been a major feature of The Grocer's website, newsletter, and magazine, delivering more than 200,000 impressions.

Food safety expert highlights issues with imported eggs

Independent food safety expert, Sterling Crew, has responded to reports of imported eggs appearing on retailer shelves, raising his concerns around the food safety risks.

Crew, Chair of the Food Authenticity Network's Advisory board, used his LinkedIn platform to remind his 30k strong audience of food safety professionals that the British Lion mark means that eggs and egg products have been produced in accordance with the world-leading, independently audited British Lion Code of Practice, and are approved by the FSA to be consumed runny by vulnerable groups.

Crew has also been highlighting the food safety benefits of specifying British Lion eggs and egg products to food safety professionals at the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health Safe Food conference, and European Federation of Food Science and Technology annual conference in November.

5 million views for Metro ad campaign

A major British Lion eggs ad campaign has been running across the Metro website, delivering more than 5.3m impressions with 'Look for the Lion' messaging and tasty, affordable egg recipes. The content has been inspiring millennials and families to cook with eggs, with the @eggs_recipes Instagram gaining over 600 new followers to date since it launched.

Cracking campaign with The Grocer

An integrated British Lion eggs ad campaign running across The Grocer website, social and daily newsletter in October and November, reminding retailers of the food safety assurances offered by the Lion, was viewed for +1,100 hours and generated +573,500 impressions and 8,000 clicks.

Wholesalers look for the Lion

The importance of specifying and stocking British Lion eggs to ensure the highest standards of food safety and quality has been profiled across Wholesale News, the Federation of Wholesale Distributors industry magazine.

Advertising, and an interview with independent food safety expert, Sterling Crew, and BEIC Chairman Andrew Joret, has been live since November highlighting the issues with imported eggs, consumer expectations for British Lion eggs and the global industry-leading standards of the Lion Code of Practice. The campaign runs throughout December.

Catering for the Lion

A digital advertising campaign running across The Caterer website and e-newsletter targeting professional chefs with messaging around the food safety benefits of using Lion eggs on the menu, has been seen more than 520,000 times.

We hope you have a Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Mark Williams
Morgan Brobyn

