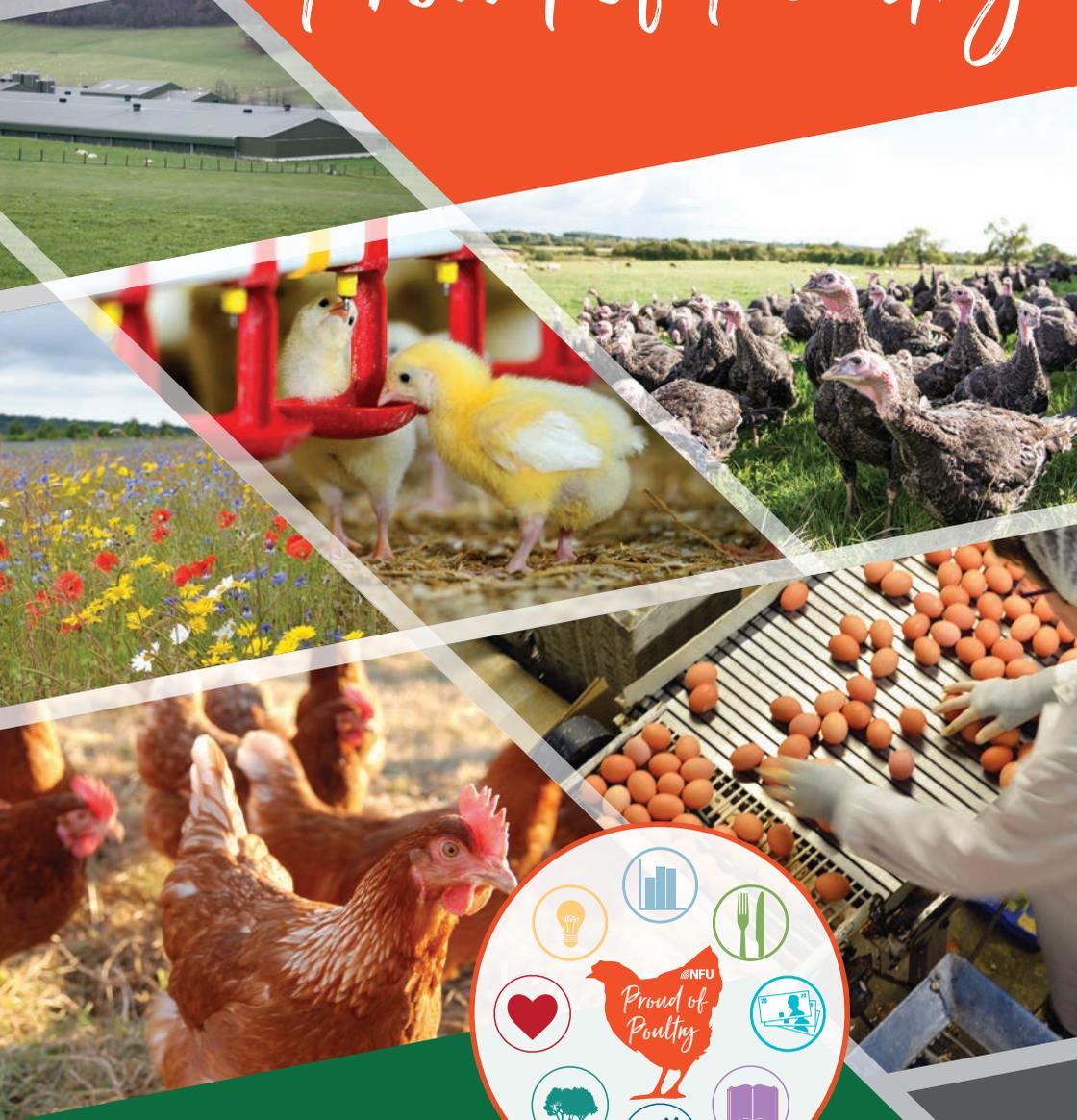


# Proud of Poultry



**FOOD SAFETY**

# OVERVIEW

Proud of Poultry has been produced by the NFU to showcase the many positive initiatives the poultry industry has to offer. The aim of this working document is to demonstrate and educate a variety of audiences including farmers, schools, universities, government and the media on how efficient, innovative and dynamic our sector is.

## THE PUBLICATION WILL BE SPLIT INTO EIGHT SEPARATE SECTIONS:



**DEMAND**



**FOOD SAFETY**



**ECONOMIC**



**TRAINING**



**EFFICIENCY**



**ENVIRONMENT**



**WELFARE**



**INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY**



Stemming from the original document, a series of additional features for a variety of key pillars within the poultry industry will be created, including: infographics, case studies, social media content, posters and leaflets, as well as briefings and articles.

# INTRODUCTION

UK poultry farmers are proud to produce food to some of the world's highest animal welfare and food safety standards. Poultry producers, processors and retailers all work collaboratively throughout the food chain to deliver safe, reliable and affordable food to consumers.

## FARM ASSURANCE

In the UK, 95% of broiler producers are Red Tractor certified and 90% of egg laying farms adhere to the Lion Code standards. Assurance schemes such as these include exacting production standards to prevent and control food safety concerns such as salmonella and campylobacter. In addition to compliance with these standards, producers are required to record and retain critical information to uphold full food chain traceability.

## CAMPYLOBACTER

Foodborne campylobacter is one of the biggest causes of food poisoning in the UK. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has been testing chickens for campylobacter and publishing the results since February 2014 as part of an industry-wide campaign to bring together the entire food chain to tackle the problem. Since the survey began there has been a significant fall in the percentage of chickens testing positive for campylobacter at any level, down almost 20%.

Poultry meat producers have been fully committed to the campaign, adapting husbandry practices and investing in infrastructure as well as staff training. Practices include conducting comprehensive flock monitoring and testing, as well as maximising the effectiveness of biosecurity controls.

Processors also play integral roles in reducing the incidence of campylobacter within the supply chain, ensuring their processes minimise levels of potential contamination. Effective and consistent hygiene practices have been developed and enforced in relation to plucking evisceration, washing and chilling processes.

## SALMONELLA

A programme for the control of salmonella has been in operation in the UK since 1989. As a result of the 'UK National Control Programme for Salmonella' and through stringent controls upheld by producers, there has been a drastic reduction in the presence of salmonella in UK eggs and poultry meat. UK poultry producers with more than 350 hens are required by law to undergo official salmonella sampling. There are robust measures in place to uphold sampling regimes and procedures enforced surrounding a positive test result.

Recently, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) revised its advice on runny eggs, stating: that the risk level of Salmonella for UK hen shell eggs produced under the Lion Code, or produced under demonstrably-equivalent comprehensive quality assurance schemes, should be considered as 'very low', whilst for all other UK hen shell eggs, the risk level should be considered 'low'. 'Very low' risk considers eggs safe to be consumed runny, or even raw, by vulnerable groups such as pregnant women, babies, and the elderly. This has been a move welcomed by producers who ensure strict food safety controls and record keeping procedures to protect consumers against Salmonella contamination, and ensure full food traceability. British Lion Producers represent 90% of UK egg producers, and Salmonella controls are written into other production standards, such as 'Laid in Britain'. Additionally, many producers who are not members of such schemes also follow similar procedures on a voluntary basis.

#### **Pullet rearing farms and salmonella vaccination:**

Under the Lion Code, all birds destined for British Lion egg-producing flocks are vaccinated against *Salmonella enteritidis* and *Salmonella typhimurium* using licensed vaccines. A full hygiene monitoring programme, including hygiene swabbing, must be completed by pullet rearers before birds are transferred

to a laying farm. All equipment and vehicles used for transporting pullets to the laying unit must be disinfected; additionally records of bird movement and Salmonella testing must also be kept on a unique flock passport. The Lion Code also includes controls on wild birds and rodents, as well as strict hygiene/ biosecurity requirements to help protect against the spread of diseases such as avian influenza.

#### **Breeding flock controls and salmonella monitoring:**

Hygiene controls for Lion approved breeding flocks and hatcheries are more stringent than required by UK and EU legislation and include hygiene swabbing of hen houses; regular microbiological monitoring of parent flocks and hatcheries, with slaughter of any flocks positive for *Salmonella enteritidis* or *Salmonella typhimurium*, heat and/or acid treatment of feed. Controls for Lion approved flocks also include additional sampling of the farm environment and housing, disinfection of farms between flocks, prevention of cross-infection and the control of wild birds and rodents. Detailed record keeping is also required, with records, monitoring, testing procedures and audits retained for a minimum of two years. There are further specific protocols for farms if Salmonella is detected in the hygiene testing programme.

### **Feed controls:**

Feed for Lion flocks must be produced to the Agricultural Industries Confederation's UFAS (Universal Feed Assurance Scheme) code of practice. Feed samples and records of deliveries and usage must be kept and measures taken to prevent on-farm contamination of feed. In addition to the UK legislative ban on ingredients derived from mammalian sources, avian ingredients are also prohibited from feed, and a number of other ingredients are also banned, including the colourant canthaxanthin, growth promoters and any raw materials likely to produce taint.

### **Packing centres:**

British Lion eggs are stored in hygienic conditions on the farm, transported to the packing centre a minimum of twice a week and kept at a constant temperature below 20°C. All Lion eggs are marked on farm with the producer establishment number, which shows the system of production, country of origin and identification of the farm where the eggs were laid. A website – [www.lioneggfarms.co.uk](http://www.lioneggfarms.co.uk) – is also available to help consumers trace British Lion eggs back to the farm from the code on their eggs.

All eggs must also be accompanied by written documentation for proof of identity including date of lay, type of production and farm of origin. The British Lion mark is stamped on all Lion eggs to show that they have been produced in accordance with a wide-reaching code of practice. In addition all Lion eggs carry a 'best before' date on the egg shell as well as the pack as a guarantee of freshness.

## CASE STUDY:

# Duncan Priestner

## North West egg producer

December 1988 is a date that we remember vividly, when for many months we struggled to sell an egg because of the 'salmonella crisis'. Our egg packer dropped our egg price from about 65p per dozen to a flat rate of 30 pence and we had to dispose of eggs at our local tip. At the end of the crisis, egg consumption remained 10% lower and took decades to get back up to the original pre-crisis levels.

Time has moved on but food safety is still of paramount importance. As a non-lion producer, we still understand the importance and consequences of a salmonella breakdown and the effects this would have on our business. The Lion Code has set the benchmark for the rest of the country and most of us who aren't in the Lion Code or other schemes such as Laid in Britain will still follow a similar regime.



Salmonella generally is thought to come into a farm through the chicks or the feed, but vermin are also known as a big risk. At our rearing site we test for salmonella via different methods including swabbing our rearing sheds and sending off the liners from the transport trays when the chicks arrive. Then when the birds reach 14 weeks of age we do the final check of faeces and dust samples before moving the birds to the laying site.

At the laying site we will again swab the house before we restock the sheds (9 swabs rather than the 6 at the rearing site) plus another rodent swab. When the birds are in lay, it is the National Control Programme (NCP) for salmonella in layers that all egg producers have to adhere to. This involves a 15-week interval salmonella test, although like a lot of others, we do ours every 14 weeks, to allow some flexibility and reduce the chance of a £4,000 fine, for a late test. There is then the official salmonella test from the egg inspector once per year, which we now also have to cover financially. The old hen processors have now been asked by officials to check the producers final salmonella test at the same time as checking their Food Chain Information (FCI) sheet prior to slaughtering the birds to ensure they comply with the relevant sampling regime.

From rearing through to the laying cycle, everything needs to be in place to reduce the risk of contracting salmonella. We have a comprehensive cleaning

schedule for both farms using Defra approved disinfectants. Vermin have to be controlled as mice are known to have spread salmonella in the past. We keep 12 weeks of feed samples, which if needed can be used for testing and this also gives us full traceability of the feed.

There are very few laying hen salmonella outbreaks in the country each year, maybe just the odd farm, but not being able to sell your eggs if you have a positive result would only be the beginning of all of your problems. Disposing of your eggs and your old hens would be a major problem. Trying to retain your customers would be a major challenge for anyone marketing their own eggs.

We have an excellent traceability system in the egg industry. All eggs are stamped on farm with a method of production and then stamped again in the packing centre. Because our farm is all online grading we just stamp the eggs once with all of the information. Every egg pack then has a packing station number on, so we can quickly find where an egg has been packed and which farm it originally came from. On our farm we also put a shed number on all of our eggs, for our own internal audits and also to give us better control if there were ever any issues with our eggs.

Like the 90% of farms that are Lion Code assured we vaccinate for salmonella when the birds are 1, 6 and 15 weeks of age. The risks of salmonella have reduced significantly and it is rarely talked about now.



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