

Your laying hen & pullet update

from RSPCA Assured



Welcome

Welcome to this festive edition of your RSPCA Assured laying hen & pullet e-newsletter. Hopefully, you will find it not only interesting but also useful. I would love to hear your good news stories, awards you have been nominated for, personal and business achievements. This is your opportunity, as well as ours, to share information, photos, thoughts, and ideas, as well as standards updates and pertinent industry news.

A message from Joe Bailey - Head of Farming, Welfare & Welbeing



Joe began her career with the RSPCA as an Inspector back in 1994. Since then, she has worked as a Trading Standards Animal Health and Welfare Inspector, Livestock Technical Manager for NSF and Farm Community Network Ambassador. She is also a Nuffield Farming Scholar.

Joe attends and speaks at events, conferences, industry and government meetings and is a well-regarded figure in the industry.

In 2017, Joe was awarded the CharityComms inspiring communicator award.

‘Its the most wonderful time of the year...’ although for farmers it can also be one of the busiest and most stressful times of the year. Many work long hours to meet the extra demand or will cover for those wanting a holiday, and some can feel isolated and excluded from the festivities, although I am sure there are also those who prefer the peace and solitude of the henhouse. As a child I would often find my dad, after eating his Turkey and plum pudding, managing to escape family charades, taking a well-earned nap in the hay barn!

If your house is full to the brim with family or friends, escaping (even if just to take the dog for a walk, or go for a run, check on the hens), can re-energise you and help keep stress levels low. But please spare a thought for those who are alone or who are struggling to feel jolly. Sparing some of your precious time to reach out a hand, share a

sherry, pull a cracker with or even just pop in to see if they are ok, can not only make a huge difference to them but will also fill you with the true spirit of Christmas.

2019 has been a year of political uncertainty, extreme weather conditions and increased anti-farming activism. By the time you read this, we will have had an election and we may/may not know what the deal is with Brexit! Whatever the result, one thing is certain 2020 will bring about new challenges but also exciting opportunities. Consumer awareness of our label, the public's growing interest in, and demand for higher welfare will hopefully help you value your membership as much as we value you.

I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a wonderful happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.

Tel: 07717 722045



And the winner of the Farmers Weekly Award for Poultry Farmer of the Year goes to...

RSPCA Assured would like to congratulate Susie Macmillan and family for her amazing achievement on winning the Farmers Weekly Poultry Farmer of the Year Award 2019! We are not at all surprised by this as the level of dedication and emphasis on high standards and welfare is clearly evident in the condition of her 'girls'.

The Mac's Farm is a family run business and has been since 1990 when her Mum & Dad bought the farm. Then, it consisted of just one barn and supplied Free Range eggs to the major supermarkets! Now the farm consists of 18000 hens in 3 sheds across 36hs of woodland and grassland and has 7 part-time members of staff who are equally dedicated to the welfare of the hens.

To ensure financial security allowing the highest level of care towards the hens, The Macs Farm has diversified- family, wellbeing, and education are all key drivers. They open up their farm to the public allowing customers to 'Pick Your Own' eggs, camp, attend festivals events and barn dances. They also have a Snake Shack where you can meet, feed and learn about reptiles. They even hold birthday parties! Education is very important to Susie and she has produced the perfect environment for the public to come and learn about the girls, environment and where our food comes from!



[Click here to go to The Mac's Farm Website](#)



Avian Influenza

by Gary Ford, NFU Chief Poultry Adviser

Unfortunately, there has already been an outbreak of Avian Influenza and therefore it is vital we do all we can to stop it spreading. Poultry farmers must focus on good biosecurity to keep AI out of their farms. The virus is in the environment and we must be on our guard.

We have entered the high-risk period for AI. Please help to communicate the 3 key messages to our poultry members:

Enhanced biosecurity all of the time

- * Minimise contact with wild birds, i.e. ensure that food spillages are promptly cleaned up
- * Restrict access to essential visitors and keep full records of visits
- * Check to see if you are in a higher-risk area

- * Use government-approved disinfectants at the correct dilution and regularly change foot dips to ensure that they are effective.
- * Preparing a contingency plan for your farm in the event of AI - or being in a movement restriction zone - is strongly recommended.

Vigilance

Look out for signs. These can vary from species to species. Signs can include:

- * coughing
- * sneezing
- * lethargy
- * diarrhoea
- * reduced food and water intake
- * swollen head
- * blue discolouration of the neck and throat

Prompt reporting of any suspicion of disease

- * Contact your vet promptly if you notice an increase in mortality

The Poultry Health and Welfare Group (PHWG), which we are members, ran an AI webinar in October. The webinar can be watched again here

<https://www.nfuonline.com/sectors/poultry/poultry-news/in-case-you-missed-it-avian-influenza-readiness-webinar/>



The Farming Community Network: Here For You

Sam Conway, Marketing & Communications Manager

As the old saying goes, it never rains, but it pours. For the farming community, this is not only the case metaphorically, but also literally.

The recent spate of torrential rain across the country has been described in some quarters as “biblical” and left a significant amount of British farmland underwater.

Many farmers have been unable to finish harvesting crops and many have experienced significant delays in drilling and sowing winter cereals. Meanwhile, livestock farmers have been forced to bring in livestock earlier than normal, which means higher costs for feed and bedding.

With the water levels reducing, farmers are now counting the cost of the damage that has been done. It only seemed like yesterday that the farming community was dealing with the impact of 2018’s adversely wet spring and dry summer. For some of those people, repeating this process may be too much to bear.

The weather is not the only factor that farmers are being forced to deal with all over again. The subject of climate change has, once again, put farmers in the spotlight and unjustifiably portrayed them in a less than favourable light.

In times like these, it is more important than ever that farmers build their personal and business resilience. As The Farming Community Network (FCN) enters its 25th year in 2020, we have evolved from merely responding to farmers in crisis into an organisation which offers a much more proactive support service that actively encourages farmers to seek help before their situation worsens significantly. We now plan to be even more focused on helping to build personal and business resilience in those that turn to us for help.

There is some great information available to help farmers become more resilient, but this information is rarely in one place and can often be difficult to access, especially if you are dealing with reduced mental wellbeing.

This is why we have launched a brand new initiative called FarmWell - a one-stop online resources hub to help farmers and their businesses stay strong and resilient. FarmWell gives ready access to a range of vital information from a wide variety of sources. It is free to use and has three clear aims:

To help develop and keep farm businesses resilient through changing times

To help farmers, their families, and their staff become resilient and enable them to manage their personal and business lives more effectively

To provide ready access to a range of support and help to anyone who may need it

FarmWell is available to use now and is already attracting interest from a wide variety of key agricultural stakeholders, including the NFU and AHDB. To learn more about FarmWell, visit www.farmwell.org.uk.

If you, or someone you know needs someone to talk to, FCN is here for you. The FCN helpline is open from 7am-11pm every day of the year. Call 03000 111999 or email help@fcn.org.uk.

FCN

THE FARMING COMMUNITY NETWORK



FarmWell

INFORMATION | SUPPORT | RESILIENCE



Meet the Office Staff



Mary Spreadbury Membership Services Manager

Mary joined RSPCA Assured in 2014, having previously worked in the RSPCA's Farm Animal department for six months. She has held a number of roles within RSPCA Assured since then, including administrator, Certification assistant to the Field Assessor Manager, and now Membership Services Team manager.

Mary enjoys socialising and being active by taking part in activities such as walking and cycling, and is a keen Scrabble and board game player.

I am fortunate to lead the Membership Services Team from RSPCA Assured Headquarters in Southwater, West Sussex and have done for almost 6 years. Before that, I held several roles in the team since joining RSPCA Assured in 2014.

It is a very varied and fast-moving role that oversees the essential compliance processing and procedures of our UKAS accredited scheme, whilst supporting our members and delivering the best possible service all round.

No two days are the same, one day I could be working with the Operations Manager to review a members audit report in relation to compliance processes or non conformance, attending meetings with NSF our Certification Partner, planning the distribution of welfare standard updates, designing process improvements such as the recent digitisation of our certificates to save on unnecessary use of paper or working on the streamline project for the implementation of Salesforce, our new CRM platform. The list really is endless as we are constantly seeking to improve what we do for our members and staff alike.

I also get involved with the technical aspects of the scheme evaluating questions and queries raised by producers directly and via the assessors, the marketing team and many other stakeholders. Along with leading the Complaint process and raising / Derogation / Exception requests.

It is not all inward-facing though, and I really enjoy talking directly with producers and groups, whether it is just a quick update or working on projects.

In my spare time, I enjoy physical activities such as walking. When I saw the Everest 'Expawdition' Base camp trek featured in the Head Quarters foyer, I thought it would be a significant challenge to undertake! After I declared my provisional request for over 2 weeks of annual leave I realised that I had to go ahead with it, and I am glad I did! The few 'enjoyments' of the trek was stopping to appreciate the views on route, the feeling of achievement on reaching base camp with 19 other like-minded & supportive trekkers, and relaxation time after the end of the trek at our lovely hotel in Kathmandu. It took a good week of really early nights to recover from the trek and come back down to earth, so to speak. To be honest, even after doing a recent presentation at Head Office, it's still difficult to appreciate the enormity of the trip. I raised £700 myself and with fellow colleagues, Helen and Barrie's fundraising amounts to £2800, all to RSPCA



Meet the Farm Animals Department RSPCA

Lucy Blumburg Farm Livestock Officer



Lucy studied Animal Health and Welfare at Harper Adams University before getting an Agricultural Graduate role within the 2 Sisters Food Group for 18 months. She then moved on to become a Farm Livestock Officer, monitoring RSPCA Assured farms in West Midlands and Wales.

Lucy has always been passionate about animals, especially concerning their health and welfare. Her passion for animals began at the young age of 5 when she began horse riding. She was a member of Ludlow Pony Club for 9 years and still competes regularly in showjumping and eventing competitions. She loves being outside, going for long walks in the fresh air and outdoor activities!

Lucy will be spending Christmas with her family and dogs eating and drinking as much as possible!



Head of Commercial Development Lydia Stratton



I joined RSPCA Assured (previously known as Freedom Food) as a Business Development Manager in 2005, with the remit to introduce the scheme and build relationships with the retailers and members. I had no knowledge of agriculture or animal welfare, so this was a complete change of direction for me.

I had worked in a variety of roles and industries; recruitment, mobile phones, government training, managed a team of field consultants in the South East of England and had my own business. RSPCA Assured at first was 'just' a business development role. As my understanding grew and my interest in the scheme developed, I was hooked.

Over the years I have spent a lot of time at agriculture shows, meeting members, promoting the scheme on a retailer's stand, building relationships with a variety of industry stakeholders, attending a variety of conferences, exhibitions, and networking events. It has been a busy time.

14 years on, I am still passionate about promoting the scheme, our members and their products to retail, foodservice and the industry. My role and responsibilities have grown and there are now five of us, with managers focusing on supply chain traceability and auditing, business development and levy.

Our focus is on transparency and traceability within the supply chain and to manage this we launched a chain of custody standard for the supply chain with the help of BRC, Sainsbury's, NSF and Lloyds Register, the latter also audit the food supply chain on our behalf.

We map our supply chains to try and ensure any use of the RSPCA Assured name or logo is valid and the products it is used on are authentic. To achieve this we are building

relationships with the industry to enable us to cross-reference members and claims. We have met with a variety of stakeholders such as Soil Association, Association of Independent Meat Traders, BRC, Federation of Warehouse and Distributors and the British Sandwich Association, amongst others, to garner support for our traceability efforts.

We build relationships with food and farming industry stakeholders, engaging with all the major retailers and discounters, associations and members. And we actively promote the scheme to foodservice to get more RSPCA Assured products listed..

When I am not working I have two daughters who keep me busy, do a little sports therapy (I am qualified!) and my passion for martial arts has been overtaken by a passion for golf.

My partner and I spend most weekends playing in all weathers with the odd trip abroad for a new challenge. I'm not very good, I can just about manage to hit the ball and find it immensely frustrating but my competitive streak keeps me going!



Xenia Kingsley **Marketing Manager**

Xenia is responsible for consumer marketing. This includes planning television advertising; event catering partnerships; Google Adwords; campaign implementation and supplier management. Xenia also oversees our Marketing Executive, Emily.

Prior to joining RSPCA Assured in early 2018, Xenia's career background was in PR and marketing, where she worked agency-side for a number of years. She holds a degree in Marketing Food and Drink.

Laying hens marketing update

By Xenia Kingsley, Marketing Manager

With Christmas just around the corner, we are now deep into our festive advertising programme, and while the star of the show is turkey, we also know that Christmas is a big time for festive baking and egg sales. From gingerbread cookies to Christmas cake, we have a host of festive recipes on our website that we're promoting throughout December.

And speaking of baking, the results are in from our £125k Great British Bake Off advertising push. Our Great British Bake Off themed TV ad, filmed at Lakes Free Range earlier in the summer, aired throughout August and September, including a slot during the premiere episode, which had an incredible 5.6m viewers. In total, our TV ad reached almost 8m viewers! Thank you again to David Brass and team for allowing us to film their wonderful farm and hens.

The digital activation of our Bake Off push (promoted posts on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram) delivered 4.4m impressions, 1.5m views, and 17.67k clicks through to our website. We also worked with Instagram influencers on this project, including ex-Bake Off contestants, Love Island stars and food bloggers. Over the course of the programme, a total of 26 Instagram posts and 181 Instagram stories generated 4.3 million impressions and 3.5 million total engagements, which has resulted in our highest awareness result to date..

We reached millions of people with this activity and got some amazing feedback from the public about RSPCA Assured eggs.

Don't forget to tag us on social media if you post about any product deals and offers, so we can share them with our followers. And if you have any exciting food photos please do send them across. We'd love to help promote them on our website and social media - we are @rspcaassured on Twitter and @rspcaassured_official on Instagram.

Email us at hello@rspcaassured.org.uk



Popholes clarification

By Joe Bailey, Head of Farming

The base height of popholes - therefore the distance from the floor to the bottom of the pophole - was discussed at the last RSPCA Laying Hen Scientific Technical Advisory Group (STAG) meeting in November 2018.

This was in response to a concern raised by a stakeholder that the base height of some

popholes may mean birds have difficulty accessing the range. If the base is too high, then the birds either have to jump to exit the pophole, or ramps may have to be provided, which may not be ideal.

There isn't currently an RSPCA standard concerning pophole base height - only pophole dimensions - so this issue was discussed at the meeting*.

However, nothing has been progressed following this initial discussion. No change in standards has been proposed, and this issue requires further consideration.

We would like to reassure members that should any changes to the RSPCA standards be made for pophole base height in future, this would only be undertaken following consideration of a range of available evidence - including scientific research (where available), expert opinion and practical experience. Consultation with a range of stakeholders including the veterinary profession, welfare researchers, farmers and industry groups would also be carried out.

Finally, as always, members should be reassured that we will always write to them with notice before any new standard is introduced, to allow adequate time for any necessary changes to be made. This also gives members the chance to contact the RSPCA/RSPCA Assured for help and guidance if they have any concerns.

We are always here to help and listen to members. Anyone with any concerns about the standards should contact the RSPCA farm animals department on 0300 123 0183 or, for scheme related queries, contact RSPCA Assured on 01403 800141 or help@rspcaassured.org.uk

*There is no requirement for pophole base heights to be higher than 450mm, as has been reported, as there is currently no RSPCA standard concerning pophole base height.



[Click here to see our laying hens standards](#)

Need to contact us?

We are here to help! Please contact the relevant department below:

[Commercial](#) [Farming/Mental Wellbeing](#) [Finance](#) [Marketing](#) [Membership](#)

Best wishes,

RSPCA Assured

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Registered Office: Freedom Food Limited, Wilberforce Way, Southwater, Horsham, West Sussex, RH13 9RS

www.berspcaassured.org.uk t. 0300 123 0014 e. help@rspcaassured.org.uk

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