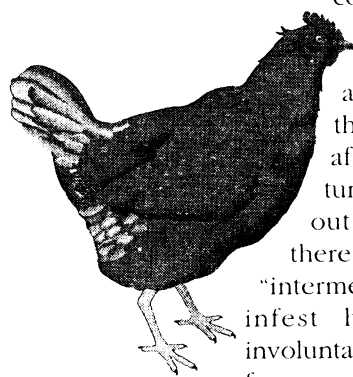


Preventive protection for chickens

SALMONELLAE are dreaded by consumers and poultry farmers alike. While consumers fear the threat to their health, poultry farmers have to deal with considerable losses in sales.



Salmonellae are the worst enemies of poultry farmers for a number of reasons. For the one thing, there are types that severely affect the health of chickens and turkeys, even to the point of wiping out whole populations. And then there are other types that leave the "intermediate host" unscathed, only to infest humans who become their involuntary "final host". The bad thing for farmers and consumers is that if a single animal is infected by salmonellae, sooner or later the whole flock may be infested and with it, also the eggs and meat. The infected chicken excretes the salmonellae with its dropping, with which the other animals come in contact when pecking food.

This also helps explain the transmission of salmonellae from egg to humans. When an infected hen lays an egg, it comes in contact with the infested droppings and becomes a transmitter of salmonellae. If the infected egg is used for breeding, the salmonellae are passed on to the next generation. And these bacteria are particularly keen to infest freshly hatched chicks.

Most infected animals remain salmonellae transmitters their entire life. On a single day, a tiny troop of one to ten salmonellae per animal can infect up to 80 per cent of the entire livestock of chickens, whereas whole armies of bacteria are necessary to infect older animals.

Until now, poultry farmers have relied on vaccines and antibiotics to combat their salmonellae problems. And, of course, coop hygiene is also extremely important.

Despite all such precautions, these persistent micro organism always manage to survive even the most stringent of hygienic programmes.

All this could change – Thanks to a new principle for natural preventive protection against salmonellae, which was developed in 1995 at Microbial Developments Ltd., a Bayer company in the U.K.

The technical term for this principle is called 'competitive exclusion'. This idea is not unlike the fable with the tortoise and the hare. No matter how hard the hare tries, the tortoise beats him to the finish and robs him of his place on the victory rostrum. The comparison is that the salmonellae are not destroyed by antibiotics: there is simply no more room for them in the intestines of the pultry.

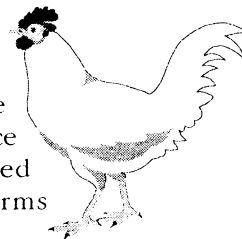
The new principle works as follows: As soon as the chicks have hatched, they are sprayed with the natural intestinal flora. This measure is sufficient because the bacteria immediately make their way to the spot where they feel most comfortable: the intestines.

After only a few days, the chicks are equipped with a natural intestinal flora against which the salmonellae do not have a chance.

"Using this principle, millions of chickens have since been treated in extensive field trials in Europe," reports Dr. Robrecht Froyman, who is responsible for the worldwide clinical testing in connection with this project.

How does one obtain this natural intestinal flora? And how can it be reproduced outside animals? In the past many researchers have sought the answers to these questions without success. But MDL researchers have now succeeded in developing the right 'formula.'

The Poultry farmers participating in the field trials, in a combined effort with hygienic measures, see in Aviguard. (the trade name for Bayer's new anti-salmonellae product) the big chance to wipe out this feared pathogen at their farms once and for all.



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