

New website to help reduce the risk of Avian Influenza (AI)



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With recent avian influenza outbreaks front-of-mind, the Australian Egg Corporation Ltd (AECL) today launched a new initiative aimed at reducing the risk of future disease outbreaks among Australia's laying hens.

AECL developed the online diagnostic tool called Hen Support, in collaboration with Fractal Solutions, to assist egg farmers identify and solve performance problems and diagnose sick hens before seeking further veterinary advice.

AECL Managing Director James Kellaway said Hen Support would provide egg farmers with important information about hen health issues (including avian influenza) as well as guidance on hen performance 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"Avian Influenza cannot be cured with Hen Support but it can help identify the disease. In fact, if used properly and in the right situation, Hen Support could assist in detecting the disease in its early stages," Mr Kellaway said.

"Hen Support provides egg farmers with the opportunity to assess the severity of hen health problems and seek veterinary assistance when necessary. In some instances, Hen Support can pick up early signs of a disease so it can be treated and contained in a rapid and efficient manner. If an egg farmer notices that their hens are not well, the farmer can run the symptoms through a simple set of question on the Hen Support website. Based on the farmer's answers to those questions, the site then provides advice on what could be ailing the hens and what the potential courses of action are, before the farmer sought help from a veterinary surgeon. This could help reduce the risk and spread of avian influenza and other serious diseases in Australia into the future, or at least get on top of a disease a lot earlier," Mr Kellaway said.

Fractal Solutions Managing Director, Dr Santiago Ramirez, said Hen Support could help with rapid identification of diseases, particularly notifiable ones such as avian influenza, so that losses and further spreading was minimised.

"This will ultimately improve the overall health status of the Australian layer flock. Hen Support puts Australia at the forefront of primary production innovation and knowledge extension," Dr Ramirez said.

Hen Support also includes a library that provides straightforward information on over 120 hen health disorders.

"Each disorder is briefly summarised on the site. The site also suggests potential courses of action to fix the problem and prevent them from occurring into the future. For less than \$1 per day hen support provides a resource that will assist producers identify possible issues that could be costing them thousands," he said.

Egg farmers are eligible to receive free access to Hen Support (www.hensupport.com.au) for the first 12 months. For further information, please email contactus@hensupport.com.au.