
Editorial

Only a few hundred readers of this journal were able to be present in the audience at the European Poultry Congress in Bremen, Germany, last September when one of the invited speakers, Dr Andrew Chesson from the Rowett Research Institute, presented his paper on 'Transgenic plants in poultry nutrition'. However, we considered his valuable contribution to the current discussions on this important topic, well worthy of the attention of wider audience. So with the agreement of Dr Chesson and the conference organisers we are publishing the full text of his paper in this issue.

In his introduction, he says 'Public concerns about the safety of recombinant DNA technologies have resulted in what is effectively an embargo on the growth of genetically modified crops in Europe. Only small areas are currently grown, usually for experimental purposes. Despite the concerns expressed in Europe the global planting of GM varieties continues to increase'. It is a sad fact that much of the public opinion about the safety of genetically modified feedstuffs is uninformed and based mainly on perception and prejudice. The studies reported here by Dr Chesson should help shed more light on this contentious issue and help to reduce concerns about the safety of GM feedstuffs for human and animal health.

Another issue that has provoked considerable debate in Europe, over the past 40 or more years, is the question of washing table eggs. Current European Union legislation specifically prohibits the washing of Class A eggs for human consumption. As long ago as the 1960s, washing and oiling table eggs was common commercial practice in the USA, but egg producers in the United Kingdom could only use dry cleaning methods. This was either by hand buffing or by feeding the dirty eggs through machines based on moving belts with abrasive pads which effectively removed not only surface contamination but much of the eggshell cuticle as well. Despite the fact that there has been a great advance in egg-washing technology since that time, and modern eggs washer/sanitizers are highly efficient machines, table egg washing is still banned in Europe. Somewhat illogically, hatching eggs can be washed and sanitised prior to incubation. The paper on washing table eggs, by Hutchison *et al.* reviews the history of egg washing in Europe, together with the technologies and scientific principles involved.

The last time this journal published a major review on the role of ascorbic acid in poultry nutrition was in 1986. Since then there has been a considerable volume of new research, particularly on ascorbic acid in relation to metabolic stress and its physiological consequences. One of the world's leading authorities, Professor Colin Whitehead from the Roslin Institute, Edinburgh, in a comprehensive review brings the story right up to date.

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