

Australian Egg Corp takes the lead in responsible use of antibiotics

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Australian Egg Corporation Ltd (AECL) has commenced the process of Antimicrobial Stewardship (AMS) through participation in a survey of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in layer hens by the University of Adelaide.

The survey is being funded by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources as part of the National AMR Strategy 2015-2019 which forms part of a global effort to explore and address AMR.

Australian Egg Corporation Ltd Managing Director, Rowan McMonnies, said the National AMR Strategy 2015-2019 identifies key activities to promote AMS. One activity identified is to develop a national coordinated survey of AMR and antimicrobial usage.

“This survey will provide benchmark data about antimicrobial resistance in the Australian layer industry. The red meat and pork industries have completed surveys and the broiler and salmon industries have surveys underway.

“The egg industry has a good story to tell on antibiotics use and we expect the results to confirm this.

“Antibiotic use is tightly regulated and the few therapeutic antibiotics used to treat layer hens for health and welfare reasons in Australia do not include the class of antimicrobials that are critically important to humans. The antibiotics that are commonly referred to as growth promotants are not used in Australian egg farming.

“But we can’t be complacent. Recent growth in free range and non-cage egg farming means greater exposure to environments which may contain pathogens and as a result, therapeutic antibiotics will continue to be used strategically to ensure the welfare of layer hens that become ill.

“The AMS process is about finding the right way to use them and future research will be conducted to monitor their use as well as exploring alternatives to antibiotics such as vaccines and non-antibiotic feed additives,” he said.

The results of the survey will be available in late 2017.

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