



St David's Poultry Team, one of the largest poultry veterinary practices in the U.K. employing some of the countries leading poultry specialists, have created a new website "The Chicken Vet". This came about from the ever increasing popularity in keeping chickens. It is now believed there are more than 750,000 hobby owners in the UK and with the British Hen Welfare Trust just about to re-home it's 250,000th ex battery hen St David's identified a real demand for this service.

The site is very easy to use and its main aim is to offer veterinary help and advice to chicken keepers, the site includes a unique health care pathway that people can follow to help them with common problems and ailments with their chickens, this will lead them to a recommended product or they will be advised to seek veterinary advice.

There is plenty of useful information on all aspects of chicken health and well being as well as advice on chicken vaccination, worming and problems commonly encountered such as lice and red mite control. There are a range of products for sale, with veterinary advice and recommendations and quite uniquely people can receive continual veterinary health updates supplied through newsletters, the sites news page and Twitter alerts.

Another very useful aspect of the site is a helpline that concerned chicken keepers can call, manned by Chicken Vet field service staff, they are able to answer questions of a non veterinary nature about keeping chickens. If the caller needs veterinary advice, they are advised to contact their local vet or attend one of the practices associated to Chicken Vet around the UK.

In addition to the site the St David's poultry practice are also developing one day courses for other veterinarians on general chicken diseases and treatments to help with their continuing professional development. They will also be offering training to Domestic Poultry keepers through their experienced field service managers in different locations around the country.

You can visit the Chicken Vet Website here:



The Beryl's team are delighted that The Chicken Vet website has been set up, and we believe it will provide a vital service to the growing number of chicken keepers around the country. We have therefore teamed up with The Chicken Vet for distribution of Beryl's via their online shop with a link direct from our website. Beryl's is available at the same great prices together with special offers and services and many other exciting products to keep your hens in the best of health and condition. We hope you like The Chicken Vet as much as us.

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The British Hen Welfare Trust is a national charity that re-homes commercial laying hens destined for slaughter, educates the public about how they can make a difference to hen welfare, and encourages support for the British egg industry. Its ultimate aim is to see consumers and food manufacturers buying only UK produced free range eggs, resulting in a strong British egg industry where all commercial laying hens enjoy a good quality life.

Since it was founded in 2005 by Jane Howorth almost 250,000 caged hens have been found pet homes and the whole issue of caged egg production has been put in the public eye as never before. The charity places great emphasis on educating consumers on how they can influence and support British farming through their shopping choices and has drawn considerable publicity and high profile endorsement, including support from Jamie Oliver, Amanda Holden and the Duchess of Richmond.

For more information or to support the work of the charity, please go to: <http://www.bhwt.org.uk/>

For every pack of Beryl's Friendly Bacteria sold via this website, 20 pence will be donated to the British Hen Welfare Trust.

Healthy breakthrough

Probiotics for chickens are nothing new in the commercial sector, but now we can all buy them for our back garden hens, as David Spackman, NDP, BVSc, MRCVS, explains.

All of us enjoy a tasty, nutritious egg. Otherwise, it's unlikely that we would be keeping chickens. Now that the medical authorities have agreed that cholesterol from eating eggs isn't a problem, we only have to worry about what else the eggs may contain, which might be less than healthy. The only way to truly keep chickens so that they cannot pick up anything from their environment which might harm them – or anyone eating their eggs – is to house them in isolators (as is the case in research facilities). Under these tightly controlled conditions, the birds receive only sterilised feed and water; even their air supply is filtered.

This, of course, isn't only a physical impossibility for the domestic poultry keeper but, a totally undesirable one as well. Quite apart from the cost and inconvenience involved, it also prevents any close liaison between birds and keeper.

Limited protection

Under ideal environmental conditions, chickens can remain clear of potentially harmful organisms. However, in the majority of domestic situations, even with the utmost care and attention to hygiene, conditions usually prevail where the bird needs a little extra help. In the case of the common viruses which trouble chickens, it is possible to vaccinate. The situation is different, however, with many bacteria. In the event of a bacterial challenge, it will involve, in most cases, a treatment with an antibiotic. The ruling on the use of the majority of these is that the eggs from hens being treated should not be used for human consumption. If the birds remain untreated, there's the possibility of some bacteria coming through in, or on the

egg, to the consumer, which may result in ill health.

There's also the danger to the hen herself. The inside of the small intestine is lined with tongue-like projections, known as villi. They are responsible for absorption of nutrients from the gut. When affected by virulent viruses or bacteria, the covering of these villi is damaged, which not only interferes with nutrient absorption, but also allows harmful bacteria such as *Salmonellae* and *E. coli*, access to the bloodstream.

Where environmental conditions deteriorate, and birds are forced to live in wet, muddy runs, they'll need extra help if they're to successfully counter health challenges.

Health benefits

Many readers will be familiar with the benefits of probiotics, and I'm sure that plenty of you use them on a regular basis themselves. The concept isn't new. As long ago as 1908, in Bulgaria, it was noted that the inhabitants lived to an extreme age. A similar trend was also spotted in various other parts of the world too, and the common factor that linked them all was the population's consumption of raw, plain yoghurt. Further investigation then revealed that this product contained several beneficial bacteria, which gave the consumer a degree of protection against harmful organisms.

In the animal field, the first work to mimic these effects was carried out by Greenberg and Nurmi in Finland. Greenberg showed that certain bacteria in the gut of blowflies suppressed the infection levels of *Salmonella typhimurium* in their maggots. Nurmi then questioned what similar protective systems were at work in the chicken.

Up until the beginning of the 20th century, most chickens were hatched under broody hens and reared by them too. Hence, they were exposed to the gut bacteria from the mother and, as long as she was healthy, they thrived. However, the increasing use of incubators means that, nowadays, most chicks are hatched artificially. A direct consequence of this is that these chicks aren't exposed to any beneficial bacteria that a mother bird may have excreted, such as lactobacilli, the organism found in most human probiotics.

Continuing this work, Nurmi and other researchers around the world extracted various beneficial bacteria from the chicken gut and, by feeding it to chicks, showed a degree of protection against harmful organisms. They also found that the greater the variety of beneficial bacteria in the mix, the better the results. Some scientists in the UK suggested that if the whole contents of a healthy chicken's gut could be used, containing no harmful agents, then the optimum results might be obtained.

They searched and finally found an old lady living in a cottage in the Malvern Hills, with a few chickens in the back garden. These proved to have an ideal gut flora, and researchers began a long and precise procedure to produce this in large quantities, and then freeze-dry it. This resulted in a product something like instant coffee or soup, which has since been extensively tested by government agencies and others around the world, and been used successfully in more than two billion commercial poultry facilities worldwide.

Exciting product

Now, the really exciting news is that this same product, branded as Beryl's Healthy Bacteria, is available in pack sizes that allow it's beneficial effects to be applied to chickens at the domestic end of the poultry scene. e domestic poultry scene.

The World Health Organisation has defined both probiotics and 'normal adult gut flora' (NAGF), and has declared the latter to be superior in protection. To date, there is no human NAGF, so we have to 'make do' with probiotics. However, in the chicken field, we are luckier in having the superior product available right now.

So I imagine you're wondering how it works. Well, there are several possible modes of action, but principally, through lining the chicken's gut with beneficial bacteria, harmful bacteria (Salmonellae, E. coli and other pathogens) are prevented from being able to establish themselves. Although Salmonella enteritidis and Salmonella typhimurium can be vaccinated against, there are over 2,000 other Salmonellae, as well as other pathogens, not covered by this vaccination. This is where the NAGF or Competitive Exclusion product proves its value. The freeze-dried product is re-suspended in a small quantity of water, and given directly into the beak of each bird, using the 1ml syringe provided with every pack; available in sizes measured to give enough product for six or 12 birds.

By providing your hens with Competitive Exclusion (CD) product on a regular basis (just as we humans take our probiotics), then you'll offer them the best chance of resisting the many challenges thrown at them as they develop and grow. For the best results, I advise a monthly application to each bird. Not only will this help ensure better physical effects, but it'll prove to be the most cost-effective approach too.

The product, called Beryl's Friendly Bacteria, should now be available from all good poultry product suppliers, and you can find out more information by telephoning 01684 580832, or visiting: www.berylsbackyard.co.uk

They'll need extra help if they're to successfully counter health challenges

1 Now your chickens can benefit from the positive effects of 'friendly bacteria', increasing their resistance to disease.

2 All of us enjoy a tasty, nutritious egg. Otherwise, it's unlikely that we would be keeping chickens.

3 Chickens need to be completely isolated in 'laboratory conditions' to guarantee a disease-free life; not a practical proposition.

5 The inside of the small intestine is lined with tongue-like projections, known as villi, which absorb nutrients from the gut. Note here the villus to the right, which has it's covering intact, compared to many of those in the centre of the electron microscope picture, which have had their outer layers stripped away.

6 Hens enduring a poor environment will need extra help if they're to successfully counter

health challenges.

Beryl's Helps the UK Corncrake (*Crex crex*)

Reintroduction



An Adult Corncrake

The Corncrake (*Crex crex*) is a migratory member of the rail family (Rallidae) which breeds in northern Eurasia and winters in sub-Saharan Africa. It is a threatened species with an estimated population of only 5 to 10 million worldwide.

Corncrakes have been declining in Britain for the last 100 years, and modern agricultural methods such as mechanized mowing have been identified as a primary cause. The Corncrake Reintroduction Project, involving the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Natural England, the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) and the Pensthorpe Conservation Trust (PCT) aims to re-establish the corncrake as a species nesting regularly in England.

The first birds that were hatched for the project were parent-reared but unfortunately a lot of these were lost due to predators. Since then eggs have been hatched in artificial incubators at ZSL Whipsnade Zoo and brooder reared until 10 to 14 days old before being transferred to pre-release pens at the RSPB reserve in Cambridgeshire. At approximately 30 days of age they are released. The first release of 6 birds took place in 2002 and the numbers released have increased consistently each year with over 100 birds being released in 2007.

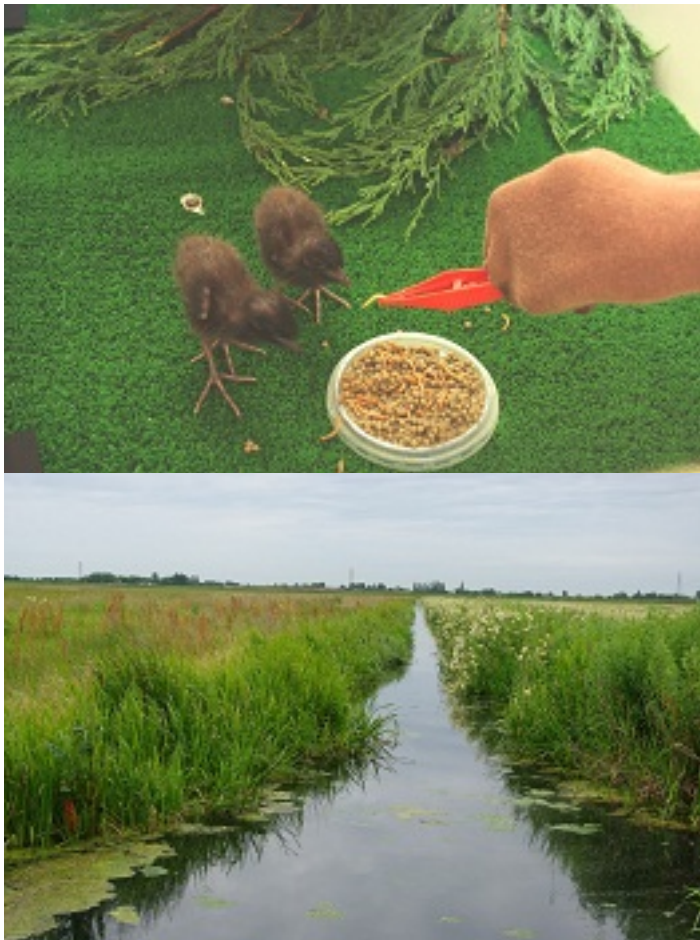
From 2007 to 2009 ZSL Whipsnade Zoo suffered losses in corncrake chicks aged between 6 and 16 days, likely due to infection with a bacterium called *Enterococcus hirae*. The Zoological Society of London heard about the competitive exclusion product Aviguard, which is our commercial poultry industry equivalent to Beryl's Friendly Bacteria, and contacted us to ask if we could supply some product for a study to see if competitive exclusion could help combat *Enterococcus* infection.

We were delighted to help, and even more delighted to hear that the study has been a great success with no deaths associated with *Enterococcus hirae* in 2010. The study will be repeated in 2011 to further investigate the use of this product in corncrake captive rearing.

Joanna Reynard a 2010 MSc graduate in Wild Animal Health says that "this study supports the value of CE (competitive exclusion) products in competitively excluding *Enterococcus hirae*. CE products have the potential to be used on other avian reintroduction programmes in the future. In addition to controlling pathogenic bacteria they could be used prior to a stressful event such as transport, in the face of an infection or even to establish normal gut flora after a course of

antibiotics.”

We wish the Corncrake Reintroduction project continued success in future years.



Corncrake Chicks being fed
Cambridge

The Nene Washes, RSPB,

released

where the Corncrakes are

"Your excellent product was recommended by my vet to use after a course of antibiotics and I have to tell you it was brilliant!"



Helen Rose with her "girls"

These were the words of Helen Rose, from Tonbridge in Kent, who has three hens; an Orpington, a Sussex, and a Maran. Helen went on to say:

“My hens have never looked better, bright combed and glossy feathered and one who's never laid started laying!! I think it's such a brilliant product that more people should know about, I was just so pleased my vet mentioned it”

We were delighted to hear Helen's comments, and have received many positive comments from customers in recent weeks. We thought it might be nice to share more of your comments and experiences on our website

We would love to hear your comments about Beryl's Friendly Bacteria. E-mail us at info@life-care-products.com Send us your name and address, a photo of you and your hens, and let us know your thoughts. You may well appear on our website soon!