

Health and welfare in organic poultry in Europe

State of the art and future challenges

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Organic poultry in Europe

> 4 million laying hens (UK, France, Germany, Netherlands)

1.8 million broilers (France, UK)



Diversity of poultry systems

Characteristic	Netherlands	Switzerland
No. of hens	700.000	220.000
Mean farm size	7.000	1.200
Max group size	3.000	500
Organic since	Rearing	Parent animals and rearing
Farm type	Mainly specialised	Mixed
Sales	75% exported to Germany	100% domestic consumption

Animal health

- Mortality 11(0-21)% in NL and 8 (3-25)% in Switzerland
- E. coli, IB, Coccidiosis, Brachyspira
- High infection pressure in NL: 25 million of layers in 2 regions
- Vaccinations against Marek's Disease, Gumboro, Infectious Bronchitis, Avian Encephalomyelitis, Coccidia, NewCastle Disease, Salmonella, Laryngotracheitis, Fowl Pox and Egg Drop Syndrome.
- Endoparasites
- Red blood mites



Food safety

- Salmonella: NL vaccination
- Dioxins (and PCB's?) , especially in smaller farms
- Avian Influenza



Vaccination against Avian flu

- Why: chickens can stay outside year round
- Methods: marker vaccine, sentinel animals, intensive monitoring of chickens and wild birds
- No vaccination in NL
- Consensus needed on European/world-wide level



Animal Welfare – feather pecking

- NL 70% of the laying flocks, 54% of the rearing flocks
- Laying farms: limited use of the outdoor run
- Rearing farms: high densities and poor environments
 - feather pecking not recognised
 - persistence through whole chicken life

(see poster about rearing)



Outdoor runs

- Often not attractive for chickens
- Mineral loss to ground water
- Dioxins
- Wild birds, avian flu



Broilers

Characteristic	Netherlands	Switzerland
No farms	16	77
Broilers/year	190.000	66.000
Farm size	12.000	900

Coccidiosis, salmonella (13%) and campylobacter (35%)

NL: small demand (price 4x conventional)



Challenges for the future – research

- Feather pecking, especially during rearing
- Outdoor runs
- Vulnerability to diseases
- Parasite control
- 100% organic feed
- Broilers: coccidiosis, salmonella and campylobacter



Challenges – awareness farmers

- Man-animal relationship
- Feather pecking, especially in rearing hens
- Wholeness of a chickens life
- Importance of outdoor run
- Preventive health care



Challenges in regulations

- Rearing conditions
- Vaccination against avian flu
- Farm size



Thank you for your attention!



LOUIS BOLK
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