

# **The eggshell quality of table eggs and how this affects food safety**

By

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A thesis submitted for the research degree of **Master of Rural Science (Poultry)** of  
the University of New England Armidale, Australia

August, 2012



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## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I am extremely grateful to Almighty “**God**” Who enabled me to fulfil the partial requirements for **Master of Rural Science (Poultry)** research degree successfully and bestowed upon me an opportunity to achieve one of my life’s desires.

I have no appropriate words that fully convey the sense of immense indebtedness and deep gratitude that I owe to my Principal Supervisor, **Dr Juliet Rosemary Roberts**, Associate Professor in Physiology, School of Environmental & Rural Science, for her timely advice, technical guidance (study design and data analysis), constant encouragement and constructive criticism during the research work, even in the midst of her multifarious duties. At times I strayed into blind alleys and it was her guidance that led me out of the lengthening shadows. In fact, it would not have been possible without her help and personal interest to complete this study successfully. A teacher in the shape of friends, everyone wish to be their supervisor.

I wish to express my deep sense of gratitude and sincere appreciation to my Co Supervisor, **Dr Kapil K. Chousalkar**, Senior Lecturer in Avian Health, School of Veterinary & Animal Science Roseworthy Campus, The University of Adelaide, for his constant technical guidance and valuable suggestions and providing facilities during the present study. His personal involvement with me in the laboratory work in the Microbiology PC II (Proximity Contaminant II) laboratory of the University of Adelaide, Roseworthy campus, imparts him 50% credit of the present work.

I highly acknowledge both of my supervisors in terms of their financial support that markedly reduced my tension and worries and put me on the right track of deeply focusing on studies.

I also owe thanks to **Prof. Jeremy J. Bruhl**, Professor in Botany, School of Environmental & Rural Science for his constant and extended cooperation during the Scanning Electron Microscopy.

Deep and sincere thanks are forwarded to **Mr. George Plunkett**, Ph.D student in Botany, School of Environmental & Rural Science, for his quick positive response and installation of filaments in the Scanning Electron Microscope.

The friendly cooperation and efforts in egg collections of Mr. Bede Burke and Mr. Rowly Horn is highly acknowledged as without their contributions I wouldn’t be able to carry out my research activities smoothly.

Last but not least, with esteemed reverence I acknowledge the Poultry CRC Australia who gave me an opportunity to work on this small project, a part of “Egg Safety and Food Quality”.

In the end, I am indebted to my parents and siblings whose continued support, good wishes and sacrifices in the form of prayers, love and financial support made it possible for me to achieve this goal.

**SAMIULLAH**

## Abbreviations

|                 |                                     |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| ABS             | Australian bureau of statistics     |
| AECL            | Australian egg corporation limited  |
| BPW             | buffered peptone water              |
| BSN             | breaking shell strength             |
| CC              | conventional cage production system |
| cfu             | colony forming unit                 |
| CO <sub>2</sub> | carbon dioxide                      |
| EDTA            | ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid     |
| FR              | free range production system        |
| g               | gram                                |
| HCl             | hydrochloric acid                   |
| hr              | hour                                |
| IgY             | Immunoglobulin Y                    |
| M               | molar                               |
| mm              | millimeter                          |
| mM              | millimolar                          |
| μL              | micro litre                         |
| μm              | micrometer                          |
| nm              | nanometer                           |

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| N     | Newtons                                   |
| PBS   | phosphate buffered saline                 |
| PP IX | protoporphyrin IX                         |
| RVS   | rappaport –vissiliadis soya peptone broth |
| RO    | reverse osmosis                           |
| rpm   | rotation per minute                       |
| Sec   | second                                    |
| SE    | standard error                            |
| SEM   | scanning electron microscope              |
| TBC   | total bacterial count                     |
| TEC   | total Enterobacteriaceae count            |
| TSI   | triple sugar iron                         |
| TSS   | technical services and supplies           |
| VBRGA | violet red bile glucose agar              |
| wk    | week                                      |
| XLD   | xylose lysine deoxycholate                |

## Abstract

The longitudinal effect of age and production system was evaluated for egg quality parameters and egg microbial load by following 2 flocks (Hy Line brown commercial layer), one conventional cage production system (CC) and one free range (FR). A horizontal study of the effect of flock age (22, 39, 55 and 79 wk) of the same strain of bird from the same CC was also evaluated for egg quality parameters and egg microbial load. From the CC and FR production systems, eggs were collected at the age of 25, 35, 45, 55, 65 and 75 wk with one extra collection at 85 wk from CC. For the eggshell and egg internal quality parameters, a significant main effect ( $P < 0.05$ ) of flock age and production system or interaction between the two was recorded for egg translucency, shell reflectivity (%), egg weight (g), shell weight (g), percentage shell, shell thickness ( $\mu\text{m}$ ), albumen height (mm), Haugh unit and yolk colour. Breaking shell strength (BSN) and shell deformation ( $\mu\text{m}$ ) were only significantly affected by flock age and interaction between flock age and production system. In the horizontal study, all eggshell and egg internal quality variables were significantly affected by flock age.

The amount of cuticle quantified by spectrophotometry and scanning electron microscopy (SEM) of stained eggs was higher in the middle of the lay versus early and late lay and was significantly higher for CC compared to FR eggs. Similarly, the cuticle cover was higher in mid lay period in the horizontal study.

Shell mammillary layer ultrastructural variables that have a positive effect on the shell decreased in incidence with increasing flock age while the incidence of negatively affecting variables tended to increase being higher in FR. Similarly, in the horizontal study, variables having a positive effect decreased with flock age and the incidence of the negative variables tended to increase.

The overall bacterial load on the eggs was low in the present study, as compared with other published studies. The total bacterial count (TBC) and total Enterobacteriaceae count (TEC) on the eggshells and in shell crush changed significantly with flock age, being higher in the mid lay period. The overall bacterial load was higher for FR versus CC eggs. The egg internal contents were negative for bacteria in both CC and FR eggs. Two egg belt swabs from FR were positive for *Salmonella* Infantis while *Salmonella* was not recovered from CC swabs.

Protoporphyrin IX (PP IX) quantified from the cuticle and true eggshell at flock ages of 33, 50 and 67 wk was higher in the true eggshell than in the cuticle and was not significantly affected by flock age. PP IX in the cuticle, as a percentage of total PP IX in the shell with cuticle was 13% in 33 wk, 20 % in 50 wk and 18 % in 67 wk eggs. The L\*a\*b components of the colour space system and shell reflectivity (%) were significantly different ( $P < 0.0001$ ) among the age groups.

In the whole egg penetration studies, *Salmonella* Infantis was recovered only from shell rinsate of 1 pooled sample (2 eggs) while none of the egg internal contents were positive for *Salmonella* Infantis suggesting that the Infantis serovar may be more vulnerable to the antimicrobial properties of albumen. In the agar egg moulding technique, all the washed eggs were penetrated and 70% penetration occurred in the unwashed eggs. There was a positive correlation between egg translucency and *Salmonella* penetration in both washed and unwashed groups. A lower amount of cuticle was also recorded in the penetrated areas.