

A new breed enters layer market

Novogen is a new name in layer genetics. Mickael Le Helloco explains what it means for UK producers

Recent years have seen considerable global consolidation in poultry genetics, with steadily fewer breeding companies.

In the layer sector, there have lately been just two main global players, Hendrix Genetics and the Wesjohann Group. But last autumn, Groupe Grimaud, which until then had been associated with duck, pig and broiler genetics, entered the layer market by forming a new company called Novogen.

Based in Brittany, France, Novogen aims to offer producers greater choice by launching new layer breeds for the production of brown, white and tinted eggs for cage, free range and organic systems.

So why has Groupe Grimaud decided to enter the highly competitive layer market and how do they see UK producers benefiting? *Poultry World* quizzes general manager Mickael Le Helloco.

Q Why has Groupe Grimaud [through Novogen] entered the layer market?

First of all animal genetics is the core business of Groupe Grimaud, which is well known for its duck breeding in the last 40 years. Since early 2000, we have been looking to expand



Novogen believes a changing market needs more than two main suppliers.

into other sectors with good future prospects and are big enough to support the high cost of a research and development programme.

Our first expansion saw the acquisition of Hubbard for the broiler breeder market, followed by a strategic alliance with US pig genetics company Newsham Choice Genetics.

Q Why do you believe Novogen will be successful?

We entered the market with a strong belief and confidence that our birds can compete with currently available breeds.

In addition, we will make use of the existing global network of Hubbard, which is selling broiler birds in more than 100 countries. All the Hubbard business directors are also responsible for Novogen's business.

Q How do you believe egg producers will benefit from more choice?

In a highly consolidated breeding market, the lack of competitors may decrease the search for competitiveness and lead to slower genetic progress.

We believe that the needs of the changing and growing market are not being fulfilled by only having two main breeding stock suppliers, even when each offers several different brands. Therefore,

a third significant global primary breeder will help the industry maintain its efficiency.

We will also be able to bring new genetic solutions to meet the requirements of a market that is becoming increasingly segmented through various egg production systems, welfare issues, climatic conditions and the growth of the egg breaking industry.

Q What birds have you launched?

We are currently selling the Novogen brown and the white layers, with the focus on a competitive and well-balanced performance. Additional products are still in development with some birds being selected for specific markets.

Q Is Novogen planning to sell stock pullets directly to producers?

Groupe Grimaud mainly focuses on its core business of primary breeding to assure the continuous genetic improvement of birds.

As part of this strategy, we will concentrate on research and development and be an independent supplier of high-quality layer GP and PS

Group Grimaud

■ With a turnover for 2008 of about €185m (£160m) and operating in over 100 countries, Groupe Grimaud is the second largest multi-species animal genetics group in the world.

Within its core animal genetics business, Groupe Grimaud has in total nine research and development centres. Through its breeding companies – Grimaud Freres Selection, Hubbard, Novogen and Newsham Choice Genetics – the group offers breeding stock to the poultry (broilers, layers, ducks, geese, guinea fowl and pigeons), rabbit and pig industries throughout the world.

around the world. However, we will not become involved in the production and distribution of commercial layers.

Q How have the layers performed in tests?

As you can imagine, our products were tested in various conditions of production and their performances validated prior to their launch. The field performances of the first breeder flocks placed in 2008 are excellent and in line with what we expected (see table).

Q When will the new breeds be available to UK producers?

During the first six months, production was quite limited. Our efforts were concentrated on increasing production capacity, extending our research and development programme and setting up the distribution network.

However, from this March our production capacity of PS was significantly increased and we are now able to supply large volumes of breeders.

BIRD PERFORMANCE

	Brown	White
Bodyweight at 18 weeks (kg)	1.5-1.58	1.25-1.32
Peak production (%)	93-95	93-95
Egg number (eggs/hen housed)	348-352	350-355
Egg mass (kg)	21.8-22.2	21.5-22.0
Average egg weight (g)	62.5-63.5	61.5-62.5
Feed consumption (g/day)	113-117	110-112

*Production period 18 to 80 weeks

The Novogen Brown breeder is available in volume.

