

PRODUCT FOCUS

Publication of Cobb-Vantress, Inc.

ONE - 2004

Ten-year success story for leading German producer

Few companies are better placed than Mecklenburger Broiler Farm in Germany to chart the progress of the Cobb 500 over the past ten years.

The company, situated at Neubukow, inland from the Baltic Sea holiday resorts, has seen performance continually advance since the first stock was placed in June 1993.

Each year Mecklenburger produces more than 14 million hatching eggs and grows some ten million broilers on a complex originally developed as an egg production farm housing one million layers by the former German Democratic Republic.

Many of the units are more than 30 years old, but they have been well maintained and re-equipped to modern standards. Although much reduced from the days when egg production and packing provided employment for over 400 people, the work force there now has been together for much of this period and their dedication and enthusiasm contribute to the success of the operation.

Johannes Siemer, general manager of Mecklenburger Broiler Farm, says they had enjoyed a long and successful association with Cobb and he hoped this would continue in the future.

Consistency has been a feature of the Cobb 500 performance through the years, he says, singling out breeder flock fertility and broiler uniformity which both brought significant financial returns.

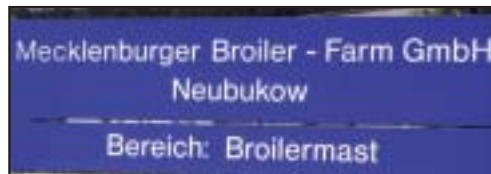
When the business began in 1993, Mecklenburger Broiler

Farm had taken on some excellent employees but their - and his own - experience had been in egg production. The support and advice of Cobb, together with the local expert Dr. Herbert Sporn, had played an important part in the early success.

"We are extremely satisfied with the Cobb 500," adds Manfred Behrens, assistant general manager. *"We've benefited from Cobb's genetic progress through the years, and we're impressed by*

the very strong, healthy nature of the breed."

The company is regularly achieving more than 165 hatching eggs/breeder housed to 60 weeks of age, with the latest flock of 30,000 parents averaging 166.5 hatching eggs and 140 chicks per breeder.



Cobb 500 - 10 years' progress at Mecklenburger Broiler Farm

	1994	2004
Age (days)	34.58	32.81
Bodyweight (kg)	1.417	1.547
(lb)	3.12	3.41
Daily liveweight gain (g)	42.19	45.66
Feed conversion	1.76	1.68
Livability (%)	96.37	97.5

Friendly rivalry is encouraged

Building a good team spirit - and even encouraging friendly rivalry between the different units - is how breeder farms manager Christine Möller approaches her job on a complex where she has worked with many of the same colleagues for some 30 years.

"We like to see competition between the three units," says Mrs Möller. *"Each unit provides detailed daily records covering total eggs, hatching eggs, broken eggs, floor eggs, feed intake, water consumption, temperature, humidity and any mortality."*



This egg collection truck has been specifically designed for the farm, maintaining the eggs in a temperature controlled environment on route to the farm's egg store.

Continued on page 4

UK integrator chooses a one breed approach to optimize profit

Lloyd Maunder began using the Cobb 500 during 2003 and is using the breed for the whole of its output of Assured Chicken Production (ACP) standard birds for leading UK supermarkets.

The family-owned business has a reputation for high quality chicken produced to high health and welfare standards.

The decision to switch to the Cobb 500 was cemented after a visit to the breed's US headquarters by one of the firm's directors, Andrew Maunder, and agricultural general manager, David Lanning.



The family business now a traditional name in the UK meat industry.

"We were extremely impressed by the Cobb performance in the United States," says David Lanning. "Not only by the performance in the broiler house but by product consistency on the processing line.

"Supermarkets are setting ever more precise specifications and it's our responsibility to meet these targets in quality and weight

tolerance. Our policy is to remove as many variables as we can to achieve consistent product quality, and we need a breed which can deliver this consistency."

Lloyd Maunder has also been able to achieve a considerable saving in feed costs with the Cobb 500. In addition to reducing the nutrient density of the diet, Lloyd Maunder has been able to significantly increase the proportion of whole wheat fed to the birds.



David Lanning, general manager - agriculture of Lloyd Maunder.

"We're no longer having to compromise the usage of wheat in the ration to allow for the different nutritional needs of the two breeds," says David Lanning.

"We are able to include an average of 25 per cent whole wheat which is saving us nearly £15 a tonne at current prices."

Whole, cracked wheat is introduced from ten days of age, providing an increasing proportion of the diet from 15 per cent in the starter diet up to 30 per cent in finisher rations

from 21 days of age. This helps to considerably offset the current high compound feed prices, lowering overall production cost.

Lloyd Maunder is currently processing more than 350,000 chickens a week at its plant at Willand, near Cullompton, Devon, of which two thirds are for production of standard chickens and one third for free range products. An increasing proportion, now almost 70 per cent, of the standard chickens is sold as portions.

The first Cobb 500 parent flocks from the US genetics program were placed early last year and by the autumn Lloyd Maunder was able to see the benefits of the breed.

Cobb 500 product manager, Euan Meldrum said: *"Our product is performing very well at all levels in integrations like Lloyd Maunder across Europe. The Cobb 500 broiler is showing excellent results with lighting programs which utilize a significant dark period every day. Lloyd Maunder is currently seeing the benefits of using these lighting programs. They not only improve feed efficiency, but equally are good for the general health and well-being of the birds."*



Euan Meldrum (right) joins broiler fieldsman Andrew Tonge on one of the company's contract farms in Devon.

Chicks are hatched at the Kentisbeare hatchery which produces more than 500,000 a week. One feature is the provision made for visitors, with around 50 touring the premises over the past year. In each room there are explanations of the hatchery procedures so that visitors from supermarkets, official organizations, the poultry industry and consumer groups can see the care taken in maintaining high standards.

So, too, farmers and visitors are welcome in the processing plant where a combination of mechanical and hand trimming is used in preparing the cut-up products. Wings and legs are removed automatically, for instance, while the breast fillet is separated manually which Lloyd Maunder has found achieves the highest yield.



Joining Lloyd Maunder hatchery manager Mike Mitchell (right) in inspecting the Cobb 500 chicks at Kentisbeare is Cobb's quality control co-ordinator Jason Cormick.

Ted Higgins, factory general manager, is pleased with the meat yield being achieved with the Cobb 500. Trials are showing an average 71.8 per cent carcass yield of liveweight from 2.24 kg (5.03 lb) broilers, and 27.8 per cent breast meat from 1.68 kg (3.70 lb) processed birds.

He points to the value of uniformity and predictability: *"When you're producing to the very specific requirements of supermarket customers, uniformity is everything in achieving same size products and not giving away value."*



Consistent quality of the Cobb 500 pays dividends in supplying the major retailers.

The company is continuing to invest substantially in the processing plant to meet supermarket needs, with a new fast chilling system and modified atmosphere packaging to provide leak-proof packs.

Broilers are grown to produce whole bird, oven-ready weights from 1 to 1.7 kg (2.2 to 3.75 lb). The broiler growing farms vary from 6,000 to 150,000 birds within a two-hour drive of the processing plant.

Over 3.2 million chickens Lloyd Maunder has achieved an average weight of 2.44 kg (5.38 lb) at 42 days, compared

Value of lower nutrient density diets

by Dr. Tony Marangos, nutritional consultant

In-house and commercial trials have repeatedly shown that the US Cobb 500 has the ability to grow exceptionally well with significantly reduced nutrient density diets and/or with increasing use of whole grain wheat feeding.

In many European countries whole wheat feeding is routinely used. It is a very effective method of reducing feed cost and also manipulating nutrient intake, leading to improved gizzard development and efficiency of digestion.

Reducing growth rate through a diet of lower nutrient density, especially during the early life, is followed by compensatory growth, a reduction in maintenance requirements and improved efficiency.

This practice in conjunction with carefully designed lighting programs has also been shown to improve broiler health and benefit daily weight gain.

Knowing or determining the relationship between nutrient intake and actual performance means that we can use mathematical modeling to determine the optimum nutrient density as that which results in the highest profit for the producer.

with the company average of 2.32 kg (5.11 lb) at this age in 2002 when two breeds were being used. A reduction in feed cost has also made the growing stage more profitable.

LLOYD MAUNDER COBB 500 RESULTS

Farm	No Placed	Weight (kg) (lb)		FCR	Livability (%)
Farm 1	135,725	2.41	5.31	1.82	95.6
Farm 2	37,625	2.28	5.03	1.81	95.7
Farm 3	123,950	2.50	5.51	1.83	95.3
Farm 4	56,750	2.44	5.38	1.83	95.4
Farm 5	102,450	2.35	5.18	1.84	95.5

David Lanning says they have seen improved weight for age, feed conversion, breast meat yield and carcass consistency with the Cobb 500, together with better litter condition and, significantly, the ability to feed more whole wheat in the ration which delivers the substantial saving in production costs.

Continued from page 1

"In this way we can recognize changes or unexpected trends at once, enabling us to identify potential problems before they really develop."

Emphasis on uniformity is a key to success. From the start the smallest chicks are culled, and then from the 28th day one per cent of the flock is check weighed with the smallest pullets moved into a middle pen. The objective is to have 86 percent of the flock within ± 10 percent of the target weight by 15 to 16 weeks of age. They are moved, at this early age to the production units to avoid causing any additional stress as they approach the onset of lay.

Mecklenburger Broiler Farm was one of the first in Germany to introduce spin feeding during rearing, achieving the benefits of fast and even feed distribution. There are seven spin feeders in each house, with the feed weighed rather than metered by volume to improve accuracy.

Importance is attached to pellet quality, and the farm specifies 100 per cent pellets - with no fines - from the supplier Habema Raiffeisen of Hamburg. Maize makes up around 50 per cent and crude protein 16.1 percent.

Rewards for broiler uniformity

Just as uniformity of pullets is seen as crucial in the breeder house, so uniformity is important in Mecklenburger Broiler Farm's chicken growing activities. Under a long standing arrangement, the chicks are hatched by Stolle which in turn processes the broilers at its plant in Brenz.

Increasingly the chickens are being used for the portion trade and particularly for mobile caterers supplying the rotisserie market. The demand is for a 1.45 - 1.50 kg (3.20 - 3.30 lb) bird at 32 days of age, with an excellent uniformity.

With seven or eight as-hatched flocks per house each year, there is a tight turn-round between flocks and a particular need for good hygiene. Chopped straw makes a significant cost saving compared with wood shavings.

The broiler houses use a modified version of tunnel ventilation, designed under the guidance of Robert Barnwell from Cobb's World Technical Support Team. This is used together with a fogging system to cope with extreme summer heat. Providing an even environment is indeed quite a challenge, with the Continental climate ranging from summer temperatures over 30°C (86°F) to prolonged winter frost.

'Wherever you go, you feel everything is predictable'

Cobb Europe's regional sales and marketing manager James Truscott has been involved with Mecklenburger Broiler Farms since the initial contact through the chicken processing company Stolle.

James Truscott says the consistent quality of management and attention to breed guidelines have enabled the customer to reap the benefit of the Cobb 500's genetic progress.



James Truscott (left) of Cobb Europe and Marcus von Heimendahl of Cobb Germany checking the latest figures with breeder manager Christine Möller of Mecklenburger broiler farm.

"They have a very caring workforce which recognizes and reacts to small changes," he says. "They'll spot any change in the environment, or in the color of the feed, which may be significant. And, equally, they're always open to new ideas."

"This attention to fine detail is reflected in the uniformity of breeder flocks, and the success in broilers meeting strict weight targets set by the processing plant. Wherever you go, you feel the whole operation is predictable."

James Truscott and Marcus von Heimendahl, sales and service manager of Cobb Germany, who supply the parent stock, help to identify areas for further improvement.

Cobb Germany has been supplying Cobb 500 parent stock for Mecklenburger from its hatchery at Wiesenena, near Leipzig, since 1998 when it took over distribution of the breed in the country and now also supplies markets in central and eastern Europe.

Initially Cobb Germany was established to produce 2.5 million parents a year, but now with 20 grandparent farms and hatchery expansion, capacity has been extended to over 6.5 million, with around one third sold to the German market.



COBB-VANTRESS



COBB-VANTRESS, INC.

PO BOX 1030, SILOAM SPRINGS,
ARKANSAS 72761, USA
TEL: +1 479 524 3166
FAX: +1 479 524 3043
EMAIL: info@cobb-vantress.com



COBB EUROPE

MIDDEN ENGWEG 13, 3882 TS
PUTTEN, THE NETHERLANDS
TEL: +31 341 36 08 80
FAX: +31 341 36 05 24
EMAIL: info@cobb-europe.com



COBB-VANTRESS BRASIL, LTDA.

RODOVIA ASSIS CHATEAUBRIAND, KM 10
CEP: 15110-000/CAIXA POSTAL 2,
GUAPIAÇU-SP-BRASIL
TEL: +55 (17) 3216 9700
FAX: +55 (17) 3216 9701
EMAIL: cobb.info@cobb-vantress.com.br

WEBSITE: www.cobb-vantress.com