

***“Super chick with our way of working and under our circumstances”***

The switch to Cobb 500 broilers has worked out well for poultry farmer Bart Janssen from Zuidvelde. *“A production number of 445 is simply gigantic. Under our way of working and our circumstances, it’s really one of the best - no intestinal problems and good resistance,”* he concludes about the very fast growing flock.

Janssen first trialed the Cobb500 broiler from Cobb Vantress last winter: *“We immediately saw very positive aspects. Management is one of the biggest advantages. The chick eats quite easily, there is no pushing and pulling necessary and the chick is just stable throughout the cycle.”*

The poultry farmer has two locations where he keeps five hundred thousand broilers in thirteen houses. One of the key points in Janssen's production method is hatching on the farm. Last year, he setup the X-Treck from Vencomatic in all houses, *“It ensures an easy start-up and the litter continues to dry,”* adds Janssen. *“There is more work at the start, but more ease in the cycle.”*



**OPTIMIZATION IN THE HOUSE**

*“We are always looking for areas for improvement within our business operations. For example, we work closely with feed suppliers to see how you can improve the digestion – recently we have adjusted the feed for hatching on the farm”* says Janssen.

In the Netherlands, the Ross 308 is usually chosen for fast-growing chicks, however Janssen’s keen eye on optimization made him wonder whether another step could possibly be made in the field of genetics. *“Our results weren’t showing an improvement in the previous year, and progress had started to stall. Of course, this can have various causes, but we had a clear view of the company and the feed, so we started looking at genetics”.*

Janssen’s poultry farm in Zuidvelde has been doing business with the production company, Schotman, for forty years. In the past, Janssen had housed a couple of Cobb flocks with varying results. *“Cobb has kept us up to date with new developments ever since. At the beginning of this year, they announced that they had something ‘ready’,”* says Janssen. *“Schotman had a flock of 10,000 Cobb parent stock. The robust intestinal health appealed to us, so we wanted to try this chick”.*

**GOOD NUMBERS**

The positive management aspects not only gave Janssen a good feeling, the chicks also recorded higher final weights. Growth and health were maintained, whilst up to five percent of wheat was added to the diet to reduce production costs per unit. In addition, live weight increased by 4 g/day, resulting in an advantage for Janssen of 12 cents per chick, or 4800 euros per house of 40,000 chicks.

*“The production number of 445 is simply very high. This really is a winner. Perfect age, growth figures are extremely good and the meat quality remained good. With a very fast-growing flock, you sometimes run into fillet deviations. That happens less with us and that is partly due to hatching on the farm. The blood flow is simply better,”* explains Janssen. *“On top of*

that, the Cobb500 just gives very nice numbers. It is a chick that just keeps going, with a very constant feed intake from day zero to 40”.



### **STRONGER CHICK, BETTER RESISTANCE**

In addition to the numbers, Janssen is also very pleased with the chick's resistance. *“This spring, a Gumboro strain was present in this area. We needed to medicate one third of the houses – that’s about 120,000 – 150,000 broilers. We’ve had to deal with drought and sand storms, and in this situation, even with accurate vaccination, you cannot prevent a Gumboro strain to enter with the manure and storms around the houses”.* Janssen hasn’t seen the effects of this strain within his Cobb flock, and says the immune system is therefore in good order: *“The chicks show a strong resistance. I always say if the intestinal health is in order, the resistance is also in order”.*

Janssen realizes that the breeders produce less hatching eggs, therefore the hatcheries are less economical, but for him this is a strong point. *“This is another one of the reasons why the chick is stronger in my opinion. The broiler farmer must decide for himself whether he thinks it is worth paying a little extra for it”.* He adds, *“the Cobb500 just fits into our dry house system. Ultimately, you have to ensure that your housing space is used optimally. We have invested a lot in the future and that has resulted in a certain cost price. In our view, this chick is ideal for that”.*

### **SUCCESS MUST BE REPEATABLE**

Janssen maintains close contact with Martijn Gruyters, Technical Manager at Cobb Europe, about technical follow-up. *“Success must also be repeatable. Feed conversion follows daily growth in the technical result, because the pieces fit,”* adds Janssen. *“The advantage for us of course is hatching on the farm, so that we can follow the chick from start to finish. We quickly see where things might go wrong”.*

Janssen says that the "economic picture " must be correct and plans to continue with the Cobb500 chicks in 2020/2021. *“We will continue with the Cobb500 in half of the houses and maybe more. Fair is fair, if everything is equal you get the real advantage. The feeding days are shorter, because the chicks grow faster, and the meat quality numbers are just as important”.*

Given the economic situation of poultry farming, in which the market for very fast-growing chicks does not immediately have bright prospects, consolidation is the motto, according to Janssen. *“Growth is mainly in optimization. I think that’s more important than ever before”.* Janssen therefore remains skeptical of the chick he is now so enthusiastic about, *“Open competition is a healthy situation and ultimately good for all parties. We ultimately need each other”.*

