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Dandenong layer farmer's upgrade addresses locals' concerns.

Contract broiler growers' advocate happy to be a chook farmer again

The 13th AECL Industry Forum 2009

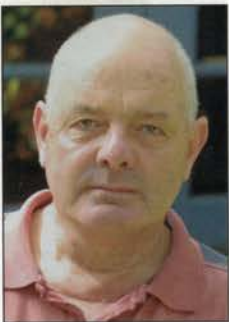
Time to neutralise the demands of noisy minorities





Ground floor level of Valli 8 tier cage layer system in new shed.

Dandenong layer farmer's upgrade addresses locals' concerns – and sells them eggs too



By PETER BEDWELL

Andrew Postregna, manager and owner of the Tamarix Poultry Farm located on the busy Dandenong-Frankston road, is in the process of upgrading his layer

operation to take advantage on his location, offering plenty of direct retail opportunity.

When the farm was built in the early 1980s, the site was in a rural area where horticulture and small poultry rearing operations were a significant activity.

Now the 10 acre farm, just 5km from the centre of Dandenong and 10km from Frankston, is close to many factories, warehouses and of course residential property.

The old sheds needed upgrading and Andrew choose to invest in brand new state of the art sheds with an eight tier Valli cage layer system supplied by B&M Slots.

The first of two 87x10m sheds has been completed and in operation for about ten months and the second is well under way and should be complete and occupied with birds within the next few months.

The new sheds house 35,000 birds delivering a 70,000 bird capacity operation when the upgrade is complete. An old shed housing 10,000 birds is still in operation until the second new shed is finished.

Proximity to industrial and residential sites meant that Andrew had to factor in the added expenditure to comply with VCAT regulation, particularly in respect of main fan operation.

The new sheds are tunnel ventilated and employ Hotraco automated climate control systems, cool pads and of course the MultiFan 130cm units, also supplied by B&M Slots.

Instead of the main fans being simply installed in an end wall blowing directly to the outside environment there is a containment extension to the end of the shed that extends to the full height of the building. ▷

△ The surface of the enclosure facing the fans is corrugated and catches the dust that then drops to the floor.

This design feature, Andrew explained, while in no way impeding the fans efficiency, reduces odour and noise and captures almost all of the dust that is typical of cage layer sheds. "It works," he added with some satisfaction.

So there has been not inconsiderable expense involved in satisfying regulatory requirements and the potential concerns of neighbours and local industry – so what's the pay-off?

Despite the fact that a new tollway system has funnelled off some of the traffic in this rapidly expanding area on Melbourne's south eastern fringe, Andrew believes that up to 80,000 vehicles a day can drive past his highly visible operation.

Further, the access to his farm is easy and safe from the road and this has created an opportunity to expand the direct retail side of the business.

Apart from upgrading his sheds and egg handling and storage areas, Andrew has also invested in a new and spacious building that will house farm staff but also a retail operation that in the near future will sell not only eggs but chicken meat products and organic fertiliser – another valuable bi-product from the layer farm.

Apart from the new sheds housing the Valli cages, Andrew has built a state of the art extension to manage and handle the chicken manure that, properly processed, offers plenty of long term profit potential.

Other farm upgrades will be to the feed mill area. Tamarix formulates its own feed with assistance from Lienerts and Propharma.

The farm's genetics are HyLine Brown and Andrew also operates another farm that grows for the Hy-Line Huntly operation.

The new cages will put the grading and storage areas under some stress as production is increased.

"The Moba 2000 grader has served us well but we will need to expand this whole area of the operation," Andrew explained.

In the key areas of water and power supply Andrew has also been busy with forward planning.

"Our proximity a major industrial centre like Dandenong means that town water and power supply are readily available but we have built plenty of rain water storage capacity along with our new sheds," he said.

"We also have significant power requirements, not only for the tunnel ventilation and automated Valli cage systems but for our feed mill and cool room storage facilities."

The farm has two back up generators, a▷



Top: New retail/office complex easily accessible from the busy Dandenong-Frankston road. Centre: Plenty of rain water storage capacity. Above: Neat manure handling system makes removal and transport of a valuable asset easy.

◁ 250 Kva unit and a serious Perkins powered 450 Kva generator.

“Power cuts are rare but a fact of life particularly during periods of high temperatures and we don't want to get caught out so we have plenty of back up capacity,” Andrew said.

When completed, the Tamarix Poultry Farm operation will not only be state of the art from the production efficiency point of view, but 'neighbour friendly' as well.

It will also offer tremendous retail sale potential because of its unique position in a high population density area.

The fact that Andrew and his wife Lisa have chosen to significantly invest in creating a sustainable operation that can generate long term profitability and add value to what was once a rural back block demonstrates both intelligence and strategic planning ability.

But that's no surprise really, as apart from his accumulated experience in running a layer farm, Andrew has a degree in business studies and Lisa is a qualified accountant – truly a new breed of poultry farmers bringing new skills and attitudes to an old and traditional farming business.



1. Dust, odour, noise reducing chimney design containing main fan area. 2. Serious Perkins powered 450 KVA generator. 3. Andrew sets the Hotraco shed climate control system. 4. Lower four tiers of Valli cage system and cool pad. 5. Grader and packing rook Moba system. 6. New shed exterior with manure belt left of picture.