

Case Study

Livetec:
**supporting farmers
through salmonella**

Salmonella is one of the most deadly livestock diseases in the UK with nearly 3,500 cases recorded in 2022 - an increase of 22.9% on 2021.

Cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry are the most impacted species with poultry being subjected to statutory surveillance under the salmonella National Control Programme (NCP).

What happened?

Whilst not a notifiable disease, the impact of a salmonella outbreak at a poultry or egg farm on animal welfare and on business is significant. No one knows this better than Scott and Robert*, Production Director and Area Farm Manager of a layer breeder supplier in England.

When one of the farms they manage was affected by salmonella in 2022, the cost - both financially and emotionally - was huge.

Their experience of disease outbreak and of working with Livetec emphasises the challenges of poultry farming, of combating disease outbreaks and how partnering with experts can help lessen the stresses of the experience.



*Not their real names



The challenge: the introduction of disease

Run by Martin* - the latest in a long line of generational farmers - the farm was home to thousands of breeder layers. With strong biosecurity practices already in place, Martin, Robert and Scott were confident that they were doing everything possible to rear produce effectively and free of disease.

In early 2022, they took the arrival of a new batch of chicks. Following protocol, these were tested twice upon arrival for salmonella, with negative results in both. After a two-week settling in process, the birds were tested again as per the 18 week regulations, and it was at this point that salmonella was detected.

There was disbelief for all concerned: these were chicks that were disease-free after transfer, and kept on what has been dubbed a brilliant farm with a very conscientious farmer.

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The consequences of such a result loomed large.

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Firstly, confirmation of a positive case means depopulation is legally required. Public health concerns mean that salmonella must be prevented from entering the food chain - the consequences of which were seen in the 2023 salmonella enteritidis outbreak.

The second consequence of a positive test is the immediate enforcement of movement restrictions with neither animals nor material allowed to leave or enter the site until the process has been completed.

For Martin, Scott and Robert, this was a significant concern.

Although the decision to be made was a clear one, that didn't mean it was easy. For those involved, the impact was profound - especially for farmer Martin.

"[The decision to depopulate] is especially difficult for the farmers. It's their animals and they are the ones who have put in the blood, sweat and hours into rearing them. It's always going to be hard"

Robert - Farm Manager

Searching for the solution: working with Livetec

It was vital to act fast. Upon receiving the diagnosis it was obvious that specialist help would be needed, so the team were quick to call in the industry experts, Livetec.

Within minutes, their experts had made contact with Scott and were implementing a plan of action. Livetec's extensive experience in dealing with disease outbreaks, particularly during the record avian influenza cases of 2021-2023, meant that they were uniquely placed to offer advice and practical steps to Scott and the team.

Most importantly, at this time of high stress and worry, they were able to reassure Scott and Robert that there was a solution.

A specialist technical team arrived on site within 24 hours, working solidly for the next 48 to complete the initial operation.

Once the depopulation phase was over, the following days saw the Livetec team undertake the first round of an exhaustive, site and equipment-wide cleansing and disinfection process. Following a buffer period, the team returned to complete the secondary deep clean, ensuring any remaining traces of the virus had been extinguished.

"I've always applauded Livetec's attitude to that initial conversation and then the subsequent things they put in place...all those things have been a positive experience."

Scott - Production Director



Aftershocks: the impact felt long after the outbreak

Whilst the physical damage of salmonella was eradicated, its impact continued to be felt. The business would need to be fallow for an extended period before being able to re-stock and return to effective operations.

In addition, the emotional impact of such an experience lingered long after the gates closed behind the Livetec workers. For Martin, there was sadness that all the hard work he had put into preparing for and working with the chickens felt fruitless.

In addition, having taken all reasonable precautions, the team were filled with questions of what else could have been done to prevent the infection occurring. For Martin in particular, there remained a constant fear that visitors might be bringing dangerous pathogens onto his farm.

In truth, there was little else Martin could have done in addition to his already excellent biosecurity measures. The particular type of salmonella present in this case had not been seen in the UK for some time and had most likely been transmitted via pigeon faeces. Not that any of this would be consolation to Martin.

The recovery process was also challenging for manager Robert, with an overwhelming mountain of bureaucracy and red tape to deal with. For Scott, even years on from the original incident, the memories remain strong, **"It's not a nice experience. It never leaves you. It's still there now, in the back of your mind."**

For all involved, whether director, manager or farmer, the mental impacts of disease outbreak were significant. In this case, Livetec experts worked with Scott and Robert to help Martin, in tandem with their own employee support network.

"As a person, it absolutely tore him to pieces, he took it very hard."

Scott - Production Director



Reflecting on a difficult situation

With the benefit of hindsight, what could Scott and Robert take away from the experience and how would it inform future planning?

Firstly, they both acknowledge the importance of having specific plans in place in the event of a salmonella (or other disease) outbreak.

Whilst a recovery plan can't guarantee not being affected by disease outbreak, it does ensure that the necessary steps and resources are in place to effectively manage such a situation, should it occur.

A step-by-step set of actions ensures recovery starts at the earliest opportunity and slashes the time needed for each recovery stage.

Their experience also acted as a reminder of the critical nature of effective biosecurity protocols, leading the wider team to sharpen their practice across all the farms they manage. For Scott, this has meant taking small, practical, cost-effective steps to improve the premises' structural biosecurity profile, **"We've moved back a barrier so that someone getting out of a car with their shoes on must change into farm wellingtons a lot further back from the poultry. We're always improving."**

Equally important has been using this experience as a learning point to further develop a culture of constant improvement, **"even with things we think we're good at like training, monitoring and supporting, we're looking for ways to improve as well"**.

To Scott and Robert, the experience of this outbreak has highlighted how critical it is that effective biosecurity is consistently followed across the entire business with full buy-in from everyone, from the individual farm worker all the way to enterprise managers.

Wholesale cultural change regarding biosecurity in the poultry and egg industries still has some distance to go. However, for Scott, the industry is on the right path, **"There's now so much more emphasis on the whole process and culture of biosecurity."**

One of the barriers to this cultural shift, according to Scott, has been the range of contradictory advice and vested interests that prevent the best and most effective operational advice being offered, **"It is one of the things that wears you out."**

However, working with Livetec is a crucial step in cutting through this noise and receiving authoritative, industry-leading advice.

"In our experience, Livetec were A1. They were a really professional team who had empathy for the farmer from the minute they drove through the gate to the minute they left"

Robert - Area Farm Manager



Livetec's Emergency Services

Livetec's 24/7 365 Emergency Line ensures that for anyone finding themselves in a similar situation to Robert, Scott and Martin, immediate help and advice is just a few clicks away.



Emergency help



For our range of global-standard biosecurity solutions that help minimise the chances of disease outbreak, [find out more here →](#)

To discover more about our contingency planning service to ensure your recovery from disease outbreak starts from day 1, [click here →](#)

Read more about our emergency depopulation service in the event of flooding, avian influenza, salmonella or other disease outbreaks [here →](#)

**For a chat or further
information about how we
can help protect your farm
business contact our team**



0208 087 1499



www.livetecsystems.co.uk



Livetec Biosecurity

► Biosecurity Advisory Service

Our Biosecurity Advisory Service provides you with an on-farm visit with a biosecurity expert. Our on-farm discovery sessions make us a supportive partner, helping you to minimise risks and imparting knowledge so that you can better protect your farm from disease incursion.



► Contingency Plan

Our Contingency Plans encompass every aspect of farming businesses, risks and emergencies that could arise in the future. We help you to design strategies to manage the impact of these concerns. A comprehensive package, this helps make you compliant and insurable.



► Biosecurity Plan

Without a Biosecurity Plan in place, you are leaving your business and animals highly susceptible to disease incursion. We document your biosecurity plans to encompass and outline all of the measures that must be followed by every single person on/off-farm to prevent the introduction of deadly pathogens.



► Emergency Response Plan

An Infected Premises Response plan or, as we call them, an Emergency Response Plan, significantly enhances your preparedness and is designed to cover everything that APHA and insurance brokers require if and when they visit your farm business. This plan holds all the necessary critical information, in one place, putting your mind at rest during a time of crisis.



► Cleansing and Disinfection Plan

Our Cleansing and Disinfection plan is designed to give you the framework for all of the measures you need to take, with clear instructions that comply with APHA requirements.



► Cost of Depopulation Report

Our Cost of Depopulation calculator will help you accurately assess all catching and disposal costs related to depopulation, assisting you in gaining the correct level of insurance.



Now updated for 2024

► National Outbreak Plan

Our National Outbreak Plan has been designed to comply with the regulations and requirements set by the UK government, providing bird owners with everything you need to know should you be impacted by a disease outbreak or fall within a restriction zone.

Free on the Livetec Systems App



► The Livetec Systems App

You can stay ahead of bird flu outbreaks with real-time alerts from across the UK delivered to your phone. So, if there's an outbreak near your premises you can be proactive and protect your poultry - whether the threats come from wild birds or neighbouring premises.



Learn more

To find out more about how our plans can help your farming business, please visit www.livetecsystems.co.uk/plans or email us for more information sales@livetecsystems.co.uk

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