

Blue Mountain Ostrich Nutrition E-Bulletin #94

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Ostrich Industry Review of 2003

When sitting down to write the annual review this year, I first looked back to see what I had written last year. I do suggest that all readers re-read that review, along with all the references: <http://www.blue-mountain.net/bulletin/bull88.htm>

The report concluded that we need to be aware of the three 'A's of Marketing – Awareness, Acknowledgement and Action – as it applies to the development of our industry.

The 2003 bulletins have focused on summarising Awareness and Acknowledgement and mapping the Action required.

[Bulletin #90](#) discusses Economics of Bird Raising and Processing

[Bulletin #91](#) discusses Scientific Livestock Production as it applies to Ostrich

[Bulletin #92](#) maps out the steps required to achieving a successful transition to Production on an Industrial Scale yet retaining ethical and humane systems of rearing.

[Bulletin #94](#) demonstrates the full scope of the production/value chain demonstrating how everything links together. This bulletin also emphasises just how small and fragmented our industry remains to highlight the difficulties this raises for all. While our industry remains small and fragmented, we still have difficulties to overcome in costs of production that can only improve with economies of scale.

Major steps forward under “Action” are the activities of The World Ostrich Association, founded in September 2002. In 2003 the Association took the first steps to bring our industry in line with mainstream livestock production species – our competitors. The first Industry Standards for Meat Grading and Yield Classifications were published during the year and can be viewed at:

Ostrich Carcass Grading System: <http://www.world-ostrich.org/grading.htm>

Ostrich Yield Classifications: <http://www.world-ostrich.org/yield.htm>

Factors Influencing Meat Quality: <http://www.world-ostrich.org/meatqual.htm>

The Standards committees have an ongoing program to develop basic standards for oil, skins, feathers and meat.

Why are grading systems so important?

A quote from United States Classes, Standards, and Grades for Poultry:

“The grading program, regulations, classes, standards, and grades establish a basis for quality and price relationship and enable more orderly marketing. Consumers can purchase officially graded product with the confidence of receiving quality in accordance with the official identification”.

By setting Industry standards The World Ostrich Association is developing an environment to enable Ostrich to compete in the marketplace with modern livestock and agri-processing methods.

A number of Blue Mountain producers have been taking their own action also:

1. Chile

The World Ostrich Association held their first conference in Chile at the end of March. The organiser in Chile was Marie Isabel Silva and she kindly hosted delegates to a barbeque the day following the end of the conference. Figure 1 is a batch of chicks that were between 3 months and 3.5 months on the date of the photo – 1st April, 2003.



Figure 1 - Chicks 3.5 Months 1st April 2003

Figure 2 are the same group of chicks on 28th June 2003 – just 3 months later at 6 months old. Note the strong legs, depth and length of frame and excellent feather growth on these chicks in figure 2.



Figure 2 - Figure 1 Chicks on 28th June 2003

2. Spain



Figure 3 - Hatch Date 5th and 22nd April 2003 - Photo 1st July 2003



Figure 4 - Figure 3 Chicks on 4th October 2003

The chicks in Figures 3 and 4 are mainly African Blacks hatched from Breeders with no Nutritional Classification.

A batch of 34 birds including the chicks in Figures 3 and 4 were slaughtered at in the first week of December 2003 and aged between 6 and 8 months of age. All but one of the skins was the correct size and all but 4 Grade A, which means they achieved Follicle classification 3 or higher. This again proves that chicks that are grown with the correct nutrition and management will produce very acceptable skins at a very much younger age than the industry has been led to believe, supporting my skin study of last year reported in Bulletin #79.

Meat yields averaged 23kgs with the best chicks achieving in excess of 29kgs of meat.

3. Canada

It was with great pleasure that I received a report from Phyllis Ironside in Canada a few weeks ago. Her egg production was up 340% in 2003 from 2002. Her breeders went onto the BM rations in the 2nd week of December 2002. Her most encouraging pen was a pen of 3 hens and 1 male all two year olds. They produced an average of 58 eggs/hen at 95% fertility. The best pen produced 94 eggs/hen – up from 21 eggs the previous season. Fertility was 71%.

All Phyllis' production of fertile eggs is sold to a producer who does not keep records of chicks so there are no records of chick performance. How any producer can expect to progress without keeping proper records I continue to find simply amazing and just one clue of the lack of professionalism currently so prevalent throughout our industry.

The above are just a few examples of the reports coming back from dedicated producers in different parts of the world operating in totally different climatic conditions – from hot humid climates to the extremes of weather experienced in countries like Poland and Canada. We are a group of people who have all proven to ourselves just how important nutrition is in everything we do, but understand also that it is only one very important step of the whole production/value chain. We also know that alone we are too small to do more than develop small niche markets with high production costs, as we cannot benefit from economies of scale.

For the past decade there have been a number of health scares relating to current production of meat with BSE being the best known and again in the news. The use of growth hormones, routine antibiotics etc. are also factors that are creating increased distrust in meat from mainstream livestock production and creating opportunities to those providing alternatives.

Each time there is a BSE outbreak, or other health scare, there is increased interest in alternative meats such as Venison, Ostrich, Emu and Buffalo. As an industry we will only be able to benefit from these opportunities once we have adequate levels of production, supported by adequate resources for a large marketing campaign.

Blue Mountain customers and friends have developed our own Alliance (BMIOA) <http://www.blue-mountain.net/bmioa/index.htm>. We are a group of like-minded people working to coordinate and collaborate in developing all aspects of our individual businesses. There are many benefits of this type of commercial collaboration that bring a pooling of resources to assist in developing the economies of scale in production, research, product development and marketing. We encourage all those serious about Commercial levels of Ostrich Production and developing a profitable agri-processing business to take action and join us in developing a strong commercial infrastructure following the principles of The New Ostrich Industry.