MAINTENANCE

Have you got a hatchery maintenance plan in place?

During hatchery visits we often notice that maintenance is reactive rather than preventative – things are only fixed when they break down.

This can compromise hatchability and chick quality which are the two most important performance factors a hatchery's success is measured on. A scheduled maintenance program minimizes the risk of machine failure and the impact of incorrect machine operation on hatch and quality. A few things to consider when setting up a maintenance program are:

- **Have a dedicated person responsible for maintenance reporting to the hatchery manager.**
- **Produce a list of all the equipment to be maintained including frequencies.**
- **Keep records on all performed maintenance.**
- **Keep track of the spare parts on hand.**
- **Include the building structure and ancillary equipment in the program.**
- **All sensors (temperature, humidity etc) need to be calibrated regularly.**

Maintenance is required on any equipment that can affect the performance of the hatchery. This includes setters, hatchers, all chick processing equipment, any measuring equipment (thermometers, hygrometers, pressure gauges), ventilation, generators, all possible water treatment systems, alarm systems and trucks.

All maintenance should be done according to manufacturers' instructions, by using their provided checklists and their recommended maintenance intervals as a minimum. Keeping good records is useful to monitor if the same equipment keeps failing or needs more maintenance than others as this could indicate that there is an underlying problem elsewhere. Keeping track of the spare parts and their usage avoids over ordering unnecessary parts. Some of the incubation manufacturers now offer technical audits which are extremely helpful to get you started with your maintenance program. Monitoring the equipment allows us to see if the equipment is performing within the acceptable limits and to take action if we notice unacceptable readings.

Regular visual checks should still be done several times a day to ensure temperature, humidity, ventilation and turning are all as they should be. Over time it should be possible to assess costs and benefits of the maintenance program.

Preventive maintenance generally has benefits in all industries and the hatchery is no exception. It contributes to a better hatchability and chick quality, safer work environment, reduced power and utility costs as efficiency is increased, lower insurance costs and retaining a higher value of assets.

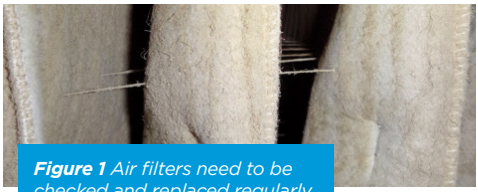

Figure 1 *Air filters need to be checked and replaced regularly.*

Figure 2 *Fan belts should be checked regularly and replaced as necessary – this belt is not fit for use.*