

REVOLUTIONIZING TURKEY HATCHERIES: HEADSTART HATCHERY SETS NEW STANDARDS FOR THE INDUSTRY



HEADSTART
HATCHING

In a groundbreaking move for the turkey industry, HeadStart Hatching, located in Willmar, Minnesota, has emerged as a force of positive innovation by opening a first-of-its-kind turkey hatchery. The facility realizes a long-desired, but difficult to achieve dream; providing newly hatched poultts with immediate access to food and water.

Jonathan Huisinga, General Manager, shared insights into the inception and development of HeadStart Hatching. The project originated as part of a research partnership between Life-Science Innovation's research and development division and HatchTech Incubation, a Netherlands-based incubation equipment designer and manufacturer. HatchTech has been a leading innovator in the chicken industry, successfully launching HatchCare technology to deliver on the concept of providing feed and water to chicks immediately after hatching.

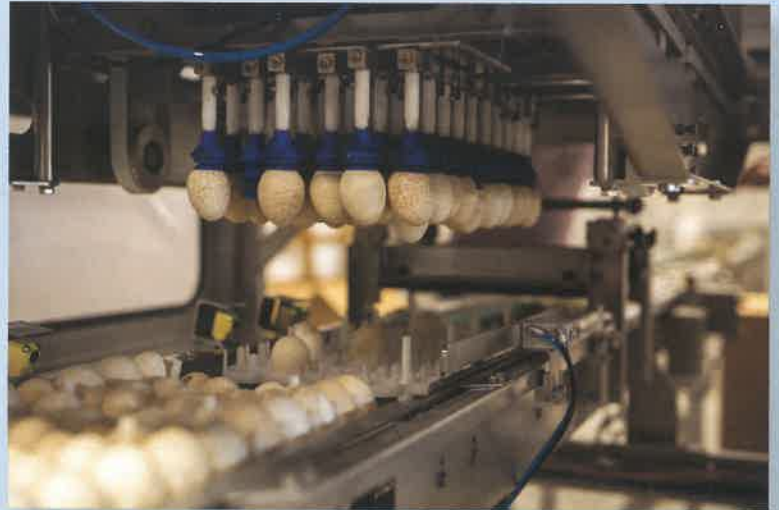
Chicken customers are seeing sustained performance improvements with immediate feed/water, and Tjitze Meter (HatchTech CEO) shared this breakthrough with Life-Science Innovations CEO Rick Huisinga. The two discussed the potential of a turkey version of HatchCare, and providing their team's respective expertise to work together to develop a solution customized for turkey use. Since that time, the collaboration has seen exceptional results, adapting, testing, measuring and now producing the first commercial poultts from turkey HatchCare.

"We spent two and a half years just working out box dimensions, figuring out what works, what doesn't," Jonathan said. "And then executing a long line of scientific studies to figure out the performance advantage."

Once there was a solid understanding of the equipment needed and trails had been done with positive results, construction plans on the new hatchery could begin.

"We wanted to show that we're going to put our money where our mouth is; we don't want to just sell this to others but show that we're active producers and users of the equipment ourselves. We also went to some of our partners and asked, 'based on what you've seen in the field during these trials, are you interested in participating in this?' They said

yes," he said. "So, we filled up the hatchery before we built it. The extra scale of the operation also allowed us to work with our automation partner, Viscon (also out of the Netherlands), to add many efficiency options to the building in the transfer, servicing and washing areas of the operation."



The differentiator for HeadStart Hatchery lies in its core principle—ensuring that newly hatched birds have instant access to feed, water, and light. This stark contrast to industry standards, where chicks often sit in a dark room waiting to be serviced, sets HeadStart apart. The benefits are tangible, with birds experiencing improved hydration, gut development, and overall size, consistently measuring 20-40% larger than their counterparts.

Jonathan highlighted the logistical advantages of the hatchery, emphasizing the stress-free environment it provides, both to the birds and the individuals handling them.

"Usually, in a hatchery when you're doing servicing, there are trucks warmed up, urgently waiting to get birds out to farms to start eating and drinking," he said. "They do deliveries all night, trying to get the birds out as fast as possible."

At HeadStart, birds are serviced and put back into the hatching boxes, and then returned to the ideal comfort of the hatcher. They're given a chance to settle, eat, drink, even take a nap prior to transport to the farms. Deliveries tend to take place the following morning, reducing stress on the poultts, the drivers as well as the farmers getting ready to receive the birds.



“Whenever the farmer wants that delivery, we can set it up to arrive then,” he said.”

There’s no downside to making that delay and making sure things are organized and planned out.”

Transporting birds from HeadStart Hatchery comes with its challenges, particularly concerning water access on trucks. While birds have access to feed during transport, water access remains a future consideration. Before commercialization finished, the R&D team ran a series of tests to make sure that there was no downside to starting poults on feed & water and then removing water during transportation. With three consecutive successful trials, even at very long distances, they green lit progress and will solve the water dilemma in the future if/when it’s deemed critical. The hatchery’s commitment to continuous improvement and innovation is evident.

The benefits extend beyond the hatchery itself, impacting growers who receive birds that are not only larger but also possess well-developed guts, increased hydration, and enhanced resilience. The emphasis on improved performance translates into potential cost savings for growers, a point that

Jonathan reiterated. HeadStart Hatchery charges for feed and services, aligning its pricing model with the savings realized by growers.

Jonathan shared insights into the global demand for immediate feed and water access, noting that Europe has been ahead in recognizing and implementing such practices. To directly address this need, Life-Science Innovations is launching a sister company to Headstart Hatching, named Next Nest Hatching. Next Nest will partner with Headstart Hatching in the new hatchery to serve as a hub for learning, research, and showcasing advancements in the industry. Then, while Headstart focuses on turkey production, Next Nest will market and sell the innovations and equipment to the rest of the global turkey industry.

As HeadStart Hatchery begins its operations, growers interested in accessing birds from this innovative facility can reach out to Peter Gruhl, Head of Sales. However, there is a very limited supply of birds available at this time (most of the 45,000,000 annual poults are spoken for). The hatchery aims to optimize its processes and gather valuable insights for the industry’s benefit. There’s still a lot of learning to do!

In conclusion, HeadStart Hatchery's pioneering approach marks a significant step forward in the turkey industry. By addressing crucial aspects of early bird development, the hatchery not only meets current standards but sets the stage for future advancements and improvements in turkey farming practices.



MDA PROTECTING LIVESTOCK GRANTS AVAILABLE

Applications due March 7, 2024



Also called the Protect Grant, enables Minnesota farmers to purchase and install equipment to prevent disease outbreaks

Requests can be between \$500 and \$10,000, with the farmer paying 50% of the total project costs

Project Examples include:

- Danish entry systems
- Air filtration
- Truck washes
- Wildlife Deterrents like
 - Inflatables
 - Lasers
 - Sound Machines

Learn more at mda.state.mn.us/protecting-livestock-protect-grant