Article written for the Marans Chicken Club USA by E Hardin

1. This article is on Mycoplasma gallisepticum, a bacterial infection that plagues the poultry industry from large egg producing operations to the small backyard fancier. This infection can play havoc with a flock. Infection with M. gallisepticum has a wide variety of clinical manifestations, but the most dramatic disease presentation of M. gallisepticum is chronic respiratory disease in large fowl varieties. Transmission of M. gallisepticum in eggs from infected breeder birds to progeny is the major route of spreading of the infection, and is the prime consideration for trade. In most countries, control efforts are based on maintaining commercial breeding stock free of infection. Where this is not possible, vaccination, especially with newly developed live vaccines, is being evaluated as an option. Major advances in diagnostic methods have been made in recent years. However, this is not cost effective for the exhibition breeder.

M. gallisepticum (MG) is usually controlled by maintaining MG-free flocks on single-age production sites and keeping them MG-free utilizing good biosecurity and a consistent serological monitoring program. Biosecurity put simple is being conscious of what you bring onto your farm and making sure you use antimicrobial agents such as Lysol and or bleach to clean travel coops, buckets, even your shoes after being in an area where this bacteria may be found. These, to name a few are swap meets, flea markets and areas where poultry are sold or handled without having to be tested to enter the area. Even visiting a neighboring farm where free range fowl are present. Wash clothing materials and shoes prior to going near your own birds and equipment after exposure to any of these situations.

The preferred method for the control of Mycoplasma gallisepticum is eradication. However because of large scale poultry operations after the organism has been introduced eradication is next to impossible. Vaccines and bacterin offer protection against egg transmission, respiratory signs and lesions, and egg production losses but is available only in large quantities (500 doses minimum order) as far as I can determine. Bacterins consist of a concentrated suspension of MG organisms in an oil emulsion. They are administered to chicks at 12–16 weeks of age, usually injected under the skin in the neck. Two doses are desirable. Bacterins are effective in preventing egg-production losses and respiratory disease, but they do not prevent infection with wild-type MG. While Vaccines seem to be produced in the U.S. for large volume operations such as broiler and egg layers, it is not marketed in a manner that is conducive for the exhibition breeder. There is a product on the market used for swine in this country and swine/poultry in other countries called Denagard liquid concentrate made by Novartis. It contains Tiamutin which is a pleuromutin antibiotic effective against M.gallisepticum. This drug has been shown to increase egg production as well as fertility in eggs produced for hatching. The least expensive place to purchase this product is at www.qcsupply. com . If you do use this drug be sure that you use it as directed and that you do not use it within10 to 12 days before or after any other drugs have been administered. You can go to the Novartis Tiamutin website at www.tiamutin. com for more information. I hope this has been helpful and wish you all a very Marans Christmas and a happy, healthy New Year.