

# Alternative housing systems for layers

As a result of the 2012 European legislation which will prohibit the production of eggs from the traditional battery cage, European Union producers are reviewing and modifying their production systems.

## Big Dutchman

**N**ATURA-aviaries for layers: flexible, economic, animal and user friendly

Big Dutchman is the perfect partner for producing eggs in alternative management systems.

development of alternative systems at Big Dutchman as the product manager. "Due to our long-term experience we can always offer the optimal products to our customers, demonstrate practicable approaches and pass on valuable experiences. This is not only valid concerning the installation but also the lighting and climate concepts, which make up a considerable part of the success at the end of the day." The Big Dutchman-modular system for versatile requirements for alternative layer management is



Natura Nova Twin: less mislaid eggs, clean nests, very clearly-arranged und easy to control

TECHNICAL COLUMN



With regard to this matter Zootechnica International will be investigating and reporting on the manufacturing and marketing of alternative egg laying systems.

Since the ban on cage management in Switzerland 1981, the global market leader for housing systems has been working on alternative management systems.

"We have developed an extensive range of products and ingenious systems especially for this management type which are constantly optimized through consultation with our customers", says Hans-Jürgen Seiffert, who manages the

called NATURA. The list of references of the product line is long: in the meantime more than 1500 farm projects have been implemented successfully with NATURA-systems. From Switzerland through Germany, Spain, Ireland, Austria, the Netherlands and Sweden, Norway, USA, Belgium, Great Britain, Canada, Finland, Rumania, Croatia through to Japan 20 million layers are housed in Big Dutchman NATURA-systems.

"The prerequisite for an economic floor and free-range management is: the right system", Seiffert says. "Only a perfectly fitted design in the house ensures best conditions for a high laying performance with few mislaid eggs and a justifiable control and work input." In addi-







**Natura60: perfectly approachable system with a worldwide unique feature: every second inspection aisle remains free of litter, hens and manure.**

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tion, the animal needs have to be coordinated with the requirements of the farm manager.

The flexible NATURA-modular system is the right choice when considering optimal space utilization and customized solutions.

Whether old or new buildings, a small or a big house, NATURA-aviaries offer a multitude of intelligent design scopes.

All aviaries of the NATURA-family are characterized by their consequently structured design, so that the animals find adequate areas for their activities like resting, egg laying, eating, scratching, drinking and dust bathing. This is an important prerequisite for high egg production and animal-friendly housing.

Through the correct adjustment of the feeding and water line as well as the nests all areas of the aviary are utilized equally well and the nest acceptance is raised.

Usable areas on several levels as well as a 100 percent utilization of the house floor allow a high bird density in the NATURA-installations and, therefore, for an

economic egg production.

In-house hygiene and bird health are associated. Manure belts underneath each level ensure that most of the droppings is regularly transported out of the house with minimal effort. In addition the concentration of ammonia in the house air can be further reduced through the ventilation of the droppings.

NATURA-installations set themselves apart through a lot of unique features. *NATURA Nova Twin* is the bestseller among the so-called classical aviaries. In this installation animals are provided with feed and water on two levels and can move directly into the nest. Less mislaid eggs and small housing-in risk are the pleasing results of the elaborate construction – which can even be fenced off for a safe commencement of production.

Experienced practitioners praise the readily accessible egg canal and the extraordinary clarity of NATURA Nova Twin-systems. The latter can be attributed to the corridor between nest and installation.

It can also be used by the farm staff for daily inspection from a higher level.

A special approach perch in the NATURA Nova Twin (patent no. 299 19 443.4) ensures that the hens

sit facing the aisle. Thereby less manure drops into the litter. The group laying nest *Colony 2+* with a tilting nest floor mechanism is a further Big Dutchman feature. Before the nest is fully closed for the night, any remaining eggs automatically roll onto the egg belt. Besides this hens are excluded from the nest at night. That avoids soiling and provides for good nest hygiene.

An extraordinary and unequalled development is the *NATURA60-aviary generation* from Big Dutchman. It is a perfectly approachable installation with a unique feature: every second (inspection) aisle remains free of litter, hens and manure.

This concept simplifies and reduces the management effort essentially, improves the conditions of employment considerably and coevally increases the reliability of the production process. The supervision of birds is trouble-free, convenient and comfortable and also due to small, well manageable

**NaturaStep:**  
the newest member of the Natura-family  
from Big Dutchman



group sizes inside the installation through partitions every 2,41 m. The litter area of the NATURA60 can be fenced off easily and simply for the adaption phase. That provides for an optimal start of the laying phase and prevents floor eggs effectively.

The youngest member of the NATURA-family at Big Dutchman is *NATURA Step*. This aviary for an efficient floor and free-range management of layers can also be installed in single lines.

The reason being the stepped structure of the system which makes it possible for animals to move between the different levels without leaving the system.

Consequently the integrated nests are perfectly accessible and less floor eggs is the pleasing result.

Furthermore you can see and control the complete animal area from the aisles, which has a positive effect on the animal management.

The NATURA Step offers a lot of useable floor space and with that guarantees optimal bird density.

