

### Nice nod for Pepe's Ducks

#### Industry pioneer wins Biosecurity Farmer of the Year Award

By any measure, Pepe Bonaccordo is one of Australian agriculture's great success stories.

Starting in 1976 as a backyard business with just 22 Pekin ducks, Pepe's Ducks now supplies 80,000 birds a week out of its facility at Windsor, NSW, and is the largest producer of ducks in Australia and New Zealand.

Having put home-grown duck firmly on the Australian dinner plate, over the past two decades Mr Bonaccordo has been cementing the future growth of the industry by developing and enforcing uncompromising standards on biosecurity, food safety and animal welfare.

These outstanding efforts last night saw him become this year's Biosecurity Farmer of the Year at the Australian Farmer of the Year Awards held in Sydney.

"When it comes to biosecurity, for many years we were under the umbrella of the chicken industry," Mr Bonaccordo said. "But a duck's needs are quite different to those of a chicken.

"Put simply, if you put a duck in a bucket of water and you put a chicken in a bucket of water – one will float, the other won't.

"That goes all the way through to factors like the densities of our sheds, the way we grow the ducks, husbandry, animal welfare, water requirements etc."

In 2006, in an effort to develop industry-wide biosecurity standards, Mr Bonaccordo drove the establishment of the Australian Duck Meat Association, along with the other major player in the market (Luv-a-Duck).

The association's crowning achievement was the production, last year, of the *Farm Biosecurity Manual for the Duck Meat Industry*. The manual identifies areas of risk common to all duck enterprises along with appropriate measures to minimise those risks.

While Pepe's handles most of the breeding, hatching and slaughter itself, 90% of the growing of the animals is now done by contracted growers and the company has been hard at work rolling out the manual across the industry.



“We’ve seen a lot of issues with poultry diseases, particularly in Europe and Asia,” Mr Bonaccordo said. “We thought that we needed to do something as an industry to ensure our biosecurity.

“We’ve also had more of our people trained in emergency animal disease response – another step that we’ve taken so that if there ever was an emergency outbreak we were prepared for it.”

Duncan Rowland, Manager of Biosecurity Planning and Implementation at Animal Health Australia, said Mr Bonaccordo demonstrated a clear passion for improving biosecurity, not only in his own business but for the broader industry.

“The judges were particularly impressed with the market drivers Pepe’s have introduced for better biosecurity and the way they’ve demonstrated that biosecurity systems provide a standard of excellence that helps meets customer needs,” Mr Rowland said.

“We feel very excited about the win,” Mr Bonaccordo said. “It does tell us that a lot of the hard work that we’ve done has been recognised by other people.

“It’s important that we build a great foundation underneath our market. And that foundation is: good farming management practices, good biosecurity, animal welfare, food safety, training – that’s what brands are built on.

“The duck has become a lot more acceptable to the average Australian, hence the need to grow our business.

“We want to build a new factory, we want to build a new hatchery because the demand tells us that the facilities we have at the moment are not coping with the demand.

Hosted by Kondinin Group and ABC Rural, and sponsored by Plant Health Australia and Animal Health Australia, the Biosecurity Farmer of the Year award recognises the efforts of producers dedicated to keeping their operations free of diseases, pests and weeds.

The winner and finalists demonstrate that successful biosecurity practices are not only part of responsible farming – they can also be great for business.

**-ENDS-**

**For more information, or to arrange an interview, contact Thea McNaught-Reynolds, AHA, on (02) 6203 3942. (Images of Pepe Bonaccordo are available)**



## Further Information

### The Farm Biosecurity Initiative

Farm Biosecurity, a joint program managed by Animal Health Australia (AHA) and Plant Health Australia (PHA), is a national education and engagement campaign which provides producers with information and tools to reduce the risk of diseases, pests and weeds. Producers are encouraged to check their properties regularly and if they see anything unusual to call the **Exotic Plant Pest Hotline** on **1800 084 881** or the **Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline** on **1800 675 888**. For further information visit [www.farmbiosecurity.com.au](http://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au).

### Animal Health Australia

AHA is an innovative partnership involving the Australian Government, state and territory governments, major livestock industries and other stakeholders. We work with our members and stakeholders to strengthen Australia's national animal health system and maximise confidence in the safety and quality of Australia's livestock products in domestic and overseas markets. For further information, visit [www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au](http://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au) or call (02) 6232 5522.

### Plant Health Australia

Plant Health Australia is the national coordinator of the government-industry partnership for plant biosecurity in Australia. As a not-for-profit company, we service the needs of Members and independently advocate on behalf of the national plant biosecurity system. Our efforts enhance Australia's plant health status, assist trade, safeguard the livelihood of producers and support the sustainability and profitability of our plant industries and the communities that rely upon them. For further information, visit [www.phau.com.au](http://www.phau.com.au) or call (02) 6215 7700.

### Hotlines

The Exotic Plant Pest Hotline (1800 084 881) and the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline (1800 675 888) are free-call telephone services provided for people to report unusual plant and animal pests and diseases. The hotlines allow callers to directly report suspect detections to an area where action can be taken by knowledgeable staff.



---

For more information on Farm Biosecurity visit [www.farmbiosecurity.com.au](http://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au)