

ON MY FARM Robert Lanning, Devonshire Poultry

It's conference season, and *Robert Lanning* has been travelling the length and breadth of the country to attend producer get-togethers

■ During the past six weeks, I have found myself attending many conferences and dinners.

It started with Chicken 2015 in Daventry. One speaker gave an informative talk on the recent avian influenza outbreaks in the US. This was a real eye-opener – both on the scale of their industry and the vulnerability from migrating water fowl flying up and down the Mississippi. It was yet another reminder on biosecurity.

I did take note of one point, which was how important the washing of overalls is. We all wash them and hang them outside to dry, which is leaving us wide open to wild birds depositing a load of virus and bacteria on those beautifully laundered overalls, ready to bring back into our sheds. Tumble dryers are now being sourced.

Then it was on to Norfolk for a dinner dance, which was well attended with many partners, and this



A talk on the subject of avian influenza in the US brought biosecurity to the fore.

made for a really sociable evening.

The Faccenda grower's conference in Coventry started with a "double buffet", featuring the company's entire range of duck, turkey and chicken. It was a fantastic spread – and no vegetables in sight. Perfect.

I also received an invitation to the Lancashire Poultry Club. I was made to feel very welcome by an incredibly friendly group of farmers and traders. What was notable

about the evening was the comedian didn't turn up, which made for far more conversation, laughs and jokes among us all. The comedian certainly was not needed.

In between all this travelling we have started building two new poultry houses at our site in Chard. The weather has been on our side, so both footprints are now levelled and stoned, and construction starts in earnest this month.

I have obviously been looking

at equipment and ventilation, and this has taken me to Sweden where, for the first time, I met some farmers and had a good, informative discussion on their low levels of campylobacter.

The farm I visited had had only one positive test in the past three years. Their biosecurity was as good, but no higher than the Red Tractor standards, with boot barriers and boot changes and so on. The biggest differences, however, were no thinning, much colder, drier winters and the remoteness of the farms. We were about 10 miles from the nearest poultry farm, although for Sweden we were in a relatively "poultry-dense" area.

Back on our other farms we are seeing some good performance, but the 400 EPEF still eludes us. We are being challenged with coccidiosis, which has led to us changing our chemical programme at turnarounds and floor burning, along with expert help at 21 days on lesion scoring.

As always, this will mean more attention to detail, keeping us all on our toes. In a strange way I enjoy this sort of challenge.

Devonshire Poultry comprises six farms in Devon, Dorset and Somerset, growing 3.5 million chickens a year for a leading integrator.