
Editorials

It is vital for the *World's Poultry Science Journal* to be dynamic and to strive to keep abreast of the needs of WPSA members throughout the world. After 12 years as editor I concluded that meeting these and the other demanding objectives would be best achieved by handing the task to a younger successor. Thus, I am very pleased to report that at its meeting on 21 June this year the Executive Committee of the WPSA agreed to accept my resignation and to appoint Dr Jim McNab as Editor with effect from the beginning of 1999.

The objective will be to achieve a smooth transition and, in so far as any assistance may be needed, I shall continue to help with journal publication during the year. Dr Pete Lewis will continue as Assistant Editor. While the change in editorship will receive further mention in the December issue, at this time readers can be assured that Jim McNab brings with him a wealth of knowledge and editing experience with *British Poultry Science* that will be of immense value for the development of the journal in the years ahead.

Chris Hann

The introduction of a letters section in the journal has been perceived as a useful way of encouraging interaction among our readers. However, three letters in this issue all relate to an unfortunate sequence of events concerning a paper published in the March 1998 issue. These letters raise some fundamental matters concerning the foundations on which scientists work and report their work.

By definition, material included in review papers is heavily reliant on previously published reports. However, within the bounds of the chosen subject, the role of the reviewer is to conduct a critical evaluation of the published evidence and then to bring the information together in a logical and well structured way. To be acceptable for publication in the journal the result, including the conclusions that may be drawn, should always represent a worthwhile addition to the body of published literature. For intending authors these and other matters relating to papers submitted for publication are emphasized in the Notes for Contributors included in each issue of the *WPSJ*. When scrutinising papers, referees are very conscious of these requirements.

In the case of the paper by Sebastian *et al.* (1998) it transpired that large parts were taken from a previous review by Ravindran *et al.* (1996), thus revealing plagiarism by the authors of the later paper and opening their integrity to question. As will be seen from their letters of explanation, the authors accept that they made serious mistakes during the preparation of the paper. Subsequently, the system set up by the *WPSJ* to ensure the suitability of papers for publication failed to identify a major defect. The most important lesson for all concerned is the need for care and constant vigilance in the preparation of papers and in the subsequent application of rigorous checking when they are assessed for publication. Such measures are essential to help preserve the vital element of trust on which scientists and the progress of science depend.

Chris Hann
Pete Lewis

References

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- SEBASTIAN, S., TOUCHBURN, S.P. and CHAVEZ, E.R. (1998) Implications of phytic acid and supplemental microbial phytase in poultry nutrition: a review. *World's Poultry Science Journal* 54: 27-47