

Boehringer Ingelheim launches new trivalent poultry vaccine, includes protection against H5 avian influenza

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With VAXXITEK® HVT+IBD+H5, Boehringer Ingelheim is expanding its proven VAXXITEK® range with a new vaccine that protects against three severe poultry diseases: Marek's disease, Infectious Bursal Disease, and H5 avian influenza.

Leveraging extensive expertise in avian influenza protection, this innovative vaccine will first launch in Egypt in February 2025. VAXXITEK® HVT+IBD+H5 is manufactured in the U.S. where it has been licensed since 2023; however, avian influenza vaccination is currently not permitted in the U.S.

Marek's disease is a viral disease in chickens that can cause tumors, paralysis, and often death. It is widespread and can lead to significant losses in poultry farms. Infectious Bursal Disease, also known as Gumboro disease, is another viral disease in chickens that causes clinical symptoms like diarrhea and dehydration resulting in significant productivity losses in poultry farms. Both diseases target the immune system, making the birds more susceptible to other infections. Vaccination against Marek's disease and Gumboro is standard practice in most poultry farms globally.

Avian influenza, mostly known as avian flu or bird flu, is a highly contagious disease affecting domestic and wild birds. It can also infect other species such as cows, cats and even humans, although human infections are rare. H5 is one of the most prevalent avian influenza virus strains and endemic in several countries where it is present all year-round. In these countries, vaccination is a necessary tool to further prevent the spread of the disease. Due to the continuous evolution of the virus and development of many variants, the need for innovative vaccine solutions to manage avian flu remains urgent.

Supporting poultry producers through technology and ease of use

“The launch of VAXXITEK® HVT+IBD+H5 is another step forward in avian influenza prevention regarding both coverage and convenience”, says Taoufik Rawi, Head of Franchise, Poultry, at Boehringer Ingelheim. “Our new three-in-one vaccine is quick and effective: It combines broad protection against the most prevalent H5 avian influenza clades and two major poultry diseases in just one shot.”

A clade is a group of viral strains that share a common ancestor. While traditional bird flu vaccines often only cover one clade at a time, Boehringer Ingelheim leveraged a technology called COBRA (Computationally Optimised Broadly Reactive Antigen) to create a unique antigen sequence which provides protection against the most prevalent and infectious H5 clades.

Waleed El Mashak, Head of Animal Health India, Middle East, Turkey, and Africa (IMETA) at Boehringer Ingelheim, says: “As a region heavily impacted by avian influenza, the launch of VAXXITEK® HVT+IBD+H5 represents a critical advancement for poultry farmers across IMETA. By offering cross-clade protection against H5 avian influenza alongside immunity against other major diseases, this innovative vaccine provides farmers with a comprehensive and efficient solution to safeguard their flocks and support sustainable poultry farming.”

VAXXITEK® HVT+IBD+H5 is administered directly at the hatchery, providing early protection for chicks, avoiding any immunity gap. This refers to the potential gap between the decrease of maternal antibodies in the chicks and the raise of active immunity due to vaccination. Just like Boehringer’s other avian influenza vaccines, VAXXITEK® HVT+IBD+H5 is a DIVA (Differentiating Infected from Vaccinated Animals) vaccine. This is crucial to distinguish between vaccinated and naturally infected birds in case of a disease outbreak.