

Laying Hen Welfare Forum



Presentation to BVPA Spring Meeting, Harrogate
15th March 2019

Mark Williams
Paula Baker

Beak trimming - background

- Beak Trimming Action Group
 - Report to Minister in November 2015
 - Minister accepted all recommendations
 - No ban on IRBT
- LHWF
 - Set up in 2014
 - Now charged with providing biennial update to minister on progress to reduce FP

Who are we?

- LHWF brings together expertise from industry, farm, animal welfare and government to explore how we can improve flock management and reduce injurious pecking amongst laying hens
- Through practical studies, the group is seeking to establish economically positive ways of improvement in animal welfare for laying hens and pullets
- LHWF will promote knowledge transfer to the wider egg industry, including the domestic poultry keeping sector, and endeavour to encourage adoption of best practice by all
- Members are:



EIP Agri project - 'Maintaining Feather Cover'

- Trialling innovative ways of maintaining feather cover in laying hens
- The need to reduce the levels of injurious pecking is clear, for high levels can be associated with increased mortality and feed use, and reduced hen welfare
- Operational Group:
 - Andrew Joret (Chairman) - BEIC
 - Mark Williams - BEIC
 - Richard Kempsey - ex Stonegate Farmers
 - Claire Weeks - University of Bristol
 - David Brass - The Lakes Free Range Egg Co
 - Gary Ford - NFU
 - Robert Gooch - BFREPA
 - Mia Fernyhough - RSPCA
 - Stephen Lister - Crowshall Veterinary Services
 - Jess Stokes - Royal Agricultural University
 - Paula Baker - LHWF
 - Defra representative
 - APHA representative

Maintaining Feather Cover in Laying Hens



Working together to reduce injurious pecking

Aims and overview of activities

1. Empower a range of producers (>28) to maintain and improve feather cover
2. Reach other farmers via articles, social media, roadshows and vets
3. LHWF will work on factors outside producer control

How are people motivated?

- Feelings of competence: '*I know how to control this problem*' can enhance intrinsic motivation
- But, this will not motivate unless accompanied by a sense of autonomy: '*I have control over this problem*'. If people feel capable and in charge they are more likely to change.
- Feeling connected to other farmers and feeling that this activity or solving this problem is culturally valued. The need to feel part of a team or group of people acting with similar goals is key.

Motivational and self-determination theory

How can we help?

- Make it *easier to do* something about feather cover and *harder not to*
- **Work together to find solutions** and connect producers with others to inform, share and empower
- **One size does not fit all** Creating *bespoke* plans based on motives, beliefs, perceptions and barriers (understand better how to support different people)
- **Reduce barriers** (our environment dictates our actions)
- Vets and industry work together - supportive environment for transitioning to intact beak flocks

Professor Jeff French <http://strategic-social-marketing.vpweb.co.uk/Prof--Jeff-French.html>

Farmer led bespoke action

- 28 producers recruited by BEIC
- Working alongside farmers to monitor feather cover and create bespoke action, with support from their vet and others
- Ask producers how they would like to share and receive information
- Ongoing support and review progress - successes, barriers, revised plan of action
- Developing material to support vets in drawing up Feather Cover Action Plans (FCAP)

Opportunities to maintain feather cover
Creating a Bespoke Plan Together



Walk around flock/house, discuss action areas that apply, current practice and where producer particularly wants to develop new bespoke management ideas: *is there anything you'd particularly like to focus on to reduce injurious pecking? Would you like to show me?*

Keeping an eye on feather cover for health and welfare

Current practice (s)



Bespoke action (s)



What motivates farmers to take part in this project?

- Welfare of the birds
- To gain and pass on knowledge
- Advice and support
- Forward thinking if potential of a beak trimming ban

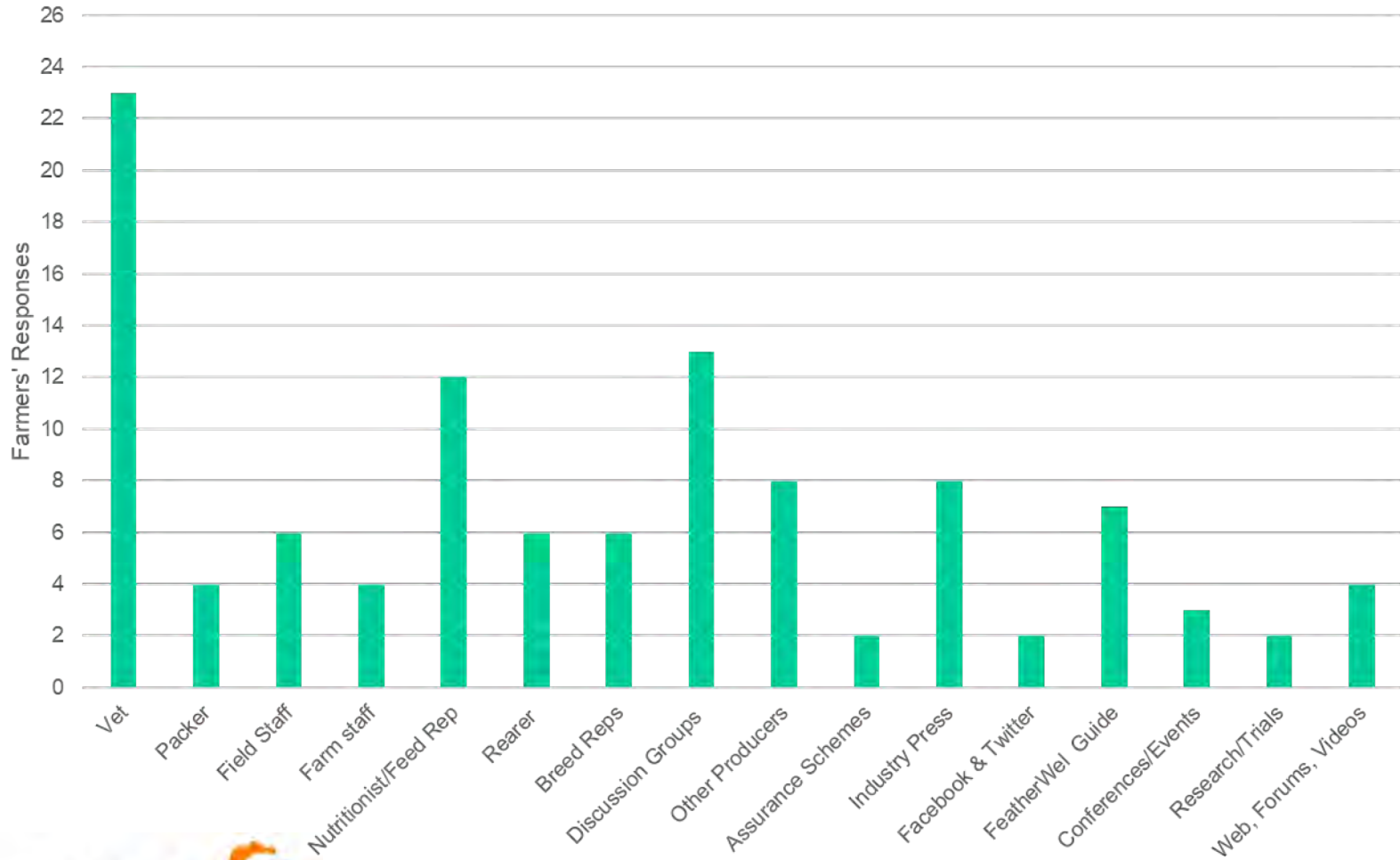


Why do farmers think it's worth reducing FP?

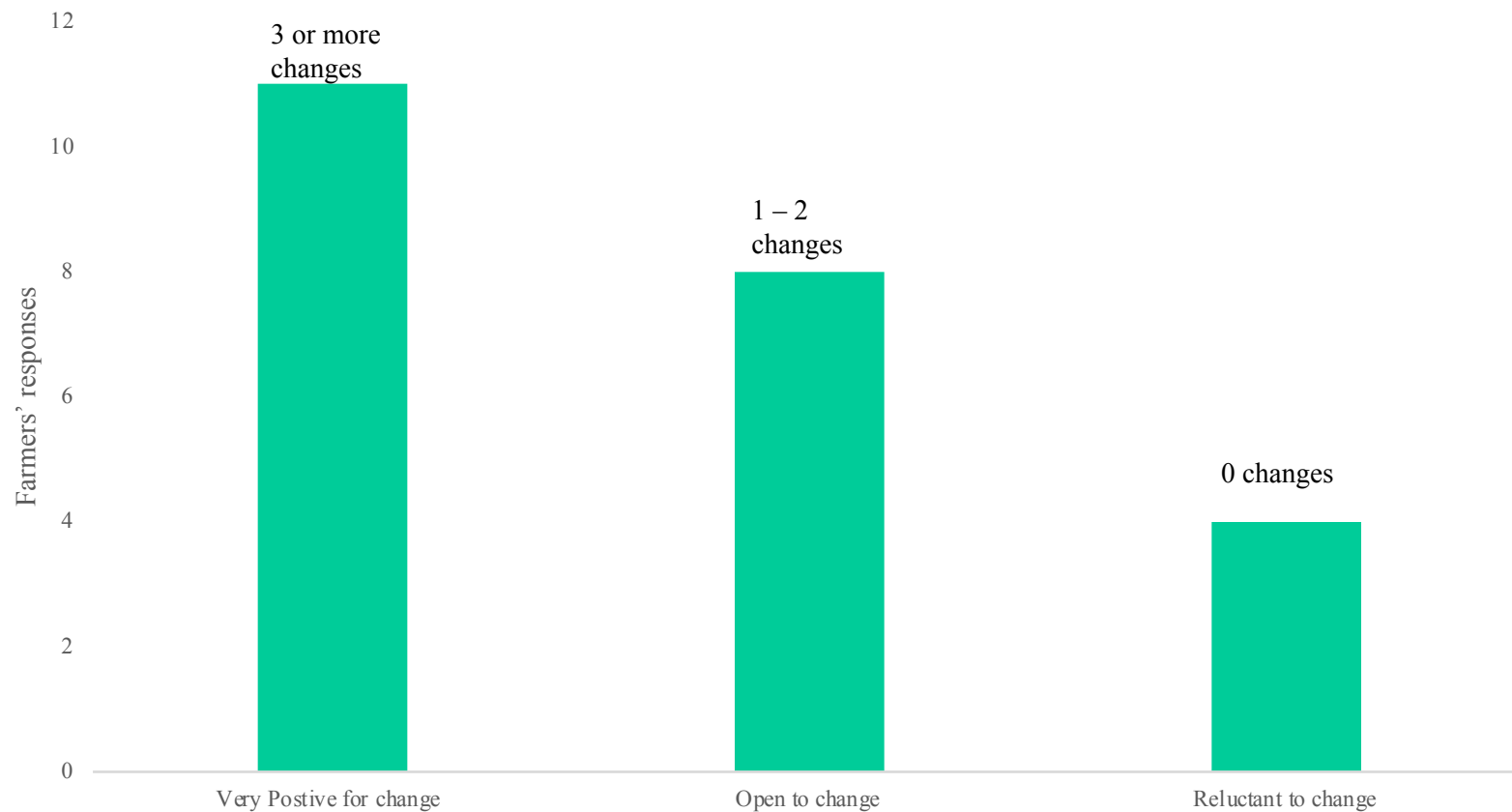
- Welfare and flock health
 - Lower mortality
 - Less stress
- Customer relations
- Good welfare leads to better profitability



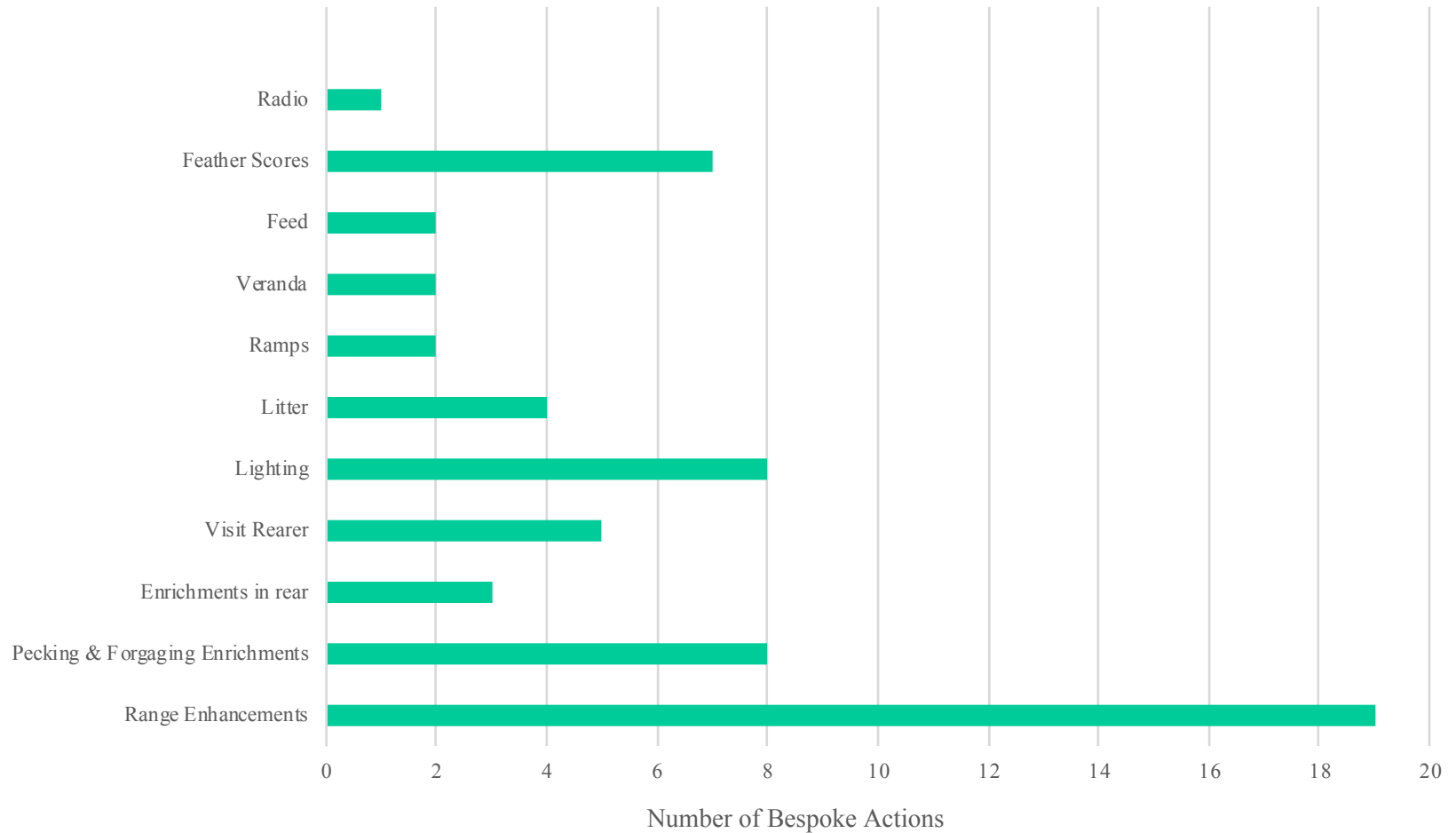
Where do farmers get info on FP?



Farmers' Attitudes to adopt change



FCAP - Bespoke Actions



Feather Scoring (Assurewel)

50 birds (3 or more assessed jointly with the stockperson)

Assess and score 5 birds in each of 10 different areas of house and/or range. Visually assess the head/neck area back/vent area of the bird (without handling birds).

Score separately for head/neck area and back/vent area:



0 = **No/Minimal feather loss**

No bare skin visible, no or slight wear, only single feathers missing

1 = **Slight feather loss**

Moderate wear, damaged feathers or 2 or more adjacent feathers missing up to bare skin visible < 5cm maximum dimension

2 = **Moderate/Severe feather loss**

Bare skin visible ≥ 5cm maximum dimension

Feather Scoring Sheet

AssureWel				Welfare Outcome Assessment Laying Hens			
Farm/Unit				Breed			
Flock/Unit				Flock age (weeks)			
House				Flock size (placed)			
Date				Total birds on farm			
				Beak trimmed		Eyes On: On emergency	
Bird	Feather Loss		Dirtyness	Bird	Feather Loss		Dirtyness
	Head/ Neck	Back/ Vent			Head/ Neck	Back/ Vent	
1				26			
2				27			
3				28			
4				29			
5				30			
6				31			
7				32			
8				33			
9				34			
10				35			
11				36			
12				37			
13				38			
14				39			
15				40			
16				41			
17				42			
18				43			
19				44			
20				45			
21				46			
22				47			
23				48			
24				49			
25				50			
				Feather Loss			
				Head/ Neck		Back/ Vent	Dirtyness
Total number birds with score 0							
Total number birds with score 1							
Total number birds with score 2							
Antagonistic behaviours (number of incidents)				☐ Aggressive behaviour observed ☐ Feather pecking observed			
Severe beak trimming (number of birds)				Birds needing further care (number of birds)			
Flightiness		☐ Calm ☐ Cautious ☐ Flighty					
% Mortality to date				To 40 weeks			
Predominant cause				Predominant cause			
Production to date (%)				Peak production (%)			
Bird age/week				Bird age/week			

Good Practices already on Farm



Industry wide communications

POULTRY WORLD

Farminguk
04 July 2018 | Online since 2003

RANGER
f t q+ s
04 July 2018 | Online since 2003



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FEATHER SCORING GUIDE

Working together to reduce injurious pecking

British Lay Industry Council

METHOD AND SAMPLING

- Visually assess the back/vent area of the bird
- Score at least 50 birds per shed i.e. 5 birds in each of 10 different areas of the house and/or range
- If borderline e.g. 0/1 or 1/2, allocate the lower score
- Feather re-growth = feather loss

AREAS TO BE SCOREDA diagram of a chicken from the side, with green lines indicating the areas on the back and vent that should be scored for feather loss.

SIZE GUIDE

Less than ruler = score 1

More than ruler = score 2

When this guide is printed on A4 this ruler is 5cm in size

BACK/VENT SCORE 0: No bare skin visible, no or slight wear, only single feathers missing



BACK/VENT SCORE 1: Moderate wear, damaged feathers or 2 or more adjacent feathers missing up to 5cm bare skin



BACK/VENT SCORE 2: 5cm or more bare skin visible



Photographs courtesy of AssureWel

PoultryNews

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Video case studies

- Farmer-led feather scoring video
- Illustrate development of bespoke action plans - What have they achieved? What have they learnt? What has worked/what can be done differently? What ideas and advice would they give to other producers?
- BEIC organised LHWF operational group study tours to other countries to share intact beak flock learnings and best practice with the UK

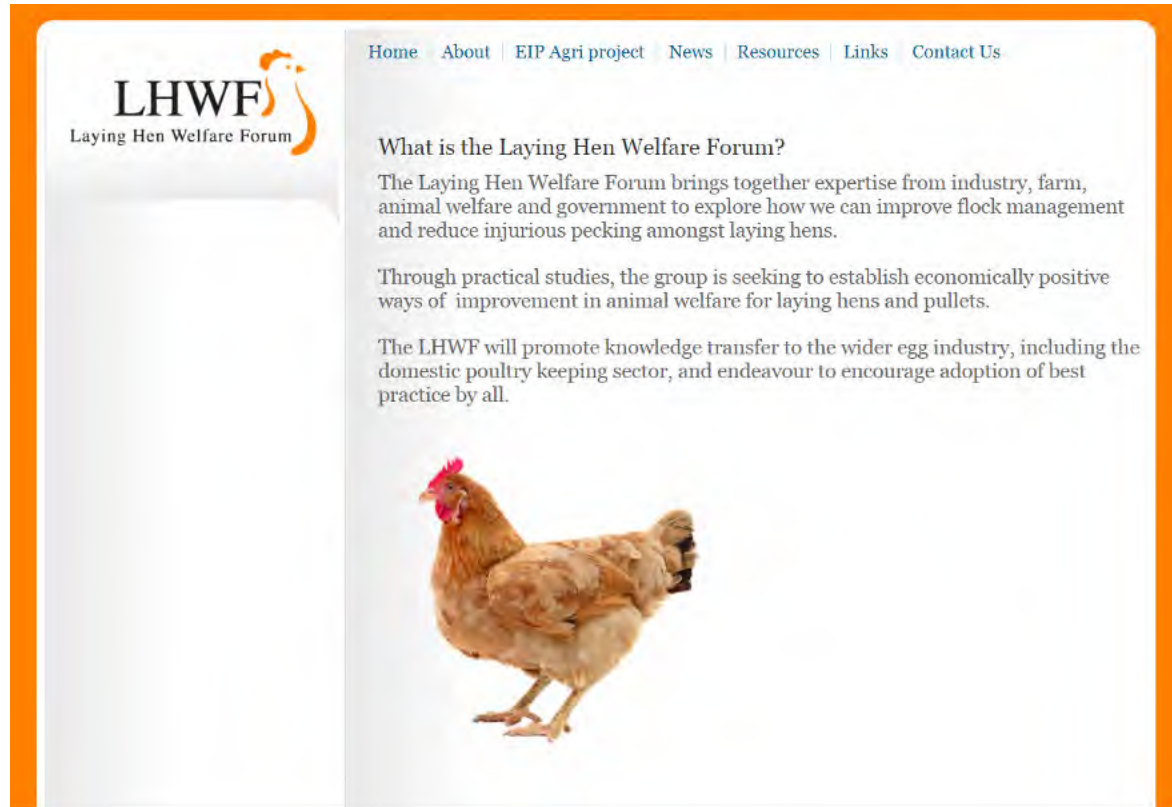


Share fair roadshows

- Producers share ideas and reflections on maintaining feather cover with others
- 5 roadshows Autumn 2019
- Interactive breakout sessions
- Publicise on LHWF website, social media, farming press

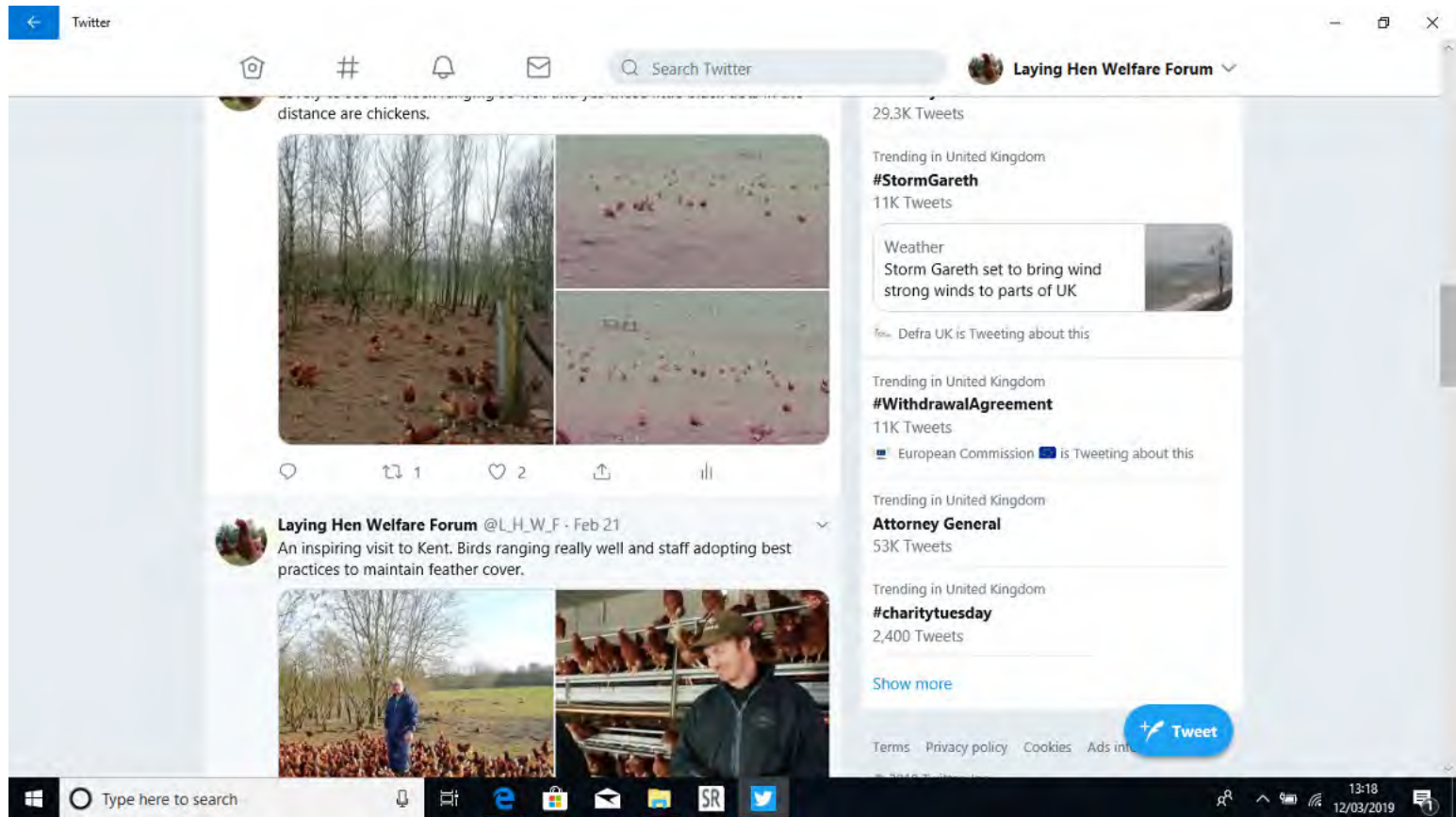


Website



Please have a look and share: <https://lhwf.co.uk/>

Twitter



Please follow us on twitter: https://twitter.com/L_H_W_F

Thank You

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