

Hester Pharma ties up with Japanese firm

Our Special Correspondent
B O M B A Y

Hester Pharmaceuticals Ltd has forged a strategic alliance with Ghen Corporation of Japan and its US subsidiary Maine Biological Laboratories (MBL) to set up a state-of-the-art poultry vaccine project in Ahmedabad.

Under the alliance, Hester will soon introduce a range of Immunocomb kits for the diagnosis of poultry, canine, feline, bovine and ovine diseases.

Hester's managing director Rajiv Gandhi told *Business Standard* that the project, estimated to cost Rs 5 crore, envisages setting up a poultry vaccine plant with an installed capacity of 395 million doses of live and killed (inactivated) vaccines.

"The project will use the technology of MBL and Ghen Corporation. We will also have access to all future developments from them", Gandhi said.

Currently, Hester Pharmaceuticals is engaged in marketing vaccines from MBL and Ghen Corporation, animal livestock disease diagnostic kits from Idexx Corporation of the US and Biological Gal-Ed Labs, Israel, and animal feed from Kemin Europe, Belgium.

Ghen Corporation specialises in poultry, seed corn genetics, vaccines and other biotechnological products. It was the first company in the world to produce bivalent marke disease vaccine for poultry and is dedicated to high-tech research, including genetic

engineering.

For Hester Pharmaceuticals, its turnover has grown from Rs 191.76 crore in 1991 to Rs 230.19 crore in 1993 on an equity base of Rs 12.75 crore. Net profit grew from Rs 23.01 crore in 1991 to Rs 34.53 crore in 1993.

Maine Biological Laboratories is the exclusive licensee of USDA-approved veterinary products for several unique poultry vaccines.

The lab produces a wide range of poultry vaccines which are distributed throughout the US and other countries. Activac and Inactivac are trade names of MBL.

Hester Pharmaceuticals has already acquired the land for its new project. The construction of the factory building has begun and is scheduled to be completed by October, Gandhi said.

The installation of the machinery will begin after 80 per cent of the civil construction is completed. The company expects to start trial production by December and commercial production by March next year.

On the poultry vaccine industry, Gandhi said the standard vaccination schedule recommended by the ministry of agriculture, animal husbandry department, envisages about 2,500 million doses per annum.

However, the actual consumption of poultry vaccines is around 1,200 million doses per annum. This, according to Gandhi, is due to limited availability of poultry vaccines and non-availability of certain vaccines in the domestic market.