

Chicken Farmers of Ontario

Regional Farmer-Member Consultation

June 28, 2016
Grimsby, Ontario



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Executive Summary

On June 28, 2016 farmer-members from Districts 4, 5, 6, 8 and 9 of the Chicken Farmers of Ontario met at the Casablanca Winery Inn in Grimsby for a highly interactive consultation workshop facilitated by Bryan Boyle. The purpose of the session was to generate valuable input from farmer-members to assist Chicken Farmers of Ontario Board of Directors:

- 1) Understand farmer-member perspectives and their accountability on issues relating to the safe, healthy and sustainable production of chicken, with a focus on the farmer-members' transformation towards modular loading
- 2) Understand farmer-member perspectives and their accountability on issues relating to procuring, placing and growing chicks

To set the stage for the workshop, Gwen Zellen from Chicken Farmers of Ontario provided a brief description of current and future drivers for animal welfare and why modular loading is an important transformation.

Participants were asked, "How will we know that we "got it right" with modular loading as we grow safe, healthy and sustainable chicken?" They identified the desired outcomes from the perspective of various key stakeholders.

Examples of the desired outcomes identified for specific stakeholders include:

Farmer-Members: quicker catching and loading, fewer condemnations or damage birds, improved animal welfare, financially feasible, requirements are well communicated, better biosecurity and worker safety is preserved

Processors: fewer condemnations, less portions trimmed, animal welfare improved, easier handling, more efficient plants

Government: increased animal welfare to animals that appeals to consumers, less need to regulate the chicken industry, fewer condemnations and increased employee safety

Consumers: more humane treatment of birds, better quality product

The farmer-members present were asked, "What actions have farmer-members taken or will they be taking to implement modular loading on their farms?" Responses were clustered into the following key areas: renovate barns, improve driveways, improve communication, set standards and consider financial implications.

Gwen Zellen from Chicken Farmers of Ontario provided a brief description of chick supply optimization and some of the related issues.

Farmer-members present were asked “How will we know that we “got it right” in procuring, placing, and growing chicks?”

Examples of the desired outcomes identified for specific stakeholders include:

Hatcheries: fewer complaints from farmer-members, improved hatchability, reduced production costs, fewer vet trips, less competition from USA, more profitability

Farmer-Members: early day mortality greatly reduced, better quality chicks, more profitable farm operations, fewer condemnations, less medicating, more predictability in production and marketing

Processors: more even birds, fewer condemnations, processing meets schedules, higher quality product

Government: less antibiotics used, less lab work, less antibiotic use, more Ontario hatcheries, fewer complaints in the system

Consumers: fewer antibiotics used, improved animal welfare, better quality product, improved consumer confidence, specialty markets

Farmer-members shared their experiences with chick supply and proactive steps they have taken relating to those experiences. The experiences were clustered around inferior quality chicks, timing, chicks from the USA, communication and the need for compensation.

Participants were asked, “What actions should farmer-members be taking to ensure an optimized chick supply to allow them to maximize their potential to grow safe, healthy and sustainable chicken?” Their actions were clustered into the key areas of: incentives and penalties, hatchery ownership, improved communication, enhanced breeder flocks, added regulation, sourcing and improved farmer-member animal husbandry.

The Chicken Farmers of Ontario farmer-member consultation workshop was a productive event, where the farmer-members present were very engaged. Through their valued input, participants shared their perspectives relating to modular loading and chick supply optimization as an important step in helping to ensure a strong and vibrant Ontario chicken industry in the future.

Chicken Farmers of Ontario

Farmer-Member Consultation
Casablanca Winery Inn, Grimsby, Ontario
June 28, 2016 Facilitated by Bryan Boyle

Purpose of the Session

To generate valuable input from farmer-members to assist Chicken Farmers of Ontario Board of Directors:

- 1) Understand farmer-member perspectives and their accountability on issues relating to the safe, healthy and sustainable production of chicken, with a focus on the farmer-members' transformation towards modular loading
- 2) Understand farmer-member perspectives and their accountability on issues relating to procuring, placing and growing chicks

Throughout this report whenever two or more tables of participants offered the same or very similar comments they are noted with an "x" and the number, e.g. (x3)

Safe, Healthy and Sustainable Production: Modular Loading

What lies ahead for the Ontario Chicken Industry?

Gwen Zellen provided a brief description of current and future drivers for animal welfare and why modular loading is an important transformation.

Desired Outcomes

Participants were asked "How will we know that we "got it right" with modular loading as we grow safe, healthy and sustainable chicken?" They looked at the desired outcomes from the perspective of various key stakeholders.

Farmer-Members

- Much quicker catching and loading process (x3)
- Fewer condemnments or damage to birds (x2)
- Animal welfare is improved
- Financially feasible
- Cost recovery is possible

- Minimal cost or subsidized equipment changes if required
- Minimal cost for the change, e.g. engineering for upgrades
- If farmer-members to get a cheque covering 100% of the cost of the upgrades
- Practical approach for second-floor loading
- Requirements for ceiling heights, door widths, etc. are readily available to farmer-members
- Requirements are fair and well communicated without changing midstream
- Standardized modular equipment
- Modular loading can be done in any weather conditions
- Better biosecurity
- Less requirement for barn management during the catching process
- Farm worker safety is preserved

Processors (Our Customers)

- Fewer birds condemned (x4)
- Less portions trimmed (x2)
- Animal welfare improved (x2)
- More usable product
- Better yield
- Less bruising
- Better bird health management under extreme conditions
- More humane initial handling of bird within the plant
- Processors can demonstrate to their customers that they're striving for animal welfare
- Easier handling
- Reduced catching time
- More efficient catching
- Quality of the catching crews improved
- More efficient plant
- Standard modular equipment
- Facilitate gas stunning for less stress on the birds

Governments

- Increased welfare to animals and consumers (x3)
- Happier Canadian Food Inspection Agency
- Less need to regulate the chicken industry
- Encouraged that steps are being made by the chicken industry to address issues instead of requiring government regulations
- Increase employee safety
- Funding is available under Growing Forward II
- Fewer condemnations and fewer Dead On Arrivals (DOA's)

Consumers

- More humane treatment of birds during catching and processing (x3)
- Better quality of product
- Quality of the meat is recognized by the consumer
- “Feel good” idealism
- Consumers don't know or care about modular loading
- Will consumers know the difference between handling using crates or modules?

Potential Actions

- We continue to grow safe, healthy and sustainable chicken to meet the changing needs of our customers, governments and consumers.
- The Ontario chicken industry will have fully transformed to modular loading over the next few years in response to the changing needs.

The farmer-members present were asked, “What actions have farmer-members taken or will they be taking to implement modular loading on their farms?”

Renovate Barns

- Renovate barns as required (x3)
- Pursue engineer’s stamp to retrofit present multi-floor barns (x3)
- Build a new one-story barn (x2)
- Anticipate possible changes to our barns
- Add additional reinforcement for second-floor of barns
- Three-story barn will be decommissioned
- Consider if barn renovation is worth the cost
- Budget for the cost of barn changes
- Research other jurisdictions to see how they handle modular loading

Improve Driveway

- Review the ideal laneway requirements and specifications
- Widen our laneways

Improve Communication

- Looking for further direction from Chicken Farmers of Ontario and our processor
- Engage in feedback sessions
- Make equipment providers aware of the specifications required for modular loading
- Utilize self-education to become updated on the modular process
- Evaluate existing barns in other areas through videos or pictures

Set Standards

- Identify a timeline for modular transition (x2)
- Not planning to do anything until I am sure what the requirements will be (x2)
- Learn about modular process specific as they are developed
- Hoping for a standard

Consider Financial Implications

- Spend the money
- Investigate the requirements and estimate the costs
- Get a loan because renovations will not be cheap
- Cost of modular loading retrofits need to be put into new cost of production formula
- Retire and sell my quota

Optimization of Chick Supply

What is chick supply optimization?

Gwen Zellen provided a brief description of chick supply and some of the current issues relating to it.

Desired Outcomes

Farmer-members present were asked “How will we know that we “got it right” in procuring, placing, and growing chicks?” They looked at the desired outcomes from the perspective of various key stakeholders.

Hatcheries

- Fewer or no complaints from farmer-members (x4)
- 90% to 100% hatchability (x2)
- Reduced production costs (x2)
- Fewer veterinarian vet trips required
- Less resistance due to fewer veterinarian scripts
- Meet the schedules required
- Less competition from USA
- Control of USA supply of chicks
- Able to use data to analyze identify issues and act on them to demonstrate accountability
- Business becomes more profitable
- Transparency is more possible
- Happier hatchery salesmen

Farmer-Members

- Early day mortality rate greatly reduced (x4)
- Better quality chicks (x2)
- More profitable farm operations (x2)
- Mortality rates on both USA and domestic chicks the same and minimal
- Ability to hatch on the farm, given special rates
- Increase cycles to allow for on-site hatching
- Transparency is more possible
- Better informed on the source of chicks and eggs. e.g. bar coded
- Less medicating of birds
- Fewer condemnns
- Reduced stress on birds and farmer-members
- More predictability on weights and growing days
- Smiling farmer members

Processors (Our Customers)

- More uniform bird size and quality within specifications(x3)
- Fewer condemnations (x2)
- Processing able to meet desired schedule (x2)
- Kilograms of chicken contracted and expected are received
- More choice of hatcheries
- Improved predictability
- Higher-quality finished product

Governments

- Less antibiotic use (x2)
- Less laboratory work
- Reduced antimicrobial resistance (AMR)
- Enhanced traceability
- Decreased numbers of imported chicks
- More Ontario hatcheries
- No complaints about Ontario chicks setting them apart from the poor quality received in USA chicks
- Spent hen and egg imports have been stopped

Consumers

- Fewer antibiotics used (x2)
- Improved animal welfare (x2)
- Better quality chicken product
- Improved consumer confidence in meet quality
- Perceived need for specialty markets and core markets is filled
- Consumers won't know for the most part unless it's covered by media

Farmer-Members Experiences with Chick Supply

Inferior Quality Chicks

Personal Experience	Proactive Steps Taken
Inconsistency between crops with some crops good and next crop not as good	Discuss with hatchery salesmen
Veterinarians inform me that my chick problem originated in the hatchery	Discuss problem with hatchery but they deny it. A large number of birds culled and left in the barn at the end of production cycle
Hatchery only takes responsibility for mortality in the first 10 days	Encourage Chicken Farmers of Ontario to extend mortality of bird declaration from 10 to 15 days
Chicks delivered were dehydrated	Informed hatchery
Received dehydrated chicks	Despite putting out extra water for the birds, quality continued to deteriorate
Poor quality chicks delivered	Switched hatcheries to find better chicks
Receive pullets instead of mixed chicks	Kept the lights up, higher energy feed to get the weight for shipping
First weeks loss of 3%	Complained to hatchery
Overall we have had good deliveries on our farm	In our 28 years' experience, we have used Uniprim only three times and received financial compensation from the hatchery on only six flocks

Timing

Personal Experience	Proactive Steps Taken
Initial delivery was short in numbers	Separate the chicks that came the next day and provide extra water for them
Problem with availability so received multiple-day placings for our flock	Communicated concern to hatchery and paid special attention to the chicks
Received chicks in deliveries over two or three days from multiple hatcheries	Expressed displeasure to hatchery

No chicks were delivered as promised at start of production date	Waited patiently for a week to get chicks
Received approximately 30% of our chicks on the scheduled day with the rest later. Experienced three times the level of mortality in the early days	Reported the situation to the processor on all documentation
Chicks came later than expected	Adjusted the barn settings, e.g. water, air, heat, etc.

Chicks from the USA

Personal Experience	Proactive Steps Taken
Received chicks from US hatchery. Recorded 2 to 3 times the condemnations	Put in the extra work required to bring the flock along
Received chicks that had traveled 27 hours on the truck	Expressed concern to hatchery
Experience 13% mortality on USA chicks	Approached hatchery for compensation
Given less than 24 hours notice that we were getting USA chicks that had been in transport for 18 to 24 hours	Accept the consequences and put out extra water in egg cartons. Did the best we could
Received chicks from Miami, although they had no tan! Chicks endured 36 hours on the truck	Extra preparations required. Flock was two days behind with higher mortality to deal with
Lack of proper culling at the hatchery, egg shells in the crate, uneven flock that was dehydrated	Communicated with hatchery and found they were USA chicks

Need for Compensation

Personal Experience	Proactive Steps Taken
Shipped more birds than I paid for causing me to be over the levy and lost production the next year	Torn between getting enough chicks for a poor flock or too many chicks for good flock

Communications

Personal Experience	Proactive Steps Taken
Received poor chick quality that manifested itself after 21 day deadline for reporting to Ontario Broiler Hatching Egg and Chick Commission (OBHECC)	Encourage Chicken Farmers of Ontario to discuss or challenge OBHECC policies that protect OBHECCC from accountability

Participants were asked, “What actions should farmer-members be taking to ensure an optimized chick supply to allow them to maximize their potential to grow safe, healthy and sustainable chicken?”

Incentives or Penalties

- Initiate differential pricing for chicks to pay based on the quality received
- Ensure that all chicks are worth the same money by not paying the same for poor quality as good quality
- Eliminate the 2% extra chicks and make appropriate adjustments if needed
- Hold hatcheries accountable for their quality

Hatchery Ownership

- Provide more choices in hatcheries
- Encourage more hatcheries in Ontario

Improve Communication

- Communicate with hatcheries proactively before there are problems instead of dealing with complaints
- Have discussions to see what we can do to improve the chick situation
- Complained and voice our issues
- Change hatcheries

Enhanced Breeder Flocks

- Increase Ontario breeder farms to supply Ontario hatcheries
- Encourage an increase in Ontario domestic supply of chicks

Add Regulations

- Regulate that chicks can travel no longer than four hours on a truck
- Lobby to change the USA mandatory chick limits

Sourcing

- Stop sorting chicks into good and poor quality at the hatchery because some farmer-member gets all the poor quality chicks
- Demand equal treatment since chicks are sorted for some producers and not for others
- Build a wall between the USA and Ontario that chicks can't get over!

Improve Farmer-Members' Animal Husbandry

- Manage young chicks appropriately
- Carefully check and monitor chick health, e.g. weight, temperature, appearance, etc.
- Farmer-members take a brooding course
- Ensure that all areas the barn are heated evenly

Summary

The Chicken Farmers of Ontario farmer-member consultation workshop was a productive event, where the farmer-members present were very engaged. Through their valued input, participants shared their perspectives relating to modular loading and chick supply optimization as an important step in helping to ensure a strong and vibrant Ontario chicken industry in the future.