

Chicken Farmers of Ontario

Regional Farmer-Member Consultation On Optimization of Chick Supply

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. One of the purposes of the session was to generate valuable input from farmer-members to assist Chicken Farmers of Ontario Board of Directors understand farmer-member perspectives and their accountability on issues relating to procuring, placing and growing chicks.

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 condemnments, less medicating, more predictability in production and marketing

Processors: more even birds, fewer condemnments, 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 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 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)

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 chick supply optimization as an important step in helping to ensure a strong and vibrant Ontario chicken industry in the future.