

Chicken Farmers of Ontario

Regional Farmer-Member Consultation

July 21, 2016
St. Isidore, Ontario



Bryan Boyle & Associates

FACILITATING YOUR FUTURE

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Executive Summary

On July 21, 2016 farmer-members from District 9 of the Chicken Farmers of Ontario met at the Recreation Centre in St. Isidore 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: farm conversion costs are covered, modular is not a provincial requirement, farm yards are able to accommodate truck staging for outdoor modular loading, improved catcher and farm labour safety, less stress on birds, improved consumer confidence

Processors: Québec processors will not be using modules and have no plans to convert the modules, cost effective, improved carcass quality, fewer condemnments, improved public perception

Government: positive public perception, improved consumer confidence, less pressure from animal rights groups

Consumers: consumer confidence of animal welfare, knowledge that gas used for stunning is not dangerous to workers or meat quality, meat birds are of less concern than caged layers

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 and farmsteads, 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: system in place to supply feed and water to chicks, lower mortality, reinvestment in hatcheries, reduced issues with farmer members, fewer antibiotics used, higher profitability

Farmer-Members: continued good supply of quality chicks from Québec, use fewer antibiotics, higher profitability, lower mortality, appropriate levels of compensation for chick quality, Chicken Farmers of Ontario not involved in chick issues

Processors: fewer condemnments, less antibiotic use, profitability improves, reinvestment in hatcheries, able to get out of the hatchery business

Government: less antibiotic use, lower mortality, fewer chick imports, happy consumers

Consumers: fewer antibiotics used, humane chick hatching, handling and delivery

Farmer-members shared their experiences with chick supply and proactive steps they have taken relating to those experiences. Their experiences were clustered around inferior quality chicks, chicks from the USA, number of chicks 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 suggested actions were clustered into the key areas of: incentives and penalties, hatchery ownership, improved communication, enhanced breeder flocks, added regulation as well as sourcing.

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
 Recreation Centre, St. Isidore, Ontario
 July 21, 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

- Cost of conversion to modular is recovered (x3)
- Modular is not a provincial requirement
- Fewer condemnations at shipping and processing stage
- Every farm yard can accommodate truck staging for outdoor modular loading
- Barns will be able to accommodate modules and still have room for additional quota

- Labour cost savings
- Chickens are less stressed
- Fewer condemnations
- Improved catcher and farm labour safety
- Consumer confidence of animal welfare during loading and transport
- Reduced pressure from animal rights groups

Processors (Our Customers)

- Québec processors will not be using modules and have no plans to convert to modules
- Chickens are less stressed
- Less bruising and fewer broken wings
- Fewer dead on arrivals (DOA's)
- Fewer condemnations
- Improved catcher and plant labour safety
- Consumer confidence of animal welfare during loading and transport
- Reduced pressure from animal rights groups

Governments

- Consumer confidence of animal welfare during loading and transport
- Improved image of the chicken industry
- Reduced pressure from animal rights groups
- Government does not care

Consumers

- Consumer confidence of animal welfare during loading and transport
- More humane handling of birds
- Confidence that gas used for stunning is not toxic to workers or impacts meat quality
- Meat birds are a lower concern for animal welfare activists than caged laying hens

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

- Complete major renovations
- Consult with an engineer regarding second-floor renovations
- Construct new barns that comply with modular requirements
- Modify the size of existing doors on barns

Improve Driveway and Farmstead

- Laneways will be widened
- Set up farmstead to accommodate loading modules outside the barn

Improve Communication

- Engage in discussions with our processor relating to their intentions regarding modular
- Find out when our processor will be changing to modular
- Find out specific statistics and numbers relating to condemnations, bird quality, etc.

Set Standards

- Ensure that biosecurity standards are met
- Pressure processors to ensure modular uniformity in the industry
- New barn building plans should be approved by Chicken Farmers of Ontario before producers get a building permit

Consider Financial Implications

- Ensure that the processors pay for the conversion to modular (x2)
- Commission a financial study on modular because we are moving too fast to implement

Optimization of Chick Supply

What is chick supply optimization?

Gwen Zellen provided a brief description of chick supply optimization 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

- Lower mortality
- System developed to allow feed and water for chicks at the hatchery
- Reinvestment in new equipment and plants
- More profitable operations
- Reduced chick quality issues
- Less use of antibiotics and better chick health

Farmer-Members

- Lower mortality (x2)
- More profitable operations (x2)
- Less use of antibiotics and better chick health
- Continued good supply of quality chicks from Québec
- Adequate compensation for chick quality issues
- Chicken Farmers of Ontario is not involved in solving chick issues
- Chick quality is none of Chicken Farmers of Ontario’s business
- Fewer eggs and chick coming from the USA
- Uniform bird weights
- Buying our chicks from an independent hatchery
- Better control of our growing environment

Processors (Our Customers)

- Lower mortality
- More profitable operations
- Less use of antibiotics and better chicken health
- Reinvestment made in hatcheries
- Able to get out of the hatchery business

Governments

- Less use of antibiotics and better chicken health
- Fewer imported chicks to supply the Canadian market

Consumers

- Fewer antibiotics used (x2)
- More humane treatment of chickens during hatching, handling and delivery

Farmer-Members' Experiences with Chick Supply

Inferior Quality Chicks

Personal Experience	Proactive Steps Taken
Received very uneven quality chicks from Ontario hatchery	Switched hatcheries
Limited support from hatchery for our chick start-up	Switched hatcheries
Poor quality chicks	Placed no more orders to that hatchery. Unlike Québec, this may not be a viable option in Ontario. U
Experienced high mortality and poor quality chicks	Switched hatcheries

Chicks from the USA

Personal Experience	Proactive Steps Taken
Received chicks from USA resulting in health issues	Treated with Uniprim; requested no more USA chicks for future flocks

Number of Chicks

Personal Experience	Proactive Steps Taken
Hatchery was short in supplying number of chicks ordered	Forced to place cockerels instead of pullets; negotiated a price adjustment; continue to communicate and work with each other

Need for Compensation

Personal Experience	Proactive Steps Taken
Experienced yolk sac infection and high mortality	Talked to hatchery that supplied the chicks; negotiated compensation; received a reasonable compensation; continue to buy chicks from that hatchery

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

- Pricing of chicks should be based on quality and/or mortality rates

Hatchery Ownership

- Start an independent hatchery

Improve Communication

- Create an evaluation or scoring system for Ontario hatcheries to compare with other hatcheries in Québec, USA and Europe in an effort to improve hatchery practices
- Provide some advanced communication to your hatchery if your needs for chicks will be increasing through quota purchase, etc.

Enhanced Breeder Flocks

- Work with Ontario Broiler Hatching Egg and Chick Commission (OBHECC) to make improvements to chick quality
- Improve the genetics in the breeder flocks
- Motivate breeders to accommodate increased production
- Control of the age of the breeder hens to ensure bigger chicks

Add Regulations

- Chicken Farmers of Ontario should regulate to ensure there are no two or three-way deals, e.g. hatcheries, feed companies, processors, etc. (x5)

Sourcing

- Evaluate different hatcheries by comparing different sexes, barns or floors (x2)
- Buy from an independent hatchery
- Ensure that hatchery can provide feed and water for chicks
- Receive 2% extra chick numbers to allow for mortality
- Use more Boire hatcheries
- Ontario Broiler Hatching Egg and Chick Commission (OBHECC) needs to get out of the chick pricing activities

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.