

Extending Knowledge - Changing Lives

Poultry Grower Basics Series

ISSUE

Poultry is Delaware agriculture's main economic engine, with an estimated annual value of \$1.7 billion (DPI). In recent years, the Delaware Nutrient Management Program has experienced a surge in the number of new poultry growers attending certification sessions. New and experienced growers face a variety of production issues including seasonal ventilation, as well as environmental and financial concerns.

RESPONSE

We developed the 2018 Poultry Grower Basics Series, which consisted of a series of three unique programs in Kent and Sussex counties held throughout the year to address issues faced by new growers. The courses also served as an excellent refresher for experienced poultry growers. Each program was approximately two hours long and was offered in the afternoon and evening in each county to accommodate growers varied schedules. Topics presented during the programs include neighbor relations, best management practices, warm weather ventilation, cool weather ventilation, mortality management, biosecurity, animal welfare and settlement calculation. All of the programs offered Delaware Nutrient Management Continuing Education Credits.

IMPACT

During the 2018 Poultry Grower Basics Series, total attendance was 152 for all five programs. A total of 140 participants completed the program evaluation (92%). Respondents reported that a total poultry farm capacity of more than 9.3 million birds. Delaware poultry farms produce 252 million broilers and an average of five flocks annually. Producers that attended the series account for 18.4% of Delaware broilers.

After the programs on Jun. 11, 74 participants replied:

- 94% (70) learned something new about neighbor relations;
- 95% (74) learned something new about best management practices; and
- 93% (69) learned something new about warm weather ventilation.

Following two programs on Oct. 17 participants indicated:

- 93% (56) learned something new about cool weather ventilation; and
- 91% (55) learned something new about mortality management.

Participants were also asked if they would implement or change a practice. Of respondents from both dates:

- 82% (61) will change how they communicate with neighbors;
- 90% (67) will change how they manage their farm and manure in order to minimize environmental impacts,
- 88% (53) will change how they ventilate their poultry house during cool weather; and
- 75% (45) will change how they manage mortalities on their farm.