

# Maintenance keeps poultry houses operating

By SALLY BAIR  
Staff Writer

LANCASTER — You don't have to be an engineer to operate poultry house equipment, but your operation will run more smoothly if you're a good mechanic and use common sense in caring for the large investment, according to

Floyd W. Hicks, Extension poultry specialist at Penn State.

Hicks told a large group of Lancaster County Poultry growers that preventive maintenance can go a long way in keeping a house operating well.

A good ventilation system, Hicks said, can ensure that a lot of other problems will not exist. Poor ventilation systems can contribute to the largest breakdown in management.

According to Hicks, successful ventilation is the combination of location and management of inlets.

"Where the inlets are located and how you manage them as the operator can make a lot of difference," he said. And good ventilation cannot be achieved without proper insulation.

Static pressure is necessary for good mechanical ventilation, Hicks stated. If an exhaust

type ventilation is used, 1.8 inch of static pressure is needed. In a layer house the width of the house and the number of birds may cause this to vary.

The point of control for inlets should be on the inside of the house, which means there will be no restrictions between the eaves, over the plate and into the inlet. He added that there should be general "tightening up" around doors, windows, unused fans and other openings.

Hicks told the poultry men to get the most efficient fan they can, and to be sure they are getting what they pay for in the ventilation system. A fan should have an efficiency of 12 or better.

If there can be a choice in the location of the fan, it should be placed to take advantage of the prevailing wind during maximum ventilation which usually means on the south side of the house. Hicks noted that most of the year fans will be running all the time.

Hicks said Pennsylvania poultry men have come along way in ventilation. "We are doing a better job than anywhere else in the country."

Hicks said a preventive maintenance schedule should go along with the installation of equipment to prevent problems in the future. A checklist is helpful in avoiding trouble.

Using the operators' manual can avoid service calls, Hicks said, and manuals which use everyday language to describe their operation would be helpful.

In a panel discussion led by industry personnel, preventive maintenance and a general understanding of the operation of the equipment were cited as two goals for efficient management of poultry houses.

Wally Newman, regional sales manager for big Dutchman, agreed with Hicks that this area had done a good job with ventilation, calling Lancaster County a leader "nationally and world

wide in high production with best feed conversion."

Newman said it is important that the original installation be done correctly, adding that excellent people in the equipment business have been a great help in propelling the industry to its present position.

He agreed with Hicks that "a lot of service can be eliminated by proper maintenance." He cautioned poultry men to be careful in avoiding a dust build-up on fan motors and feeder motors. "When you have clean equipment take pride in it-it will be easy to maintain."

Proper planning, proper installation, proper operation and proper maintenance cannot be built in at the factory, Newman added.

Martin Pflieger, installation coordinator for Favorite and Ebersole Equipment and Supply, agreed that preventive maintenance is important on poultry house equipment. He said regular checks should be made on the feeders, ventilation, water pressure and lighting. Since the evening feeding usually puts the greatest demand on the system, it is a good time to check for problems.

He said a lot of time should be spent with customers to help them become familiar with their system after installation.

Felix Hart, district manager for Chore-time Equipment, agreed with Pflieger, stating that the person who will be running the equipment should be there to ask questions as the equipment is installed.

"Have a time with the salesman or servicemen and go over all the equipment."

Hart noted that mechanical equipment never replaces management, it only replaces labor. He agreed that a preventive maintenance schedule will help keep problems to a minimum.



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