

Checklists, Consumer Trends, Disease Control At Poultry Day

(Continued from Page A1) cludes components such as environment, sanitation, isolation, personnel, farm traffic, and flock health history and management.

An evaluation takes into consideration, for instance, how many backyards flocks are in the grid area, which impacts the score of the assessment. Biosecurity measures such as locked doors on the poultry houses also figure into the score.

The overall cleanliness — for instance, if the facilities are washed and disinfected between flocks — makes up the sanitation score. Whether or not employees wear dedicated boots, use footbaths and disinfectant spray, or work on other poultry farms also changes the score.

Scores are broken into ranks of 50 points to determine the risk figure for each farm.

Looking into the future, Owen predicted that food safety and animal welfare issues will become increasingly important. "We in animal agriculture have a moral obligation to provide the best care for them each day. If we do that, animal welfare will become much more of a non-issue."

Recognizing Excellence

A panel of industry representatives educated the audience about "protecting the environment" and "being a good neighbor." Tyson representative Tom Pantano highlighted the business's efforts to recognize producers who excel in both environmental and community categories.

"People are moving in and

surrounding our farms," said Pantano. For starters, "We need to educate people on nutrient management practices and keep bad publicity out of the newspaper."

Tyson foods, which includes 35 production complexes in 15 states and 7,500 growers nationwide, gives an environmental award for producers. The farms are judged locally, then go on to national competition for manure management, off-farm, ag-related activities, the appearance of the farm, community involvement, innovations, wildlife management, and relations with neighbors.

Responsibility Checklist

Bill Achor, environmental coordinator for Wenger Feeds, presented a checklist for responsible poultry production. First on the list was appearance, as producers should evaluate the amount of mowing done on the grounds along with the look of the buildings and equipment.

"It's for the nonfarm neighbors driving by, trying to see what kind of a producer we are," said Achor.

Mortality management is also a factor in being a responsible producer. Birds should be legally taken care of in a clean, screened, or fenced area.

Careful manure management can also make or break a poultry farm. Stockpiling manure that is close to water or neighbors should be carefully monitored. Also the brokers who will take the manure away should be held to your standard, said Achor, so manure is not left on the roads

for your neighbors to drive through.

Educational tours are increasingly recognized as a valuable tool to reach nonfarm neighbors, legislators, and environmental groups.

"Agriculture's changed a lot in the last 10 years, so get people out to show what we're doing and what our challenges are so they can have a commonsense approach to decision-making," he said.

A producer can ease expansion pains by discussing plans with the township supervisor, DEP field supervisors, and the county conservation district to tap their knowledge and develop a game plan, suggested Achor.

"Go beyond compliance," he said. "Don't just be a box checker."

Neighbor Relations

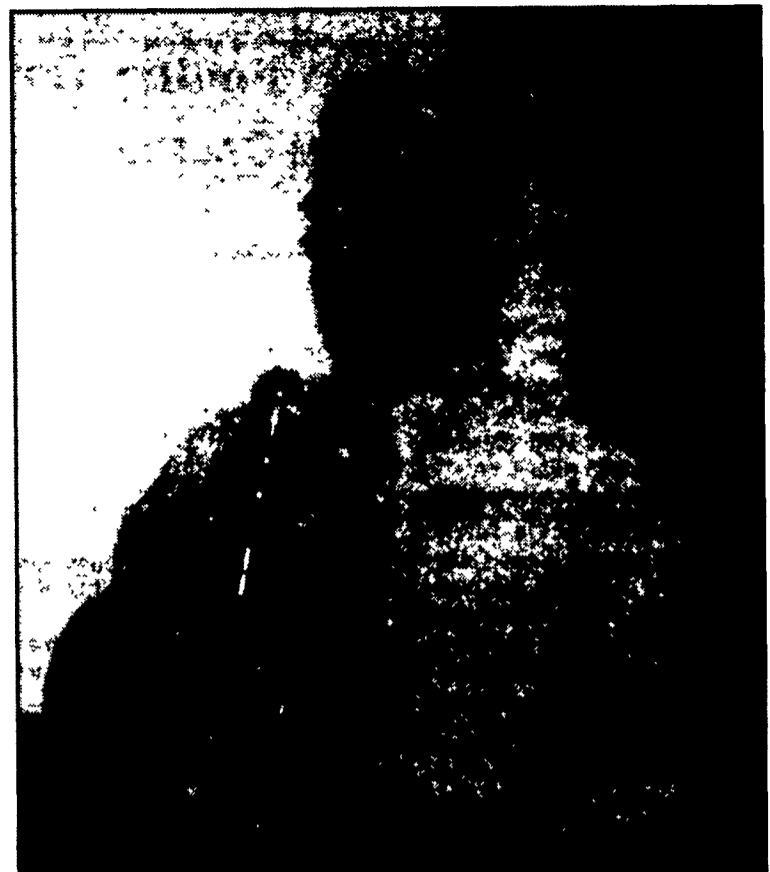
Leon Ressler outlined results of a six-week odor control project with Penn State. Researchers studied three odor-reducing strategies and surveyed neighbors which produced results applicable to the poultry industry.

For instance if neighbors knew the producer, scores tended to be lower, said Ressler. However if the neighbors could see the barn, scores tended to be higher. Attractive farms had smaller odor scores.

"We should take to heart these points and do all you can to improve your circumstances with your neighbors. We're a small portion of the total population," he said.

Practical Farm Experience

Tony Brubaker, who farms with his father and brother, shared basic tenets which help to make their operation success-



Tony Brubaker, representing Brubaker farms in Mount Joy, believes that being responsible, considerate, and keeping communications lines open are integral to a successful operation.

ful.

Winners of the national Tyson environmental award two years ago, the Brubakers and eight full-time employees operate two broiler houses contracted under Tyson, milk 500 cows and have 410 replacement heifers.

Sound environmental practices and solid neighbor relations are especially important, as "we farm up to the back yards of 160 homes," said Brubaker, who also noted the hundreds of other homes in close

proximity.

Brubaker Farms operates under three objectives, he said, "be responsible, be considerate, and communicate."

Under the heading of responsibility, Brubaker recommended having a nutrient management plan.

"It helps explain what you are doing" and helps to protect against neighbor accusations. Additionally streambank fencing not only protects water quality but affords greater aquatic life.

(Turn to Page A41)

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