



# 2015 ASSESSMENT OF POULTRY TRAINING & EXTENSION NEEDS

*Overcoming Challenges and Capturing Opportunities*



## Introduction

Staff from Perennia and from the Extended Learning at the Dalhousie Faculty of Agriculture conducted a training needs assessment for the Nova Scotia poultry industry on August 7, 2015. Producers and key industry experts participated in a focus group to identify ***how training and extension can help poultry farmers and farm employees do things better, or differently, in order to overcome challenges and capture opportunities***. They also prioritized the identified training and extension needs, and completed a short survey/discussion on the Atlantic Poultry Short Course (APSC).

Participation in the process was very positive, and participant input was specific, detailed and forward-thinking. For validation, the results were shared with a wider group of poultry representatives in the Atlantic region, and a follow-up survey was conducted online.

This document summarizes the results, makes recommendations for a renewed course model and suggests priority actions for November, 2015 – March, 2016.

## The Process

The August 7 session consisted of:

- a 2.5 hour focus group with five leading industry experts;
- prioritization of the training and extension needs identified in the focus group; and
- a short survey/discussion on the Atlantic Poultry Short Course (APSC).

The objective of the focus groups was to identify how training and extension can help poultry farmers and farm employees do things better, or differently, in order to overcome challenges and capture opportunities. Participants were asked to first think about the results/impact that training/extension efforts should achieve, and then to align the behavior changes (i.e. transfer outcomes) necessary to achieve the results/impact.

For validation, the results were shared with a wider group of poultry representatives in the Atlantic region, and a follow-up survey was conducted online.

This report details the results of the focus group and summarizes the results of the surveys. It also recommends priority actions for developing and delivering poultry training in the Atlantic provinces.

## Focus Group Results

The results of the focus group are summarized below, showing the desired results/impacts statements and the main behavior changes (learning transfer outcomes) that participants thought would contribute to the results/impacts.

### Impact = Technology that Works on the Farm

- Know when to change from one technology or system to another
- Determine which technologies you need to investigate
- Know what technologies, resources and equipment are available (e.g. ventilation, farm design & construction, alternative energy)
- Evaluate new technologies
  - Source people and resources to guide you through the process

### Impact = New Management Strategies for Housing Systems

- Identify when you need to switch
- Evaluate your current system
  - Identify where you fit (benchmark)
- Research/gather information
  - Connect with others with new systems
- Identify what will work with you
- Identify differences between the new & old systems
- Find information on the new systems
- Troubleshoot & mitigate problems

### Impact = Improved Use of Renewable Energy

- Research different types of renewable energy to suit your needs
- Connect with other farmers/government for help
- Know what funding, knowledge and resources are available and where to find them
- Identify the best spots for wind/solar energy installations on farm

### Impact = Improved/Shared Knowledge & Best Practices

- Agree on what to track
- Develop templates & methods to track aggregate information
- Provide benchmarking data

### Impact = Improved Barn & Flock Management

- Improve the quality of management to improve \$ returns (e.g. lighting programs)
- Improve water quality
- Manage the flock for sustained egg quality when transitioning from a 12 to 13 month lay cycle
- Manage the flock for extreme weather conditions
  - Know how to react

### Impact = Improved Efficiency in High Cost Areas (feed, veterinary, housing)

- Assess current situation
- Break Cost of Production down into different areas
- Identify where high cost areas are
- Identify areas for potential improvement
- Evaluate alternative & economical feed sources
- Improve feed efficiency

### Impact = Improved Ability to Detect Disease

This was not specifically addressed. It can likely be considered a subset of improved biosecurity (see below).

### Impact = Improved Biosecurity

- Understand “the why” of biosecurity
- Evaluate the usefulness of biosecurity procedures
- Improve your ability to detect disease

#### ***For trainers/extension workers:***

- Share the research in farm language
- Develop methods for assessing improvements

### Impact = Better Prepared /Understanding for Societal Pressures (animal welfare, antibiotic use & resistance, humane transportation, euthanasia)

- Develop the understanding that it won't go away and that the push is from consumers, not producers
  - “Think about it backwards”
- Start the right kinds of conversations (education is vital, but also need to do other things)
- Use technologies to transition to where we want to be and to share information and move forward (e.g. social media)
- Be prepared to adapt
- Document your practices as proof of what you are doing (e.g. euthanasia)
- Respond as a cohesive unit and use the people, tools and strengths that we have
- Retail & processors take a more active role in educating producers
- Improved coordination between board, producer & producer
  - Deliver on what's expected
- Understand the consequences

### Impact = Ability to Transition to Antibiotic-Free Production

- Determine what is considered antibiotic free
- Determine if it is worth going into
- Determine returns
- Implement protocols

### Impact = Meet New Pullet Care Guidelines

- Assess guidelines
- Compare to your current system
  - Identify gaps & where improvements are needed
- Develop a step-by-step approach
- Identify management strategies to mitigate negative effects
- Re-assess

### Impact = Improved Finances & Long-term Planning

- Improved knowledge
- Navigate processes better
- Organize & update records
- Estimate & project where you want to go
- Meet with professionals & advisors
- Know what your returns are
- Update & re-evaluate on a regular basis
- Determine the best structure for the business

### Impact = Improved Recruitment & Retention for Hired Staff

- Research pay rates, conditions & contracts in agriculture
- Train & educate current staff
  - Give them “the why”
- Delegate responsibility
- Discuss ways to improve non-monetary incentives

### Impact = Improved Barn Maintenance & Repair Procedures

- Parked by group agreement; staff need training in this area

## Prioritization of Training/Extension Needs

Impact/Result Area:	Priority for Training:	Priority for Extension:
<b>Technology &amp; Systems:</b>		
Technology that Works on the Farm	5	0
New Management Strategies for Housing Systems	1	3
Improved Use of Renewable Energy	2	2
<b>Barn &amp; Flock Management:</b>		
Improved/Shared Knowledge & Best Practices	0	3
Improved Barn & Flock Management	0	0
Improved Efficiency in High Cost Areas (feed, veterinary, housing)	5	1
Improved Ability to Detect Disease	Not prioritized – see note above	Not prioritized – see note above
Improved Biosecurity	0	2
<b>Responding to Societal Pressures &amp; New Priorities:</b>		
Better Prepared /Understanding for Societal Pressures (animal welfare, antibiotic use & resistance, humane transportation, euthanasia)	0	4
Ability to Transition to Antibiotic-Free Production	0	0
Meet New Pullet Care Guidelines	0	1
<b>Financial, Planning &amp; HR: These areas are targeted for training in the Faculty of Agriculture's Business Training project, to start in September, 2015</b>		
Improved Finances & Long-term Planning	0	0
<b>Improved Efficiency in High Cost Areas (also included with Barn &amp; Flock Management)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
Improved Recruitment & Retention for Hired Staff	0	1
<b>Other:</b>		
Improved Barn Maintenance and Repair Procedures	Not prioritized – see note above	Not prioritized – see note above

## Survey Results – Focus Group

Focus group participants completed a short survey on the Atlantic Poultry Short Course using “Audience Response Devices” (clickers). Because of small numbers, the responses are omitted from this version of the report, but are available on request. A summary of the survey and discussion is included below.

### Summary of Discussion - APSC:

- Participants still see value in the APSC
- Participants are looking for special topics within the specific commodities
- An introductory course would also be beneficial, but not for everyone
- March is not a good option for the APSC, because there are AGM’s and March break
- November is a possibility that might work for the APSC
- We need to consider how a new time for the APSC will align with the Poultry Conference

## Validation With Other Provinces

Representatives of the NS Turkey Board and all poultry boards in NB, PEI and NL were invited to review the focus group results and to complete a twelve question online survey about the Atlantic Poultry Short Course. Because of the low response rate (total respondents =7), a summary only is presented. Results are available on request.

### Summary of Discussion - APSC:

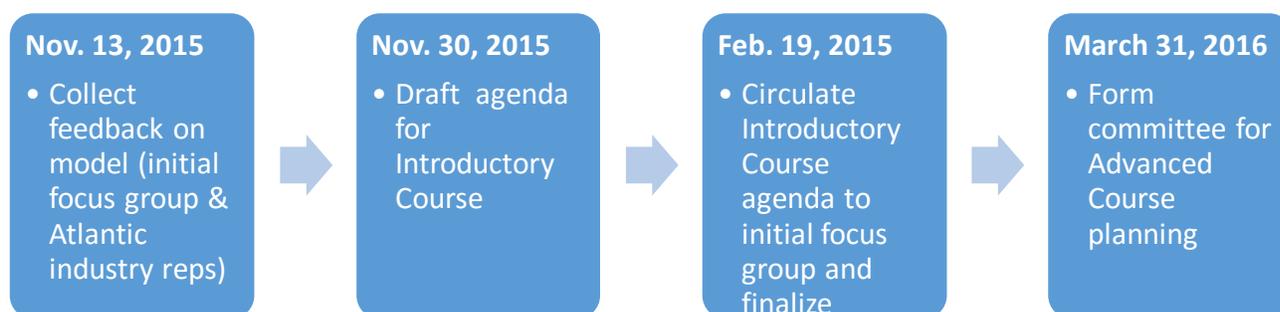
- Respondents see value in continuing the APSC
- Respondents believe there is value in both the general, introductory overview and more targeted, in-depth content
- Both the overview course and shorter modules that are specific to each commodity are desirable.
- Producers and employees would be the target audience for both the overview course and the shorter, commodity-specific modules. Producers would be the target audience for the in-depth content; employees would be the target for the introductory content.
- The optimum course length for both producers and employees would be 2-3 days or less. In-class is the preferred delivery method. Blended (in-class + online) would possibly be acceptable for producers, but not for employees.
- Days during the week are the best time for the course. Because of low numbers, there was no clear indication of what would be the best months.
- \$399/training day is the maximum price for both producers and employees.

## Recommendations

Based on the limited survey results, it appears that shorter, more targeted courses would work best. We are therefore proposing that the course be renewed as two shorter courses: an introductory course and an advanced course. The details on the suggested model are provided in the table below.

	Introductory Course	Advanced Course
Target Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New employees on farms</li> <li>- New service industry employees</li> <li>- 0-5 years experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Owners, managers, experienced employees</li> <li>-5-15 years' experience</li> </ul>
Overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-General introduction to production</li> <li>-Best practices in the industry, with theory so they understand “the why”</li> <li>-Combination in-class and hands-on, with emphasis on hands-on</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Commodity-specific sessions (e.g. meat, eggs)</li> <li>- Based on the focus group results</li> <li>-Focus on new skills &amp; tools they can take home and apply to the farm</li> </ul>
Length	2-3 days	2-3 days
Instructors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Local expertise</li> <li>-Maximum of 2 – 3 instructors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Advanced speakers &amp; instructors</li> <li>-Some from outside the region</li> </ul>
Course Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Planned as a low cost, logistically simple model.</li> <li>-To minimize planning commitments, Heather McLean (Perennia), along with Rosaria Campbell, Ashley Coffin, Bruce Rathgeber and Mike McConky (Dalhousie Faculty of Agriculture) would draft an outline, and circulate to the original focus group members for verification.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expected to be higher-cost and to involve more course logistics (planning, instructors etc.).</li> <li>-To ensure this course meets the needs for advanced knowledge and skills, additional industry members would be recruited to help with planning, logistics, industry communications etc.</li> </ul>
Roll Out & Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Pilot in November 2016</li> <li>-Delivery every two years after 2016</li> <li>- Delivered on a cost-recovery, demand-driven basis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Pilot in November 2017</li> <li>-Delivery every two years after 2017</li> <li>- Delivered on a cost-recovery, demand-driven basis.</li> </ul>

## Priority Actions



## Additional Information

Thank you for reviewing this document and taking the time to comment. We would also like to thank the participants in the August 7, 2015 focus group, and the online survey respondents. Your time and insights have made this a rewarding and valuable process!

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