Professional Development for Agricultural Service Providers in Applied Poultry Science

Abstract

In response to increasing consumer demand for local foods, many farmers have started or are very interested in integrating poultry enterprises in their operations to increase farm income. Poultry are efficient converters of feed to meat and eggs, require less space, and fit nicely as a complementary enterprise on many types of farms.

Extension agricultural service providers were recently surveyed on the issue of poultry. Over 92% of the respondents felt they were not effectively serving poultry producers. Only one of the 40 respondents was confident in answering poultry related questions. At least 81% of the respondents were interested in gaining knowledge and skills in poultry science.

This project, lead by a team of poultry experts, will involve working with 20 agriculture service providers in New England. These participants will come from a variety of backgrounds related to agriculture, technology, education and service. Each will have a solid history of working with farmers and farm families. They will gain knowledge and skills in basic poultry science in egg and meat production, alternative feeds, breed selection, biosecurity, processing, regulations, marketing, pests, business planning, economics and more for traditionally reared, organic, free-range and pastured poultry. The project will also focus on the joint development of educational materials as well as tools to measure impacts of the providers’ efforts. Successful poultry producers will play an important role by serving on an advisory committee and sharing their real world knowledge, information and situations. This project will involve annual training and regular updates via electronic media. At least twenty agriculture service providers in the six-state region will gain practical knowledge and skills in applied poultry science to confidently
design and present educational programs to assist the owners of at least 200 small scale poultry enterprises and assess the local economic impacts of these businesses.