

2017 Feed Energy Scholarship Essay

Without a consumer base, the poultry industry cannot survive. If we ignore the requests of something we are so dependent on, it will be our downfall. Consumers may unintentionally demand a change that is not in the best interest of the animal. It is our job as producers and professionals in the poultry industry to educate the public on the effects that their change may cause. Our industry has recently observed an increase in consumer participation and the impacts it has had. After consumers decided that they did not like the idea of battery cages for laying hens, California's proposition 2 was passed and expanded the space requirement for the hens. A bill was also introduced that would require all eggs sold in California to conform to this law, regardless of what state they originated from. Restaurants, grocery stores, and other companies have also announced their future plans to only market or use eggs from cage free production. This consumer driven change is only a single example of a larger issue facing agriculture.

This issue that I have mentioned could also be described as more of a trend—consumers want agriculture to go “all-natural.” By using this term I am describing the consumer desire for production without cages and without indoor confinement. We have learned that production agriculture has evolved to be highly efficient using fewer natural resources and fewer animals. Now we are observing the trend going back in time, similar to the fashion industry bringing back outdated fashion such as crop tops and overalls. By this, I am predicting that consumers can expect production animal agriculture to transition backwards in time to house animals in these “all-natural” environments—as seen from the consumer perspective. Consumer perspective has indeed driven laying hens to go cage-free, and farrowing stalls are under

scrutiny. Livestock operations can be expected to transition to environments that have a lower ability to be controlled, and our animals will be expected to adapt to this as well. But, by building on the past, we can invest in the future.

Over the years, producers have innovated their livestock production to become more efficient. When animals are housed in pens in indoor environments, temperature and energy exertion can easily be regulated and tracked. When cattle are kept outside during the winter, and laying hens roam an enormous barn, their energy expenditures and requirements are going to increase. The way that the industry can compensate for these efficiency losses is by compensating with improved diet. This is where Feed Energy and other companies will protect animal agriculture. By altering diets to meet the new energy requirements for changing production practices, we can save feed efficiency.

Feed Energy set the standard for energy solutions in diets when developing the Garrett formula. Now we are facing a new issue that requires a familiar dietary solution. Diets can be formulated to improve their energy content with Feed Energy's signature commercial oil blends. Because of this, nutrition can be argued as the most crucial aspect of livestock production. Altering nutrition in turn alters production. When we transition through methods of production, such as turning away from the use of cages, diets will be expected to transition as well. Although it may be frustrating for producers to change their methods of production in order to satisfy the desires of consumers, these desires must be taken seriously. Luckily for our industry we have the solution to satisfy needs and stabilize feed efficiency—nutrition.