

# Managing Food Safety and Avian Health In Canadian Poultry Integration In An Era of Globalization

Prepared for the Caribbean Poultry Association

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It is indeed a pleasure to be asked to participate in your conference and to be treated with your outstanding hospitality. Thank you.

The topic I was asked to address is one that has been a way of life for me over the past 13 years. After a period operating a private poultry practice, I joined Lilydale Foods located in western Canada as Staff Veterinarian. Just as background, Lilydale Foods is a farmer owned Cooperative. My initial activity was to put in place health programs for the shareholders and improve chick / poult quality. I had established a serological blood testing lab prior to joining Lilydale and continued to use it to determine the effectiveness of vaccination programs and determine what the disease status of the industry flocks.

In 1992, the company purchased a sausage company as a means of getting into the further processing industry. Dealing with fully cooked products brought with it the concerns and challenges of producing a safe high quality food product.

Where does one begin? Quality has many definitions but in simple terms is meeting customer expectations. In general, customers want a wholesome safe product that meets their expectations of size, weight, cut and presentation.

The increased demand for a safe food product around the world stands out as prime concern. Thus in developing an encompassing program, the decision was made to build a Quality System which would include HACCP principles to ensure the food safety aspects. Because of the demand from

several customers and the regulatory system to “do it their way” a format was needed that would be acceptable to all. The decision was made to use the ISO (International Standards Organization) format to organize the Quality System. This decision had the practical aspect of being able to move more easily to a full ISO system in the future should some customer desire it.

In general it is not difficult to get Senior Management support; however, to get functional commitment beyond lip service is often a real challenge.

Briefly, some of the strategies used were:

- Obtain a letter of commitment from the highest level (Owner, CEO or Board of Directors) to implementing a Quality / Food Safety System and to provide all necessary resources. This must be then communicate this to all employees.
- Establish a Quality Assurance Group that function independent of plant management and supervision.
- Establish working communication between all departments and employee groups. Improvements can only come with all departments and employees knowing what is happening and having an opportunity to play a part in the overall vision and mission of the company.
- Form working teams to develop and implement the chosen programs, policies and functions. Encourage all staff to be involved in finding ways to solve problem not just “fix things”.
- Provide staff with the tools (training, tools, space, etc.). Celebrate successes with them.
- Measure, record and document daily, not only the production parameters but the problems as well. Drive out fear of revealing mistakes or deficiencies.
- Identify and define non-conformances of product, waste (rework) and customer complaints. Attach a cost to these items. Communicate the costs of non-conformance to all levels of management. It is the one item that Senior Management understands.
- Provide feed-back to your main supplier (Growers) on bird performance. Obtaining the desired supply of birds is key to the quality and value of your product.
- Develop relationships with Suppliers (Growers, Materials suppliers), customers and with your Regulatory people.

In this era of globalization and increasing competitiveness, the survivors will be the ones that take the steps to produce a high quality safe food product. The biggest cost to any organization is the loss of an unhappy customer. The Caribbean Poultry Industry has a great future. Adoption of a well planned Quality System will provide positive returns regardless of size and complexity of your operation.

Thank you for the opportunity to be part of your program.