

Retail Panel – Stewardship Programs

David French, DVM, MAM, Dipl. ACPV

Sanderson Farms, Inc.

Poultry Industry in the United States

- Vertically Integrated
 - Companies Own: Breeders (Parent Stock), Eggs, Hatcheries, Broilers, Feed Mills, Feed, Live Haul (Transportation of the Birds), Processing Plants
 - Growers Own: Housing only , and are paid as contractors
- Advantage of Vertical Integration
 - Complete process control – growers are not allowed to add anything (such as antibiotics or feed ingredients) – only lights, air quality (heat and cool), and water.
 - Direct veterinary supervision over all treated flocks
- Whether traditional or raised without antibiotics, the goal of the industry at large has always been to minimize the unnecessary use of antibiotics.

Why an interest in stewardship, even in traditional programs?

- Veterinarians have an obligation to use these products appropriately as defined by the veterinary oath:
 - “the protection of animal health and welfare, the prevention and relief of animal suffering”
 - “the promotion of public health”
- We must use with caution the products that are available because there are no new antibiotics in the pipeline.
- Additionally, we are losing products that we currently have – through consumer and economic pressure rather than regulatory action
 - Restaurant chains going to no antibiotics ever – “no science at all in their decision”
 - Pharmaceutical companies shifting production from approved antimicrobials to chemicals that can be used in “raised without antibiotic production”
 - Turkey Industry – AVMA Symposium on Blackhead Disease

My Perspective on Judicious Antibiotic Use:

- Animal welfare – No matter how careful you are with best management practices, there will always be occasions where birds will get sick and need medical intervention. We need to be able to take care of that need when it arises.
- Food Safety – Sick birds result in greater food safety risk.
- Sustainability of agriculture – The inefficiencies inherent in a “Raised Without Antibiotics” program results in the use of more land, more houses, and more resources; produces more fecal material; and less food is produced.

Stewardship – how do we do it?

- Veterinary oversight in diagnosis and treatment
- Diagnostics including culture and sensitivity
 - For disease resulting from stress or mismanagement, we seek to find the cause and correct it
 - Use of waterline acidifiers as first attempt at control until laboratory work is complete
- Use of management practices to reduce the need of antibiotics
 - Vaccination programs
 - Litter replacement / density / downtime between flocks
 - Management practices must be sustainable and environmentally acceptable
 - Biosecurity – critical to reduce the introduction of pathogens to our farms
- Two documents:
 - AAAP-AVMA Guidelines for Judicious Therapeutic Use of Antimicrobials in Poultry
 - AAAP Position on the Judicious Use of Drugs Fed to Poultry and the Risks to Human Health

Challenges Moving Forward

- Veterinarians ability to treat sick flocks with increasing pressures to go 100% antibiotic free – animal welfare issues
- Unique to the poultry Industry, is our inability to treat individual birds
- Who should make the decisions about what products are available to use in animal agriculture
- Consumer education is critical to avoid throwing away products with demonstrated safety and efficacy
- More products are being introduced for the “raised without antibiotics” market without scientific vetting – we don’t know how or why they work, or what unintended consequences they might contribute
- Sustainability of animal agriculture in the United States
 - Growing worldwide demand for poultry
 - Abandoning technology that would position us to fulfill that market
 - Who will fill that gap and are we taking ourselves out of the picture as producers of food