



Pride in the Poultry Farm

Joe Berry
Extension Poultry Specialist

Being proud of a farming enterprise is easy if the farm and related buildings are kept looking nice and orderly. Sometimes when farm buildings are built, there is not an overall plan that will take into account other buildings that may be constructed later. Also, efficiency of labor may not be a primary consideration at the time. If these items are overlooked, managing the farm and keeping everything orderly may be more difficult.

Pride of ownership is important to the self-concept of each poultry farmer. Proper landscaping and regular maintenance of buildings and equipment make the farmstead look much better and make it easy for the owner to show pride in his farm.

Results of research at Auburn University indicate that there is a direct correlation between the appearance of a poultry farm and the performance inside the chicken house. The Auburn study involved 200 poultry farms, half of which were consistently in the top one-third of all company growers and half of which were in the bottom one-third. Those that had a neat well-cared-for house and farm were always the most profitable. The conclusions reached were that farmers who took pride in the appearance of their total farm and gave attention to details required to keep the farm looking nice also gave attention to detail in the broiler house and provided the type of management program that placed them among top growers.

Poultry Farm Management

Poultry farmers should always provide optimum conditions in the broiler house if they want to be among the top producers and maximize on profits. The primary concerns of broiler producers are house and bird temperature, ventilation, feed, water, litter conditions and overall bird health. All of these

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Fact Sheets
are also available on our website at:
<http://osufacts.okstate.edu>

factors are critical to success in producing broilers and they are topics which the company field service representative will discuss with each grower during regular visits. In addition, there are several other areas around the farm that will need attention to maintain appearances and keep everything functioning properly.

The first area that should get attention is weeds and grass. First of all it is advantageous to have good grass cover around farm building, particularly the broiler houses. Grass helps reduce reflected heat which in turn helps keep house temperatures under control in hot weather. Well established grasses also prevent soil erosion which in severe cases could result in damage to the house pad or the footing and foundation of the poultry house. Grass should always be kept mowed and weeds should also be kept under control. Not only are unmown weeds and grass unsightly, but they can encourage rodents and can also reduce the effectiveness of natural ventilation. Tall weeds and grass provide rats and mice a place to hide that is close to the building. Most rodent control programs will stress the need to keep areas around buildings mowed frequently.

Trees with low hanging limbs can also be problems around the broiler farm. The low limbs may not look too bad from an appearance standpoint but they can certainly reduce air movement if they are too close to buildings. In very warm weather, when natural ventilation is a must, all low limbs should be pruned and hauled away.

Roads that provide access to the farm building should also be properly maintained for appearance and easy ac-



cess. Roads should be in good repair with any low spots filled to prevent problems in wet weather. Weeds should not be allowed to grow along roadways or in the roadbed. Mowing and the use of herbicides can easily keep weeds from becoming a problem.

Broiler house feed bins should also be on the preventive maintenance list. Covers should always be in good repair and in place to prevent water from getting into bins. Wet feed can cake and result in an improper flow. In addition, wet feed can develop mold which in turn can lead to an aflatoxin problem. Ladders leading to the top of bins should always be in good repair to minimize danger to anyone needing to use them. Spilled feed should be avoided and removed immediately if a spill occurs. Feed spills attract wild birds and rodents and if wet can also attract flies.

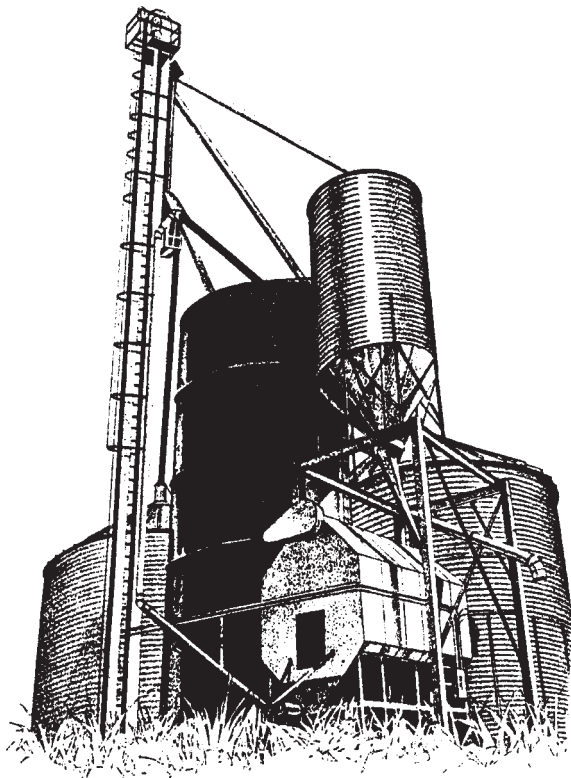
Another detail that can have a major impact on the appearance of the farm is waste disposal and disposal

of dead birds. Disposal of litter is a must on a regular basis. Some growers clean their houses annually and others on a more frequent basis. At cleaning time litter can sometimes spill from trucks or loaders onto areas outside of the broiler house. Not only does the spilled litter look and smell bad, but it can also attract flies. Any misplaced litter should be removed and proper disposal methods used at the end of the cleaning session. Daily removal of dead birds from poultry houses is a must for any type of farm. Removal should be followed by the correct disposal technique. Growers in Oklahoma have a number of options; disposal pits (in areas where soil types encourage percolation), composting, incineration, and freezing with periodic removal.

The exterior of buildings should always be on the maintenance list. Proper repair and painting is essential not only to maintain the appearance of buildings, but also to extend their useful life.

Drainage around the farmstead is also an important aspect. Not only should proper drainage be provided to prevent storm water from entering the building, but also to prevent water from standing for long periods of time. Standing puddles of water encourage mosquitoes and kill vegetation, so low spots should be filled to prevent such problems. Also, drainage ditches should be properly mowed and maintained to give storm water an easy exit. Any trash and debris should be removed from ditches and grass and weeds kept short to encourage water flow.

Last, but certainly not least, is the removal of old vehicles and equipment from the farmstead. It is sometimes easy to allow equipment and vehicles to remain where they were last used. Not only do they detract from the appearance of the farm, but they hamper mowing, they can be a harbor for rodents, and they can reduce the overall efficiency of the farm because they are always in the way. Oklahoma does not always enjoy the reputation of having clean and neat farmsteads, so everyone is encouraged to do his/her part to improve the appearance of the farm and maybe the overall efficiency of production will also improve.



Oklahoma State University, in compliance with Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 11246 as amended, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and other federal laws and regulations, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, age, religion, disability, or status as a veteran in any of its policies, practices, or procedures. This includes but is not limited to admissions, employment, financial aid, and educational services.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Robert E. Whitson, Director of Cooperative Extension Service, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma. This publication is printed and issued by Oklahoma State University as authorized by the Vice President, Dean, and Director of the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources and has been prepared and distributed at a cost of 20 cents per copy. 0607