

A Textbook Example

Dedicated researchers and teachers, a group of University of Alberta scientists turned research reports into textbooks that are as colourful as they are helpful.

"It's the gospel according to us," Frank Robinson says of his team's two published textbooks *Optimizing Chick Production in Broiler Breeders* and *New Developments in Reproduction and Incubation of Broiler Chickens*. Robinson, along with Gaylene Fasenko, Rob Renema, and their research staff at the Alberta Poultry Research Centre completed their final report for a five-year research grant, but did it with a twist. If there is one thing Robinson is passionate about, it's getting research findings out to producers. He recognized a real need in the broiler breeder industry to provide current, relevant information to not only Canada's breeders, but the world's as well.

Some of the most recent books in use on this topic were printed in the '70s. Fasenko notes that, in general, most research information ends up in peer-reviewed journals, which tend to be dry and not readily available to the average farmer. "The goal for this work then became to not only put all this information in one resource, but also to make it readable, interesting, and informative," she says.

Based on several years of research funded by members of the Alberta Agriculture Funding Consortium as well as industry and producer groups, the new textbooks cover all aspects of broiler breeder health and production. "The first book is geared towards anyone with an interest in chicken production," says Renema. "The goal is for every broiler breeder producer to have this book to help them make more informed decisions."

The second text is designed so that each chapter addresses a particular production issue. In fact, every chapter answers a question, questions the research team had been asked by producers. In this way, *New Developments in Reproduction and Incubation of Broiler Chickens* becomes a real troubleshooting guide for producers, in an easy to understand format that can be kept right in the barn.

Each chapter is summed up with a short list entitled "What does it Mean?". "The summary at the end of each chapter has proven to be a great way to be as clear and concise as possible so that the reader can take away the essential message of the work that was done," Renema says. Robinson credits their publisher, Jerome Martin of Spotted Cow Press, with taking their idea of creating these books to the next level by making them pleasing to the eye and easy-to-read.

Martin's team worked closely with the researchers to improve the readability of the text while still

Did you know?

Broiler breeders are a very specialized type of hen. The term broiler refers to a type of chicken raised for meat consumption. Broilers are quick, efficient growers that produce tasty chicken for our tables. Broiler breeders are the hens that lay the eggs that are hatched to produce chicks that grow into broilers. A broiler breeder must have good growth characteristics and also be an efficient egg layer, two traits that are difficult to find in the same bird because of years of intense selection for production characteristics. This balancing act of reproductive and production traits takes careful management.

maintaining the sophistication the research required. "The publisher encouraged sidebars, full-colour graphs, and accessible language to create a truly readable book," Robinson says. "I even left an early draft of the book on my brother-in-law's (an accountant) table. He picked it up and actually started reading it. He would never have done that with a research journal."

Optimizing Chick Production in Broiler Breeders is already being put to good use as the required text book for Animal Science 471 (Applied Poultry Science) at the University of Alberta. "It's like a Reader's Digest approach to avian physiology, with directions to the reader to find more detailed publications on each project," Robinson says. The reaction from students has been positive, which Robinson attributes to the overall appearance of the book.

These two books are the pinnacle of technology transfer. Much of the writing time created long hours for the researchers, but what Robinson and his team have done really makes research worthwhile – they've delivered essential information into the hands of those who can put the knowledge to practical use. And the fact that it's delivered in a colourful package doesn't hurt either.

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To view sample chapters or order copies of *Optimizing Chick Production in Broiler Breeders* and *New Developments in Reproduction and Incubation of Broiler Chickens* visit *Spotted Cow Press* on-line at www.spottedcowpress.ca.

Avian Accolades

The Alberta Poultry Research Centre recently received the 2004 World's Poultry Science Association Education Award. This prestigious award is handed out once every four years and brings with it important funding dollars for development of educational materials.

Congratulations to the APRC on winning their industry's equivalent to an Olympic gold medal – handed out in Turkey, of all places!

