

Chicken Farmers of Canada

OUR MISSION:

To build an evidence-based, consumer-driven Canadian chicken industry that provides opportunities for profitable growth for all stakeholders.

FACS Annual Meeting Strategies for Survival



**Chicken Farmers
of Canada**
**Les Producteurs de
poulet du Canada**

Who We Are and What We Do

Chicken Farmers of Canada (CFC) is a national farmer-run organization. Our main responsibility is to ensure that our 2,800 farmers produce enough chicken to meet the needs of the market place.

The Board represents farmers, restaurants, further processing and processing.

CFC is located in Ottawa and is staffed by 23 employees.



Who We Are and What We Do

CFC also has a mandate to provide accurate information to consumers and farmers regarding important issues within the chicken industry.

Why “Strategies for Survival”?

“Survival” refers to the overall survival of the scrutiny of our industries by consumers. We have heavy responsibilities.

We need to be open, transparent and ready for anything. And frankly, there are increased dangers from communities who would prefer that our industries did not do what they do.

Why “Strategies for Survival”?

Animal agriculture is subject to intense scrutiny.

Dealing with living creatures, we have a responsibility to ensure that we uphold high standards when it comes to animal health, food safety and industry well-being.

And consumer expectations are growing more and more, as is the scrutiny – we have to be able to stand up to it.

Why “Strategies for Survival”?

Over the last 20 years, consumer attitudes have proven that consumers are looking for reassurance.

Over the course of a year – we hear complaints and concerns from hundreds of Canadians, from coast to coast. Our suspicion that there was increased concern about animal care has been confirmed in our Usage & Attitudes Studies that have been conducted over the last 15 years.

Why “Strategies for Survival”?

Although the title of the presentation refers to activism, it’s really about any challenge to how we do our business, when it comes to animal care.

CFC has tracked significant changes in consumer attitudes towards animal agriculture – specifically chicken. For example:

- 1/5 have heard the KFC deformed chicken (“Frankenchicken”) urban legend (no consistency to stories)
 - Still, 18% of those say that they believe it!

Why “Strategies for Survival”?

Misconceptions and myths proliferate the landscape - and historically, we’ve dismissed them as inane ramblings – but people have begun to ask questions.

Now we have to catch up and set the record straight.

Vegetarians say animal welfare concerns were a major influence (behind health) in the decision to become vegetarians.

Many concerns surround how animals are raised (restricted movement, feed, animal health, etc.).

And, most importantly, animal agriculture has historically closed itself off from communications with the public.



Enough already!

Why “Strategies for Survival”?

Ultimately – because we haven’t been very good at getting our messages out there – and it’s coming back to us. People no longer “take our word for it”.

In most cases, it’s not a question of doing anything new at the farm level – it’s a question of demonstrating that it’s being done.

Unfortunately, in some cases, it will involve changing how things are done.

But, more positively, animal agriculture has two very powerful tools that it needs to use more effectively: Education and the truth.

So, Why do we need them?

Trust in animal agriculture is extremely high for good reason. The production of safe, quality meat is of paramount importance to all the stakeholders in our industry.

Everyone plays a key role within the management of any situation that challenges how we care for our animals. This is not a problem unique to any one industry.

We need tools to respond quickly and effectively to any situation, real or perceived, that may negatively affect the Canadian animal agriculture industry.

Three Things to Think About NOW

Serve, where possible, as a source through which information flows from and to your industry stakeholders, the media and the general public. Your national organizations can help.

Create messages based on factual, confirmed information.

Anticipate reactions and design strategies to best deal with them (e.g. a contingency management manual).

Pitfalls in Attitude

Pitfalls We Can't Afford

- Attitudes and choices can directly affect how serious a situation gets. Here is a list of pitfall attitudes:
 - “We don't need to deal with this now”
 - “This is an isolated situation – They're a bunch of crackpots!”
 - “We don't have the time to deal with this now”
 - “We're/They're just overreacting”

Principles – One of the Strategies

A set of guiding principles is your primary tool in dealing with any issue that challenges your industry:

- Believe that consumer confidence in your products and in your industry is to be considered within the scope of every situation.
- Do not blame others.
- Keep your priorities straight, with public safety always being first.
- Maintain the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

Principles – One of the Strategies

- Consider challenging false reports – give the pros and cons the consideration they deserve.
- Ensure that you and your partners will speak with one voice. Sometimes joint efforts show consumers that your whole industry supports proper animal care standards (eg. joint letter to the editor)
- Value your consumers.
- Retain your reputation. Deserve to.
- Deal fairly with your consumers (uphold their right to ask questions and their right to receive answers).
- Be sensitive to cultural ideals and values – including those that do not believe in meat consumption.

Principles – One of the Strategies

There are people who decide, for moral or other reasons, to live a meat-free lifestyle.

That is a choice.

However, work to ensure that consumers make those choices based on correct information, not deliberately misleading misinformation.

Principles

- Know that you won't change every mind – there are people whose agendas are different than yours – and whose minds won't be changed.
- Is our system perfect? No. But change should come from all facets – not just pressure from outside forces that capitalize on shock and fear. And it should come based on evidence, not hearsay, ploys or manipulation.

Proactive Strategies

- Education kits
- Websites
- Regular updates
- Factsheets
- Videos, B-Rolls, stock footage, etc.
- Tours? Depends on your biosecurity protocols.
- Farmer spokes – training in media, community spokespersonship and letter writing

Proactive Strategies

Education Kits

CFC's Education Program

A school-based program, with video, companion website, teachers' tools (workbook)

Applicable in all curricula in Canada

Provides tools for students, as well as educators.

Proactive Strategies

Websites

CFC – Food Safety and Animal Care Section allows website to provide updated information and links.

Direct people there as often as possible.

There are more assertive strategies that can be used on a website – think about them – surveys, FAQs, debates, etc.



Proactive Strategies

Regular Updates/Factsheets

Keep information fresh.

Update staff, spokespeople and colleagues – anyone who delivers messages.

Get your message out any way you can.

Proactive Strategies

Videos, B-Rolls, stock footage, etc.

Get them made – they are an invaluable tool that can assist in conveying the right information – otherwise, footage may be provided by others.

Make it available to media – and the public.

Proactive Strategies

Tours

Sometimes, providing tours can be an effective tool in ensuring that people know how your part of the industry is run. Other times, local groups organize farm tours for media. Or, videotape a tour. Make it available.

BIOSECURITY IS KEY – ENSURE THAT PROTOCOLS ARE FOLLOWED TO THE LETTER. REMEMBER, FOR BIOSECURITY REASONS, IT MAY NOT BE THE BEST IDEA TO CONDUCT TOURS – IN THIS CASE, FIND ANOTHER WAY TO TELL YOUR SIDE OF THE STORY.

Proactive Strategies

Farmer Spokespeople

Find spokespeople

Train them in Media Relations, Community Relations and in writing letters to the editor.

Locate them across the country/region –
people want a local perspective.

(CFC Ambassador Training)

Proactive Strategies

Use farmer resources – once they've spoken once or twice, they'll proactively give the right information. Schools often look for spokespeople. Teach them to speak to community audiences, not just the media.

Staff work too, although people really want to hear from the farmer. And they trust farmers.

Reactive Strategies

The good news is that by developing the proactive resources, you'll have tools at your disposal to use in a situation whereby you are being challenged.

The bad news is that you may still have to react.

In these cases, preparations beyond these resources must be made.

Issue Vs. Situation

An “issue” can be proactively managed
whereas

A “situation” is an immediate occurrence
requiring immediate attention

Key – Preparedness and Integration between
Management, Operations and Communications

Other Important Considerations

Drills

Jointly coordinated yearly drills to test strategies, Update contact lists etc.

Divisive Issues

Industry should ensure unity during the crisis and that support is expressed through the combined effort of all key groups.

PR Firms

Industry should consider as standard practice to ensure consistent messaging, media co-ordination, trained local spokespeople, all perspectives are represented.

Experts

Helpful to ensure third party ‘experts’; such as veterinarians, animal health experts, etc, be made available for media and public inquiries.

Reactive Strategies

Information arrives indicating possible problem

THEN WHAT???



- Define the disruption
- Assemble the Contingency Management Team
- Identify the stakeholders
- Prioritize the stakeholders

Reactive Strategies

- Assess the stakeholders’ perspectives:
 - a) before anything happened
 - b) likely initial reaction to the event
 - c) what could change their reaction?
 - d) who are the key people to get involved?
- Develop strategies to react/manage the situation
- Establish a response plan
 - legal counsel
 - media plan
 - website
 - authorities, if necessary

Reactive Strategies

- Coordinate a communications plan
- Manage the aftermath as carefully as the situation itself
- Don't be afraid to defer to others – national organizations, farm animal councils, third party experts, etc.
- Document
- Have an evaluation/debriefing session to see how everything was handled
- Change what needs to be changed.



The Hard Part

Consult with as many people in industry as possible. Ask them the top 10 questions they hope no one will ever ask. Then, develop the answers. If you don't have them, demonstrate that you're working towards finding them.

To be honest, it's not all about messaging. We must continue to work to fill any gaps. We must do so continually, and we must do so with third parties whose partnerships will help us develop the right solutions – parties who understand our business and who will publicly support us throughout the process.

We'll never make everyone happy, but we'll be doing the right thing.

Strategies for Survival

The Recap

- Animal agriculture is under scrutiny and we must all operate responsibly, transparently and accountably
- Myths and misperceptions are opportunities to deliver the truth; education is our mandate
- Stay informed and be informative
- Work together with your industry partners to ensure smooth, consistent messaging; after all, we are all in this together!



Thank you