

Quality components, not special prices, required when building a new poultry barn

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When building a new poultry barn, producers should focus on maximizing return on investment, not just on the initial cost of the facility. This means equipping the new barn with quality components that guarantee great bird performance. The results: good profits and more revenue over time.

Many poultry equipment distributors today offer a complete package to prospective producers that are considering building a new poultry barn. At times, these packages may contain certain components that have attractive pricing; but are they really a bargain? These potentially inferior, poor performing components can lead to a drop in bird performance and lower profits. The best package is one that incorporates top performing feeding, ventilation and watering equipment.

To illustrate using a broiler situation, look at two barns built for one producer. Each is two stories, 46 by 200 feet. Equipment costs include a feeding system, watering system and ventilation system with controls.

The cost of the installed equipment package for Barn A was \$69,920 and included a \$3,680 discount for a pre-packaged group of equipment, including an inferior watering system.

The cost of the installed equipment package for Barn B was \$73,600 and included top-performing feed, ventilation and watering equipment.

Birds in House B outperformed birds in House A each growout. On average, the producer reaped \$1,550 more revenue in each flock. Based on this example, the time required to recover the higher initial investment cost is just over two flocks. All subsequent flocks in Barn B are simply increasing the producer's return on investment.

To achieve similar gains, producers should consult an agricultural engineer when planning a new poultry barn. The engineer can provide the specifications for all of the equipment, taking into account the producer's type of operation and any special considerations. Choose the engineer carefully, insisting he show how he will bring savings to a project. The opinions of other producers are sometimes helpful but aren't a good substitute for expert advice.

Return on investment, not the initial investment cost, makes the difference in the long run. Invest in quality components that will withstand the harsh barn conditions. Also, invest in systems that will provide maximum performance. Consider the ventilation system, for instance. If the distributor installs a less than optimum system, it can allow ammonia levels to increase and ammonia, even at very low levels, suppresses weight gain and feed conversion.

In Ontario, at the minimum number of quota units of 14,000, a loss of bird performance amounting to only 5 cents per kilogram equals a \$1,330 loss in income. Over the course of five flocks a year, the loss increases to \$6,650. Over the life of the barn, the producer suffers significant financial harm.

Money earned on each flock represents the return on investment for the barn. If the initial equipment underperforms, the producer must bear additional expense to correct the situation.

Producers also should consider the manufacturer and the distributor supplying the equipment. Both should have solid reputations for good customer service and standing behind the products they sell.

While a producer needs to examine each component going into the house, pay special attention to the watering system. Water is a central nutrient and the watering system can make or break a poultry operation. A watering system that supplies birds with ample water, without spillage or waste, will provide your birds the best opportunity for maximum growth rate and improved feed conversion.

Important features of a quality-built watering system include:

- Simple management techniques for ample water delivery without spillage.
- A flushing system that helps prevent biofilm formation.
- An effective and easy flushing system, either attended or unattended.
- An efficient and effective method to administer medications and interventions.
- A warranty backed by a reputable manufacturer that stands behind its distributors and products, as well as provides good service and backup.

Taking extra time in the planning phase and spending a little more money at the beginning can result in substantial savings and profits for producers. That profit translates into a family's income for years to come. Sometimes, it's well worth it to spend a little to save a lot.

Ziggity Systems, Inc. is the only manufacturer 100 percent focused on poultry watering for improved performance. For more information, write Ziggity Systems, Inc. at 101 Industrial Parkway, P.O. Box 1169, Middlebury, Indiana 46540-1169 USA, call +1 574.825.5849, fax +1 574.825.7674, or visit its Web site at www.ziggity.com.

