

EDUCATING FARMERS TO USE BIOSECURITY IS AN IMPORTANT RISK MANAGEMENT TOOL

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In today's modern world commercial farmers face a wide range of challenges, from weather to diseases to government regulations. These ever changing, if not properly prevented or addressed in a timely manner can lead to large losses in production. With the increased movement of products and animals in the current world, preventing diseases is becoming a greater challenge. All types of agricultural ventures can have disease problems, whether it is Avian Influenza in birds, African Swine Fever in pigs or even nematodes in bananas, preventing disease is a priority. Biosecurity – any and all measures used to prevent disease – is an important risk management tool that farmers need to use to help reduce the risk of disease. In order to help farmers understand biosecurity and implement good practices, the University of Maryland Extension service conducted a number of outreach programs to train commercial poultry growers in the Delmarva region (DE, MD, VA). These programs included: traditional extension hands-on education, newsletters, factsheets, videos and on farm field days. Prior to educational outreach growers were surveyed on biosecurity practices, this was followed by surveys three to four months after trainings and then again 2 years later. The results found that 87% of growers made changes to their biosecurity plans as a result of workshops and 75% still maintained practices two years later and 92% reporting they still train employees on biosecurity.