

UPDATE FROM COE GRAD MANAGING 115 PEOPLE AND OVER 2 MILLION LAYER HENS

Neil Moser was a student at Michigan State University (MSU) when he learned about the COE program. He took COE classes in 2005 and 2006. He did his COE internships with Rose Acre Farms and Sunrise Farms.

After graduating from college, Neil took a job with a layer company in Ohio. He worked for that company for over a decade and grew into the role of Regional Live Production Manager. “I was managing over 2.2 million layers and 470,000 pullets, serving as a liaison to contract pullet growers in multiple states, and supervising over 50 staff members,” he said.

In 2021, Neil leveraged his experience to make a career move bringing him closer to family and allowing him to gain experience in cage-free egg production. He accepted the role of Production Manager at Herbruck’s Poultry Ranch at a complex with over 2 million caged and cage-free layers near Saranac, MI. In this role Neil leads a team of 115 employees that are directly responsible for the daily care of the hens and all the related tasks within the production department. “I ensure the team is following all the animal welfare, food safety, biosecurity, and environmental standards while maintaining industry-leading flock performance,” he said.

While working with animals and people requires adaptability and flexibility, Neil gave some examples of the tasks he does on a regular basis as a Production Manager. “I perform daily flock walkthroughs to inspect bird health, cleanliness, maintenance issues, identify performance challenges within flocks and develop a plan of action. I review flock performance metrics and staffing-related needs and challenges. I also hold daily huddles with the supervisory staff to assist them with challenges in their respective areas and establish clear and concise goals for the teams. When we are bringing in new staff, I conduct interviews and help with the skilled-labor employment programs,” he said.

Neil is proud to be part of Herbruck’s workforce development and helping his teammates build their skills. “We have established a stable and well-trained workforce, and this has helped Herbruck’s attain state and national awards for production quality and workforce development.”

Neil started working with poultry through 4-H. He competed in the American Poultry Association sanctioned shows starting when he was 13 and had an early interest in laying hens. When he started at MSU he found he could attend the COE program to help prepare him for a job in the poultry industry. “COE helped me prepare for this industry tremendously. The facilities, faculty, staff, and speakers are top-notch. I met several people at COE that I’m still in contact with today,” he said.

Neil has found that the skills he built in COE regarding anatomy, physiology, and nutrition were most helpful for his career path. He also values the labs related to poultry necropsy as it is a skill he continues to use today. “I still remember the labs with Rob Porter and Bernie Wentworth, they did amazing work with those labs,” Neil said.

Neil enjoys meeting other COE students and now works with several at Herbruck’s Poultry Ranch including Max Pfund (COE 2008/2009), Natalie Gross (COE 2014/2015), and Jared Liggett (COE 2020). He also remains in contact with some of his COE classmates. “People like China Jacobs (COE 2004/2005) and Dan Wilson (COE 2006/2007) can now help me with health and nutritional needs. It is a cool experience to get to know these people while they were starting their journeys in the poultry industry and still be working with them over a decade later.”

He also enjoys the experience of helping grow the careers of others interested in poultry and has gotten very close with some of the later graduates of COE. “Alex Neilley (COE 2016/2017) and I worked together in Ohio, where he developed and trained under my direction. We don’t work together anymore but we are still close, he is even the godfather to one of my sons,” Neil said.

Outside of work Neil likes spending time with his wife and four children. They enjoy traveling, gardening, and trying new foods. He is an avid whitetail deer hunter and enjoys salmon fishing on Lake Michigan. He is also a co-driver in the American Rally Association series for teams Wickfield Racing and Boreal Rally Sport. He and his wife volunteer with their local Great Start Collaborative and Parent Coalition which gives their community a voice to advocate for the needs of the families in their county.



Neil Moser and his family.