

## YOUTH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: A CORNERSTONE OF INDUSTRY SUCCESS

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An integral part of the Iowa Egg Council's and North Central Poultry Association's mission is to develop new ways to engage the poultry and egg community of the future. From educating a potential future workforce to solidifying the confidence of our consumers, community and youth engagement is paramount to the continued success of the poultry and egg industry.



A priority of today's young workforce is to have a career where they can feel good about their world impact and know they are making a difference for the better. At six grams of protein per whole egg and eight grams of protein per ounce of chicken, the poultry and egg industry produces not only delicious products, but nutritious. Employees of the industry can feel good about providing a high-quality, affordable, accessible protein source to consumers.

The poultry and egg industry also provides high-quality, high-paying jobs. In Iowa alone, the egg industry is responsible for around 3,000 direct jobs. Once the Allied industry is factored in, the poultry and egg industry has influence in a wide variety of sectors. It's important to convey that any career interest has a place in the poultry and egg industry. We need not only on-farm production personnel, but marketing staff, IT, engineers, maintenance workers, construction, manufacturing, food safety and more. Anyone can have a welcome place in our industry and have a part in feeding the world.

We also have concrete evidence that our producers are dedicated to the health and welfare of the animals they care for daily. This is shown no better than through the biosecurity investments made between the 2015 and 2022 HPAI outbreaks. In 2015, the industry faced a challenge like never before and we saw areas for improvement when most case introductions were due to lateral spread. In 2022, we can see the direct value of those investments in the fact that 80% of introductions have been point-source.

The poultry and egg industry has the perfect story to tell our youth and communities. The challenge we face is figuring out the avenues to do it successfully. How do we reach urban and rural; farmers and those who have never set foot on a farm?

It is imperative that employees of the poultry and egg industry actively look for opportunities to become advocates. Some engagements the Iowa Egg Council works on include handing out more than 175,000 hardboiled eggs on a stick at the Iowa State Fair. This gives us the opportunity to engage directly with our consumer base and tell the story of our producer's nutritious product. This is a fair tradition people remember and look forward to all year. Iowa Egg Council also engages in school curriculum by sending resources to family and consumer science instructors to highlight the nutritional benefits of eggs and egg-products. We also consult with dietitians and athletic programs at Iowa State University to provide a high-quality product for their athletes and create impactful content for our social media channels.

At North Central Poultry Association, we have created numerous educational materials including youth curriculum to be used in classrooms or 4H groups, a booth for our producers to utilize at career fairs, and biosecurity signage to be placed in our Iowa State Fair poultry building. We recently launched an award for local university students who have no experience in the poultry industry to have the opportunity to spend a semester learning through hands-on opportunities. Our organization also provides free membership for students and junior participants which includes access to monthly education webinars and free attendance at our educational events throughout the year. We also participate in local career fairs and community events where we can share information and materials on our industry throughout the year.

As members of the poultry and egg industry it's important that we all share the responsibility of engaging with consumers and our community. There is a plethora of opportunities outside of organization involvement to make sure your story and message is communicated. Look for career fairs and school events in your area and consider attending as a representative of your company or the poultry and egg industry. There are many high school and college students looking to find their future career path and they'll take note of someone who can speak about their job with passion and excitement. Many elementary schools will host science fairs or learning days where your company can be creative and devise fun activities for children and their families to participate in. The USDA Defend the Flock toolkits have a variety of print-outs and activities geared toward young people. Use these opportunities not only as an avenue to educate, but to advocate for the industry.

Local 4H and extension groups may also be open to speakers from different industries; this is a great way to engage with young poultry hobbyists with minimal biosecurity risk. It is easy and safe to reach out to county extension staff with information or to offer yourself as a resource for educational purposes. Your company could also sponsor an award for a local county fair class or speak with fair superintendents about educational materials or signage your company might provide. North Central Poultry Association sponsors an award for a youth poultry breeding project at the Iowa State Fair

every year. It encourages young poultry enthusiasts to get actively involved in the science behind raising poultry. Several of our member companies sponsor awards for varying classes of poultry such as layers and market broilers.

Lastly, continually engage in telling the story of the poultry and egg industry on social media. Share posts from the American Egg Board, your local poultry association, North Central Poultry Association, or Iowa Egg Council. It's important that as an industry we take charge of telling our story by making ourselves known as someone people can come to with their questions and potential misconceptions. We are all too aware of how quickly the truth of our industry can become misconstrued by a false narrative; becoming a trusted source of information for those in your circle creates an opportunity to broaden your sphere of influence.

Youth and community engagement is a cornerstone of the continued success of the poultry and egg industry as an avenue to recruit a potential future workforce and to foster confidence in the goodness of our products to consumers. As advocates, we must be creative and spearhead telling the incredible story of our industry.