

MacFarlane Pheasant Seminar

MacFarlane Pheasants, the largest pheasant producer in North America, held its 9th bi-annual Pheasant Management Seminar in Janesville, Wisconsin, from March 2 through March 5, 2014. Over 90 people attended from the U.S., the U.K., and China. Presentations were made by MacFarlane staff, and guest speakers from the University of Arkansas, University of Minnesota, the UK, China and the Netherlands. The topics addressed included pheasant genetics, hatching pheasants, disinfecting pheasant buildings, water quality and general pheasant farm management. Members of the MacFarlane staff gave presentations about their responsibilities, and about the raising of pheasants. It was a microcosm of the game bird industry, from breeding to marketing.

Dawe's has participated in this event for several years, through attendance and a presentation on [Animal Husbandry in Game Birds](#). As is the case at many conferences, much of the value is in the conversations that take place on the sidelines, during breaks and in the evening hours. Those informal discussions help us, and our clients, to take the general principles presented at the seminar and customize them for particular farm conditions in specific climates. The Wisconsin-way of caring for game birds requires some adaptation in the other states we serve, including Kansas, Illinois, Indiana, Alabama, Georgia, Oklahoma, New Mexico, etc.

Dr. R. Keith Bramwell, Extension Specialist at the U. of Arkansas Department of Poultry Science, and Ben Lawton, the Hatchery Manager at MacFarlane Farms, conducted a session on egg breakout, which provided producers with methods of discovering how to improve pheasant egg hatchability. Farm profitability relies heavily on hatchability; breaking unhatched eggs at the seminar gave clues into why the eggs had not hatched. By mastering such examinations, Dawe's helps producers achieve greater revenue. The photo to the right shows Ben Lawton of MacFarlane discussing pheasant egg hatchability with one of our Kansas customers. On the table are cartons holding opened eggs that had not properly hatched, and whose chick embryos were inspected by the attendees:



Below is a just-hatched male pheasant chick (half of MacFarlane's pheasant chicks are sexed at the hatchery; half are sold as straight-run). We can tell this pheasant chick is male because of the brow line in front and above the eye:



Methods of egg handling and storage also affect pheasant egg hatchability, and are shown below. On the left, a MacFarlane employee is loading pheasant eggs into an egg-washing machine. On the right, a colleague is waiting for the just-cleaned eggs to come out of that machine. He will sort them by pheasant breeder pen, so they can be kept separate at the pheasant hatchery. This will enable at the hatchery, the identification, by pen, of any problem pheasant eggs:



At Dawe's we closely study such farm procedures in many locations, in order to customize best practices to each individual pheasant operation.

All of our game bird customers would benefit by attending the MacFarlane Pheasant Management Seminar. For those who cannot attend, the Dawe's staff keeps up to date at this conference and other conventions, and provides our customers with critically important information.