

Meat Science Extension — Processors, Packers and Retailers

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In most land grant universities throughout the country, some extension-type work is being done with the meat industry — packers, processors and retailers. Several universities have extension specialists, either full- or part-time, who have the responsibility of providing educational opportunities and services to the industry. At other universities, this function is conducted by teaching and/or research staff.

Methods used vary considerably state by state, but, generally, most of the programs involve:

1. Consultations
2. Seminars
3. Short Courses
4. Associations
5. Mass Media

Consultations, or one-on-one basis, are very important methods used by anyone dealing with business firms. This is due, in part, to the confidentiality that is sometimes necessary. Working directly with individual firms also provides the specialist with a broad experience that is not otherwise available. Examples of activities are:

1. Product Development or Improvement
2. Physical Facilities — remodeling or new construction
3. Quality Control and Sanitation
4. Marketing and Management
5. Miscellaneous Problem Solving

Formal seminars and short courses offer opportunities to “teach” groups of individuals from several firms on such subjects as: curing, sausage manufacture, marketing, management, accounting and quality control. These programs provide the forum to teach “Meat Science” and present research information to the industry. It might be surprising for some of you to see the technical information that is presented at these sessions. Not all of it is clearly understood by those in attendance, but it is a real effort to help the industry understand “Meat Science” so that they might do a better job in their plants. These programs, in most instances, are staffed by teaching/research staff, industry consultants, ingredient and/

or equipment personnel — in addition to the extension specialists.

Mass media, such as guide sheets, manuals, new articles, etc., are used considerably. These may impact directly on the firms or may provide them with information that they may use with customers.

University personnel in meat science were responsible, early on, for the organization of meat processors and packers. Not only did they provide programs for their meetings, but served as officers and advisors. This is still true today in many states. Most of the specialists report that they are involved with the trade associations to some extent; however, many do not serve as elected officers.

Most meat processor associations have a product show in connection with their annual meeting. These are usually judged by extension specialists. This provides an excellent opportunity to do “teaching” on product development, quality control, marketing, etc. Extension specialists also work closely with national organizations such as NMA, AMI, NAMP and AAMP.

Work with state and national retail organizations is not as common as that with processors and packers. Some of us have been doing work with state organizations by contributing articles for their publications and in program planning. In addition, FMI and NARGUS have involved extension specialists in program planning, applied research and consultations. The potential is great for working with retailers in much the same way as we have with processors and packers.

In summary, from the response I have received from other specialists throughout the country and my knowledge of other programs, it is evident that considerable effort is devoted to educational and service work with the commercial meat industry. There is a large potential for continuing and expanding this effort. I want to emphasize that most of the programs are well planned to extend research results and, in general, provide educational opportunities and services to the industry.

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Reciprocal Meat Conference Proceedings, Volume 35, 1982.

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