

Man. Chicken Producers make donation



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The Manitoba Chicken Producers, along with Exceldor Cooperative and Dunn-Rite Food Products, developed the Caring for Communities partnership

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Chicken producers in Manitoba now have the option to donate poultry towards the Caring for Communities partnership with Winnipeg Harvest, a not-for-profit that provides food to the province's food banks.

The program, organized by the Manitoba Chicken Producers and the food bank, will see 1,000 chickens donated to Winnipeg Harvest per week starting the first week of July.

The concept for the program started two years ago when Winnipeg Harvest and Manitoba Chicken Producers representatives wanted to look at a different option for donations, said Wayne Hiltz. He's the executive director of the Manitoba Chicken Producers.

"The last five years we've been sponsoring (Winnipeg Harvest's) golf tournament with a monetary donation," Hiltz told Farms.com. "Although they were happy with money being donated, their real demand is meat protein. That's their number one concern and has been for a while."

After a year of thinking about the concept, the team at the Manitoba Chicken Producers reconnected with Winnipeg Harvest, said Hiltz.

“We went back to (Winnipeg Harvest) and said, ‘Hey what if we could get our producers to donate the chickens and get our processors to donate the processing?’ We talked about (the food bank’s) needs and demands and then we took (the information) took our processors, Dunn-Rite Foods and Exceldor Cooperative, and had good conversations with them,” said Hiltz.

The producers’ association informed the province’s chicken producers of the program in the fall. At the start of April, the Manitoba Chicken Producers asked producers what they could donate to the program.

“Our goal, which we thought was very optimistic, was 1,000 (chickens) per week. I’m pleased and humbled to say, by the generosity of our farmers, we surpassed that (figure) this week,” said Hiltz.

Over half of the chicken farmers agreed to donate, with more commitments rolling over the last week, said Hiltz.

On top of this long-term commitment, which currently extends until Feb. 2021, Manitoba Chicken Producers, Exceldor Cooperative and Dunn-Rite Food Products are donating 3,000 chickens to Winnipeg Harvest on April 24. This donation will help with the COVID-19 emergency.

Since Winnipeg Harvest supplies a network of 300 food banks and agencies, this initial donation will help alleviate one of their largest needs.

Winnipeg Harvest’s “number one demand is meat protein; they just can’t get enough of that. And we grow good, safe, nutritious Manitoba-raised chicken, which fits exactly with what (the organization’s) demands are,” said Hiltz.

The Caring for Communities program administrators will check in with farmers in the fall to see what they can donate for the rest of 2021. The Manitoba Chicken Producers and Winnipeg Harvest plan to keep the program longer term.

“We are pleased with the response of our farmers and the support for their communities. Especially during this time of crisis, we encourage everyone to see what they can do to help those less fortunate,” said Hiltz.

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