



The grills on the VAL-CO FUZE ProLine feed pan minimise birds' side-to-side movement, preventing them from flicking feed outside the pan

HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT PAN

A recent visit to a grower from Northern Ireland, who chose VAL-CO FUZE ProLine feed pans, provided insight into how some farmers choose their equipment, writes Galina Sadovska, regional sales manager for Europe and Africa, VAL-CO BV

Everyone has an opinion on which feeder pan is the best. It creates a loyalty that is hard to shake, even in the face of evidence of something better. The reality is that it is hard to know what makes a great feed pan, because there are so many shared features.

A grower from Northern Ireland who recently bought VAL-CO FUZE ProLine feed pans, gave his reasons for choosing them: "Most pans are plastic these days. The benefits are known and spoken about enough. But, are all plastic pans equally created? I chose the VAL-CO durable and lightweight plastic pan. Heavy does not mean strong; it means you are paying more for more plastic."

Feed spillage is something that affects the bottom line for every grower. Most pans have grills. "I appreciate the grills on my feed pans," he said. "The number of spokes tells me how many birds have access to

the pan at any given time, and the grills minimise birds' side-to-side movement, preventing them from flicking feed outside the pan. All the grills are shaped differently."

The pans ensure the birds have enough clearance to move their heads around to eat. Since birds cannot swallow, they cannot eat with their heads down, and so must lift their heads often.

Plus, chicks like to hop in the pan and move around when they eat, so the grills must be high enough that brooding chicks won't get stuck, and low enough that, as the birds grow, they can no longer fit in the pan because the grill is in the way.

"And have you noticed those fins inside the pan? They also help to avoid feed spillage, as no chicks will be able to scratch in the pan, raking the feed out.

We also discussed the depth of the pans. "I chose a shallow pan instead of a standard plate. My day-olds find it fast and eat easily

from it, giving them a perfect start for a great performance result. VAL-CO took care of the design of a pan for me: the bottom plate with its grill creates a lip which saves feed from spilling. And that is where management is important – just know your flock, their behaviour, and learn about your equipment."

This is an important point. If spillage seems to be an issue, it's often a problem with the settings, allowing too much feed to be present in the pan. Flooding is good for chicks, but during grow out, lower settings will help control the feed levels.

David and Richard Armstrong, from Positive Poultry, are a VAL-CO dealer in Northern Ireland and the Republic. They agree on the importance of management, maintenance of the feeding lines, service, and support. Having clean, healthy, and abundant feed available is crucial. It is imperative that the pan feeding system is in good working order to ensure that feed is evenly and adequately distributed.

Following the maintenance recommendations will help you keep your feed lines working well and your birds growing.

Look at your management style – the type of barn, integrator requirements, litter depth and material, feed type and breed of bird are all factors in choosing the best feeder. Ultimately, proof of performance will be in your feed conversion and liveability numbers, assuming all other factors are neutral.