

2025 AF&GA Nutrition Seminar

Speaker Bios

Dr. Mike Bedford, Research Director AB Vista

A chance meeting with a farm hand on a holiday in Wales sparked an interest in Animal Science in Dr Mike Bedford from an early age. In 1978 he enrolled in the BSc program in Animal Production at The University of Nottingham. A PhD in poultry nutrition and biochemistry at University of Guelph in Canada followed, along with two post doctorate positions in Molecular Biology and Poultry Nutrition. Mike's career spans nearly 35 years working in the feed additives industry, examining the use of enzymes in animal feed. He joined AB Agri in 2007 as the Research Director for emerging feed ingredients business, AB Vista. He has authored over 300 publications and reviews articles for 7 journals.



Dr. Mark Burleson graduated and received his DVM and Masters degrees from Mississippi State University. He has been working in the poultry industry as a production veterinarian for 18 years, with Sanderson Farms, Wayne Farms, and is now the Senior Director of Veterinary Services at Wayne-Sanderson Farms. He currently resides in Decatur, AL with his wife and 3 children.



Dr. Dirk Hoehler is the Senior Vice President of Essential Nutrition at Evonik Advanced Technologies in Hanau, Germany. He has held various leadership roles within Evonik, including Senior Vice President of Sales & eBusiness for Animal Nutrition and Senior Vice President of Marketing & Sales for Performance Intermediates. Dr. Hoehler's career began in academia, where he earned a Ph.D. and completed his Habilitation in Animal Nutrition and Nutritional Physiology, focusing on the mode of action of different mycotoxins. His extensive experience spans over two decades in both North America and Europe, where he has contributed significantly to advancements in feed additives and nutritional solutions.



Dr. Dave McCreery is a Poultry Nutritionist with CSA Animal Nutrition. He holds a BS in Animal Science from Cal Poly and a PhD in Poultry Nutrition from the University of Arkansas. His career has involved live production with Tyson's Pork Group and Simmons Foods and as a nutritionist for Pilgrim's Pride. He and his wife, Jenny, make their home in Northeast Oklahoma where he spends his free time following around a couple of bird dogs.

Dr. Randy Mitchell is Vice-President of Nutrition and Research for Perdue Farms in Salisbury, MD USA. Randy developed a passion for Agriculture while being raised on a poultry and beef cattle farm in Northeast Georgia. After abandoning his dreams of being a cattle rancher, he obtained a B.S. in Poultry Science from the University of Georgia in 1988. He worked as a Field Supervisor for Harrison Poultry until returning to UGA for graduate school in 1990, where he received a MS and PhD from the Department of Poultry Science. He began his post graduate career with British United Turkeys of America in 1995 and then joined Perdue Farms in 1998. He completed a MBA degree from Salisbury University in 2006. Randy's responsibilities include feed formulation and nutrition programs for all poultry, analytical laboratories, feed mill quality control and live research program. His research focuses on economic evaluations of different genetic strains, innovations to support Perdue's Animal Care initiatives, and advances in nutrition of NAE and organic poultry that will improve performance, health and reduce environmental impact. Randy is an active member of several industry and academic organizations including the Poultry Science Association, where he served as President from 2016-17.



Dr. Wilmer Pacheco, originally from Honduras, earned a B.S. in Food Science from Zamorano in 2005. He began his career at Murphy Brown, LLC, managing production of 10,000 tons of pelleted feed weekly. He later earned an M.S. and Ph.D. in Poultry Science at North Carolina State University. He is currently an Associate Professor and Extension Specialist at Auburn University, with research focused on how feed processing and nutrition impact broiler performance. Dr. Pacheco is the lead or contributing author of 47 peer-reviewed research articles and 110 news articles, primarily published in *Feedstuffs* magazine. He has been invited to deliver over 260 presentations in 27 countries and has served as chair or committee member for 36 graduate students. Dr. Pacheco also collaborates with the U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC) and the U.S. Grains Council to develop both online and in-person training programs in feed manufacturing and poultry production.



Dr. Benjamin Parsons is an assistant professor of Poultry Nutrition in the Department of Poultry Science at the University of Arkansas. He received BS and MS degrees in Animal Science from the University of Illinois, and received his Ph.D. in 2023 at the University of Arkansas. His research program focuses on evaluation of nutrient availability in feedstuffs, which includes amino acid digestibility, metabolizable energy, phytic acid degradation, and Ca, P, and trace mineral bioavailability and digestibility for poultry. In addition to poultry, Dr. Parsons has also generated nutrient availability estimates for swine, cattle, fish, dogs, and cats. Overall, Dr. Parsons aims to improve the precision by which the nutrient requirements of livestock are met by better characterizing the available nutrient content in feedstuffs and identifying ways to improve digestibility of nutrients.



Ken Semon is a 40-year veteran of the poultry industry. He began his career in 1985 with Arbor Acres in Glastonbury, CT, after receiving a Bachelor of Science in Animal Science from Rutgers University. At Arbor Acres, he was involved in all aspects of production & hatchery management before being appointed Sales & Technical Service Manager for South Asia in 1992. He later joined Cobb-Vantress in 2001 and was appointed Director of Technical Service, North America in 2003. In 2017, Ken was appointed Sr. Director of Technical Service at Cobb. He joined Aviagen in 2020, where his current position is Technical Service Manager responsible for sales & technical support to Aviagen customers throughout the US south & west regions.



Dr. Phillip Smith is a poultry nutritionist for Tyson Foods, Inc. located in Springdale, Arkansas. He received his B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. from the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. He started his career with Tastybird Foods as a poultry nutritionist in Russellville, Arkansas in 1980. Tastybird Foods was later acquired by Tyson Foods, Inc. Currently, Dr. Smith formulates broiler feeds for nine complexes. Also, Dr. Smith organizes Tyson's in-house poultry research and has worked as swine nutritionist in the Tyson pork group for several years. Phillip lives near Fayetteville, Arkansas with his wife Terry and has two grown sons, Nathaniel and Joshua and four grandchildren. He enjoys spending time with his family and working on his beef cattle farm.



Dr. James Wen is a Senior Technical Service Manager at Evonik Corporation. He earned both his bachelor's and master's degrees from China Agricultural University. After graduating, he began his career at Evonik Greater China as a sales manager. After six years with the company, he relocated to the United States to pursue a Ph.D. in poultry nutrition at Virginia Tech, where his research focused primarily on amino acids and vitamin D nutrition in laying hens. In 2018, he joined Evonik North America, where he is currently responsible for providing technical services to customers in the U.S. and Canada.



Todd Wilson became interested in animal agriculture at the age of 13 while working summers on his grandfather's cattle and broiler farm in the beautiful Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. He received his bachelor's degree in Poultry Science from Virginia Tech in 1989, and his PhD in Chicken Catching in the many years that followed. He spent 27 years at Tyson Foods in various roles involving live production, plant management, and complex management. He also held corporate positions in competitive intelligence and continuous improvement before moving to Cobb Vantress as the GM of the North American business unit. He joined Agri Stats in 2023 as a Vice President of Business Development and Account Management, and also serves as the President of EMI, a wholly owned subsidiary of Agri Stats.

