Computers Do Not Bite!

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A computer can be an invaluable tool in your business through the services that it can provide. Unfortunately many folks with little or no experience with computers tend to be scared of computers. Would you feel comfortable working around a genius or would the genius tend to make you feel self-conscious and inadequate? These feelings are the same that many people have about computers. The typical thought is that "The computer is smarter than I am." and the result is that many folks are scared to work with one. **The truth is that computers are really not very smart.**

Working With Computers

In spite of the common view of computers, computers are really very "stupid". The only thing computers have going for themselves is speed! If you were to count to a hundred from zero, it would probably take you several seconds. A typical computer would have that count done before you could even think about blinking an eye. Computers only do what they are told (or programmed) to do. Computers are so fast at what they do, that they look smart to us. If someone has not programmed a particular task into a computer, the computer will never be able to do that task regardless of how simple the task may be. The same is true for entering information into the computer. If the computer is programmed to only recognize the word "ratite" and you enter the word as "rATite", the computer will not recognize the second form of the word as meaning the same as the first form of the same word. We have no trouble recognizing the capital letter "O" as meaning the number zero when read as part of a string of numbers, such as in a date or in a dollar amount, however a computer would not be able to recognize the correct meaning.

The frustration many people feel when trying to learn to use computers comes more from the limitations of computers rather than from any inadequacies of the individuals. This is a minor distinction but a very important point to someone who is just starting to work with computers. One is then able to start with a good feeling about one's self, making it easier to put one's energy into learning how to work with the limitations and idiosyncracies of computers. The purpose of a computer program, such as a ratite tracking program, is to extend the capabilities of a computer to better meet the needs of the computer user. Windows® type shells have become popular for controlling computers because they uses icons (picture style commands) and selection menus to control the computer. This minimizes the need for a new user to learn the operating language (or command language) of the computer.

Computers also have the advantage of being able to run a wide range of programs in addition to a ratite tracking program. Once the initial investment is made in the equipment the most expensive part is behind you. Other programs, such as word processors and communications programs are relatively inexpensive to buy. The more comfortable you get with your computer the more things you think of that you can do with your computer, limited only by your imagination.

Record keeping with a computer becomes easier after you learn the rules of the program. Any time you try something new you can expect things to go slow at first. As you start getting the hand of it, it gets easier for you. The same is true for computers and computer programs. When first working with a ratite tracking program you can expect some slow going while you learn what to do and not to do with it. As you gain experience, you will find that less time is taken to enter information or select and print information. Of course the ultimate ease of a program depends on how well the program was written. Not all programs are created equal–there are pros and cons for each. The trick is to find the program that is easiest for you to use and still meets your ratite tracking needs.

The real value of a program is in its ability to quickly display selected ratite data. With the click of a button you may print a report or display a screen full of data. The better programs will give you different ways of looking at the same data–similar to looking at a house from different angles. Your data is saved in an ordered structure for you. The program knows where to go to find stored information on a particular item of interest. The program should guide you while entering information so that a vital detail is not overlooked. The better programs will help you enter the data in the correct format, either warning you when an input error is being made or refusing to let you enter the data incorrectly.

<u>Computerized Record Keeping</u>

Gone are the hand written records and stacks of boxes. If you are like me, your hand writing is not the best and can only be read by you. When was the last time you went back to check some old records and had trouble figuring out what was written? With a computer all your data will be clearly stored, displayed and printed.

There is no comparison to the ability of a computerized tracking program to make quick calculations again and again and again. With the click of a button, complex calculations and statistics are completed with little or no waiting. Imagine spending the last hour calculating some statistics by hand. Then you realize a piece of data was left out. Now you have to start calculating from the beginning again. With a computer all stored data that impacts the answer will be used and your answer is available in just a few moments. Re-calculations are done just as quickly. If you forgot to tell the computer a piece of information, no problem, you can quickly enter that piece and restart the calculations. Depending upon the options built into the program, you can quickly list all the eggs that a bird has laid this season, review the productivity statistics of the bird, or look at many other vital pieces of information.

A good ratite tracking program is an invaluable asset to the management of your ratite operation. A good program will make it easy for you, the user, to enter data. This means the user should not have a hard time figuring out where to go in the program to input a specific piece of information. You should not have to enter the same information over and over again. It should be forgiving when input errors are made. The program needs to be flexible and provide a wide range of reports. The user must realize that a program can not be all things to all people–compromises are made in attempting to meet as many of the ratite rancher's needs while still be reasonable and cost-effective to develop.

Note that the complexity of a program increases as the capabilities of the program is increased. The goal of the programmer should be to keep the program fairly simple to run while adding new functions or capabilities into the program. The more the program automatically does for the user, the better off the user usually is. Increased capabilities in a program can also affect the total cost of the program. Do not buy more than what you need in a program, but keep in mind that occasionally you will have a need that you have not recognized.