

# ALABAMAPOULTRY

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE ALABAMA POULTRY & EGG ASSOCIATION

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2021  
VOL. 16 | NO. 6





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*Alabama Poultry Magazine* (USPS 23800; ISSN 2767519X) is published bimonthly by the Alabama Poultry and Egg Association at 465 Bainbridge St., Montgomery, Ala. 36104. Phone (334) 265-2732 | FAX (334) 265-0008. Periodicals postage paid at Montgomery, Alabama.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Alabama Poultry Magazine, P.O. Box 240, Montgomery, AL 36101

Editorial matter from sources outside APEA is sometimes presented for the information and interest of our members. Such material may or may not coincide with official APEA policy. Publication does not necessarily imply endorsement by APEA.

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# CEO'S MESSAGE: JOHNNY ADAMS

I hope you are enjoying the change in seasons and the beautiful fall weather as much as I am. I also hope you are as excited as I am that, after two rounds of case spikes in the COVID-19 pandemic, we seem to be cautiously getting back to our old routines. I'll admit, it's been nice to once again be traveling the state and meeting with members face to face.

It was great to return to the beach for our annual and summer board meetings in July, too. I'd like to thank our sponsors for helping make them a success. We're looking forward to planning our 2022 meetings in the coming months.

President Casey Jones is off to a great start in his year of service to APEA with visits and presidential duties. We know he will have a successful year.

In August, we awarded the highest dollar amount of scholarships in APEA history, presenting Auburn University poultry science students a grand total of \$57,000 to assist with their education. Congratulations to each of these hardworking students.

It was apparent our members were relieved to be on the backside of COVID in October, as nearly 150 attendees from various sectors in Alabama's poultry industry converged on Guntersville for the Poultry Industry Seminar. It was one of the largest workshops we've ever had. I'd also like to thank the sponsors of the workshop for their support.

Finally, I want to thank all our association members and the poultry industry workforce for your commitment to and diligence in keeping the poultry food chain going during the difficult and challenging circumstances over the past year and a half. You can be proud of the role you played in making sure friends, family and neighbors had little disruption in getting food on their table.

I look forward to seeing you soon.

*Johnny*



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## ON THE COVER

Mitchell Morgan of Marshall County raises not only chickens but also pumpkins, which he stores in old poultry houses. His son, Abel, loves to help when he's not in school.

*Photo by Caleb Hicks.*



## APEA HOSTS ANNUAL POULTRY INDUSTRY SEMINAR AND GOLF TOURNAMENT

Nearly 150 poultry industry professionals and students met at Guntersville State Lodge in October for Alabama Poultry and Egg Association's, or APEA's, annual poultry industry seminar.

Attendees heard updates from Auburn University poultry science department faculty and Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries officials and discussed topics such as responding to animal activists' tactics, trends and forecasts in the industry, salmonella control and more.

In conjunction with the seminar, golfers enjoyed a round at Eagle's Nest Golf Course in Guntersville the day prior.

APEA Associate Director Ray Hilburn thanked sponsors and attendees for the successful event.

"This seminar provides those in our industry an opportunity to network and hear from industry affiliates on issues we face in the poultry business," Hilburn said. "We appreciate all our seminar sponsors for making this event a success and for providing further education to the great folks who make up our industry."





**UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE® (All Periodicals Publications Except Requester Publications)**

1. Publication Title: Alabama Poultry Magazine

2. Issue Number: 2180

3. Filing Date: 09/29/2021

4. Issue Frequency: Bimonthly

5. Number of Issues Published Annually: 20.400

6. Annual Subscription Price: \$1.25

7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication (Not printer) (Street, city, county, state, and ZIP+4®): 465 S. Bainbridge St. Montgomery, AL 36104-4317

8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher (Not printer): 465 S. Bainbridge St. Montgomery, AL 36104-4317

9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor and Managing Editor (Do not leave blank):  
 Publisher (Name and complete mailing address): Alabama Poultry and Egg Association, 465 S. Bainbridge St. Montgomery, AL 36104-4317  
 Editor (Name and complete mailing address): Caleb Hicks, APEA, 465 S. Bainbridge St. Montgomery, AL 36104-4317  
 Managing Editor (Name and complete mailing address): Johnny Adams, APEA, 465 S. Bainbridge St. Montgomery, AL 36104-4317

10. Owner (Do not leave blank. If the publication is owned by a corporation, give the name and address of the corporation immediately followed by the names and addresses of all individuals owning or holding 1 percent or more of the total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, give the names and addresses of the individual owners. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, give its name and address as well as those of each individual owner. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, give its name and address.):  
 Full Name: Alabama Poultry and Egg Association  
 Complete Mailing Address: 465 S. Bainbridge St. Montgomery, AL 36104-4317

11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities. If none, check box: ☒ None

12. Tax Status (For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at nonprofit rates) (Check one):  
☒ Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months  
☐ Has Changed During Preceding 12 Months (Publisher must submit explanation of change with this statement)

13. Publication Title: Alabama Poultry Magazine

14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: 09/07/2021

15. Extent and Nature of Circulation

		Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Total Number of Copies (Net press run)		3,400	3,400
b. Paid Circulation (By Mail and Outside the Mail)	(1) Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions (Stated on PS Form 3541 (include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)	3014	3009
	(2) Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions (Stated on PS Form 3541 (include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)	80	79
	(3) Paid Distribution Outside the Mail (Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS)	0	0
	(4) Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS (e.g., First-Class Mail®)	0	0
c. Total Paid Distribution (Sum of 15b(1), (2), (3), and (4))		3094	3088
d. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (By Mail and Outside the Mail)	(1) Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies Included on PS Form 3541	0	0
	(2) Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies Included on PS Form 3541	100	100
	(3) Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS (e.g., First-Class Mail)	0	0
	(4) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers or other means)	0	0
16. Electronic Copy Circulation		Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Paid Electronic Copies			
b. Total Paid Print Copies (Line 15c) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a)		3094	3088
c. Total Print Distribution (Line 15b) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a)		3194	3188
d. Percent Paid (Both Print & Electronic Copies) (16b divided by 16c x 100)			

☒ I certify that 95% of all my distributed copies (electronic and print) are paid above a nominal price.

17. Publication of Statement of Ownership:  
☐ If the publication is a general publication, publication of this statement is required. Will be printed in the 11/1/21 issue of this publication. ☐ Publication not required.


18. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner: Caleb Hicks, Date: 09/29/2021

I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).

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# AUBURN AG HONORS FIVE ALABAMA AGRICULTURAL LEADERS

Auburn University's College of Agriculture and Agricultural Alumni Association recognized five industry leaders for their contributions to Alabama agriculture through the years during the 2021 Alabama Agriculture Hall of Honor Banquet, held Sept. 16 at the Auburn Marriott Opelika Hotel and Conference Center at Grand National.

Bill Gilley of Philadelphia, Mississippi; Ron Smith of Auburn; and Homer Tate of Meridianville were inducted into the Hall of Honor. The late David Yow Pearce and the late James Plaster were each honored with the Pioneer Award.

Gilley, Hall of Honor inductee in the agribusiness sector, spent much of his career with ConAgra Foods, where he served as bird health director for all ConAgra operations in Alabama and Georgia, among other roles. In one of his earliest positions with the company, he developed an environmentally controlled house for growing broilers and replacement pullets, producing management procedures that are still in use across the poultry industry today.

Education/Government sector inductee Ron Smith spent 50 seasons developing applied research and educational programs on insect management and control. He also influenced the early adoption of new technology and developed scouting techniques and economic treatment thresholds for new pests as they emerged. Smith has also been a leading scientist in designing successful insect management programs for cotton growers in Alabama and other cotton-producing states.

Tate, representing the production sector, began managing his family's 50-acre farm at age 18, eventually growing it to an 18,000-acre operation that today includes cotton as well as

corn, wheat and soybeans. Over the years, Tate Farms has continually diversified and advanced its use of new farming technology. It remains in family hands to this day. Tate Farms has also expanded over the years to include an agritourism site, Cotton Pickin' Pumpkins, which attracts about 60,000 visitors each fall.

Without a farming background, Pearce and his wife, Fran, moved to a cattle farm in Browns, but it was the farm's five catfish ponds that soon became his passion. Pearce worked to turn the five ponds into a thriving business that now includes 121 ponds. Fifty years since the company's inception, Pearce Catfish Farm today is one of the nation's leaders. In addition to operating his farm, Pearce and a dozen other farmers built the Alabama

Catfish Feed Mill in Uniontown, where Pearce served as president.

Plaster was known for his numerous roles as an Alabama public servant while still maintaining his family farm in Autaugaville. As a member of the Alabama House of Representatives, he was an influential member of several committees, including the Agriculture and Forestry Committee, which he co-chaired. He was also instrumental in establishing the Catfish Diagnostic Laboratory in Greensboro and the Alabama Crop Improvements Association Seed Technology Lab in Auburn.

For more information on the Alabama Agriculture Hall of Honor, visit [agriculture.auburn.edu/alumni/hall-of-honor](http://agriculture.auburn.edu/alumni/hall-of-honor). 🐔



Bill Gilley, center, former live production manager for ConAgra Poultry, was the 2021 agribusiness-sector inductee into the Auburn University College of Agriculture's Hall of Honor in September. Congratulating Gilley are APEA Associate Director Ray Hilburn, left, and Willie Hilburn, who worked with Gilley for many years at ConAgra's Enterprise complex.



## BILL GILLEY

### ALABAMA AGRICULTURE HALL OF HONOR 2021

Bill Gilley used his intelligence, his determination and the lessons he learned from his time at Auburn University to prevent the collapse of the poultry industry in the 1960s.

Born and raised on a small farm in Chatom, Alabama, Gilley enrolled at Auburn in the fall of 1960, the first year under the institution's new name after previously being known as the Alabama Polytechnic Institute.

He graduated with a Bachelor of Science and Master of Science in agricultural education, but his major study emphasis was poultry science. While at Auburn, he was tutored by poultry science legends Dr. Dale King and Dr. Allen Edgar, with whom he worked to develop new disease control methods.

Marek's disease — which causes birds to develop tumors that make them unfit for human consumption — took off in the '60s. A vaccine had not yet been developed, and it was common at the time for 50% of the meat from a flock to be condemned at the processing plant due to the disease.

It was discovered that some domesticated turkeys carried a herpes virus in their blood that could protect chickens from Marek's disease. Gilley worked with Dr. Dwight Bond to develop a complicated procedure that injected this turkey blood into day-old baby chicks. It was 100% effective in protecting his flocks from the disease. He shared the guidelines with the rest of the industry, and his program became common practice.

Two years later, a commercially available vaccine was developed using the same herpes virus found in the turkeys. A form of this vaccine is still used today.

In 1965, Gilley went to work for Red Hat Poultry, later to become ConAgra Foods. He worked a year in Auburn to develop an environmentally controlled house in which to grow broilers and replacement pullets. Many of the management procedures from it are still used today.

In 1966, he moved to ConAgra's Decatur operation and would eventually manage the facility's commercial layer operation. Finally, he became the bird health director for all ConAgra operations in Alabama and Georgia. It was in this role that he made some of his most important contributions to the poultry industry, including addressing not only Marek's disease, but equally devastating diseases such as Pullorum and Mycoplasma.

In 1972, he moved to Ruston, Louisiana, to start a successful new grow-out operation for ConAgra. Ten years later, the company moved him to Enterprise, Alabama, where he continued to make contributions to the industry until his retirement in 1995.

During these years, he worked with the Coffee County Extension Service and Auburn poultry science department to develop dead-bird disposal using a composting method. This system is still in use today.

Gilley is a graduate of Washington County High School, where he was salutatorian and student body president and where he met his wife of 59 years and counting, Polly.



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# THE BEST POLICY: ENSURE YOUR INSURANCE HAS YOU COVERED

BY MISTIE WIGGS  
*RANDY JONES AND ASSOCIATES INC.*

**I**magine you're spending an evening out with your family when you receive the tragic news your home is on fire. You rush to the scene, only to find there is nothing that can be done to salvage your home. It is too far gone. One of the first calls you make will be to your insurance agent. In the days to come, you find out the coverage you had on your dwelling will not be sufficient to rebuild your home at the current cost of construction.

This is a scenario we could all find ourselves in. Even if you recently reviewed your policy and were comfortable with your coverage, the inflation we have experienced this year has put us all in a position of being underinsured.

What if the fire broke out in your poultry house? An underinsured poultry house can mean having to go back to your lender and get a second loan to be able to build back.

This possibility has been on our radar all year, as we have watched the rising cost of construction. We have been able to see with each policy review that many of our insureds are

underinsured. Our advice to our customers, and to all poultry farmers, is to check with a builder to find out how much it would cost to rebuild your home, your barns and your poultry houses. Then take a look at your policy to ensure your coverage is sufficient to rebuild, should you find yourself in a loss situation.

The hope is that you will never need to use your insurance, but if you do, you want to make sure you're with a reputable company and you have the proper coverages. This goes deeper than having the appropriate amount of coverage; you need to verify you have the right coverages specific to a poultry operation. Farm liability, loss of farm income and equipment breakdown coverage are coverages no poultry farm should be without.

How does your loss of farm income work? What are your limits? How long will they pay loss of farm income? These are all questions you need to be able to answer.

What about your deductibles? Know how they work. Some are per occurrence, and some are per building. Per occurrence means should you have a single event, like a tornado, that damages multiple buildings, you will only be assessed one deductible, and it will be the highest of all buildings affected. For example, if your home, dry stack and poultry house suffer wind damage, your insurer will assess the poultry house deductible, since it will be the highest. If you have per-building deductibles, you will be assessed a deductible for each building damaged.

Poultry farms are complex when it comes to insurance and having an agent who understands your needs is very important. Contact your agent once a year to review your policy. Given the time, energy and money you have invested in building your farm, it is imperative that your insurance policy will protect you against the unexpected. 🐔



## ALATRADE EMPLOYEES NOW OWNERS

Alabama-based poultry further-processing company AlaTrade is now owned by its employees.

The company was founded by Davis Lee 21 years ago. Lee had retired from a 40-year career in the poultry industry, but rather than staying retired, he started his own company. He found the opportunity to purchase a plant, and the company has since grown to have locations in Phenix City, Boaz and Albertville.

Today, the company, which has deboning operations and produces marinated and nonmarinated products for the U.S. foodservice industry, processes more than 400 million pounds of chicken annually.

While Lee owned AlaTrade, he created an employee stock ownership plan, or ESOP, which involved the creation of a trust where employees' accounts accumulate shares of the company at no cost to them. The development in which AlaTrade became 100% employee owned was announced on the AlaTrade Foods – Phenix City Facebook page in June.

“Davis built a family at AlaTrade,” Chief Financial Officer Andrea Elrod said in the announcement. “Now, he has created a home. The ESOP is meant to reward people who stay a long time with the company. The employee ownership is so exciting. My



expectation is that all of our employees will have meaningful account balances for retirement in a 10- to 15-year time frame.”

According to the company, AlaTrade has long offered health, dental, vision and life insurance to its employees, as well as bonuses and other benefits. The ESOP, along with a new rewards program, further enhances the benefit package for current associates and offers jobseekers options that can't readily be found elsewhere.

AlaTrade, according to its website, works within the poultry industry to provide services for its customers that can be as simple as a fee for service or more complex to include co-packing of products for direct distribution. AlaTrade plants have approvals from many national account foodservice companies to produce products for their restaurants. 🐔

*Article sourced from Watt Poultry.*



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# WAYNE FARMS, SANDERSON FARMS TO MERGE

**C**argill and Continental Grain Co. have reached an agreement to form a joint venture and acquire Sanderson Farms for \$4.53 billion, or \$203 per share.

Continental Grain Co. is the owner of Wayne Farms, and when the planned acquisition is completed, Wayne Farms and Sanderson Farms will become a combined, privately held poultry business.

According to the WATTPoultry.com Top Companies database, Sanderson Farms is the third largest poultry company in the United States, while Wayne Farms ranks seventh. On a weekly basis, Sanderson Farms produces 94.31 million pounds of ready-to-cook chicken, and Wayne Farms, 48.8 million pounds.

Clint Rivers, who has served as the CEO of Wayne Farms since 2017 and is in his second year as chairman of the National Chicken Council, will lead the combined company.

The transaction is expected to close by late 2021 or early 2022 and will be subject to regulatory and Sanderson Farms stockholder approval.

According to a press release issued by Cargill, Continental Grain and Sanderson Farms, the combination of Wayne Farms and Sanderson Farms will “create a best-in-class U.S. poultry company with a high-quality asset base, complementary operating cultures and an industry-leading management team and workforce.”

“Since my grandfather founded Sanderson Farms 75 years ago, our many significant achievements have been driven by our commitment to providing the very best chicken products in a profitable manner that benefits each of the constituents who contribute to our success,” said Joe Sanderson, chairman and chief executive officer of Sanderson Farms Inc. “This transaction is the culmination of that commitment, as it delivers a significant value to our stockholders, reflecting the dedication of our



team and our best-in-class assets, quality products, efficient and sustainable operations and respected brand.

“We are proud to be joining with Cargill and Continental Grain, and we are confident that they will be strong stewards of the Sanderson Farms team, brand and assets going forward,” Sanderson said. “As part of the newly created company, Sanderson Farms and its new owners will remain committed to the employees, poultry producers, customers, communities, environment and animals under our care and will continue to deliver the highest quality products and the best service in our industry to our customers.”

Paul Fribourg, Continental Grain chairman and CEO, said he is excited about the merger.

“We are very happy to partner with Cargill, with whom we have had a decades-long relationship between two family-owned companies,” Fribourg said. “Sanderson Farms’ operations, best-in-class assets and valuable brand have underscored their success, and we have the highest respect for Joe Sanderson and the business and team he has built as the third-generation CEO.

“Wayne Farms has been one of the most important and successful parts of Continental Grain for almost 60 years, so bringing together two great partners with two great poultry companies will ensure good things for our customers, our grower partners and our employees.”

The new company will have state-of-the-art operations and will continue to invest in its workforce and in employee safety. Operations will include poultry processing plants and prepared-foods plants across Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina and Texas.

Cargill expects to support the new joint venture with its longstanding relationships with retail and foodservice customers.

“At Cargill, we are committed to nourishing the world in a safe, responsible and sustainable way,” Cargill Chairman and CEO David MacLennan said. “Expanding our poultry offerings to the U.S. is a key enabler of our ability to meet customer and consumer demands. With these great businesses and our strong partnership, we believe we will deliver a superior portfolio of products and services to our customers.” 🐔



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Tommy Thompson has been farming in Andalusia since '74. In addition to 2,500 acres of row crops, he has six breeder houses, 250 head of cattle and a hay-baling operation.



# THE BEST 'SIDES' FOR Chicken Farming

BY: CALEB HICKS



Walker County farmer Dorman Grace raises row crops, timber, cows and chickens with sons Jud, left, and Cade, right, in Jasper.

Lots of things go good with chicken — mac and cheese, french fries, mashed potatoes, green beans — the usual southern sides. For poultry farmers, though, sides may look a little different.

Ask Covington County farmer Tommy Thompson why he raises cattle and row crops along with his breeder hens, and he'll say, "Because it all works together."

"Raising chickens is a plus to us," said Thompson, an Andalusia native. "You only get paid once a year with the row crops, but with the chickens, we get paid every two weeks. It's much easier to make a living for your family when you have a diversified farm operation."

Diversified describes most chicken farmers. Along with tending his six breeder hen houses, Thompson grows 2,500 acres of row crops, raises 250 head of cattle and bales hay.

A first-generation farmer, Thompson said starting the operation back in '74 when he was a junior in high school has been a rewarding experience.

"It got in my blood, and I enjoyed it," he said. "To me, if you don't look forward

to waking up and going to work, you'll have a long, hard life ahead of you. It's also great to have my son, Russell, and family help with the farm."

As is true on many farms, Thompson's commodities have a symbiotic relationship. He uses the poultry litter to fertilize the row crops and rolls his own peanut hay post-harvest for the cows.

"Nothing we do here outweighs the other," Thompson said. "It's a 24-7 job. You don't get much of a break, but everything we do here complements the other."

The same is true for Walker County's Dorman Grace, who, like Thompson, raises row crops, cows, has six broiler houses and adds timber in the mix with sons Jud and Cade in Jasper.

"Working together is a big aspect of what we do," said Grace, who was Alabama Poultry and Egg Association president in 1996-97 and two-time Alabama Poultry Farm Family of the Year recipient in 1990 and 2009. "You learn the hierarchy of being a part of a family operation, something I learned when my dad ran the farm. Now, I've got my sons, and everything we produce works together just like we do."

Cade Grace agrees.

"We feed our cows the corn we grow and use the poultry litter to fertilize that corn," Cade said. "Having a diversified



Mitchell Morgan and son Abel tend to pumpkins on their Albertville farm, which also includes broilers, hogs, vegetables and a small cow-calf operation.

*It's much easier to make a living for your family when you have a diversified farm operation.*

TOMMY THOMPSON  
Covington County Farmer



*When he's off from school, Abel enjoys assisting with farm duties.*



*Morgan planted more than 120 acres of various pumpkin varieties this season and plans to add 100 acres next year.*

operation is more profitable than producing one commodity. You can utilize the land to its greatest ability while being good stewards."

Dorman, a 1978 Auburn University poultry science alum, returned to his family's farm after graduation and became heavily involved with the poultry production side. For him, having the independence of managing the farm comes full circle.

"I like being my own boss," he said. "But we couldn't do this without our lender and countless other state organizations who help make our farming operation possible. I'm proud of what we have and proud to have my sons here with me."

Albertville farmer Mitchell Morgan found planting pumpkins provides a prosperous, opportunity each fall to diversify his farm. It's a facet he added to his farm as a hobby in 2013.

Morgan, who primarily sells to local markets in Alabama and Georgia, said he knew farming was always on the table for him, but he also saw a need in his community.

"We started out to raise food for ourselves," he said. "Folks in our community and all over were wanting locally grown products and wanted to support farmers in the area. Everything took off about five years ago."

In addition to four broiler houses and 120 acres of pumpkins, Morgan sells a variety of vegetables. He also sells pork to restaurants and at farmers markets and has a small cow-calf operation, which his 8-year-old son, Abel, enjoys most.

Morgan said raising his family on the farm is a great teaching opportunity for his son.

"There are a lot of life lessons to learn growing up on a farm," he said. "To be able to pass those on to him is priceless."

Morgan credits God for having a hand in the farm and surviving the struggles that come with it.

"Farming isn't easy," he said. "There are a lot of ups and downs, but the Lord has been good to us. It's a good feeling to know you planted the seed, prayed for the rain, asked the Lord to bless it, and He did. I think we all have certain things God calls us to do. I feel like mine is to farm." 🐔

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# HEN HOUSE HUB OF HOPE *for Recovering Addicts*

BY: DENNIS SHERER

A trip to one Cullman County farm is literally a life-changing experience for men who choose to live there while overcoming drug and alcohol addictions.

The Foundry Ministries, based in Bessemer, has owned the 60-acre farm near Holly Pond since 1980. In 2019, a 1,000-square-foot hen house was added to the farming operation. Three of the farm's residents are assigned to caring for the 550 laying hens, gathering the eggs and preparing the eggs for distribution.

The cage-free brown eggs are sold at premium prices to grocers and restaurants in the Cullman area and at The Foundry Thrift Store in Cullman.

For the residents assigned to hen house duty, the work is a labor of love.

"Taking care of living creatures and seeing the progress you and the chickens are making by working with them is very rewarding," said farm resident Jacob Shelton.

Another resident, Steven Lovett, said working with the hens is helping him overcome his addictions.

"Being responsible for animals gives you back some of what you lost when you were addicted to drugs and alcohol and stopped caring for anything but drugs and alcohol," Lovett said.

The farm prides itself in the care the Hy-Line Brown layers receive from the residents, calling them happy hens.

The addition of the hen house to the farm was spearheaded by Cullman resident David Ozment, former Alabama Poultry and Egg Association, or APEA, executive director.

"My goal is to help The Foundry better utilize its land, people and other resources," said Ozment, a farm volunteer. "We first started using technology, such as plasticulture and drip irrigation to develop productive vegetable gardens. Now, we have built the hen house."

Ozment moved to Cullman for the job as APEA executive director 50 years ago, when the association was headquartered there. He now volunteers at The Foundry.

Farm director Eddie Wilson said that in addition to learning how to care for poultry, grow vegetables or manage a pine forest, residents at the farm learn life skills that will benefit them after they leave the 12-month recovery program.

"We call it employment readiness," Wilson said. "They learn skills like the importance of showing up for work and being on time. The importance of staying in their work area, keeping that area clean and learning how to be flexible and deal with changes on the job. The work skills they learn here on the farm can be used to help them succeed in farm-related jobs or any occupation."

Program participants receive one-on-one counseling to help them overcome their addictions. They also learn computer skills. Those without high school diplomas attend general educational development classes.

"We want them to learn everything they will need to succeed," Wilson said. "We want to give them hope that they can take back to their families."



Residents Jacob Shelton and Steven Lovett work with the laying hens as part of their recovery program.



Farm director Eddie Wilson says residents on the farm learn valuable employment readiness skills caring for the crops and animals.



Foundry residents care for a flock of 550 laying hens and prepare the eggs to be sold to local grocery stores in the Cullman area.

The recovery program at The Foundry Farm is faith-based.

"I know for a fact how my God and Savior and The Foundry Ministries can change lives, because they changed mine in 2006," said Wilson, who turned to The Foundry for help in overcoming an alcohol and cocaine addiction.

The Foundry Ministries is celebrating its 50th anniversary.

Ozment said the hen house operation helps boost the morale of farm residents as they learn new work skills and produce eggs that help the ministry generate income and reduce food expenses at its residential facilities in Bessemer and Cullman.

Ozment said the farm receives tremendous support from churches, businesses and individuals.

"The drug and alcohol problem is impacting many families, and our local Cullman people are eager to help The Foundry residents," he said.

He credits Auburn graduate "dream team" that includes poultry veterinarian Dr. Samuel Christenberry, poultry nutritionist Dr. Mark Farmer and poultry consultant Huey Hilburn for serving as local poultry experts to ensure The Foundry hens are happy, healthy and productive. Hilburn is a retired 57-year member of the Alabama poultry industry and brother of APEA Associate Director Ray Hilburn.

For more information about The Foundry, visit [FoundryMinistries.com](http://FoundryMinistries.com).

*Dennis Sherer is a freelance writer with a penchant for traveling Alabama's rural routes.*



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# Made From Scratch

Make sure you save room on this year's holiday dessert table for a couple of luscious cakes that food blogger Katrina Adams, aka K Marie, shares here with Alabama Poultry readers.

Consider her easy-as-pie Key Lime Cake, for instance. It's delicious any time of year, but bake it in a Christmas tree-shaped pan for the family's holiday meal and it will be in demand for years to come.

As for the ultra-rich creation K Marie aptly calls The Best Chocolate Cake, it is a chocoholic's dream that's covered with not just cream cheese frosting, but chocolate cream cheese frosting. It is seriously delicious.

Eggs give the cakes their moistness, and they do the same in Katrina's Sweet Potato Cornbread, a delightful alternative to the standard marshmallow-topped sweet potato casserole that, frankly, has worn out its holiday-meal welcome.

And for an effortless entrée that's ideal for this hectic holiday season, try her tender and juicy garlic rosemary chicken breasts.



*Katrina Adams, better known as K Marie, shares her passion of cooking and entertaining through her blog, "In the Kitchen with K Marie." See more of her recipes at [kmariekitchen.com](http://kmariekitchen.com).*

## GARLIC ROSEMARY CHICKEN

**Prep Time:** 5 minutes

**Cook Time:** 35 minutes

**Serves:** 4

- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 2 teaspoons minced fresh rosemary or rosemary seasoning blend
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 4 tablespoons butter, melted
- 1/4 cup chicken broth
- 1/4 cup dry white wine
- Fresh lemon slices and rosemary sprigs for serving, optional

Rinse chicken breasts and pat dry. Combine rosemary, garlic, salt and pepper in a small bowl and rub on chicken. Place chicken in a plastic storage bag and refrigerate overnight, or for at least 4 hours. Heat a large skillet that has been sprayed with nonstick spray over medium-high heat. Add chicken breasts and cook 3-5 minutes per side, or until browned. Transfer chicken to a baking dish coated with nonstick spray.

In a small bowl, combine melted butter, chicken broth and wine. Pour mixture over chicken and bake at 350 degrees for 25-30 minutes, or until chicken is cooked through to an internal temperature of at least 165 degrees. Garnish with lemon slices and rosemary sprigs, if desired.



### SWEET POTATO CORNBREAD

**Prep Time:** 15 minutes

**Cook Time:** 30 minutes

**Serves:** 8

- 2 cups cornmeal
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon sugar\*
- 1 cup cooked, mashed sweet potatoes
- 4 eggs
- 1 1/2 cups buttermilk
- 1/4 cup honey
- 1 stick butter, melted

Lightly butter a cast iron skillet, place in oven and begin preheating to 350 degrees. In a large bowl, whisk together the cornmeal, flour, brown sugar, baking powder, baking soda, salt, pumpkin pie spice and cinnamon sugar. In a separate medium bowl, combine the mashed sweet potatoes, eggs, buttermilk, honey and melted butter. Add sweet potato mixture to dry ingredients, stirring to combine.

Remove skillet from oven and pour in cornbread mixture, smoothing the top with a spatula. Bake for 30 minutes, or until cornbread is golden brown and cake tester inserted in center comes out clean.

\*K Marie uses McCormick Cinnamon Sugar

### THE BEST CHOCOLATE CAKE

**Prep Time:** 10 minutes

**Cook Time:** 35-40 minutes

**Servings:** 12

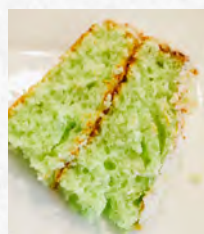
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 3/4 cup cocoa
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup milk
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 1 cup boiling water

Combine dry ingredients in a large bowl. Add eggs, milk, oil and vanilla, and beat on medium speed of electric mixer for 2 minutes. Stir in boiling water. (Batter will be thin.) Divide batter between two greased and floured 9-inch-round cake pans. Bake at 350 degrees for 30-35 minutes, or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool in pans 10 minutes, then remove layers to wire racks and cool completely. Spread Chocolate Cream Cheese Frosting between layers and over top and sides of cake.

#### Chocolate Cream Cheese Frosting

- 1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, melted
- 2/3 cup cocoa
- 3 cups powdered sugar
- 1/3 cup milk
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, at room temperature

Combine butter and cocoa powder in a mixing bowl. Add powdered sugar alternately with milk to butter mixture; beat with an electric mixer until smooth, adding a small amount of additional milk if needed. Stir in vanilla. Add cream cheese and beat until all ingredients are blended well. Spread frosting between layers and over top and sides of cake.



### KEY LIME CAKE

**Prep Time:** 5 minutes | **Cook Time:** 55 minutes | **Servings:** 12-14

- 1 (15.25-ounce) box lemon cake mix
- 1 (3-ounce) box lime-flavored gelatin
- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 4 eggs
- 3/4 cup orange juice
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons lime juice

In a large bowl, stir together dry cake mix and gelatin. Add oil, eggs, orange juice, lemon juice and lime juice, blending well. Divide batter between two 8-inch-round pans\* sprayed with nonstick spray with flour. Bake at 350 degrees for 35-40 minutes, or until toothpick inserted in middle of layers comes out clean. Cool in pans 10-15 minutes. Remove from pans onto wire racks. Spread frosting between layers and on top and sides of cake.

#### Cream Cheese Frosting

- 1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese (room temperature)
- 1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter (room temperature)
- 4 cups powdered sugar
- 3 tablespoons vanilla flavoring

In a medium bowl, beat cream cheese and butter until light and fluffy. Blend in powdered sugar until smooth; stir in flavoring.

\*Bake cake in a pan shaped like a Christmas tree for a special holiday treat.

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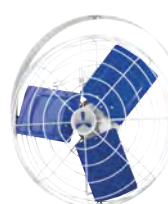


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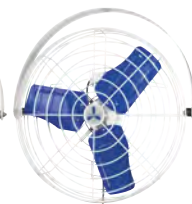
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# BLOCK, TACKLE, WIN

## MINIMUM VENTILATION AND MOISTURE CONTROL

Jess Campbell, Jeremiah Davis, John Linhoss, Kelly Griggs, Cody Smith, Carson Edge and Martha Rueda  
National Poultry Technology Center – November/December 2021

We are often asked, what is the best thing a producer and company can do to perform well during cold weather? Here is our simple answer to this question: Win minimum ventilation and moisture control. This is achieved by developing an effective, clear and simple game plan that everyone can execute. This newsletter is focused on helping producers and company service representatives prepare houses for efficient and effective cold-weather minimum ventilation. We decided to toss in some football theming along the way to get motivated. It is time to call your minimum ventilation offense out onto the field, huddle up and get ready to score some moisture control points.

### Block the Right Vents

Non-brooding-end (aka off-end or grow-out end) perimeter air inlets (aka vents or baffles) should be blocked off during brooding to make sure most/all minimum ventilation air enters the barn in the brooding chamber first and targets the ceiling peak. Not blocking vents is probably the most common minimum ventilation mistake we see producers make during brooding. Any air that enters the non-brooding area of the house and exits the house does not count toward minimum ventilation. Only

air that enters the bird area counts. If you do allow air to enter and exit the non-brooding ends and bypass the brooding chamber, that air should be deducted from the minimum ventilation calculations. If a producer uses all the perimeter inlets in the barn during minimum ventilation and does not compensate for this air bypass, this is a “false start.” As shown in Figure 1, arguably 50% of the ventilation air will bypass the brooding chamber. In this case, for example, a minimum ventilation run time of 60 seconds ON (240 seconds OFF) would need to be increased to 120 seconds ON (180 seconds OFF) to compensate for the off-chamber bypass ventilation. This would be a good starting point.

We have a simple choice to make to improve brood chamber air exchange. Either add the additional time, or close the non-brooding area vents. It is acceptable to open some vents in the back of the house, but keep in mind that air does not count toward minimum ventilation. We are also looking for about a 1.5”-2” vent opening and, for some houses, this cannot be achieved without blocking some selected vents to get the proper opening. Below are some additional tips on vent management and moisture control.

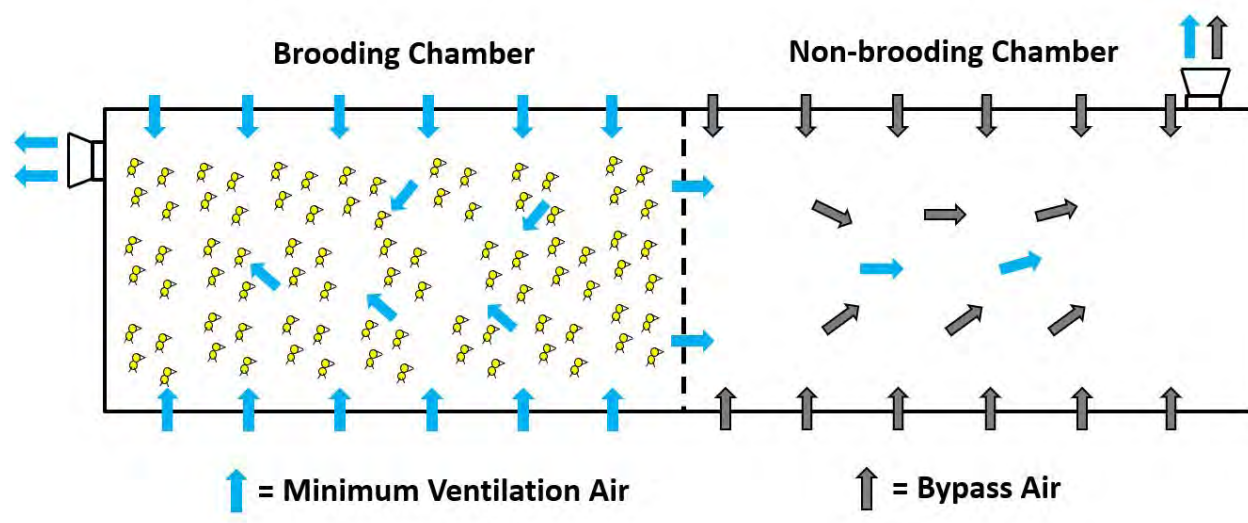


Figure 1: This is an illustration of a common minimum ventilation setup that can make it difficult to get moisture under control. Notice, one fan is ventilating the brooding chamber and the other is ventilating the non-brooding chamber. If the producer is counting both fans for minimum ventilation, this would not give enough brooding chamber air exchange and likely could lead to undesirable results.

**Missing vent door insulation:** All perimeter vents must be fully insulated so they tightly close when they are not in use. Any missing insulation (Figure 2) will likely be the source of a cold-air leak that throws air directly to the floor. This air works against litter drying (incomplete pass), drafts chicks in the vicinity, causes uneven floor temperatures and causes excessive heater runtime. If the insulation cannot be repaired, it is time to replace the door.

**Vents in front of temperature sensors:** We do not want cold outside air landing directly on sensors. Most producers know to shut off air inlets that are directly adjacent to temperature sensors to keep this from happening. Leaving these vents open can cause unnecessary temperature fluctuations, excessive heater run-times and bird movement away from this zone. Sometimes, monitoring heater zone run-times during brooding can help you spot a potential problem if you notice a zone that is running significantly more than others. It is common for the front and back brooding chamber zones to operate more than the middle zones due to heat being lost through the brood curtain or endwall.

**Dirty exterior bird wire:** Sometimes we find vent screens that are partially or almost entirely blocked off by dust, feathers and dander (Figure 4). This is especially true for vents that are located adjacent to sidewall exhaust fans or across from tunnel fans from adjacent houses. Make sure all perimeter inlet bird wire has been cleaned to ensure that all vents used are capable of unrestricted inlet airflow.

**Damaged doors:** Ideally, every inlet door in use opens evenly and the same amount during each minimum ventilation cycle. Any bent, rusted or damaged doors should be repaired or replaced prior to cold-weather operation. Any damage that forces the door to either not shut or not open (whether partial or completely) may cause cold air to land on the birds, drinkers and litter, causing more harm than good. This would be considered intentional grounding and a 10-yard penalty.

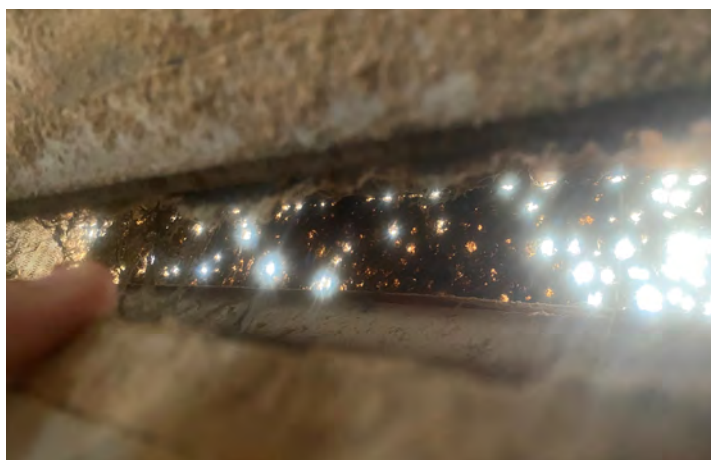
**Cables and sprockets:** Vent cables can stretch over time, creating uneven door openings and leaving vent doors at the ends partially open when they should be sealed shut. Take time to adjust vent door connections to make sure all doors open the same amount. Leaving doors open unevenly will cause excessive heater runtimes in those locations. Sprockets must be greased and pulleys must be inspected for signs of wear and possible failure.



*Figure 2: This inlet door is a considerable source of air leakage when shut. The insulation has been damaged by rodents. The door does open and shut, but when it is shut, it does not seal and is leaking on three sides. It is overdue for repair or replacement. This can often be found on inlets located closest to the feed cross-fill entrance to the house, where rodents have direct access to the house wall and attic space.*



*Figure 3: The insulation in this inlet door has almost totally disintegrated due to darkling beetles. This vent is another major source of air leakage and is made worse by the insulation settling out of the door and getting wedged between the door and frame. The metal door appears to be in good shape, so we would recommend replacing the insulation on this door. This was not staged.*



*Figure 4: This photo was taken from inside the house looking through the sidewall vent. The bird wire is almost 70% blocked with dust and feathers. It is next to a sidewall exhaust fan. This vent wire is way overdue for a good cleaning.*

**Vents without latches:** Simple, inexpensive vent door latches can be purchased from your local dealer, ordered online or homemade, if they are fully functional. Many poultry houses are not designed to operate without closing a select number of vents during cold-weather brooding. If you struggle during cold-weather moisture control, this could be part of the reason.

#### **Tackle Maintenance on the Right Fans**

Tackle minimum ventilation fan maintenance now. The minimum ventilation fans are the most important fans on the farm — the MVPs. Why is this? Consider this calculation for a broiler house: Minimum ventilation fans cycle every 5 minutes (300 seconds). Every hour, these fans start and stop 12 times. Every day, these fans start and stop 288 times. During cold weather, when the house stays in minimum ventilation for the full brooding cycle (about 10 days), these fans cycle 2,880 times. If we only estimated that these fans were used for seven flocks and only used during brooding (very conservative), then they cycle 20,160 times in a single year. This is just for the time they run during minimum ventilation. These fans require more routine inspection and maintenance. Focusing here can make you, and neglect can break you.

In addition to their high workload, these same fans operate under high static pressures at 0.10 to 0.16 inches of water column every time they run. These fans are often wet with condensation and covered with dust and dander. Dirty interior fan shutters cause these fans to work even harder during operation.

Let's consider this simplified example. If the current fans used for minimum ventilation are operating at 60% of the original designed capacity, the only way to get adequate moisture removal is to add an additional 40% to the current minimum ventilation time to make up for the inferior capacity. This additional 40% runtime would have to be maintained throughout the flock unless the fans are properly tuned up. Now is the time to conduct a complete tune-up on all fans used for minimum ventilation. This means a complete, thorough inspection of each

minimum ventilation fan for any maintenance repairs that would hinder, or potentially hinder, performance and air exchange. Additional tips are below.

**Shutter and light trap maintenance:** Shutters must be cleaned every flock. Any damaged shutter blades, rail guides, butterfly springs or blades stuck in the open position must be repaired or replaced. Sometimes shutters need a good cleaning during a flock as well. All pullet house minimum ventilation fans must have light traps removed, inspected and thoroughly cleaned every flock. Don't let dirty shutters or light traps keep you out of the end zone.

**Belts:** All minimum ventilation fan belts should be new or like new. Compare used belts to new ones, or measure them to tell. Don't assume that they are good; verify that they are good. Leaving loose, worn belts on fans is equivalent to leaving the third-string running back in the game. Don't expect to get a touchdown. If you can hear the fan squeal on the motor pulley from the control room, fix the fan.

**Tensioners:** All fan tensioners (Figure 7) must be lubricated, exercised and tested for worn or dry bearings. If the bearing is frozen and the belt is cutting into the pulley, this is grounds for a targeting call. The tensioner should immediately be ejected from the game and replaced with a new one. Most tensioners freeze up in the relaxed position, so make sure the tensioner is placing some stretch force on the belt.

**Bearings:** All bearings must be greased or replaced (Figure 7). You wouldn't leave a lineman with a torn ACL in the game, would you? Don't leave a dry bearing on a fan. Get it fixed.

#### **Win Minimum Ventilation and Moisture Control**

It is general practice to maintain house relative humidity between 50% and 70% during cold weather. Check this first thing in the morning for best results, and make adjustments. If vents are not opening enough, we need to consider blocking the right vents. This forces air to target the ceiling peak, or as close as possible, so that we



*Figures 5 and 6: These photos were taken from a pullet house that was only 5 years old. We are pretty sure the light traps, shutters and fans had never been cleaned. There was about 0.25" of dust on shutters, and about 2.5"-3" of dust settled in the bottom of the light traps and framing. Light traps were totally coated in dust, and about 1-1.5" of dust was in the fan housing. This is a personal foul.*

allow the incoming air to acclimate, mix and provide fresh air to our house and birds. This is how we remove moisture from the house. We want this to happen as evenly down the house as possible. Some variations to this are acceptable, and this will take some experimenting and adjusting to make it work properly for each house and farm. Tackle maintenance on the right fans. We need every possible cubic foot per minute out of each fan used for minimum ventilation every cycle. Anything less than 100% is a loss in adequate air exchange and static pressure ability. Any inadequacy in fan performance will have to be made up with additional run-time. It is that simple. Don't forget the importance of house tightness and of operating stirring fans during cold-weather preheating and brooding to help you get the edge on your opponent. Win moisture control with effective and efficient minimum ventilation. It may not be the only thing that counts, but it sure carries the team a long way in the right direction. It allows you to compete. We need 100% focus and effort here. Down, set, hut.

For more information on ways to improve minimum ventilation, see our newsletter #86, Four Common Minimum Ventilation Mistakes, from December 2014 on our website, [poultryhouse.com](http://poultryhouse.com).

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*Figure 7: The bearing inside this tensioner pulley had failed, and the pulley no longer turned. The fan was still in operation, and the belt was cutting into the plastic pulley. The squealing noise due to the friction between the belt and plastic pulley could be heard from outside the house and piqued our interest. Hey referee, we have an injured player on the field here.*



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