TN POULTRY ASSOCIATION

newsletter

SEE PAGES 22-24 ABOUT THE 2026 ANNUAL MEETING YOUTH ART CONTEST!

Tennessee Poultry Association

SUMMER 2026 ISSUE

PHOTO: CANVA

A SEASON OF NEW BEGINNINGS

I can't remember a time in my life when so many of my favorite people were experiencing new beginnings all at once. My husband retired in early May, our youngest child is getting married in July, our oldest recently purchased a new business, and both Jocelynn and Lida are engaged. It's certainly a busy and exciting season around here!

2026 has been a season of new beginnings for TPA as well. This year, we launched two new initiatives that we are extremely proud of and believe will have a lasting impact on our industry.

One of those milestones was the introduction of our first-ever Service Tech of the Year Award, presented during the Service Tech Workshop in April. Congratulations to Slade Murray, a very deserving recipient whose commitment to growers and the poultry industry exemplifies the purpose of this recognition. You can read more about Slade and his accomplishments on page 17.

We are also excited to announce the inaugural class of our Emerging Leaders Program at the TPA Annual Meeting & Summer Getaway in July. This idea was brought to us by TPA Board Member David Tallent after his son participated in a similar program through the Tennessee Cattlemen's Association. We believe this initiative will serve as an important catalyst for developing the next generation of leaders who will help guide Tennessee's poultry industry into the future.

Another exciting development this year has involved a topic that has received significant national attention: hot rotisserie chicken. What began as a grassroots effort by several states, including Tennessee, to add hot rotisserie chicken to their SNAP benefit lists has grown into federal legislation that has already passed the House and is currently awaiting Senate approval. If enacted, the measure would make the product eligible in all fifty states. We are grateful to Charlie Schneider for the guidance and support he provided in helping Tennessee and TPA become involved in this effort. Additional details can be found in the article below.

When you arrive at this year's Annual Meeting, be on the lookout for a few enhancements designed to improve your experience. You'll notice upgraded name badges, a limited continental breakfast before Friday morning's speaker program, and plenty of hot hors d'oeuvres during the corn hole tournament. We are always looking for ways to add value and create opportunities for members to connect and enjoy their time together.

Before closing, I would like to share a personal highlight from the past month. David Wilds and I were honored to attend the University of Tennessee Animal Science Awards Banquet. It was a wonderful event, and I was humbled to receive the Distinguished Poultry Science Sponsor Award. While my name may have been on the plaque, the recognition truly belongs to everyone who has partnered with TPA and supported our vision of investing in higher education and youth initiatives over the years.

I was equally excited to see David receive this year's Distinguished Animal Science Alumni Award, an honor that reflects his longstanding contributions to the industry and one that is certainly well deserved.

Thank you for your continued support of TPA, and I hope to see all of you next month in Nashville!

Tracy

(Pictured L to R) Dr. Justin Rhinehart, Dr. David White, Dr. Blake Brown, David Wilds, Tracy Rafferty, Dr. Keith Carver, Dr. Hongwei Xin, and Dr. Tom Tabler

FETTERMAN, COLLEAGUES INTRODUCE HOT ROTISSERIE CHICKEN ACT

April 22, 2026 at Fetterman.Senate.gov

U.S. Senator John Fetterman (D-PA) joined U.S. Senators Jim Justice (R-WV), Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), and Michael Bennet (D-CO) in introducing the Hot Rotisserie Chicken Act to allow Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participants to purchase hot rotisserie chicken with their benefits. *Click here for full article*

ADVERTISING INDEX

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Tennessee Poultry Association

VISION STATEMENT

The Tennessee Poultry Association (TPA) is dedicated to advancing and strengthening the integrated broiler/breeder industry in Tennessee and beyond. Our mission is to foster the growth and sustainability of the poultry sector through a comprehensive approach that encompasses education, policy advocacy, and public relations. We represent poultry stakeholders - including growers, integrators, genetics companies, and allied poultry companies - in legislative matters, advocating for their best interests. Moreover, TPA actively nurtures the next generation of poultry industry leaders by supporting higher education programs and youth initiatives. Through scholarships and legislative advocacy, we empower students pursuing poultry-related degrees and provide support to poultry growers and their families.

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Andy Holt was sworn in by Governor Bill Lee as the state's 39th Commissioner of Agriculture in October 2025. Before that, he served as Deputy Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner for the Business Development Division.

Prior to his post at the department, Holt was a member of the Tennessee General Assembly for 10 years representing House District 76, which included all of Weakley and portions of Carroll and Obion Counties. During Holt's service in the House of Representatives, he served as the Chairman of the Budget Subcommittee, Vice-Chairman of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, and was granted membership to numerous other committees. Holt had the pleasure of serving as the Chairman of the Ag Day on the Hill Committee for all 10 years of his tenure. His primary goal while serving in the General Assembly was to ensure that the needs and desires of agriculture, forestry, and the rural economy were sufficiently represented. Before his service in the House, Holt worked with Farm Credit Services and the Tennessee Farmers Cooperative.

Holt earned his Bachelor of Science Degree in Agricultural Economics Business with a minor in Animal Science (2004) from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, and a Master of Business Administration (2007) from the University of Tennessee at Martin.

Holt and his wife, Ellie, along with their seven children live on their family farm outside of Dresden, Tenn. Although he is a first-generation farmer, Ellie's family has been farming in West Tennessee for four generations. The Holt's operation consists of beef, goat, and swine production, as well as custom straw and hay baling. They also host agritourism activities on their farm each fall.

As senior vice president of scientific and regulatory affairs, **Dr. Ashley Peterson's** responsibilities at the National Chicken Council include food safety, poultry inspection and animal welfare issues, as well as keeping her finger on the pulse of initiatives within the Washington, D.C. regulatory agencies.

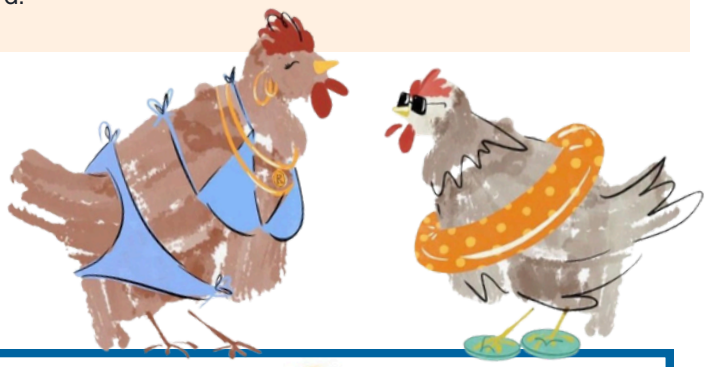
Immediately prior to joining the council, Peterson served as vice president of government relations for the United Egg Producers where she worked with Congress and the regulatory agencies on a variety of issues including organic egg production and food safety. She has also served both as the director of legislative affairs and director of regulatory affairs at the American Meat Institute, where her responsibilities included environmental and sustainability issues, animal welfare and lobbying Congress.

A native of Kentucky, Peterson came to Washington, D.C., as a Congressional Science Fellow in the U.S. House of Representatives, working on agriculture, energy and environment issues. She earned her Ph.D. in Animal Science from the University of Maryland, her Master of Science in Animal Science from Michigan State University and her Bachelor of Science from the University of Kentucky.

TPA Announces Entertainment for 2026 Annual Meeting & Summer Getaway

Sons of Habit gets their name from the trailer where the band first started making music on a piece of land in Habit, KY. It's where the band's lead singer, **Mitchell Douglas**, called home, and brought together his writing partner, **Hagan Edge**, alongside **Dalton Daniels**, **Jeffrey Parish**, and **Noah Patrick**, to play together. The band's organic beginnings can be heard in their music and felt in their live show, where they exude a natural chemistry. Although they've only been a band for less than a year, the members have a deep rooted history, all growing up in Owensboro, KY. Life took them on a number of different paths - accounting, fork lift sales, and mechanic work - but music ultimately brought them together as Sons of Habit.

Since releasing their first single "Madeline" in July 2024, the band has racked up millions of streams and have played shows nationwide, opening for the likes of Ole 60 and Shane Smith & the Saints. Sons of Habit's debut project, Nostalgia, includes five news songs, entirely cowritten by the band's Mitchell Douglas and Hagan Edge and produced by Justin Eckerd.



TPA ANNUAL MEETING & SUMMER GETAWAY

Tennessee Poultry Association

GAYLORD OPRYLAND RESORT & CONVENTION CENTER
Nashville, TN

JULY 31 - AUG. 1

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UPDATED REPORT SHOWS POULTRY INDUSTRY'S COMMITMENT TO JUDICIOUS ANTIBIOTIC USE

April 14, 2026 at ModernPoultry.Media

In December 2025, US Poultry & Egg Association (USPOULTRY) released an updated report quantifying the US poultry industry's on-farm antibiotic use.

The report reflects the poultry industry's continued efforts to improve antibiotic stewardship and its commitment to disease prevention within poultry production. As part of its commitment to a transparent and sustainable food supply, the industry aims to balance the responsible use of antibiotics considered "medically important" to human health with the need to keep flocks healthy. *Click here for full article*

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TPA ANNUAL MEETING & SUMMER GETAWAY REGISTRATION DEADLINE IS JUNE 22ND!

$50 LATE FEE APPLIED AFTER THIS DATE.

TENNESSEE FFA
Impact Report

Thank you.

POULTRY PRODUCTION PROFICIENCY AWARD

Thank you for your investment in the future of agriculture and in the development of Tennessee FFA members like **Nate Mason of the Cocke County FFA Chapter, the winner of the Poultry Production Proficiency Award**. Through your support, you are helping recognize students who are gaining hands-on experience in large-scale poultry production and contributing to the strength of the agricultural industry.

Nate's Supervised Agricultural Experience is rooted in his work on his family's commercial poultry farm, where they manage four poultry houses and produce approximately 3 million pounds of chicken each year. He plays an active role in the operation, taking responsibility for the daily care of birds during grow-out cycles, with a strong focus on maintaining flock health, efficiency, and productivity.

Through these experiences, Nate has developed a deep understanding of poultry management, including environmental control, animal health, and production performance. His attention to detail and commitment to high standards reflect the importance of consistency and care in a successful commercial operation.

Nate's passion for agriculture extends beyond production, as he plans to pursue a career as an agriculture teacher, where he will share his knowledge and experiences with future generations. The Tennessee Poultry Association's support makes it possible to recognize and celebrate students like Nate who are shaping the future of agriculture through both industry experience and a commitment to education.

The winner will represent Tennessee at the National FFA Convention, held October 21-24, 2026 in Indianapolis, Indiana, an event that hosts over 70,000 attendees and brings together FFA members from across the country to celebrate achievement, compete at the highest level, and grow as the next generation of leaders in agriculture.

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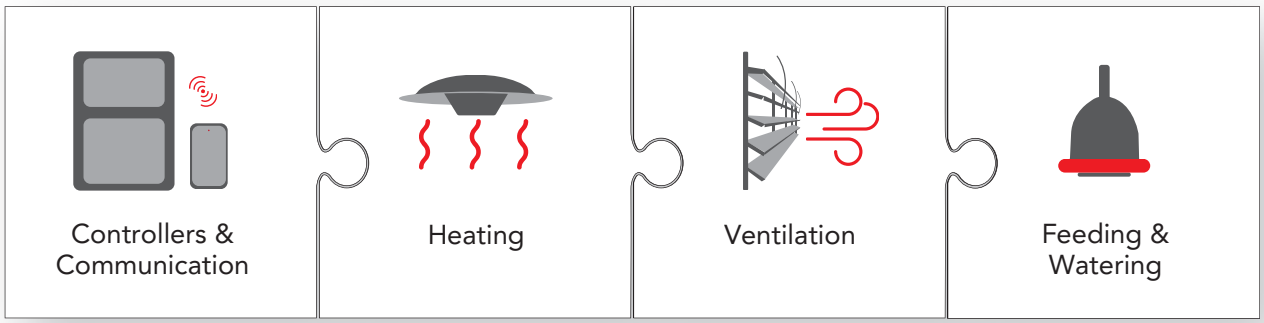

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DR. JOSEPH GULIZIA JOINS NOVUS TO SUPPORT POULTRY RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

April 23, 2026 at NovusInt.com

[Former TPA Scholarship Recipient] Joseph Gulizia, Ph.D., has joined NOVUS as its new global poultry research manager. In this role, he will design and execute research trials, analyze results and translate findings into scientific publications and technical resources for the poultry industry.

Gulizia replaces longtime NOVUS poultry nutritionist and researcher, Frances Yan, Ph.D., who retired earlier this year. He joins the leader in intelligent nutrition from Auburn University in the United States where he recently finished a postdoctoral fellowship.

Gulizia originally wanted to be a veterinarian and credits his longtime mentor, educator Kevin Downs, Ph.D., with the shift to animal agriculture.

"While I was studying animal science at Middle Tennessee State University, I conducted undergraduate research in ruminant and poultry nutrition with Dr. Downs," he says. "He introduced me to animal agriculture research and encouraged me to pursue graduate studies in poultry science."

NOVUS Exec Manager-Global Poultry Technology Lead Hugo Romero, Ph.D., says having the young researcher join his team fits the company's goals for poultry research. *Click here for full article*

TPA EVENTS CALENDAR

31-1 JULY & AUGUST
ANNUAL MEETING & SUMMER GETAWAY
GAYLORD OPRYLAND RESORT - *NASHVILLE, TN*

22 & 24 SEPTEMBER
TPA GROWER MEETINGS
UT MARTIN - *MARTIN, TN*
CLEVELAND STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE - *CLEVELAND, TN*

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WANT TO BE FEATURED? PLEASE SEND YOUR SUBMISSIONS TO JOCELYNN@TNPOULTRY.ORG BY **SEPT. 1ST** TO BE INCLUDED IN THE FALL ISSUE

D&F Equipment Sales, Inc., Senior Vice President *Adam Walker* announces the University of Arkansas EMPOWER program as a new beneficiary of the D&F Charity Trust.

JBT Marel Named One of America's Greatest Workplaces for Culture, Belonging & Community 2026!

Aviagen Recognized by Ready to Work as an Employer of the Year

The USDA Center for Veterinary Biologics has granted **Huvepharma** approval for the manufacturing and sale of a new broiler-breeder coccidiosis vaccine, Advent® P.

International Paper named one of the 2026 World's Most Ethical Companies

Jones-Hamilton Co. is celebrating 75 years as a leading chemical manufacturer with a reputation for identifying new ways to apply chemistry to solve challenges in diverse animal agriculture and industrial markets.

Our ladies are engaged!

Lida + Hunter

Jocelynn + Nate

BinSentry has added two key leaders to its team: Tim Karl as vice president of milling and Eric Adamson as vice president of product. Karl brings more than 20 years of experience driving growth and performance for major agribusinesses, including Cargill and Alltech. Adamson, a former ag-tech founder and advisor to Fortune 500 companies, previously co-founded Tortuga AgTech, a fruit harvesting robotics company acquired in 2025.

REGISTER FOR THE 2026 ANNUAL MEETING HERE!

WWW.TNPOULTRY.ORG

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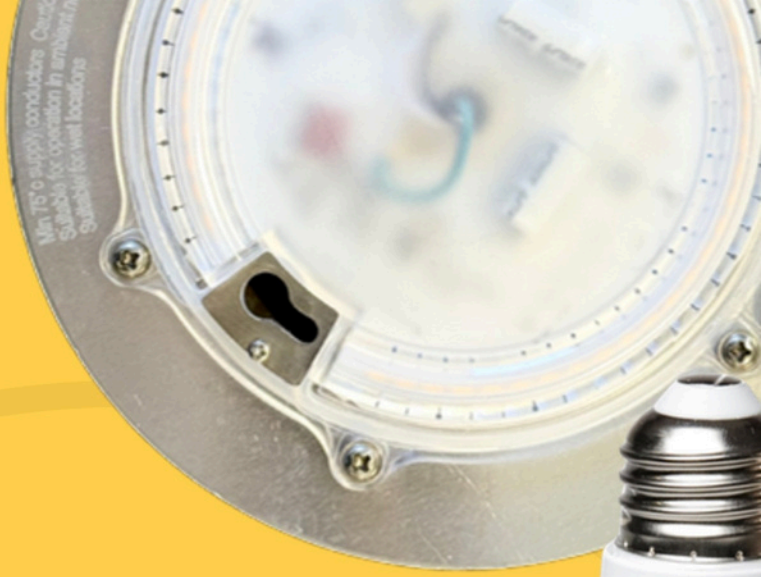
AG LIGHTING
INNOVATIONS



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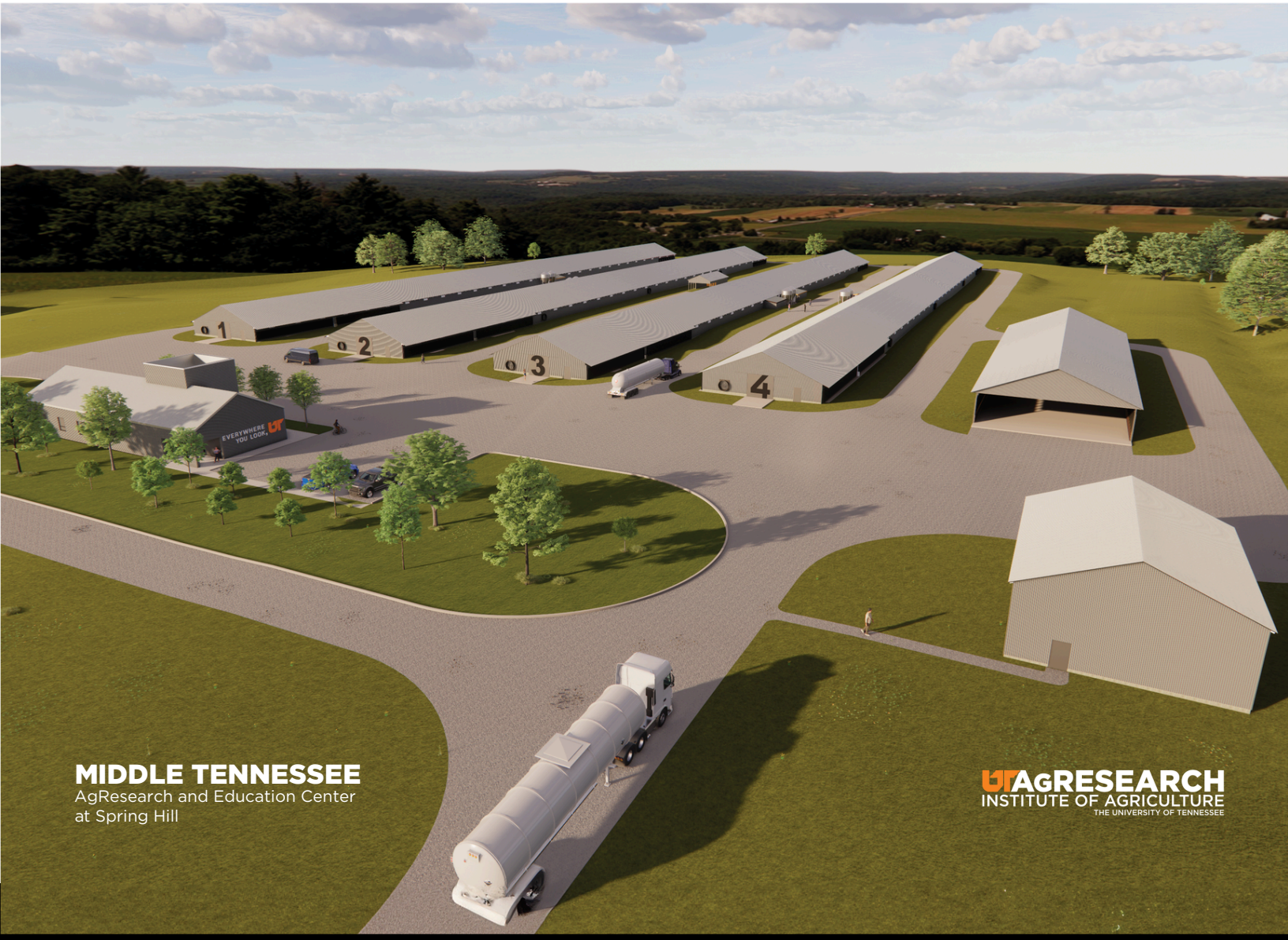


BIRD Facility Plan

CONSTRUCTION HAS STARTED! Pictured here the south side of what will eventually be House 2!

AUCTION DONATIONS

We are now accepting auction item commitments for the 2026 meeting in Nashville on *July 31 - August 1* and would be grateful for your continued support.

Auction Donor Information

Donor Company Name: _____

Please indicate how you would like your company name to appear in the auction

Contact Person: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Auction Donation Type *(check one)*

□ Auction Item(s) Donation: _____

- □ Will bring to Gaylord Opryland Resort on July 31
- □ Will ship to 210 Chick Rd., Beaver Dam, KY 42320 (Delivery deadline July 24)

□ Auction Cash Donation: $_____

Cash donations will be used to purchase auction items

Donor receipt available upon request

Tennessee Poultry Association PO Box 1525 Shelbyville, TN 37162 931-225-1123

Tennessee Poultry Association

2026 SERVICE TECH WORKSHOP

SLADE MURRAY RECOGNIZED AS TPA'S FIRST SERVICE TECH OF THE YEAR

By Tracy Rafferty

Congratulations to Slade Murray, Breeder Tech II from the Tyson Foods Obion County Complex, on being recognized as TPA's first Service Tech of the Year. He was nominated by Live Production Manager Damon Kuntz and Breeder Manager Jeni Simmons.

According to Simmons, Slade has consistently demonstrated the ability to improve performance while strengthening relationships with both growers and fellow team members. His leadership was instrumental in developing and implementing an egg-weight-based feed management program that helped growers achieve significant feed conversion and hatching egg bonuses. By earning grower trust and delivering measurable results, he strengthened grower-service technician relationships and boosted morale throughout the grower community.

Slade's understanding of the poultry production system extends well beyond the breeder department. Having gained experience in live production, hatchery operations, and broiler production during his time with Tyson Foods, he recognizes how breeder performance impacts every stage of the production process. His focus on fertility and egg quality helps ensure success not only in breeders but also in the hatchery and broiler operations.

Known as a respected leader among his peers, Slade willingly shares his knowledge and mentors newer service techs. His route focuses on pullets and bringing new breeder flocks into production, and he works closely with less experienced team members to build confidence and promote success. His strong communication skills and collaborative approach have helped foster a culture of teamwork that has contributed to outstanding breeder performance.

Slade also demonstrates initiative in identifying opportunities for improvement. When new spike male housing was introduced at OBC, he took the lead in designing house layouts and implementing presentation feeding systems. Working alongside growers and installation teams, he helped create an environment that improved spike male uniformity, resulting in increased fertility rates and consistently high hatchability.

Bird health and animal welfare are top priorities for Slade. He works closely with company veterinarians to identify and address health concerns, conducts vaccination audits, and ensures animal welfare standards are upheld throughout the production process. His attention to detail and commitment to best practices have contributed to healthier, more productive flocks.

Beyond his daily responsibilities, Slade is committed to developing the next generation of poultry professionals. He has presented to students in the University of Tennessee at Martin's Farm Management classes, sharing insights on animal health and breeder management while promoting careers in the poultry industry. He also completed PACCO training and serves as a backup Animal Well-Being technician, further demonstrating his dedication to the industry and Tyson Foods.

Slade's leadership, technical expertise, and commitment to serving growers, teammates, and the poultry industry make him highly deserving of this recognition.

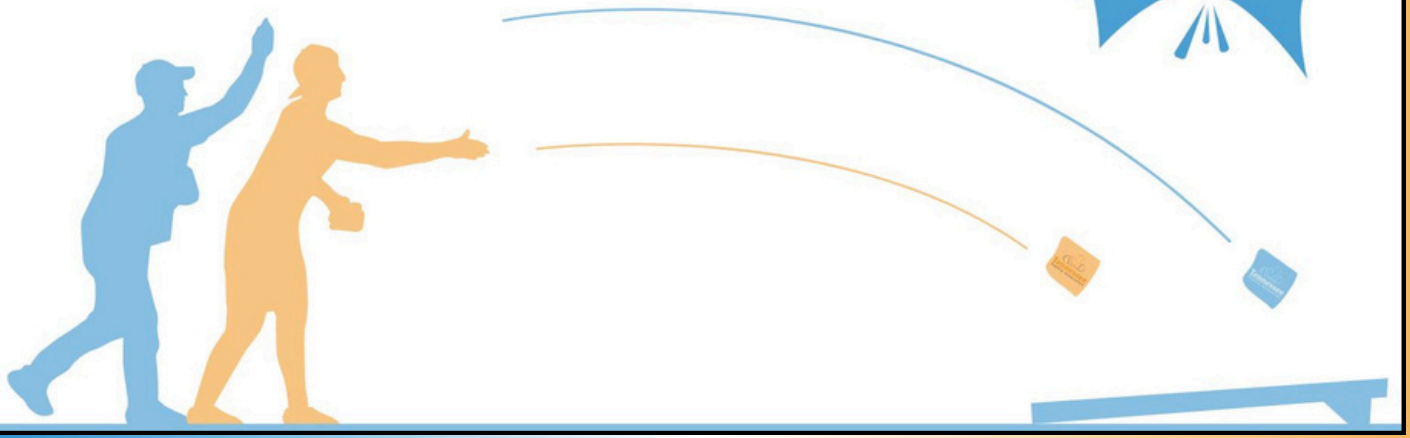
SPONSORS NEEDED!!!

ANNUAL MEETING & SUMMER GETAWAY

CORNHOLE TOURNAMENT

FRIDAY, JULY 31ST – 1:30 PM – RYMAN BALLROOM

CASH PRIZE!!!



2026 SCHOLARSHIP FUNDRAISERS

HERMITAGE GOLF COURSE | CROSS CREEK CLAYS

GOLF: MAY 19 | SHOOTING: MAY 20

Golf Scramble Champions

Flight A

1st Place: *Score 59* – Josh Bandy, Ricky Stidham, Heath Whiddon, Randy Stidham

2nd Place: *Score 61* – Jeremy Ash, Jake Bearden, Hank Bearden, Reed McClain

Flight B

1st Place: *Score 65* – Scott Larsen, David Whitt, Robbie Pryor, Andrew Todd

2nd Place: *Score 66* – Derick Brown, Landon Stephens, Rory DeWeese, David Tallent

Sporting Clays Champions

Flight A

1st Place: *Score 95* - Mark Turner

2nd Place: *Score 90* – David Corvin

3rd Place: *Score 89* - Colt Carpenter

Flight B

1st Place: *Score 59* – Matthew Woodard

2nd Place: *Score 57* – Lucas Hardison

3rd Place: *Score 56* – David Kraft

Contest Winners

Golf

Longest Drive (Hole #2): Jeff Sims

Longest Drive (Hole #14): Pate Clearman

Closest to the Pin (Hole #3): Heath Whiddon

Closest to the Pin (Hole #12): Michael Imming

Sporting Clays

Youth Shooter Long Bird: Wade Pugh

Female Shooter: Alea Gigliotti

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO CAME OUT AND SUPPORTED THE POULTRY STUDENTS OF TENNESSEE

MUSINGS FROM TOM – POULTRY PRODUCTION, MENTAL HEALTH, HUMAN RELATIONS, AND BARN CATS

April 24, 2026 by Tom Tabler

Poultry producers across the U.S. continue to battle against highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI). Tennessee's last reported case was in Hawkins County in March 2026. While the economic loss of over 206 million birds since February 2022 is staggering, the toll that HPAI takes on producers' mental health is even more devastating.

Rural challenges

Highly pathogenic avian influenza adds to the mental health crises that already exists in much of rural America and increases the mental health challenges that poultry producers face every day. Typically, livestock operations are located in rural isolated agricultural areas that often have a shortage of healthcare professionals, especially those capable of treating mental health issues. This makes it difficult for farmers to find a practitioner to address mental health challenges, including suicidal concerns.

Farming is physically demanding, emotionally taxing, often isolated, and occasionally lonely. Add in extreme weather, labor shortages, the stress associated with running a farming operation, and you create one of the most high-pressure and dangerous jobs in existence. No wonder studies indicate that farmer suicide rates are 2 to 5 times higher than the national average and mental health concerns like anxiety, financial worry, depression and burnout are so common among the farming community.

Plus, there are differences between individuals who grow up on a farm and those who grow up in town. Different experiences create different personalities. Growing up on a farm didn't make me better or worse than anyone that grew up in town… but it did make me different. I grew up on a small farm in west central Arkansas. Town was a small community (~ 3,200 folks) about 5 miles to the northwest. Many of us who grew up on farms or in remote rural areas tend to have — how to frame this to keep what few friends I have — unique demographic characteristics; distinctive, culturally-related attitudes and behaviors; and health concerns different from our townsfolk cousins.

Farmers today

The average age of rural farmers is 58.1 years old, but I doubt that farmer suicide and mental health concerns apply only to "old white guys". Although male Caucasians make up most folks that farm in the U.S., demographics of farmers are changing as more women, people of color, new farmers and younger individuals are increasingly represented in the workforce.2,4 For example, 36% of all farm producers are female, 56% of all farms have at least one female decision maker, 11% of farmers are veterans and 25% are new farmers.

I'm the first to applaud life in rural America. I'm thankful everyday that God let me grow up on a farm. However, despite all the many benefits, farm life can have its down side. Speaking from experience, farm life can be lonely, secluded, isolated, detached and forlorn at times. Farmers are often reluctant to seek mental health care. Fear of stigma and discrimination is a major consideration, as close-knit rural communities offer little hope to keep private things private.5,6 In addition, most farmers have a tough persona and do not see mental health concerns as issues requiring outside assistance, but more a matter to slough through and tough out on your own. This builds character, or so I've been told.

Ongoing HPAI breaks means that increasing numbers of farmers and poultry company executives face difficult decisions about where to go from here after an HPAI break. But just because these decisions become more common as the outbreak drags on, doesn't lessen the mental anguish folks feel or the attention they may need.

Human relations

During my last semester as an undergraduate at the University of Arkansas, I took a human relations course. I didn't consider it very useful at the time but, over the years, it has become perhaps the most valuable course of my undergraduate career, even surpassing square dance class. Why ask, pray tell? Because we learned "human relations": how to "relate" with "humans" (particularly in difficult situations). The class taught the value of empathy, sensitivity, compassion, consideration, kindness, sympathy and tenderness for others, subjects not typically on the mind of the average 22-year-old. (Although, the same might also be said for square dance class). Both reaffirmed that

you catch more flies with honey than vinegar. I try to remember that when working with folks in tough spots. I'm not a people person but I've used human relations more than I would have preferred when dealing with HPAI.

Some of what I learned did not resonate back in 1978, but I'm older and wiser than I was then saw the aftermath of HPAI in 2014-2015 and again during the current outbreak. Sadly, I'm better today at recognizing the signs of mental health stress and fatigue than I was in 1978. Each of us handles adversity differently, but the more you do it, the better you get. I'm better at it today than I ever intended to be.

Poultry growers dealing with HPAI (Fig. 1a) or other disasters like a tornado (Fig 1b), flood, hurricane, etc. are struggling physically but the mental stress can be even more dangerous. Those of us on the outside looking in need to remember this. Be mindful of the struggles these growers are facing and understand how valuable a little kindness and consideration can be to someone going through difficult situations. Even if it's just holding someone's hand at a kitchen table or sitting on a pickup tailgate listening to someone talk through their dilemma. Better days will come (Fig. 1c). It's not always important what you do or don't do, it is simply the fact that you are there and folks know you care enough to be there. Sometimes, showing up is enough.

Barn cats

It appears we will be dealing with HPAI well into the future. If your flock is affected, don't let that lead to mental despair or something worse. Don't think that there isn't anyone who will understand, because there is. Personally, I've had many long and worthwhile conversations with a substantial number of barn cats over the years. There's an upside to conversations with barn cats. You get to do most of the talking. Miss Kitty, Pancho and Lefty were perhaps the best listeners of the group. Although, Miss Kitty had a serious penchant for naughty language at times when she was upset.

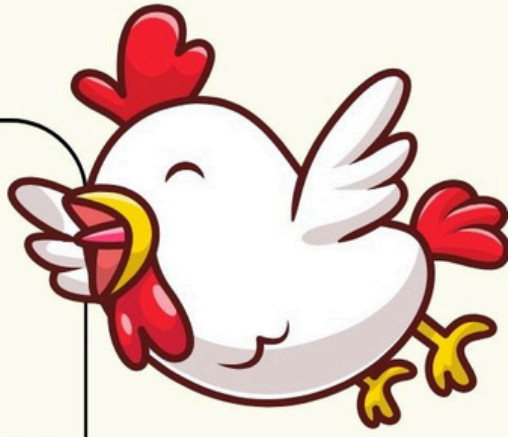
There's nothing wrong with asking for help if you're in distress or offering help if you're concerned about a friend or neighbor. If the stress of HPAI or even everyday farm chores is affecting your happiness or mental state, I graciously ask you to please consider talking things over with someone. There are lots of folks, including 988 (the suicide prevention hotline), that will readily listen. In addition, I might still have connections with a few barn cats if you are interested.

But don't wait too long to ask or offer! I was not the biggest fan of the Coen brothers' 2010 remake of True Grit, but it has grown on me over the years. The older version of Mattie has a final line that I consider appropriate here: "Time just gets away from us." While I was busy with other things, time just got away from me. Guard against that, if possible.

Tennessee
Poultry Association

2026 ART CONTEST

Eligible to enter if related to a TPA complex employee, allied company employee, or grower member



MAIL IN DEADLINE

TUES. JULY 28TH

WINNERS RECEIVE A **CASH** PRIZE!

CATEGORIES

9 and Under ✹ Ages 10-14 ✹ Ages 15-18
Eggceptional Friends of Poultry

EMAIL JOCELYNN MAGAN AT JOCELYNN@TNPOULTRY.ORG FOR RULES AND ENTRY FORM

Tennessee Poultry Association

2026 YOUTH ART CONTEST

Rules

TPA welcomes participation in our 10th annual art contest for youth. All entries will be displayed and judged during the TPA Annual Meeting & Summer Getaway on July 31st - August 1st, 2026, at the Gaylord Opryland Resort & Convention Center in Nashville.

Subject

All art must be chicken themed.

Eligibility

Family members (children, grandchildren, nieces/nephews, stepchildren, etc.) of TPA grower members, TPA poultry complex employees, or affiliated TPA allied company members are eligible to submit entries. There will be three age categories: 9 and under, Ages 10-14, and Ages 15-18 (age as of July 1st, 2026).

Our Eggceptional Friends of Poultry category is reserved for children up to age 18 who have a diagnosed exceptionality. Those qualified to enter in this category may submit a drawing, painting, or other project that fits their individual gifting. Some suggestions could include, but are not limited to, poultry-related photography, posters with pictures or cutouts, Lego or Popsicle stick buildings, etc.

Awards

Each group will have 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners that will be awarded certificates; they will also be eligible to receive cash prizes of $50, $25, and $10 respectively for each age division. There will be an overall Best of Show entry awarded which will be auctioned off during the TPA live auction fundraiser on July 31st in lieu of the cash prize. All proceeds from the sale of the winning art piece will be awarded to the artist as a scholarship.

Media

- Art MUST be mailed on 8 ½ x 11 (or similar size) rigid canvas, sketch, or cardstock paper. No exceptions.
- *Framed entries will not be accepted*, but all entries must be suitable for framing.
- Drawings and paintings are the only types of media that can be entered unless entering the Eggceptional Friends of Poultry category.
- Drawings using pencil, charcoal, colored pencil, ink, markers, etc. are acceptable.
- Paintings using acrylic, oils, tempera, watercolors, etc. are acceptable.

Entry - NEW!

All entries must be mailed to Tracy Rafferty at 210 Chick Rd., Beaver Dam, KY 42320 to be received no later than Tuesday, July 28th, 2026. *Mail-in entries are the only way to submit artwork this year.*

Include

Please complete and submit the attached TPA Art Contest Entry Form. Artwork will not be returned unless the attached form and requested information is submitted. Please include your name and age on the back of your art piece.

Judging

All entries will be judged by a panel of industry representatives on Thursday, July 30th.

More Information

- The art will stay on display through the evening TPA banquet on July 31st.
- Photo rights to all artworks become property of TPA for use on social media and for promotional efforts.
- TPA is not responsible for lost or damaged entries.
- TPA will auction off the Best of Show art piece which will not be returned to the artist. Please allow two weeks for remaining entries, certificates, and prize money to be mailed.
- TPA is not responsible for the receiving or condition of mailed in entries.
- Contact *jocelynn@tnpoultry.org* for more information.

Tennessee Poultry Association

2026 YOUTH ART CONTEST

Entry Form

FIRST & LAST NAME: _____

AGE AS OF JULY 1ST, 2026: _____

CONTACT PHONE NUMBER: _____

HOMETOWN & STATE: _____

FAMILY MEMBER'S NAME: _____

RELATIONSHIP: _____

EMPLOYER OR GROWS FOR: _____

TPA will contact and award the 1st through 3rd place in all categories and the Best of Show winner. The Best of Show winner will receive a scholarship check for the sale of their art piece. Contestants who would like to have their artwork returned and have certificates and checks sent to them after the entries are judged should provide a complete physical mailing address:

_____

ADDRESS

_____ _____ _____

CITY **STATE** **ZIP**

TPA is not responsible for the condition of artwork or for any losses or damages.

Please include this entry form along with your entry and mail to Tracy Rafferty to be received no later than Tuesday, July 28th, 2026. Mail entries to: 210 Chick Rd., Beaver Dam, KY 42320.

For more information, contact jocelynn@tnpoultry.org

TOP FIVE BROILER INNOVATIONS

Submitted on March 7, 2026 by Scott Black

The broiler industry is fast paced, full of challenges, and always evolving. Throughout the years, we have seen the industry evolve around automation, data-driven management, and sustainability-focused equipment for profitability. With just short of 30 years in the industry, I believe this period of time has had more changes than ever before. We are reshaping how modern poultry houses operate. New tools such as advanced environmental controllers, precision feeding systems, and energy-efficient equipment are improving productivity, reducing labor demands, and enhancing both bird health and environmental performance. Let's look into the top five ways the industry is changing.

1. Environmental Controllers

Environmental controllers are always evolving. Like other technology, it's always improving and becoming more sensitive to changes and the environment. New technology like streaming local weather conditions, thermal cameras, and bird activity cameras are just a few ways that the industry continues to evolve. Several companies have, or are looking into, Artificial Intelligence. This type of technology is exciting because it totally takes the guess work out of growing chickens. But there too lies the problem. The average age of a grower is close to 55 years old and new technology is a challenge. Daily management is one of the most critical factors influencing broiler performance. You have heard the old statement, "Experience is hard to beat." Modern environmental controllers now incorporate networks of high-precision sensors that regulate temperature, humidity, air speed, and air quality in real-time. Automated systems proactively reduce heat stress, maintain oxygen levels, and manage humidity for profitability for the producer and the company.

2. Feeding Systems

Smart feeding systems now dispense feed based

Smart feeding systems now dispense feed based on broiler weight, age, and real-time consumption. These systems are using hardware and integrated software to send information to a central system that allows companies the ability to know exactly when feed bins are out of feed or the exact weight of the house at any time in the grow out. Sensor-driven monitoring also alerts producers to blockages or shortages in the lines, preventing costly interruptions. The industry is using optics and lasers for precise measurements and predictions. Broiler feed cost is 70% of the total live cost and being more efficient in this area, although small, go a long way in profitability for a grower and/or integrator.

3. Energy Cost Management

Energy costs represent a major operational expense in broiler production. Recent innovations in energy-efficient equipment are helping producers reduce costs and environmental impact. Technologies such as LED lighting, solar-powered systems, and high-efficiency fans are becoming increasingly common. The need for more efficient equipment is necessary as the cost of construction has increased. Controlling costs is an integral part of any successful business. Although these upgrades can be more expensive on the front end, they will pay for themselves easily over the 30–40-year life of house. One must look at growing poultry as a business. We need to invest in energy-efficient motors, smart environmental controllers, better performing heaters, and variable speed stir fans, to minimize electricity usage without compromising bird welfare. These solutions contribute to more sustainable and profitable farming operations.

4. Energy Audits

As we all know, the word "audit" has a negative connotation, especially in agriculture. Energy, particularly electricity for ventilation and heating fuel for brooding, represents one of the highest expenses in broiler operations, second only to feed. There are many independent firms as well as governmental agencies that assist producers who want to help control costs, help with sustainability, and become more efficient in their production of both natural resources and protein sources. Documenting and analyzing actual energy usage allows producers to pinpoint inefficiencies, benchmark performance, and plan targeted upgrades.

Knowing your expenses is crucial. In warmer regions, an 11-month audit of a modern broiler house revealed that ventilation fans are the largest single source of electricity consumption, with "peak demand" charges driving up overall power costs. By understanding load patterns, producers can alter ventilation strategies or upgrade fan systems to reduce spikes in demand. In cooler regions,

thermal images reveal leaks, holes, and gaps in walls and insulation that allow cold air to penetrate the inside of the house to increase heating costs. Enhanced insulation reduces heat loss in winter and heat gain in summer, minimizing both heating and cooling demands. Energy audits help combine data with the actual buildings, to help producers see and know where their investments will go to improve the value of the barn, decrease their energy dependency, and lower their tax liability. Spending dollars today will save thousands over years.

5. Investments in Systems

Today's marketplace is very competitive and knowledge is everything. Often, the barriers of entry into the poultry business can be overwhelming. However, when we treat raising poultry like a business, then the cost of entry will be stretched over many years. We need to make educated decisions when it comes to the total package. The equipment must be made of great quality and great performance; it must show the benefits now and be evident in 20-30 years. Feeders, drinkers, heaters, and environmental machines all need to be cleaned and maintained for long-lasting results. Fans need constant maintenance and machines that open and close vents and curtains need to be adjusted and re-cabled to control air flow efficiently. Great quality vents and doors will last a very long time but do require some upfront costs. Controllers need software and sometimes hardware updates. The landscape today is a harsh environment with many factors that tend to erode our equipment over time if not take care of or not good quality. Today, more than ever, quality equipment that produces results is worth the investment.

Conclusion

New technology in the commercial poultry industry is rapidly transforming broiler production. Innovations in environmental controllers, feeding systems, and energy-efficient equipment are creating smarter, more sustainable poultry houses that optimize bird welfare, reduce labor dependency, and increase operational efficiency. As automation and connected systems continue to advance, the future of broiler production poised for even greater gains in precision, productivity, and environmental responsibility.

USDA OFFICIALLY DELAYS POULTRY PAYMENT RULE

June 4, 2026 at NCCWashingtonReport.com by Tom Super

WHAT HAPPENED: USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) on Monday officially announced in the Federal Register an 18-month delay of the "Poultry Grower Payment Systems and Capital Improvement Systems" rule, which was set to go into effect on July 1, 2026. AMS proposed the delay in March after reviewing the rule's potential costs to the poultry industry and consumers.

WHY IT MATTERS: The rule would have effectively banned performance-based bonuses for chicken farmers, requiring all growers to be paid the same rate regardless of their hard work, investments, housing conditions, or bird welfare practices. AMS acknowledged that even a small drop in production efficiency under the rule could result in significantly higher broiler costs — ultimately hitting consumers at the grocery store.

NCC'S TAKE: We strongly support the delay. "I want to thank Secretary Rollins for delaying this Biden-era regulation, which was published less than one week before President Trump was inaugurated," said NCC President Harrison Kircher. "This rule threatened to dismantle an efficient and successful industry model that rewards farmers and helps keep chicken affordable for American consumers. We applaud the Trump administration's decision to delay this rule and urge its full recission." Our March press release supporting AMS's announcement can be found here.

WHAT'S NEXT: While the rule is now set to go into effect on December 31, 2027, NCC will continue to urge for its full rescission. *Click here for full article*

US OFFICIALS HIGHLIGHT COOL PUSH WITH NEW LABELING STANDARD

March 24, 2026 at MeatPoultry.com by Joel Crews

Government officials reiterated their support for its "Product of the USA" voluntary food labeling standard, which was implemented Jan. 1, 2026, as part of commemorating National Agriculture Day, on March 24. The intent of the program is to influence consumer purchases of products of the United States and increase producers' understanding of the labels of foods labeled as such, including meat, poultry and egg products. *Click here for full article*

LIGHT-ACTIVATED DISINFECTION COULD AID POULTRY BIOSECURITY

March 27, 2026 at WattAgNet.com by Elizabeth Doughman

Solar powered-inspired technology currently used in medical facilities could represent a new approach to disinfection and biosecurity for the poultry industry, offering better protection against highly pathogen avian influenza (HPAI) and other diseases. *Click here for full article*

NEW ONLINE BIOSECURITY PREMISES MAPPING TOOL NOW AVAILABLE

March 31, 2026 at MorningAgClips.com

Recent outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in U.S. poultry flocks highlight the importance of biosecurity measures in limiting the spread of infectious disease in livestock production, diseases that can potentially cross into humans. *Click here for full article*

Save the Date

Celebrating 40 Years of the Tennessee Corn Growers Association

Join us as we celebrate 40 years of leadership, partnership, and impact during a special dinner gathering.

INDUSTRY & PRODUCER GATHERING

August 10, 2026

The Lodge at Paris Landing
Buchanan, TN

Hosted by the Tennessee Corn Growers Association

Learn more about the event and register here: https://www.tncorn.org/40-years

March 25, 2026

Tennessee Targets Food Dyes in Schools

A Tennessee bill that would ban all artificial food dyes from being served in school meals is now awaiting the Governor's signature. This is the most recent attempt by the TN legislature to make similar changes. In 2025, amendments to the Tennessee School Nutrition Standards Act banned artificial food dye Red 40 from school meals. The new proposal, SB 2423, would expand on that by prohibiting food or beverages containing "any artificial food dye" from being sold or provided to students through the school meal program. Currently, the prohibition on Red 40 becomes effective on August 1, 2027. If the current legislation is enacted, that effective date will apply to all synthetic food dyes. If signed, this legislation would make Tennessee the sixth state to ban foods containing certain ingredients from school meals. To learn more about those similar laws, click here to read NALC article "Food Law in the States - 2025 Update."

Poultry Payment Systems

The USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has proposed delaying the effective date of a final rule that would amend contract poultry regulations under the Packers & Stockyards Act (PSA). On January 16, 2025, AMS published the Poultry Grower Payment Systems and Capital Improvement Systems final rule, which was set to go into effect on July 1, 2026. This rule prohibits live poultry dealers (LPD) from decreasing a poultry grower's compensation based on a poultry grower ranking system. Additionally, the final rule requires LPDs to fairly design and operate poultry grower ranking systems. For example, the rule presumes a PSA violation when the tournament/ranking system makes up more than 25% of total compensation to growers. AMS has proposed delaying the rule's effective date to December 31, 2027. AMS claims that a delay will allow for further consideration of costs to LPDs, poultry growers, and consumers. Comments on the proposed delay may be submitted until April 17, 2026. To learn more about the Packers & Stockyards Act, click here to view NALC's overview.

April 8, 2026

Pesticide Liability Limitation Passes in KY

Kentucky became the most recent state to pass a bill limiting liability for pesticide manufacturers after state lawmakers overrode the Governor's veto of SB 199. Similar to bills passed in Georgia and North Dakota last year, SB 199 amends Kentucky law so that a federally registered pesticide label would be considered a "sufficient warning label" for any state law concerning the duty to warn. The law is intended to address lawsuits filed by plaintiffs in state court who argue that a pesticide manufacturer failed to warn consumers about health risks related to use of a particular pesticide, often when the federally registered label for the pesticide does not require such a warning. Over the last decade, thousands such cases have been filed across the United States, specifically focused on the widely-used Roundup pesticides manufactured by Bayer. Following the passage of SB 199, pesticide manufacturers sued for failure to warn in the state of Kentucky will be able to rely on their federally registered pesticide labels as a complete defense. For more information, click here to view NALC article "2026 Update on State Pesticide Liability Limitation Bills."

May 13, 2026

SCOTUS Hears Pesticide Preemption Case

On April 27, the United States Supreme Court heard oral argument in Durnell v. Monsanto, a lawsuit filed by a plaintiff who claims that Monsanto (now owned by Bayer) failed to warn him that using its pesticide Roundup could cause him to develop cancer. The case is one of thousands that have been filed over the last decade by plaintiffs asserting that they were not warned of the cancer risk allegedly presented by using glyphosate, the active ingredient in Roundup. In response, Bayer has argued that state law failure-to-warn claims raised by the plaintiffs are preempted by the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) which prohibits states from adding language to a federally approved pesticide label. Bayer claims that the only way to resolve the plaintiffs' failure-to-warn claims is to add a cancer warning to the Roundup label, a warning that is not included in the federally registered label for the product. The question of preemption has become central to this litigation and to date, three federal Circuit Courts of Appeal have considered the matter. The Ninth and Eleventh Circuits found that FIFRA does not preempt failure-to-warn claims, while the Third Circuit found the opposite. The Supreme Court decision will impact thousands of on-going cases and likely set the tone for pesticide liability lawsuits going forward. A final decision is expected sometime this summer. To learn more about Durnell v. Monsanto, click here to view NALC article "Supreme Court Agrees to Hear Pesticide Preemption Lawsuit.

SNAP Stocking Standards

On May 7, 2026, the USDA published a final rule changing stocking requirements for retailers participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). This rule, which applies to all retailers other than specialty stores such as butchers or farm stands, requires retailers to offer at least seven varieties of four staple food categories. Staple food categories include dairy, vegetables or fruits, grains, and protein. A variety is defined as "a food that is distinct from another food in the same staple food category." For example, within the category of protein, fresh chicken and dry beans are two separate varieties. Further, the final rule requires a perishable variety in at least three of the four staple food categories to be offered. The rule also updates the classification of certain foods from "staple foods" to "accessory foods." This rule goes into effect on November 4, 2026, and SNAP retailers that do not meet the new requirements will be withdrawn from the program and unable to accept SNAP funds. To read the final rule, click here.

H-2A Litigation

The Supreme Court has agreed to hear an appeal of a 3rd Circuit decision which held that the Department of Labor (DOL) cannot impose fines on employers' violations under the H-2A labor program. When the DOL alleged that Sun Valley Orchards had violated H-2A requirements, it ordered the operation to pay roughly $580,000 in back wages and fines. Sun Valley first challenged this decision with an administrative law judge, then in a district court, arguing that the DOL's fines were in violation of the Constitution. Primarily, Sun Valley argued that the DOL had adjudicated private rights in violation of Article III of the Constitution. Article III establishes and clarifies the judicial power of the United States. The 3rd Circuit agreed with Sun Valley, finding that the growers were entitled to have their case decided by an Article III court. The DOL appealed to the Supreme Court, who granted its writ of certiorari. The Supreme Court has limited its review to two questions. First, whether Article III precludes the DOL from adjudicating proceedings to collect monetary remedies from employers who have allegedly violated the terms and conditions of employment of H-2A workers and domestic workers in corresponding employment. Second, whether federal law authorizes those same proceedings. The case presents questions similar to those raised in the 2024 Supreme Court case, SEC v. Jarkesy. There, the Court was asked to consider whether a civil fine imposed by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) through an administrative adjudication system was constitutional. Ultimately, the Court ruled that when the SEC is seeking civil penalties for a legal violation that resembles common law fraud, the defendant is entitled to a jury trial. For more information, click here to read NALC article "Supreme Court of the United States Rules SEC Administrative Proceedings Unconstitutional."

ANNUAL MEETING SPONSORSHIPS START AT $200!!!

See the bottom of page 36

CRISPR-BASED THERAPY COULD COMBAT HPAI IN POULTRY

March 10, 2026 at FeedStrategy.com by Elizabeth Doughman

A CRISPR-based therapeutic designed to treat highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) could become a new tool for producers facing increasingly frequent and costly outbreaks. *Click here for full article*

LIVE HPAI VACCINE COULD RESOLVE POULTRY EXPORT CONCERNS

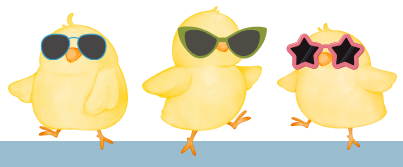
March 19, 2026 at WattAgNet.com by Elizabeth Doughman

A live vaccine platform under development by University of Missouri researchers could address one of the major barriers preventing widespread vaccination for highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in the U.S. poultry industry: the inability to distinguish vaccinated birds from infected ones for international trade purposes. *Click here for full article*

FIRST CONTINENT-WIDE MAP OF DOMINANT AVIAN INFLUENZA STRAIN EXPLAINS ITS SPREAD

April 17, 2026 at FoodMarket.com by St. Jude Children's Research Hospital

An international group of scientists mapped the spread of the current dominant strain of highly pathogenic avian influenza virus through North American bird populations in 2024. Led by scientists from St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, the collaboration provides a comprehensive view of this novel flu spreading through birds in North America. The investigators collected and sequenced samples from birds across the continent, letting them map the virus's spread. They also compared the virus from birds to those causing human infections, showing that current human vaccine stockpiles will likely work well against both. Closer evaluation of the viruses led the researchers to classify them as low risk for human-to-human spread in their current form. The study was published today in Nature Medicine. *Click here for full article*



STUDYING HPAI IN THE AIR

March 31, 2026 at FeedStuffs.com by Jim Lynch

Discovering how the bird flu virus degrades in the air around livestock and how engineering solutions can effect that degradation quickly and efficiently are core aims of a new University of Michigan Engineering-led project funded by the USDA. This work could help prevent or mitigate future outbreaks *Click here for full article*

SDA FUNDS $2M PROJECT TO TEST NOVEL ANTIVIRAL FOGGING TECHNOLOGY AGAINST AVIAN INFLUENZA

April 7, 2026 at APNews.com

A research team led by Purdue University, with partners Entomol and 1,4Group, has been awarded $2 million from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to evaluate a novel antiviral fogging technology to combat high pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) which remains a serious threat to poultry health and the global food supply. *Click here for full article*

WILD BIRD STUDY COULD SLOW HPAI SPREAD IN COMMERCIAL POULTRY

April 14, 2026 at WattAgNet.com by Elizabeth Doughman

New research into the movement patterns of waterfowl, including ducks, swans and geese, could help commercial poultry producers better predict and manage the risk of highly pathogenic avian influenza. *Click here for full article*

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BROODING, SPACE NEEDS AND FEED MANAGEMENT FOR UNIFORMITY DURING REARING

November 3, *2025 at* ModernPoultry.Media *by W.A. Dozier*

Integrated poultry operations have experienced improved metrics related to broiler performance over the past few years. The advancement in genetic selection of parent stock has translated to annual improvements with progeny of approximately 45 grams of bodyweight (BW) at 2.4 kg, a 2-point decrease in cumulative feed conversion and a 0.17% increase in breast-meat yield.

The improvement of genetic selection has also resulted in an increased appetite of cockerels and pullets, creating challenges with feed management and leading to poor uniformity during rearing. Uniformity of pullets and cockerels can be affected by brooding management, feeder space, stocking density, feed distribution and feed-allocation programs.

Brooding

It is important to get chicks off to a good start by ensuring proper feed and water access and meeting temperature setpoints during brooding. Additionally, it is necessary to provide an optimal brooding environment to achieve target BW and frame development during the first 4 weeks of age.

With preplacement, house sanitation is the key to maintaining pullet livability. Litter depth should be 4 to 6 inches throughout the house. Obtaining a uniform depth of litter or bedding materials is critical for absorbing moisture and maintaining litter quality throughout the house.

At placement, ensure that the boxes in the brood area are evenly distributed in a line. Chicks should have easy access to feed and water, with supplemental feeders and waterers on paper in the brood area for 3 to 4 days. It is recommended to place a temporary fence from the sidewall to the other side of nipple waterers, providing chicks with easy access to feed and water (Figure 1). Additionally, supplemental feeders and waterer trays should be provided, allowing for approximately 50 birds per tray, which is dependent upon the size of the trays.

The success of brooding can be assessed with crop-fill scoring. It is necessary to determine the

Figure 1. A brooding setup that provides chicks with access for feed and water consumption optimizes growth during the first few days postplacement.

percentage of chicks consuming feed and water by monitoring crop fill. Crop-fill scores can be determined with 10 birds per location, with four locations throughout the house.

Chicks can be scored at 2, 8, 12, 24 and 48 hours after placement, with 95% of the chicks having a category 1 score (full, soft and rounded) at 24 hours and 100% of the chicks at 48 hours after placement.[1] Scores of categories 2 and 3 represent chicks having crops with hard feed residue but little or no water and no feed apparent in the crop.

Uniformity

A uniform flock is easier to manage for feed allocation, target BW and adequate fleshing (males only) to optimize reproductive performance during the life of the flock.

Underweight birds typically respond more slowly to light stimulation. Lower BW hens are known to produce smaller eggs and have lower hatchability, resulting in increased embryonic mortality early in the lay cycle. It is important to achieve target BW and uniformity by 9 weeks of age (WOA) and feed birds to meet target BW from 15 to 21 WOA for sexual maturity.

Uniformity is calculated by the coefficient of variation percentage and/or evenness (percentage of birds within 10% of the average BW). Ideally, 50 birds should be weighed weekly at three or four locations in the house. Platforms can obtain weights of 600 to 900 birds daily. These scales are popular due to reduced labor requirements and daily weights; they also allow for quick changes in feed allocation and provide consistent data.

It is good to hand-weigh birds in multiple locations to verify that the platform scales are providing an accurate representation of the BW of the whole house. In addition, shank length has a strong relationship with BW and keel length. Lighter cockerels will tend to have shorter shank lengths. The target BW should be met early in life, as it will impact the skeletal frame size of male parent stock. Approximately 71% of the shank length at 25 WOA of males can be achieved by 8 WOA.

Potential causes of poor uniformity in cockerels include unlevel floors, insufficient feeder space and floor space, improper feed distribution and health issues. Longer shanks and keels are an advantage for males to complete matings in the breeder house. Pullet uniformity is primarily related to insufficient feeder space, incorrect feed distribution and health issues.

Grading

Cockerels are being graded during rearing in some locations in the US to improve uniformity and reduce the proportion of lighter BW males before moving to the lay house.

Grading is a sorting technique to separate birds by BW during rearing. It allows birds to have different feed allocation based on their BW to improve body condition, frame development, uniformity and sexual maturity. This has been practiced in the US primarily with cockerels.

Grading can consist of either two-way, three-way, or four-way grading, which involves separating the population into various weight ranges. It is typically conducted at 4 and 8 WOA but can be performed again at 12 WOA if labor constraints and cost are not prohibitive factors.

Figure 2. Providing insufficient feeder space can lead to poor uniformity for pullets.

After grading, it is important to determine the correct feed allocation for the various BW groups. Each subpopulation needs adequate feeder and water space when the house is divided into separate pens.

Scan to read full article

Published: April 2026

BACK TO BARN BASICS

Back to Barn Basics is a continuing educational series designed to reinforce fundamental poultry management practices that impact environmental control and bird welfare. Each installment focuses on a specific management area, outlining key checks, common issues, and practical solutions to support accurate decision-making and consistent barn conditions.

By Hannah Menges,
BVS Technical Service Representative

FRESHEN UP YOUR LINES

Maintaining clean water lines is a critical component of flock health and overall performance. Biofilm buildup inside drinker systems—though invisible to the naked eye—can harbor harmful bacteria, reduce the effectiveness of medications and vaccines delivered through water, and ultimately compromise bird growth and welfare. Implementing a consistent water sanitation program that includes both continuous flock sanitation and thorough between-flock line cleaning is essential to maintaining optimal water quality.

CONTINUOUS WATER SANITATION

One of the biggest challenges with continuous water sanitation is consistency. A sanitation program must run reliably from flock placement to flock finish to be effective. Inconsistent application is often the difference between success and failure.

There are several options for continuous water sanitation, including chlorine, stabilized hydrogen peroxide, and chlorine dioxide (ClO_2). Chlorine dioxide technology has gained significant traction in recent years, and for good reasons. I'm a strong advocate for ClO_2 because I've seen it work effectively in the field.

Scan to read full article

WATKINS: SIX TIPS TO CONDUCT WATER ASSESSMENTS FOR POULTRY

October 1, 2025 at ModernPoultry.Media

When it comes to drinking water for poultry, Susan Watkins, PhD, has a lot to say. Most important: Don't neglect it. "Water is the No. 1 nutrient input in poultry, and we give it second billing," she lamented. "Keep water systems clean." *Click here for full article*

$1.9M EPA GRANT FUNDS UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS RESEARCH ON POULTRY LITTER, WATER QUALITY

March 15, 2026 at NWAHomePage.com by Reagan Wynn

A University of Arkansas researcher recently received nearly $1.9 million from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to study whether biochar can help improve water quality. *Click here for full article*

VENTILATION SHUTDOWN WITH HEAT AND HUMIDITY DEMONSTRATES EFFECTIVENESS AS BROILER DEPOPULATION METHOD

March 23, 2026 at ModernPoultry.Media

Ventilation shutdown with heat and humidity may be superior to other methods of broiler depopulation under controlled environmental conditions, but this method requires further study under industry-like conditions, according to researchers at North Carolina State University. *Click here for full article*

CREATIVE FEED ADDITIVES HELP BROILERS WEATHER HEAT STRESS

March 25, 2025 at ModernPoultry.Media

Heat stress affects poultry farms everywhere — even in Canada, where poultry producers battle hot, humid conditions in the summer.

"Heat stress is not only a problem in the tropics but also in temperate climates," stated Deborah Adewole, PhD, associate professor, University of Saskatchewan. *Click here for full article*

IPSF: CAMPYLOBACTER SURVIVAL IN POULTRY LITTER

April 22, 2026 at ThePoultrySite.com by Chris Wright

Campylobacter is a major foodborne pathogen commonly associated with poultry production environments, where litter can serve as a persistent source of contamination for birds. This study evaluated the survival of Campylobacter jejuni in poultry litter under varying moisture and temperature conditions. Litter samples (≤8% moisture) were adjusted to three moisture levels (15%, 20%, and 30%) and held at three temperatures: 4°C (39°F), 42°C (107°F) and 50°C (122°F). The study design had a total of nine treatments based on moisture-temperature combinations. *Click here for full article*

VENTILATION

RETHINKING LAYER BARN AIRFLOW

April 9, 2026 at CanadianPoultryMag.com by Lilian Schear

New research led by Dr. Lingying Zhao, Distinguished Professor in Air Quality Engineering at College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences, The Ohio State University, is taking a closer look at how ventilation design influences heat stress, cold stress and the potential spread of airborne disease in commercial layer operations.

Using advanced computer modelling, Zhao's team is exploring a new approach to barn ventilation that could change how air moves through poultry houses – and how birds experience their environment. *Click here for full article*

FAIRCHILD: CONSIDER THE COMPLEXITY OF LIGHTING AND ITS IMPACT ON POULTRY HEALTH

April 7, 2026 at ModernPoultry.Media

Optimizing poultry health and performance requires navigating a wide range of variables, including chick quality, nutrition, biosecurity and management of the poultry house environment.

"At the end of the day, we try to provide an optimal environment for birds so that energy from their food and water goes toward growth and development," said Brian Fairchild, PhD, professor and extension poultry specialist at the University of Georgia. And lighting in the houses plays an important role. *Click here for full article*

LIGHT STUDY OFFERS INSIGHT ON CHICK DEVELOPMENT

April 14, 2026 at ThePoultrySite.com

Exposing eggs to light while they develop leads to chicks engaging more with environmental enrichments after they hatch, a new study has shown. Researchers found that chicks incubated in light were more likely to use shelters in their environment than chicks that developed in darkness. Understanding how early-life conditions shape behavior could help inform practices that improve welfare across the egg and poultry sector. *Click here for full article*

The Mont Belvieu Propane Spot Price on May 26, 2026, was at $0.793/gal., not including tariffs, handling, and delivery to most areas. Larger accounts can often negotiate a lower price agreement by as much as $0.05/gal., or more. To follow Mont Belvieu spot pricing, go to https://www.eia.gov/dnav/pet/hist/eer_epllpa_pf4_y44mb_dpgD.htm and scroll to the very bottom of the page. TPA's allied member propane companies welcome discussing this with you to provide best pricing and services. Their contact information is at the back of this newsletter within the allied member listings.

Propane futures can be followed at https://www.cmegroup.com/trading/energy/petrochemicals/mont-belvieu-propane-5-decimals-swap.html#.

Current updates for FMCSA emergency declarations, HOS waivers, and exemptions can be found at https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/emergency-declarations.

STUDY: HUMAN HANDLING TRIGGERS JOY IN CHICKS

March 31, 2026 at WattAgNet.com by Elizabeth Doughman

Scientists at the University of Bristol's Veterinary School have found that slow, calm stroking and soft speech don't merely reduce stress and fear responses in young chicks — they actively trigger positive emotional states. It's a finding that could reshape thinking about poultry welfare. *Click here for full article*

GROUND CHICKEN EMERGES AS A PIZZA CRUST STAPLE

May 11, 2026 at WattAgNet.com by Roy Graber

Consumer demand for ground chicken has risen, and one thing driving that increase is a recipe that sounds a bit unusual but, in my opinion, is definitely worth trying.

During the Animal Agriculture Alliance Stakeholders Summit on May 6 in Kansas City, Brian Earnest, lead economist for animal protein in CoBank's Knowledge Exchange division, talked about various trends in protein consumption. He noted that within the past year there has been a substantial increase in ground chicken purchases. *Click here for full article*

BALANCING PRIORITIES: AVIAGEN CEO JAN HENRIKSEN ON SUSTAINABILITY, ANIMAL WELFARE AND FOOD SECURITY

March 16, 2026 at ThePoultrySite.com by Sarah Mikesell

The sustainability of the poultry sector is no longer defined by a single metric. Carbon footprint and emissions reporting remain important, but the conversation has expanded. Today, governments, retailers and consumers are weighing animal welfare, food security and social responsibility alongside environmental performance – and often asking which priority should come first.

From his global vantage point, Jan Henriksen, CEO of Aviagen, sees these pressures converging into what he describes as a triangle that the poultry industry must learn to manage.

"I speak to customers all over the world, and I also speak to governments. About 10 years ago, everything was about environmental sustainability, then in some parts of the world, we started talking more about animal welfare," Henriksen said. "Now, with deglobalization, we are seeing food security as our third point."

He noted that governments are considering what is most important right now for their country – environmental sustainability, food security or animal welfare? For Henriksen, the answer is not choosing one over another but recognizing how closely they are connected.

Moving from carbon metrics to a broader mandate

Henriksen has spent decades in the poultry business and says the framing of the sustainability conversation has shifted dramatically in the past 10 years.

What began as a focus on CO_2, transport and environmental efficiency has evolved into a much broader societal discussion. In Europe and other regions, animal welfare has moved to the forefront, with debates about stocking density, housing systems and bird management. At the same time, geopolitical shifts and supply chain disruptions have elevated food security as a national priority.

COVID-19, trade tensions and avian influenza outbreaks have reminded governments how fragile supply chains can be. Empty shelves in developed economies altered the political calculus almost overnight.

"For me, it's very interesting to see how governments change the focus from the environment and welfare discussions to suddenly shifting to making sure there is adequate food production in their own country," he said. "Then, the next step they consider is self-sufficiency – how do we make sure we have genetics in our own country."

Henriksen describes this shift not as a rejection of environmental or welfare goals, but as a rebalancing. Countries are now asking how to secure domestic protein production while still meeting long-term sustainability expectations.

All three points are connected

Despite the apparent tension between the three priorities, Henriksen believes they are fundamentally aligned.

For him, sustainability is not only about emissions reductions or logistics efficiency. It includes how birds are managed, how mortality is reduced, and how welfare improvements translate into stronger biological performance.

"We actually think that everything goes hand in hand," he said. "Welfare is part of social sustainability because good welfare is good business. If the birds are not stressed, mortality is low, etc. – that's good business for everyone."

In practical terms, lower mortality, stronger robustness, and improved health directly enhance feed efficiency and reduce resource use per kilogram of meat. Welfare and efficiency are not opposing forces; they are interdependent outcomes of good management and sound genetics, according to Henriksen.

Food security, meanwhile, reinforces the case for poultry as a protein source. Compared to other livestock sectors, poultry production requires relatively modest capital investment and delivers rapid turnover, making it an accessible protein solution in both developed and emerging markets.

From Henriksen's perspective, the industry already possesses the tools needed to balance the triangle, but the emphasis varies by country.

"Where are you in this scale? It's country or at least region-specific, and it's evolving based on many factors," he explained.

Aligning ambition with production reality

As Henriksen travels globally, he hears a consistent theme from customers: aligning sustainability

expectations with the daily realities of production is not simple.

Disease pressure, labor constraints, and geopolitical uncertainty weigh heavily on producers. Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) has reshaped trade flows and forced border closures. Labor shortages complicate hatchery, farm, and processing operations. Tariffs and trade disputes add another layer of unpredictability.

Henriksen outlines what he sees as the three strategic challenges facing the sector.

"First is finding long-term labor solutions for our farms, hatcheries and processing plants. This will continue to be an issue going forward. Second is the disease pressure in the world and how to manage that. And the third issue is the geopolitical trade issues we are experiencing," he said.

Against that backdrop, sustainability cannot be an abstract reporting exercise. It must be embedded in operational resilience. Biosecurity sits at the center of that resilience. Henriksen stresses that preventing disease is both a welfare imperative and a sustainability strategy.

"One of the most important things is to keep diseases out of your flock," he noted. "Coming back to welfare, it's all connected. Strong biosecurity is connected to low disease levels; it's sustainable and it's good for bird health, which is good for business."

When it comes to HPAI, Henriksen doesn't believe that vaccine is the right path forward and says it's more important for the industry to focus its efforts on biosecurity.

Aviagen has invested heavily in biosecurity infrastructure worldwide, tailoring systems to local disease pressures. In some regions, that includes positive-pressure facilities and strict quarantine protocols. In Australia, for example, new genetic stock enters a 20-week quarantine station where staff live onsite and birds are monitored before release to production farms.

These investments are capital-intensive, but Henriksen views them as essential for long-term efficiency and trust.

Rethinking global supply models

Food security concerns have also reshaped Aviagen's operational footprint. Historically, much of the company's breeding stock was transported internationally. Today, the strategy has shifted toward localization.

"Now we have production in 34 countries, and we are working on six or seven countries right now, which we probably will open up over the next five years," said Henriksen.

This expansion reflects both geopolitical realities and welfare considerations. Reducing long-distance transport of live birds improves logistics resilience and aligns with shifting government expectations about domestic genetic capacity.

Henriksen emphasizes that localization is not about retreating from global markets but about strengthening them through distributed production.

Trade wars, tariffs and border closures during HPAI outbreaks have underscored the need for redundancy and regional capacity. By building facilities closer to customers, Aviagen aims to secure supply while reducing systemic risk.

Antibiotics, management and long-term direction

Another dimension of sustainability is antimicrobial stewardship. Henriksen is clear about the direction he believes the industry should take.

"We are breeding our animals without antibiotics, and we are pushing hard not to do any antibiotic treatment. Of course, if we have sick animals, we will treat them," he said.

He acknowledges that global priorities differ. In some regions, food security and affordability dominate policy discussions. In others, antibiotic reduction is a central focus.

But Henriksen argues that management, welfare and biosecurity are foundational.

"If everything is done the right way, then there's no need for antibiotics. The industry has all the tools in its hands to do it right," he said. "Long-term, we don't see that antibiotics should be a day-to-day part of our industry. At the same time, we acknowledge that there are differing opinions around the world."

For him, antibiotic reduction is part of the broader relationship – dependent on strong management systems and robust birds.

Genetics for a complex world

At its core, Aviagen's role in the sustainability conversation lies in genetic selection. The company selects for more than 45 traits, carefully balancing efficiency, robustness and welfare indicators.

"We are natural mating and selecting for specific traits in our birds, and it's not only for efficiency as we've discussed today, but for welfare traits like leg health and gait score," he said. "We are actually selecting for the triangle, but not only for one part of the triangle, we're selecting for all."

Henriksen rejects a one-size-fits-all approach. Climate, consumer preference and culinary culture differ across regions. In hotter climates, birds must tolerate environmental stress. In the United States, demand for white meat shapes breeding priorities. In parts of Asia, dark meat preferences influence product strategy.

Rather than standardizing globally, Aviagen develops different breeds tailored to local conditions – another example of aligning sustainability goals with market realities.

A generational perspective

Henriksen also credits Aviagen's ownership structure for enabling long-term thinking. As part of EW Group, a family-owned enterprise focused on sustainable protein and breeding, the company invests with a generational horizon.

"We have very dedicated, passionate shareholders. It's a family company, and they do what's right for the company," he said. "We aren't looking at next quarter – we are looking generations ahead, making the right decisions that are good for our birds, our customers, and the communities served."

That perspective shapes capital allocation, research priorities and global expansion decisions. It also reinforces the belief that poultry, alongside aquaculture and plant breeding, represents some of the most sustainable protein pathways available.

"It's very positive to be a part of EW Group because we have a lot of sister companies working in similar research areas, so we have a unique opportunity for technology transfer from one company to another," he said. "We are independent companies, but the technology and best practices are shared among all the companies. It's highly collaborative, and it's very valuable to us."

Defining success in the next era

As sustainability transitions from a reporting obligation to a core business driver, Henriksen believes successful poultry companies will be those that proactively manage the triangle priorities.

In practice, this means investing in biosecurity and disease prevention to strengthen animal welfare, localizing supply where necessary to support food security, and improving efficiency through genetics and operations to advance sustainability.

Despite the challenges he outlines – labor shortages, disease pressure and geopolitical uncertainty – Henriksen remains optimistic.

"It's an amazing industry," he noted.

For Henriksen, the poultry sector does not face a choice between sustainability, welfare and food security. It faces a management challenge: aligning them intelligently in a rapidly changing world.

If the triangle is balanced well, he suggests, the industry's future is not only secure – it is sustainable in the fullest sense of the word.

RESEARCHERS WORK TOWARD SAFER POULTRY LITTER ADSORBENT

April 7, 2026 at FeedsStuffs.com by Kacey Watson

In Alabama, chickens outnumber humans by the millions and handily claim the top spot among Alabama's agricultural commodities.

Even as an Alabama powerhouse, the poultry industry has its challenges, and Auburn researchers are looking for new solutions. *Click here for full article*

STUDY IDENTIFIES ABUNDANT BACTERIAL STRAINS IN CHICKEN REPRODUCTIVE TRACT

April 21, 2026 at ModernPoultry.Media

Research on the microbiota in chicken reproductive tracts revealed an abundance of live bacteria, including strains typically found in the gut, according to Nir Ben Porat, Hebrew University of Jerusalem student. "When we talk about microbiota, we usually think about the gut or the skin," Ben Porat said. "To our surprise, we found viable bacteria right where the egg forms. *Click here for full article*

RESEARCHERS EVALUATE UTILIZING CARBONIZED FEATHERS FOR POULTRY ODOR CONTROL

March 6, 2026 at FoodMarket.com

USPOULTRY and the USPOULTRY Foundation announce a newly finalized research project which uses feather-derived activated carbon and visible-light photocatalysis to reduce ammonia and odors in commercial poultry houses. Tested in a full-scale broiler facility, the system achieved consistent ammonia reductions under commercial conditions. This innovative approach, led by a team of researchers from Georgia Southern University, supports improved bird welfare, worker safety, environmental sustainability and circular use of poultry byproducts. The research is part of the Association's comprehensive research program encompassing all phases of poultry and egg production and processing and is made possible in part through proceeds from the International Poultry Expo, part of the International Production & Processing Expo. *Click here for full article*

POULTRY PROCESSING ROBOT IMITATES HUMAN GRIP

March 25, 2026 at WattAgNet.com by Elizabeth Doughman

Researchers at the University of Arkansas developed a robotic system that mimics human movement to automate the rehanging process in poultry processing, a task that the industry has struggled to automate. *Click here for full article*

GENE EDITING IN POULTRY MOVES CLOSER TO REALITY

May 7, 2026 at WattAgNet.com by Elizabeth Doughman

Researchers at the University of Missouri have developed a method to prevent gene silencing in chickens, clearing one of the biggest hurdles in poultry genetic engineering and bringing the prospect of flocks resistant to diseases like highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) closer to commercial reality. *Click here for full article*

STUDY SHOWS DRINKING WATER QUALITY SIGNIFICANTLY IMPACTS SALMONELLA VACCINES FOR POULTRY

March 6, 2026 at www.Food-Safety.com

In pre-harvest poultry production, live Salmonella vaccines are often administered through drinking water, thereby requiring water quality to be compatible with live vaccines. A new in vitro study has identified drinking water qualities and contaminants that can affect the viability of an available Salmonella vaccine for poultry. *Click here for full article*

HOW FEDERAL SALMONELLA DATA IS BIASED AGAINST POULTRY

March 18, 2026 at WattAgNet.com by Meredith Dawson

Federal illness attribution data overrepresents chicken as a Salmonella source, according to Juan DeVillena, Ph.D., senior vice president, quality assurance and food safety, Wayne-Sanderson Farms. *Click here for full article*

$750,000 RESEARCH GRANT COULD IMPROVE POULTRY FOOD SAFETY

March 23, 2026 at WattAgNet.com by Meredith Dawson

A research grant awarded to Tuskegee University College of Veterinary Medicine faculty members could help poultry producers identify Salmonella in poultry processing plants. *Click here for full article*

THE SALMONELLA REDUCTION JOURNEY

April 17, 2026 at MeatingPlace.com by Bill Potter

It hardly seems possible, but 1996 feels like only yesterday. I was a young QA manager at the time, and I clearly remember reading—probably with a mix of curiosity and anxiety—the newly-released HACCP and Pathogen Reduction "Mega-Reg." I distinctly recall wondering how on earth the poultry industry was going to meet the new Salmonella performance standards on raw chicken. We were already under tremendous pressure to conserve water, reduce labor costs, secure enough growers, and continuously improve countless other aspects of production. How were we supposed to do all of that and meet these new food safety expectations? *Click here for full article*

Science and Logistics Behind Why Chickens Do Not Receive Hormones

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Figure 1: Photo credit: Tom Tabler

One of the most confusing topics for consumers today is the question of growth hormone use in relation to commercial poultry production. There is no need for consumers to panic because the chicken at the grocery store is healthy and safe to eat, with no exogenous hormones added, regardless of what the label may say. This remains a commonly misunderstood topic despite the fact that there have been no hormones approved for growth purposes in poultry for decades. Hormone use in poultry has not been allowed in the U.S. since the 1950s (Tabler et al., 2013). In fact, no hormones are approved for growth purposes in dairy cows, veal calves, pigs, or poultry in the U.S. (U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), 2024). Since the 1950s, the FDA has approved a number of steroid hormone drugs for use in beef cattle and sheep, including natural estrogen, progesterone, testosterone, and their synthetic versions, trenbolone acetate (TBA; mimics testosterone), zeranol (mimics estradiol), and melengestrol acetate (MGA; mimics progesterone, used to suppress estrus in heifers).

These hormones are typically formulated as pellets or implants that are placed under the skin on the back side of the animal's ear, except for MGA, which is administered as a feed additive. The implants slowly dissolve over time and do not require removal. The ears of treated animals are discarded at slaughter and are not used for human food. The FDA establishes acceptable safe limits for hormones in meat. A safe level for human consumption is a level of drug in the meat that would be expected to have no harmful effects in humans based on extensive scientific study and review.

Confusion remains The hormone question has been a concern for the poultry industry for decades. The high level of misunderstanding from consumers is highlighted by the fact that questions often start with "Why" instead of "Does". Questions most often asked are "Why does the poultry industry feed hormones to make chickens grow so big and fast?", not "Does the poultry industry feed hormones?" In recent years, spread largely by social media and so-called "food experts", the myth that chickens are fed hormones to produce more meat has rapidly spread globally (Esquivel-Hernandez et al., 2016). This inaccurate information has not only negatively affected the poultry industry, but also created health concerns among consumers.

Much of the confusion over hormone use in poultry likely comes from the fact that hormone use is allowed by law and quite common in beef cattle intended for slaughter to promote growth by complementing the effects of naturally occurring hormones in the cattle. The boost in growth rate created by hormone implants allows for cattle to be finished earlier, thereby requiring less time on feed and fewer resources per pound of meat produced which improves efficiency and helps reduce beef prices for consumers at the grocery store.

As a result, growth hormones, natural or synthetic versions of somatotropin, estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone are used in cattle and sheep to increase growth rate and meat production efficiency, thereby controlling prices at the meat counter (Rumsey et al., 1992; Johnson and Chung, 2007; Stephany, 2010). World-wide health organizations have established a list of approved products, withdrawal periods, and safe limits for use of these hormones in livestock to ensure that there are no health impacts associated with meat consumption (Stephany, 2010). Since beef cattle receive hormones, consumers assume that chickens do as well; however, these growth hormone implants are not approved for use in poultry meat production (Esquivel-Hernandez et al., 2016).

Hormones are naturally occurring chemical messages released into the blood stream by the hormone-producing organs in the bodies of all animals, including humans. This means that humans, beef cattle, chickens, and other animals have naturally-occurring hormones in their systems at all times. Hormone residues in meat are an increasing concern among consumers in Europe and the U.S. (Sundlof and Cooper, 1996). This is, in part, because synthetic steroid hormones used as pharmaceutical drugs have been found to affect cancer rates. For example, a synthetic estrogen drug used in the 1960s, diethylstilbestrol (DES), was withdrawn from use after it was found to increase the risk of vaginal cancer in daughters of treated women (Ghandhi and Snedeker, 2000). In addition, the FDA banned oral DES use in cattle production in 1972 and DES implant use in cattle in 1973. The ban was overturned by a U.S. Court of Appeals in 1974 on grounds that the FDA failed to hold proper hearings. After FDA hearings on DES use in 1977, the FDA banned all use of DES in cattle production in 1979 (Raun and Preston, 2002), leading to the development of a number of other growth stimulation products for cattle.

Further confusion comes from the fact that steroid hormones can also come from plants. For years, it was believed that hormone exposure came only from food of animal origin. We now know that numerous plants that are important to human nutrition contain phytoestrogens. Phytoestrogens are a broad group of plant-derived compounds of nonsteroidal structure that can behave as estrogen mimics (Setchell, 1998). Numerous foods of plant origin contain hormonally active substances at concentrations exceeding those found in meat. Table 1 depicts the estrogenic activity of several common foods.

Table 1. Estrogenic activity of common foods (ng/500g)

Food	Estrogenic Activity
Soy flour defatted	755,000,000
Tofu	113,500,000
Pinto beans	900,000
White bread	300,000
Peanuts	100,000
Eggs	555
Butter	310
Milk	32
Beef from implanted steer	7
Beef from non-implanted steer	5

Sources: Hoffman and Eversol (1986), Hartman et al. (1998), Shore and Shemesh (2003), (USDA-ARS (2007), Treffer (2013). Units are in nanograms of estrone and estradiol for animal products and isoflavones for plant products per 500 grams of food (17.6 oz).

In addition, the hormone issue is made more difficult to understand because a human's natural steroid production far exceeds the daily hormonal intake values from either plant or animal foods. Table 2 lists daily human hormone production and amounts found in birth control pills.

Table 2. Daily natural estrogen production by humans and amounts found in birth control pills.

Item	Estrogen Amount
Pregnant woman	19,600,000 ng/day
Non-pregnant woman	513,000 ng/day
Adult man	136,000 ng/day
Pre-puberal children	41,000-54,000
High-dose birth control pill	ng/day 50,000 ng
Regular-dose birth control pill	30,000-35,000 ng
Low-dose birth control pill	20,000 ng

Sources: Hoffman and Eversol (1986); Tabler et al (2013).

Why chickens aren't fed hormones

Hormone growth **implants** have been mentioned several times but what about **feeding** growth hormones to animals? There is a reason that growth hormones are not fed to chickens. Regardless of what you may have read, been told, or believe, feeding growth hormones to chickens would not be effective. Hormones exist in two different chemical forms; steroids and proteins. Steroid hormones remain active in the body when taken orally. For example, birth control pills are steroid hormones that can be taken orally and remain effective after passing through the digestive tract. However, protein hormones are broken down in the stomach and are extensively metabolized after leaving the gut, thereby losing their effectiveness on the body when ingested. To have an effect on the body, protein hormones must be injected, not consumed. The implant ensures that each animal gets a specific daily dose based on the slow-dissolve release. Since the consumption of dry matter is variable among both beef cattle and sheep, the implant guarantees a constant level of hormone and efficient delivery.

Growth hormones are proteins, similar to insulin that is used to treat diabetes. Currently, no oral form of insulin exists to avoid insulin injections. Insulin taken orally would be broken down in the digestive tract as other proteins are broken down, and would be ineffective. Protein growth hormones given to chickens via the feed or water would be broken down in the digestive tract and rendered useless. Therefore, like insulin in humans, if growth hormones were allowed to be given to chickens (which in the U.S. and many other countries, they are not), they would have to be injected to be effective. Additionally, to be administered successfully, chickens would need to receive growth hormone injections multiple times each day throughout the growing period, creating unmanagable labor and logistics issues (Czarick and Fairchild, 2012).

Most broiler houses have 20,000-40,000 birds per house and there are multiple houses on each broiler farm. That would be hundreds of thousands of birds that would need to be caught and injected multiple times each day for growth hormone to be effective. There were approximately 32,000 broiler farms in the U.S. in 2022 (USDA, 2024), making this a logistically impossible task, nor does it need to be done. Modern broilers have been genetically selected by primary breeders to grow to their physiological limit without growth hormones. Using growth hormones would force chickens to grow too rapidly, resulting in increased health and welfare concerns and higher mortality rates.

Science behind why today's chickens grow fast

In recent decades, global beef production has doubled, whereas chicken meat production has increased approximately ten-fold (Thornton, 2010). The successful improvement of poultry meat production has nothing to do with growth hormones. It is the result of science and combined progress in the fields of genetics, nutrition, microbiology, immunology, management, engineering, and food processing (Esquivel-Hernandez et al., 2016). Three of these fields take most of the credit for why today's chickens grow at a rapid rate.

First is the phenomenal success of primary breeder companies in selecting the best birds for growth and performance. For the past several decades, poultry geneticists have been able to reduce by roughly one day per year the time it takes for birds to reach a specified target weight. Poultry geneticists benefit from the short generation interval of chickens compared to other food animals, allowing them to make huge genetic improvements in a short period of time. Genetic improvement in the beef and pork industries comes much slower because of the increased generational interval and the longer time it takes to recognize genetic potential and variation and select for improvement (Tabler et al., 2013).

For example, broiler breeder chickens can produce offspring within approximately 6-8 months, meaning that several generations of chickens can be produced in the time required for a single generation of beef cattle. Beef cattle typically require 2-3 years to reach reproductive maturity and produce the next generation. As a result, poultry breeding and genetics programs can evaluate and select superior birds much more frequently than cattle breeding programs. Over a decade, poultry breeders may evaluate 15-20 generations of birds, whereas cattle breeders may only see 3-5 generations during the same time period. This rapid turnover in the poultry industry allows geneticists to identify and propagate superior and desirable traits such as improved feed efficiency, growth rate, and meat yield far more quickly in poultry than in other livestock food animal species.

Second is years of scientific research related to nutritional requirements of the bird. We know exactly what we should be feeding based on different genetic strains and what sector the bird is used for (meat production, hatching egg production, table eggs). Unique feed formulations exist for each type of bird we are feeding. Meat birds today are kept to various market weights based on customer needs and specific feed formulations are created for each target weight based on energy, protein, vitamins, minerals, etc. to optimize performance, welfare, and growth. Even though the beef industry understands cattle nutritional requirements, it is not to the level of the poultry industry, especially when it comes to specialized sectors. In addition, the poultry industry has largely removed outside environment as a factor by moving production inside. Environment plays a major role in cattle nutrition, since production is mainly outside, and heavily dependent on forages, which are heavily dependent on temperature, rainfall, and environment.

Finally, we better understand the necessary management practices and the kind of environment the bird needs to take advantage of its genetic and nutritional potential. This includes providing the proper temperature, air quality, ventilation, lighting, and feeder and drinker space at every age to obtain optimum performance. Sound management practices that maintain the correct environment, along with high-quality feed and world-class genetics, are the winning combination that yields a superior broiler chicken that does not need and would not benefit from added growth hormones.

Summary

The use of growth hormones in chickens is logistically impossible, and not legally approved. In addition, the use of growth hormones in poultry production is unrealistic because 1) these compounds simply do not produce growth promotion effects in young chickens, 2) they are too expensive to use (even if they worked in chickens), 3) their use is illegal in chickens in the U.S. and many other countries, and 4) they simply are not needed in the poultry industry. The truth is that no exogenous hormones are used in poultry production. Lastly, the poultry industry must do a better job of emphasizing this fact to consumers to combat the confusion, myths, and inaccurate information that is prevalent regarding hormone use and chicken production instead of using misleading labels that creates more confusion and misinformation for consumers.

References Available Upon Request

Bill Clarifying Authority of the State Vet Passed

HB2517/SB2558 is headed to the Governor's desk after passing on the House Consent calendar Monday night. The bill seeks to clarify that the state veterinarian can, only in instances of a disease outbreak as recognized by USDA APHIS' National List of Reportable Animal Diseases, order testing and vaccinations. Otherwise, such authority cannot be exerted. Stakeholders from the agriculture industry believe this is already to be standard operating procedure from the office of the state veterinarian. However, this seeks to codify such practice to prevent the potential for future abuse. For several years, the authority of the state veterinarian to order vaccinations and testing has been a point of discussion. While Farm Bureau acknowledges the private property rights of livestock owners, there is also great emphasis placed on animal health and risk mitigation from foreign disease outbreaks.

U.S. POULTRY & EGG ASSOCIATION

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Information and Registration Available on Our Website

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Embassy Suites Downtown

National Safety Conference for the Poultry Industry
August 17-19, Destin, Florida
Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa

Women's Leadership Conference
August 20-2, Destin, Florida
Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa

EnvironmentalManagement Seminar
September 17-18, Destin,Florida
Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa

Live Production, Welfare & Biosecurity Seminar
September 23-24, Nashville, Tennessee
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