

Pastured Poultry

What is Pastured Poultry?

Poultry that is raised on pasture and feed. No growth enhancers of any kind are used. Pastured poultry are usually housed in a portable building or pen. The confined poultry are moved to fresh pasture every day.

Why raise Pastured Poultry?

- To produce a high quality, farm fresh, all natural product.
- To improve profits through direct marketing, lower feed costs, healthier birds, improved pastures and to meet the strong demand for this product.
- To provide an opportunity to farm profitably during a 6 month growing season.

Who should raise Pastured Poultry?

Agricultural entrepreneurs with a self motivated personality and a willingness to adopt a new production and marketing model for livestock. It can be done on a relatively small acreage.

GETTING STARTED

1. Start slow with only 100-400 birds.
2. Acquire used equipment (start-up is approximately \$1000 or less)
3. Concentrate on learning the production and local marketing model.
4. Set up a brooder house (10 sq. ft. for 100 chicks)
5. Build pens (prior to chick arrival)
6. Buy chicks (Cornish Cross recommended)
8. Set up processing facility.
9. Start developing your customer list.

YOU ARE READY TO GO

Brooder Stage

This is a three-week period. Keep them warm, clean and dry and ensure proper carbon-nitrogen ratio in absorbing waste. Pine shavings or straw are the best materials. This will eliminate odor, promote natural decomposition and ensure a healthy environment. For fryers and broilers, use a starter mash or crumble pellets containing 20-23 percent protein. Roasters require a 20-percent protein starter for the first 6 weeks and can then

be fed a 16-percent protein grower feed. At least 23 hours of light per day is recommended for meat birds. Use one 25-watt bulb per 100 square feet.

Out to Pasture

At 2 to 3 weeks of age move chicks to a 10'x12' mobile grazing shelter with approximately 85-90 birds per grazing shelter. Move shelters a minimum of once a day. Provide water, feed and fresh pasture for approximately 5 weeks.

Processing

Birds can yield a 3 lb. to 7 lb. carcass. Processing should be done on-farm to maximize profits. Volunteer to assist an existing producer to learn the process. Reward system is built in by processing in the morning and selling in the afternoon.

Minimum processing equipment:

- Poultry crates to handle live birds.
- Poultry kill cones to ensure proper bleeding.
- A propane-fired scalding tank fashioned from a metal drum and capable of handling three or four birds at a time
- A stainless steel processing table.
- Chilling tanks.
- Knives and scales

Marketing

This is frequently direct marketing straight to the customer, through a farmers market, or by word of mouth. These methods have the following benefits:

- The profit margin is high.
- The customer inspects the produce.
- A relationship is developed between producer and customer
- The middleman is eliminated.

Resources:

This system is based on Joel Salatin's book *Pastured Poultry Profits, Net \$25,000 in 6 Months on 20 Acres* published by Polyface, Inc. which can be ordered for \$30 (plus \$5.60 postage) from:

The Stockman Grass Farmer

PO Box 2300

Ridgeland, MS 39158

(800) 748-9808

<http://stockmangrassfarmer.net/>

National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service

Free publications from ATTRA (Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas) include introduction to free-range pastured poultry, semi-intensive, and yard and coop systems. Breeds, feed options, flock health on-farm processing, alternative marketing, using flocks to weed and till, and more. Visit their website at <http://www.attra.org/> or call from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (CST) Monday through Friday at (800) 346-9140.

Source: Committee for Sustainable Farm Publishing

<http://www.ibiblio.org/farming-connection/grazing/pastpoul/resource.htm>

For more information, contact WSU Extension at (509) 524-2685 or email John at fouts@wsu.edu.

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