

store-bought chicken

- The production system is environmentally safe
- The taste of these birds is unmatched by the so-called best.

How Much Should I Charge?

Don't set your price too low. It is much easier to reduce the price than to increase it. In south Louisiana, pastured poultry producers typically sell the dressed birds for \$2.00 - \$2.50 per pound. Eggs sell for \$2.00 or more per dozen.



Series, part four: This publication is part of a four-part series on pastured poultry (Publications 196-00-196-03) dealing primarily with broilers although the material is applicable layers. Written by James McNitt, Ph.D., professor, animal science and Lonnie Parker, research farm manager II.

RESOURCES

Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center

Small Farm Family Resource Development Center

James McNitt, Ph.D

Professor, Animal Science

P.O. Box 11170

Baton Rouge, LA 70813

(225) 771-2262 EXT. 270

james_mcnitt@suagcenter.com

Advice on establishing a small business:

Southern University Center for Rural and Small Business Development

Eual Hall

Business Development Outreach Specialist

P.O. Box 10010

Baton Rouge, LA 70813

(225) 771-2242 ext. 289

(225) 771-4105

You have produced a superior product, harvested it under excellent conditions, and now you need to sell it to the consumer at a premium price. There are several factors involved in marketing your products: complying with the laws and regulations that control the sales of meat and eggs, displaying your product to its best advantage, and identifying and contacting the customers.



COMPLYING WITH THE LAW

Federal inspection requirements do not apply to poultry producers:

- Who slaughter or process 20,000 or fewer poultry per year
- Who do not slaughter or process poultry products at a facility used for slaughtering or processing poultry by any other person
- Who slaughter sound and healthy poultry that are raised, slaughtered and processed by the poultry producer on his or her own farm
- Who slaughter and otherwise process and handle the poultry under sanitary conditions, practices and procedures so that the products are sound, clean, and fit for human food
- Who include a label on the products bearing the producer's name, address, and the statement "Exempted-P.L. 90-492"

and the poultry products are not otherwise misbranded

- Who distribute the poultry directly to household consumers for use in their own dining rooms, or in the preparation of meals for sales to direct consumers
- Who distribute the poultry products only within the state in which the poultry are raised; and
- Who do not engage, in the current calendar year, in the business of buying or selling any poultry products other than as described in this exemption.

What defines "sanitary conditions"? The Federal regulations require that:

- The operation must have a pest management program in place



Southern University and A&M College System
Agricultural Research and Extension Center

Ashford O. Williams Hall

Post Office Box 10010

Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70813

Phone (225) 771-2242

Fax (225) 771-2861

www.suagcenter.com

For more information contact:

Dr. James I. McNitt, professor of animal science, at (225) 771-2262 ext.270 or email james_mcnitt@suagcenter.com

or: Lonnie Parker, research farm manager II, at (225) 771-2262, or email to lonnie_parker@suagcenter.com

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- Buildings must be kept in good repair and be large enough to allow processing, handling, and storage of the product so that adulteration does not occur
- Walls of the buildings must be built of durable materials impervious to moisture and must be cleaned and sanitized as necessary
- Lighting must be of good quality and of sufficient intensity to ensure sanitary conditions are maintained
- Rooms where edible products are processed, handled, or stored must be separate and distinct from rooms where inedible products are processed, handled, or stored
- Ventilation must be adequate
- Plumbing must be installed to carry sufficient water throughout the operation, to

carry sewage and liquid disposable waste from the establishment, and to prevent adulteration of products

- Floor drainage must be adequate
- Sewage disposal must be sufficient to prevent backup of sewage into areas where the product is processed, handled or stored
- An adequate supply of running water must be maintained
- Dressing rooms, lavatories and toilets must be sufficient in number and conveniently located but separate from rooms in which products are processed, stored or handled
- Equipment and utensils must be sufficient for their purpose
- Employees must maintain cleanliness, appropriate attire and disease control activities

EXEMPTIONS AND INSURANCE

What about the requirements for the state of Louisiana?

Poultry inspection in Louisiana is governed by the Meat and Poultry Inspection Law and is carried out by the USDA for large poultry operations. The Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry's Meat and Poultry Division conducts inspection of operations with fewer than 20,000 birds.

The Meat and Poultry Division also grants exemptions upon written request of an operator and follows up with quarterly compliance checks on those granted exemptions.

How do I get an exemption?

Write a letter stating your intentions to:

Louisiana Department of Agriculture & Forestry

Attn: Ag Specialist Program Manager
Meat Inspection/Compliance Program
P.O. Box 1951
Baton Rouge, LA 70821
Telephone (225) 922-1358

In response, your processing area will be inspected and, if adequate, you will get a letter giving you an exemption under P. L. 90-492, detailing how the poultry product is to be packaged and the information needed on the label.

What about liability insurance?

Liability insurance is very difficult to obtain for this sort of operation. Even if an underwriter is found, the insurance may be very expensive.

PACKAGING

Can I put other information on the package?

Yes. In fact, one producer includes safe-handling instructions on each package. These instructions, from the USDA, can be found on

inspected meat in the supermarket and are similar to the following:

Some products may contain bacteria that could cause illness if the product is mishandled or cooked improperly. For your *protection*,

follow these safe-handling instructions: Keep refrigerated or frozen; thaw in refrigerator or microwave; keep raw meat and poultry separate from other foods; wash working surfaces,

including cutting boards, utensils and hands after exposure to raw meat or poultry; keep hot foods hot; refrigerate leftovers immediately or discard.
Source: USDA

DISPLAY

In order to display your product to its best advantage, you must harvest your broilers in sanitary conditions. The harvesting area must be clean with good ventilation, pest control procedures must be in place with adequate plumbing, good drainage and lighting. The carcasses from the harvest should immediately be cooled on ice and later wrapped for sale to the customers. This will provide an attractive product and also prevent contamination of the meat.

CUSTOMERS

Customers can be located by word of mouth, cold calling or through newspaper food editors. Don't be afraid to give a few carcasses away. Let the food editor try your product. It is also a good idea to provide a brief article with pictures describing your project and the quality of your product.

Participating in local farmer's markets is an excellent way to build a customer base. When you have located a number of customers, you should try to inform them about your farming operation and help them feel connected to it. (They really are, because if they don't buy your product, you will soon be out of business!)

SELLING POINTS

The following list provides the selling points for attracting customers to your products:

- The buyer gets clean, healthy chicken without additives, antibiotics or hormones
- Chickens feed on a fresh "salad bar" (mixed pasture) every day
- The chickens have fresh air and sunshine every day

- Chickens are moved daily to fertilize the pasture naturally
- The chickens can move freely in pens
- The chickens are not debeaked
- No artificial lighting is used
- The birds are raised in small groups for low stress
- The meat keeps in the freezer longer than



Joel Salatin, one of the early pioneers of pastured poultry production, referred to this as "relationship marketing" because you build a relationship with your customers. They may just buy chicken, but they may also want to buy vegetables or other products you have for sale.