

Montana Poultry Growers Coop

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Assessment of the Montana Poultry Growers Coop Mobile Processing Unit

A Collaborative Project between Montana Poultry Growers Cooperative, Farms for Families, and Mission Mountain Food Enterprise Center.

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The Montana Poultry Growers Cooperative, incorporated in 2006, is a statewide, open cooperative with producer members in Ravalli, Lake, Missoula, Park, Lewis & Clark, Teton, Broadwater, Blaine, Cascade, Madison



The Cooperative was organized to provide its members an avenue to collaboratively meet their processing needs.

- A open cooperative (anyone interested in poultry production can join) with presently 21 producer members. There is an expressed interest to join with the development of the MPU
- Several members projected they will increase their poultry production utilizing the MPU. (one grower plans to increase their production from 50 to 1500 birds per season)
- Members are interested in retail market opportunities (Bozeman Coop purchases \$5,000 worth of chickens weekly)

2011 Analysis of the Montana Mobile Processing Unit



Cost to Build and Operate

- Fixed Costs

– Truck	\$18,000
– Trailer	\$7,000
– Equipment	\$20,000
– Custom Fabrication	\$1,000

- Variable Costs

– Insurance	\$2,000
– Licensing	\$25.00
– Supplies	\$100.00
– Repairs	\$2,500

The cost of transportation was the producers cost- large area to move unit around created a high cost of transport.

MPU Usage

- Approx. 3000 birds processed in 2011 serving approx. 4 producers
- Conducted MPU trainings across the state
- Four farms produced farm plans for processing on-farm
- Producer was charged \$1.75 per bird to use unit
- The unit travels approximately 500 miles per farm @ \$3.50 per gallon
- The unit experienced damage in route- design did not facilitate movement well.

MPU Challenges

- Small scale production- minimum for usage was 250 birds
- High feed costs- average cost per bird is \$2.30/lb
- Large distance to travel in MT- high gas prices create a cost to the producer
- Regulation still a barrier-
 - every local county sanitarian has their own rules.
 - Two agencies to comply with – MT Dept of Livestock and Dept of Health and Human Services

Future Plans

- Explore exemption to 20,000 bird exemption that allow multiple operators at multiple locations
- Explore cooperative purchasing of feed
- Explore cooperative purchasing of chicks
- Regulation will always be a barrier-
 - Need to address lack of understanding of existing exemptions
 - Need to educate at the local level