Montana Poultry Growers Coop

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Assessment of the Montana Poultry Growers Coop Mobile Processing Unit


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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