

Science, Technology Drive Industry Growth

GEORGETOWN, Del. — The structure of America's broiler chicken industry, in which poultry companies control breeding, hatching, growing the chickens, health programs, processing, feed production, and paying attention to consumer perceptions — or misconceptions — are major factors in helping chicken to maintain its reputation as a healthy, good-for-you meat that is reasonably priced and convenient to prepare.

That was the message conveyed at a food editors' breakfast on June 18 in Dover, Del. In attendance were about 40 representatives of regional and national news media covering the 46th annual Delmarva Chicken Festival and Delmarva Chicken Cooking Contest.

During the breakfast, they heard presentations by representa-

tives of Delmarva Poultry Industry, Inc. (DPI), the trade association for the area's nearly \$1.3 billion-a-year poultry industry and sponsor of the chicken cooking contest.

Keith E. Rinehart, a former DPI president, spoke to the group on "Food Safety Issues." Rinehart is vice president for technical services with Perdue Farms, Inc., at Salisbury, Md. He predicted that it may take another generation for U.S. consumers to accept irradiated chicken, even though the Food and Drug Administration declared a few years ago that irradiation could be used in poultry processing.

In the meantime, chicken processing plants are instituting procedures that continue to reduce bacterial spread. These procedures include science-based inspection,

chlorinated water for rinsing chicken carcasses, and developing systems to identify critical control points in plants and to take corrective actions to prevent bacterial spread.

Tissue sampling from birds before they leave the farm for the processing plant is one way companies can continue to prevent drug residues from being in chicken products. Rinehart noted that most chicken processors, in the Delmarva area at least, have voluntarily complied with United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) nutritional labeling and safe-handling label requirements. He pointed out, however, that some USDA data bases for food nutrients are out-of-date, so this could cause confusion for consumers.

Bill Satterfield, DPI executive director, spoke to the food editors on "Technological Advances." He declared that "the poultry industry is one of the most technologically advanced segments of American agriculture."

Satterfield cited statistics for Delmarva that compared the years 1941 and 1993. The statistics

show that, in 52 years, the the number of broilers produced has increased more than tenfold. Young chickens are marketed at much heavier weights in half the time previously required, and with considerably less feed.

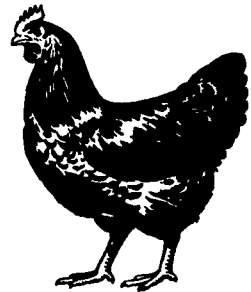
This amazing increase, driven by innovative application of science and technology, has been accompanied by an even more amazing increase in U.S. per capita consumption. In 1941, the per capita consumption was just 2.8 pounds. Last year it was 68.3 pounds, and it is forecast to be 73.4 pounds next year.

Genetics and feed formulation are key factors in producing superior chickens. The emphasis in science and technology, as always, is on finding answers to cur-

rent challenges. Nipple drinkers in chicken houses, tunnel ventilation chicken houses, vector vaccines, DNA probe-testing, and in-ovo vaccination are recent innovations that are producing or are expected to produce healthier chickens.

An enzyme called phytase holds promise of allowing chickens to better utilize the phosphorus in their feed. This could mean less phosphorus in soils where chicken manure is applied.

Satterfield noted that his organization has provided more than \$600,000 to university researchers in the last 30 years. DPI also sponsors educational meetings each year, including the internationally recognized National Meeting on Poultry Health and Processing, to share new scientific and technological research.



Laura Fitch Reigns

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heard the ads. "The 1994 campaign, which is already under way, continues the theme, stressing the message that milk makes you feel and look good," she said.

During the holiday season, Hauck said a character, "Aunt Emma," will be used to promote real dairy products, with recipes provided.

Other promotional events taking place throughout the state include cow milking contests, par-

ticipating in the Prom Promise by supplying milk beverages at proms, and taste-tests comparing hot chocolate made with milk as opposed to hot chocolate made with water.

Judges for the Dairy Princess Pageant were WHGL-FM radio personality Kenny Lane of Troy, Lycoming County Dairy Promotion Program director Becky Steppe, and Jenny Teeter, a farm wife from Milan.

QUALITY FROM TOP TO BOTTOM

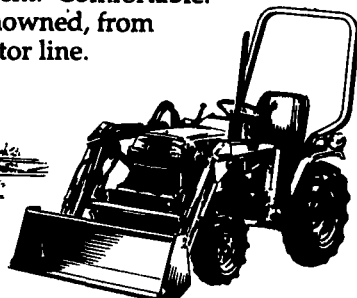


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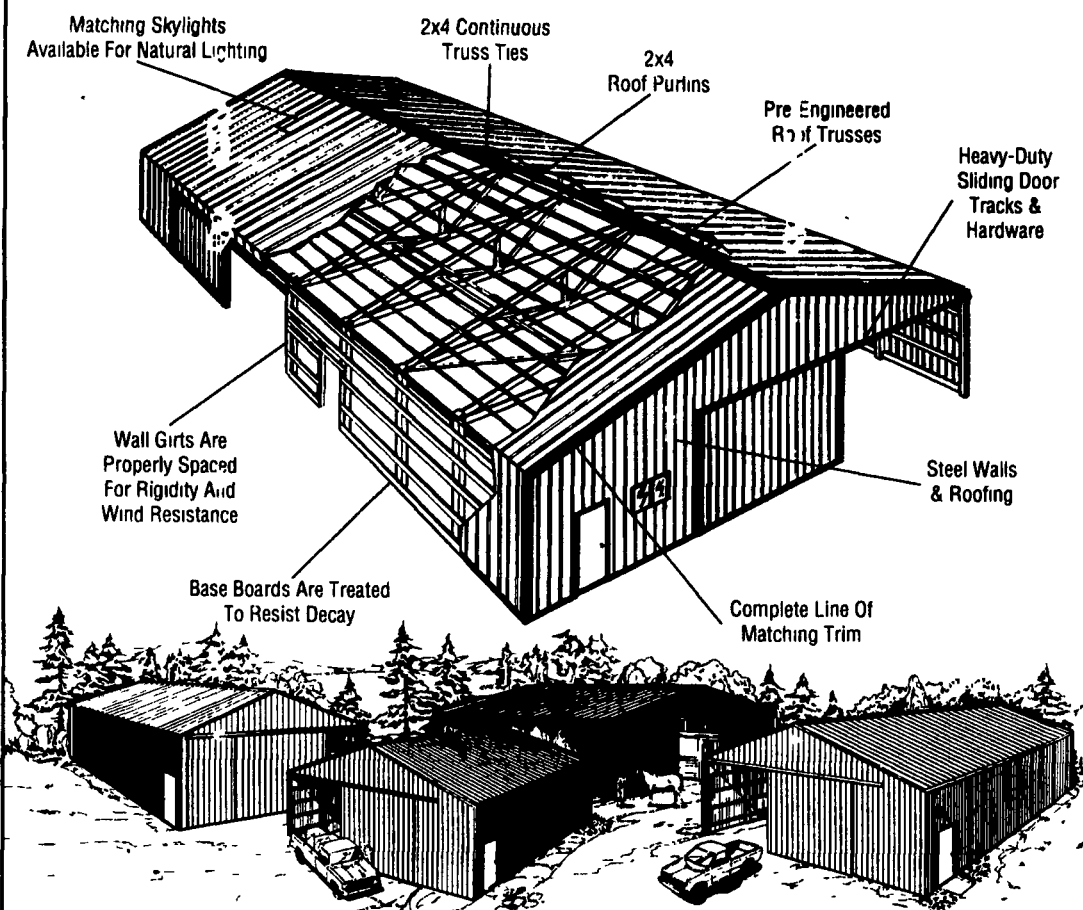
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