

# Which Came First

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producers do not use steroids or hormones to promote growth.

## Incubation Period

At the farm, the eggs are gathered throughout the day and carefully placed in the flat so the pointed side is down. The chick will not develop correctly or hatch if the larger end, the end with an air pocket, is on the bottom.

The eggs are stored in a 65-degree egg room.

"It is important that the eggs are cooled down right away so that everything that arrives here is at the same stage of development — which is basically nothing," said Daryl Hilsher, vice president.

When they reach the processors, the eggs are transferred to incubator racks and placed in one of the 34 multi-stage incubators, which are never empty. The newest eggs are at the front of the incubators while the 18-day-old eggs are in the back.

"It's just a big cycle," said Hilsher. There can be five "sets" of eggs in the incubator at one time.

The eggs are set for orders — an average of 225,000 a day — for customers that communicate to the hatchery the number of chickens they are projected to

need, according to Martin.

"We need to know close to a year ahead what breeds and what numbers they want," he said.

Each incubator holds 65,000 eggs in their 99-degree home. The temperature is slightly lower, however, where the more mature embryos are located since the embryos shed heat and carbon dioxide.

The heat and carbon dioxide is exchanged toward the front of the incubator to the eggs that are less developed and need those elements, said Hilsher. Consequently, little heat has to be added to the incubator. In addition, fresh air is brought in to give the eggs necessary oxygen.

Perched on a plastic flat with holes for airflow, necessary for the health of the chick, the eggs are turned every hour until they are 14-16 days "to keep the embryo freed up inside the shell, so it doesn't attach to the side of the egg. Turning the eggs duplicates what the hen would do on the nest," said Martin.

The chicks can safely "pip out," or come out of the shell, in hatching baskets — where they are transferred when they are ready to hatch.

Additionally, they are moved from the racks to the hatching baskets so they do not contaminate the other eggs by releasing chick dander or bacteria inside of their shell. One hatcher, with its racks of hatching baskets, holds about 11,000 chicks.

## Timely Entrance

Careful control of heat and humidity allow the hatchery to time the hatchings precisely.

"It is timed exactly. We can pretty well say that if all the eggs in the incubator at 3 a.m. on Friday they're going to be ready to pull at 3 a.m. in three weeks," said Hilsher.

A sensitive alarm and back-up alarm sounds and eventually dials a pager if the temperature or humidity changes. Chicks can stand a fluctuation in humidity but will not tolerate too much heat, said Hilsher.

An employee, whether the night-watch shift or a tenant of the property, is on duty at all times to ensure that the alarm and incubators are checked.

The new-to-the-world chicks

will move out on the first shift. The eggs are set through the night hours, beginning at midnight, because the chicks are pulled from their hatching baskets throughout the day three weeks later.

The day at the hatchery begins at 7 a.m. when employees pull carts full of chicks to the processing room. The chicks are separated from the eggs and then vaccinated. Most of the orders are sent out as a "straight run," or males and females together, with 100 in each box, then delivered to the farm. The hatchery can process 25,000 chicks an hour from the hatching basket to the truck.

Besides a vaccination under the skin, the chicks are sprayed with a vaccine as they are loaded onto the truck.

## On The Farm: The Laying Flock

The parent stock is purchased from primary breeding compa-



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Branch, Fremont, Ohio, (414) 332-5142.

Morrison Cove Dairy Show, Memorial Park, Martinsburg, 9 a.m.

Sustainable Forestry Course, Martin Millville, Elverson, (814) 867-9299.

4-H Benefit Auction, Lebanon Area Fairgrounds, 6 p.m.

Lancaster County 4-H Fair, Solanco Fairgrounds, thru Aug. 4

Pa. Dutch Festival, Reading Terminal Market, Philadelphia, thru Aug. 4.

Ohio Farm Tour: Stratford Ecological Center, Delaware, Ohio, 3:30 p.m.

Maryland Grain Checkoff Referendum, Maryland Cooperative Service Cecil County, (410) 996-5280.

Ag Field Day, Western Maryland Research and Education Center, Keedysville, Md., 8 a.m.-2 p.m.

## Friday, August 3

Wayne County Fair, thru Aug. 11.

Pa. Vegetable Growers Field Tour in Schuylkill and Co-

nies, usually from the South. Crossing the parent stock yields a hybrid that the hatchery uses to lay the eggs.

Many of the breeder houses are on a family farm in conjunction with another livestock operation. "Many of them utilize family members to help take care of the breeders," said Martin.

According to Martin, more producers are exploring niche markets for value-added products. "If you are producing the same chicken as everyone else, you have a lot more competition," said Martin.

## Broilers

Since a full cycle of putting the chicks in, raising them to maturity, sending them to the processor, and readying the house only takes eight to nine weeks, demand for chicks is brisk. Most of the customers are located within a 50-mile radius to the hatchery.

lumbia counties, (717) 964-3596.

Manure Application Field Day, Pleasant View Farms, Rodney Metzler Farm, near Martinsburg.

Lebanon County Holstein Show, Lebanon Fairgrounds, 9 a.m.

Washington County AG Expo, Ag Education Center, thru Aug. 10.

41st Annual Old Time Wheat Threshing, Steam, and Gas Engine Show, Denton, Md., thru Aug. 5.

Annual Corn Roast: Peach Fest, Rohrbach's Farm Market and Craft Shop, near Knoebels Amusement Resort, 11 a.m.-8 p.m., also Saturday 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

## Saturday, August 4

Pa. Performance-Tested Ram and Ewe Sale and Sheep Field Day, Penn State Ag Arena, (814) 267-3771.

Lancaster County 4-H Fair Beef Show, 10 a.m.

Howard County Fair, West Friendship, Md., thru Aug. 11, (410) 442-1022.

2001 Annual Soil and Water Conservation Society Conference, Kingston Plantation, Myrtle Beach, S.C., thru Aug. 8.

Clinton County Fair, thru Aug. 11.

Greene County Fair, thru Aug. 11.

Bucks County Summer Picnic For Pa. Holstein Association, Ray and Deb Detweiler Farm, Perkasio, 11 a.m.

## Sunday, August 5

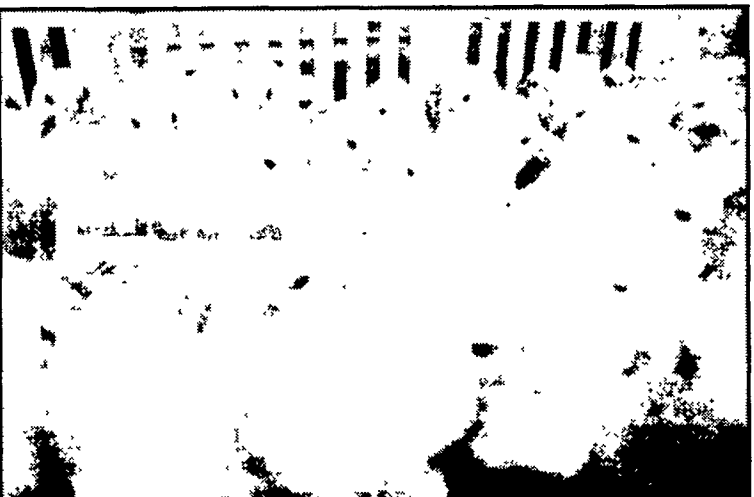
Bedford County Fair, thru Aug. 11.

Transfer Harvest Home Fair, thru Aug. 11.

Adams County Farm Bureau Annual Summer Picnic, South Mountain Fairgrounds, 12:30 p.m.



Daryl Hilsher, vice president, and John Martin, president, Longenecker Hatchery, Inc., hold several representatives of the thousands of chicks hatched and processed at the plant. Photo by Michelle Ranck-Kunjappu



The chicks are sent to the farm in boxes of 100.

# NEED HIGH QUALITY FORAGE?

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	CP	ADF	NDF	RFV	TDN	NEL
Ryegrass 10 inch tall	33.0	16.7	34.2	207	83.7	88
Ryegrass 30 inch tall	18.2	25.8	47.1	136	73.6	76
Rye 12 inch tall	22.4	21.6	47.5	141	69.5	72
Rye 30 inch tall	17.0	31.0	54.0	122	67.0	69

Feed value of Rye versus Ryegrass, on-farm trial Lancaster County, PA.

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Red & Alice White Clover	Snyder Co.	Glenn Beidler	570-539-8993	Cochranville Ag Service		717-529-5653	
Chicory	S. Sommerset Co.	Leroy Brenneman	486 Davis R	York Co.	Hakes Farm & Seed Service	717-244-2754	
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Timothy Reeds Canary	N. Sommerset Co.	Marvin Thomas	814-479-7570	Lebanon Co.	Abner Stoltzfus	717-949-2486	
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Horsemaster	E. Drumore Seeds	Henry King	717-548-3376	Bio Farm Service	Brian Futhey	814-349-4333	
Orchardgrass	Ephrata	Carl Martin	717-733-7155	Tioga Co.	David Johnson	570-324-2285	
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Forage Soybeans	Centre Co.	John Glick	814-383-4529	Virginia	L&L Seeds	877-434-7333	
Forage Oats	Bio Farm Service		717-295-9100, 800-216-1271				
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	Berks Co.	Paul Keller	610-589-2614				

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