

Chicken: Myths and Facts

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Myth: The mountains of poultry waste generated by the poultry industry pollutes local waters.

FACTS:

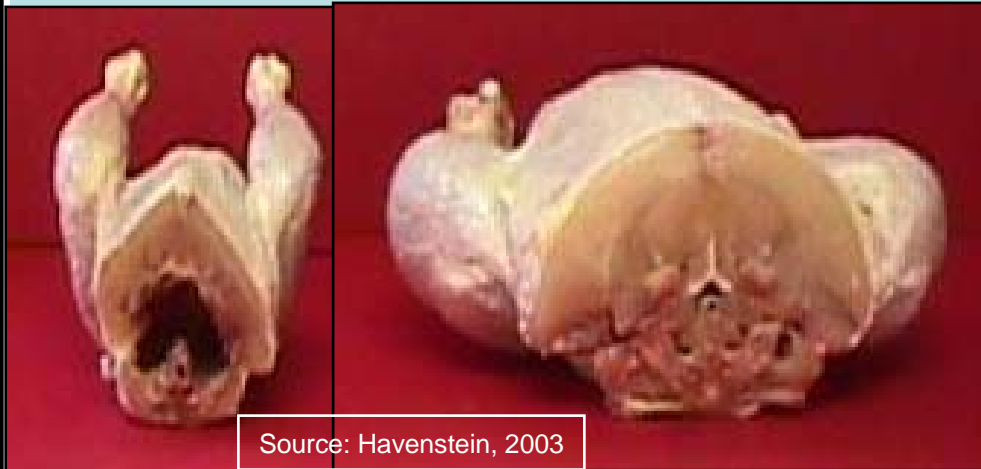
- There are no mountains of poultry waste! For the few farms having excess litter, this resource is re-located to deficit areas or converted into alternative products.
- Poultry litter is a valuable, low-cost fertilizer that helps local farmers remain profitable.
- Unlike urban landowners, farmers are required to apply litter (nutrients) according to strict nutrient management plans.
- Per acre of land, runoff and pollution is less with farm land than urban areas.



Myth: Today's bigger chickens are the result of unnatural growing conditions.

FACTS:

- Natural cross-breeding is the biggest factor in advances in the growth of chickens.
- Improved diets, housing and health care programs also contribute to faster, more efficient and healthier birds.
- Consumers have benefited from these remarkable advances. Adjusted for inflation, the cost to produce a pound of chicken over the last 60 years has decreased ~90%.



Source: Havenstein, 2003

1957 Breed

2001 Breed

Year	1923	2001
Age, wk	16	6
Wt., lbs	2.2	5.9
Lbs feed/lb meat	4.7	1.6
Live-ability(%)	82	96



Myth: “Factory farms” are used to raise broiler chickens.

FACTS:

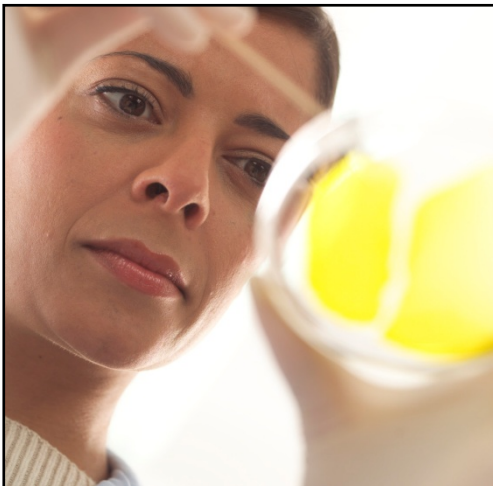
- Family farms raise broiler chickens.
- The average poultry farm on Delmarva is family owned and operated.
- Nearly 2000 farm families raise broiler chickens on Delmarva and rely on income from poultry to keep their farms profitable.
- Improvements in technology and animal welfare allow a family to successfully raise thousands of birds at a time.



Myth: Antibiotic usage in poultry is creating disease resistant bacteria that threaten human health.

FACTS:

- **Antibiotics approved by the FDA have been used safely for more than 40 years resulting in healthier animals and people.**
- **Only veterinarians can prescribe animal antibiotics.**
- **European bans on antibiotics have caused more chickens to get sick and increased the cost of food.**



Myth: Hormones are fed to chickens to make them grow faster and larger.

FACTS:

- Feeding or injection of poultry with hormones has been illegal since the 1950s.
- Chickens have been bred to have rapid growth and large breast muscles, no hormones are needed.
- Hormones have little effect on poultry growth rate.
- Improved chicken growth is do to genetics, diet, management and health.



Myth: Chicken is largely responsible for food-borne illnesses in this country.

FACTS:

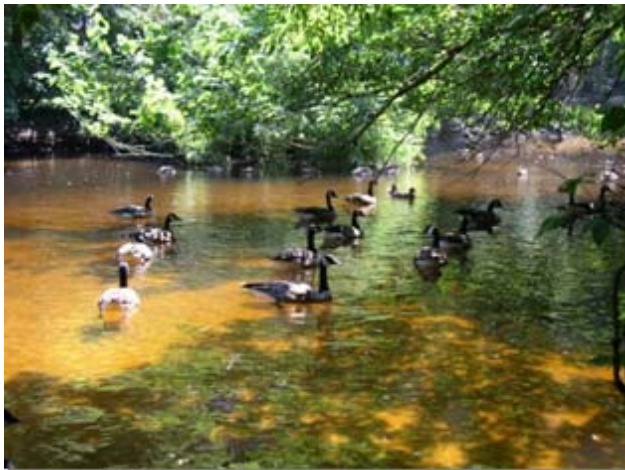
- According to CDC , fish/shellfish(19%), beef(7%), fruits and vegetables(7%) were ahead of chicken (3%) as causes for food-borne illnesses in which the contaminated food was identified.
- The few cases of food-borne illness associated with chicken can be avoided by proper handling and cooking.
- Controlling food-borne illness requires prevention efforts among all food commodities as well as proper food handling.



Myth: All wild waterfowl carry Avian Influenza virus.

FACTS:

- Different strains of Avian Influenza (AI) virus occur naturally in some wild waterfowl and shorebirds without causing illness or death.
- Although wild waterfowl and shorebirds are considered natural reservoirs of AI viruses, only the H5 and H7 subtypes can infect domestic poultry.
- Very few wild waterfowl and shorebirds carry the H5 or H7 subtypes of AI virus.
- The highly pathogenic H5N1 strain (Bird Flu) is not present in the U.S.
- Infection of U.S. domestic poultry with AI through contact with wild waterfowl and/or shorebirds is highly unlikely due to closed confinement and strict biosecurity practices.



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Help Keep Our Animals Healthy

PA State Department of
Veterinary Science

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of Agriculture



Myth: I may get Avian Influenza by eating or handling poultry products.

FACTS:

- There is no danger of acquiring Avian Influenza (AI) by eating or handling properly processed poultry products.
- AI virus is easily destroyed by the heat of normal cooking.
- AI-infected or even suspect poultry will not be sold in the U.S. because of strict USDA disease surveillance and food inspection systems.
- The U.S. does not have highly pathogenic H5N1 (Bird Flu) and does not import poultry or poultry products from countries affected with bird flu.



These chickens will never reach the U.S. and your grocery store.



Myth: Industry does not pay attention to the welfare of broiler chickens.

FACTS:

- The poultry industry operates under standards specifically designed to ensure the welfare of chickens.
- These standards were established in consultation with poultry welfare experts.
- All aspects of production from the hatchery, growout and processing are subject to independent welfare audits.

National Chicken Council Animal Welfare Audit Score Sheet	
Area	Maximum Score
Education, training & planning	100
Hatchery	175
Nutrition and feeding	150
Comfort & shelter	200
Health care	100
Normal behavior	100
On-farm best practices	100
Catching and transportation	300
Processing	200
Subtotal, Broilers	1,425
Breeder, pullets & cockerels	175
TOTAL	1,600

