

Broilers

Broilers contribute more than chicken feed to Georgia's economy. In fact, poultry is Georgia's number one agricultural commodity. The state also ranks first in the nation in cash farm receipts from all chickens and eggs including broilers. But the broiler industry has not always been the thriving business enterprise it is today.

Poultry production was considered a sideline activity on most farms until the 1930's. At that time commercial poultry production was centered primarily in the New England, Middle Atlantic and Midwestern states.

While these areas initially led the way in commercial poultry production, Southern farmers began to realize the potential of this industry as early as the 1920's. One of the first commercial broiler growers in Georgia was M.E. Murphy of Jackson County who claimed to have started growing off-season fryers in 1924.

In the South, broiler production was appealing because of good climate, cheap labor and growing markets for broilers. In addition, many farmers needed a substitute for cotton, which had come under the attack of the boll weevil. The

new industry was suited particularly for north Georgia where cotton and other crops did not provide farmers with sufficient income. For instance, farms were not large enough for dairying or raising beef cattle and many row crops could not be grown profitably due to the hilly terrain.

During the 1930's, farmers were urged to try poultry on a commercial scale. Encouragement came from county agents, agricultural colleges, experiment stations and articles in various farm publications. However, many farmers were slow to respond to this advice because they lacked the capital and expertise required for poultry farming. About this time, the industry received an unexpected boost from dealers who began promoting the industry as a means of selling larger amounts of feed.

Some feed companies began providing feed and chicks on credit to farmers who were interested in raising broilers. By the 1930's and 1940's this practice had become quite common. Jessee Dixon Jewell, a feed dealer in Gainesville, is credited with promoting expansion of the industry in north Georgia.

Short-term credit arrangements

