MISSISSIPPI
Poultry Association

emerging trends
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2009 • 3

TAXATION OF POULTRY HOUSES
By Frank McCain, Director, Property Tax Division, Mississippi State Tax Commission

Mississippi, like many other states, predominantly values property for property tax purposes using the cost approach. Simply stated, that means that improvements on the land, such as poultry houses, are valued by determining the current cost of construction, including profit, and then depreciating such cost to allow for the physical depreciation of the structure. While the assessors are required by law to consider other methods, the cost approach is normally the approach of choice for mass appraisal of properties.

County tax assessors are responsible for appraising (valuing) poultry houses. The Tax Commission’s role in the process is to provide to the counties the square-foot value for the different categories of houses. Further, it is the role of the Tax Commission to ensure that the counties use the values in the manual.

In prior years, the Mississippi Appraisal Manual – the use of which is a requirement for counties to determine cost – included eight categories of poultry houses. Noting that there has been some confusion relating to the classification of poultry houses, the Tax Commission reduced the number of categories of houses to three for the 2009 tax roll year. The change should affect property values minimally providing that the appraisers for the counties have categorized the houses correctly in previous years. The Commission has made no other changes that should adversely affect values.

The following is a simple formula for determining the amount of tax due:

\[ \text{Appraised value} \times 15\% \times \text{the applicable tax rates (millage rates)} = \text{tax due} \]

In the formula shown above, the county appraiser determines the appraised value. Fifteen percent (15%) is the assessment ratio established by the Mississippi Constitution for Class II property that includes poultry houses. The tax rates include county, city and school taxes that are applicable. Thus, you can see that the taxes paid by poultry house owners are influenced by the appraised value and the tax rates charged. Any change in either of these will effect a change in the amount due.

What does the future hold? Obviously, no one knows for sure how the economy will react in the next few years. Values of poultry houses are influenced by the economy and by market values in the county. The Tax Commission has no plans to increase values unless the market dictates that action. It appears to me that it is unlikely that values will increase significantly any time within the next few years.
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Purchasing health insurance is a very important decision. Many tend to base their entire insurance purchasing decision on the premium amount. As well as obtaining a good value, it is also vitally important that you deal with a company that is financially stable.

Types of Insurance
There are several different kinds of health insurance. Traditional insurance is often called a “fee for service” or “indemnity” plan. If you have traditional insurance, the insurer pays the bills after you receive the service. Managed care plans use your monthly payments to cover most of your medical expenses. Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) and Preferred Provider Organizations (PPOs) are the most common managed care organizations. Managed care plans provide health care in a more structured way than traditional insurance. Managed care plans encourage, and in some cases require, consumers to use doctors and hospitals that are part of a network. In both traditional insurance and managed care plans, consumers may share the cost of a service. This cost sharing is often called a co-payment, co-insurance or deductible. Many different terms are used in discussing health insurance. “Covered persons” or “enrollees” are individuals who are enrolled in a health insurance plan. “Providers” are doctors, hospitals, pharmacies, labs, urgent care facilities and other health care facilities and professionals.

Disclosure Requirements
Whether you are considering enrolling in a traditional insurance plan or managed care plan, you should know your legal rights. Mississippi law requires all insurers to clearly and truthfully disclose the following information in their insurance policies:
- A complete list of items and services that the health care plan pays for.
- A complete list of items and services that the health care plan does not pay for (exclusions and limitations).
- Any situations where the plan may not pay for all of your medical care (exceptions, reductions and limitations).
- How long you may have to wait before the policy covers recent health problems (pre-existing condition exclusion period).
- How the policy may be renewed;
- How the policy may be canceled;
- How the policy may be terminated;

A health plan may refuse to pay for health care services that relate to a health condition you had before joining your health insurance plan. Mississippi’s Premier Poultry Lender is Financing Poultry Houses & Poultry Operations in Your Area.

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plan. This is called a “pre-existing condition exclusion period”. State laws limit how long preexisting condition exclusion periods can be for individual and group health plans.

- If you have a group health plan, a pre-existing condition is a health condition for which medical advice, diagnosis, care or treatment was recommended or received within 6 months of joining a plan. Your plan may refuse to pay for services related to your pre-existing condition for 12 months.
- If you have an individual plan, a pre-existing condition is a health condition for which medical advice, diagnosis, care or treatment was recommended or received within 12 months of joining your plan. Your plan may refuse to pay for services related to your pre-existing condition for 12 months.

You may not have to serve a pre-existing condition exclusion period if you are able to get credit for your health care coverage you had before you joined your new plan. This is called “creditable coverage” and generally applies to group insurance. Ask your plan for more information. Your health insurer must renew your plan if you want to renew it. The insurer cannot cancel your policy unless it pulls out of the Mississippi market entirely, or you commit fraud or abuse or you do not pay your premiums.

**Complaint Procedures**
All health care plans must have written procedures for receiving and resolving complaints. These are often called grievance procedures. Grievance procedures must be consistent with state law requirements. If your health insurer has refused to pay for health care services that you have received or want to receive, you have the right to know the exact contractual, medical or other reason why. If you have a complaint about a health insurer or agent, you can send it in writing to the Mississippi Insurance Department at P.O. Box 79, Jackson, MS 39205. You can also download a complaint form at www.mid.state.ms.us.

**Managed Care Plans**
Every managed care plan must have enough providers so that you can get the care you need without unreasonable delay. Every managed care plan must file a description of its network of providers and how it makes sure the network can provide health care services without unreasonable delay. Sometimes, a doctor, hospital, or other health care facility leaves a managed care plans network. When this happens, a managed care plan must notify you if you saw that provider on a regular basis. By law, a covered person, you and your doctor have the right to a complete list of providers that are part of the managed care plans network. You must get this list when you enroll, re-enroll, or upon request. Every managed care plan must keep close track of the quality of the health care services it provides. Managed care plans should not use rewards or penalties that encourage less care than is medically necessary. If you want to know more about how your plan pays its providers, you should ask. Your managed care plan should notify you if it refuses to pay for a health care service based on a decision that is not medically necessary, efficient, effective or appropriate. The notice should include the main reasons for the denial and instructions on how to appeal. Every managed care plan should follow certain procedures if it determines that a health care service was not medically necessary, efficient, effective or appropriate. The procedures must be fully described in the certificate of coverage or member handbook.

**Shopping for Health Insurance**
When shopping for health insurance, it is important to make sure that you are buying the health care plan you want and can afford. You should make a list of your needs to compare with the benefits offered by a plan you are considering. You should compare plans to find out why one is cheaper than another. Listed below are some questions you should ask when shopping for health insurance:

**Questions about who is in the Insurance Provider’s Network**
- Does the health plan require you to see providers in their network?
- Does the health plan pay for you to see a doctor or use a hospital outside the network?
- Are the network providers conveniently located?
- Is the doctor you want to see in the network accepting new patients?
- What do you have to do to see a specialist?
- How easy is it to get an appointment when you need one?

**Questions About Customer Service**
- Has the company had an unusually high number of consumer complaints?
- What happens when you call the company’s consumer complaint number?
- How long does it take to reach a real person?

**Questions About Coverage**
- What does the plan pay for and not pay for?
- Will the plan pay for preventative care, immunizations, well-baby care, substance abuse, organ transplants, vision care, dental care, infertility treatment, or durable medical equipment?
- Will the plan pay for any prescriptions? If it pays for some, will it pay for all prescriptions?
- Does the plan have mental health benefits?
- Will the plan pay for long-term physical therapy?
- Not all plans cover all of the benefits listed above. Be sure to ask about benefits.

**Questions About Premiums**
- Do rates increase as you age?
- How often can rates be changed?
- How much do you have to pay when you receive health care services (co-payments and deductibles)?
- Are there any limits on how much you must pay for health care services you receive (out-of-pocket maximums)?
- Are there any limits on the number of times you may receive a service (lifetime maximums or annual benefit caps)?

**Questions About Providers**
- What are the restrictions on the use of providers or services under the plan?

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I have been to meetings in our nation’s capital and Atlanta since your last Emerging Trends, and I came back from both cities very concerned about the forces in opposition to our industry. But I am, however, optimistic that people with common sense can still communicate successfully with our leaders and the public.

Do you remember what the skyrocketing fuel prices did to your operations and your profits last year? Propane and electricity prices have returned to more normal levels now, but imagine what it would be like if 2008 were many times worse and permanent. That is exactly what the cap-and-trade legislation would mean: permanently higher fuel prices. The U.S. House of Representatives passed a cap-and-trade bill which the U.S. Senate will consider this fall. This tax scheme will make American products more expensive while other countries escape the costs of compliance. Three of four Mississippi Congressmen voted against the measure and both our U.S. Senators are opposed.

Also, in Washington – in fact, inside the White House – President Obama’s chief of regulatory affairs is the author of books supporting the notion that animals should be able to hire lawyers to sue humans. Two poultry state senators have placed a “hold” on this college professor’s nomination, but he continues to advise the President. The professor signed a letter stating that his way-out-of-the-mainstream views would not influence his job performance. Is that really possible?

In Atlanta, I met with the executives of other state poultry associations. We heard from the head of the California Poultry Association about Proposition 2 in which voters, most of whom had never been on a farm, voted restrictive animal husbandry practices into state law. The proposition on last November’s ballot basically eliminates cage layer production which will make eggs produced in California more costly. California legislators recognized this during the 2009 legislative session, and there was an unsuccessful attempt to ban eggs from other states that did not follow California’s Proposition 2 rules.

The Humane Society of the U.S. (HSUS), armed with millions in cash, began threatening a similar measure in Ohio in 2010. The Ohio Poultry Association and other agriculture groups beat HSUS to the punch and got the Legislature to put agriculture’s own initiative on the 2009 ballot. Voters will decide this November whether to create a state board to oversee animal husbandry practices. Members of the board include three family farmers, two veterinarians (one being the state veterinarian), a food safety expert, a representative of a local humane society, two members from statewide farm organizations, the dean of an Ohio agriculture college and two members representing Ohio consumers. Prospects look good for the passage of the Ohio Livestock Care Board.

I am proud to help represent Mississippi’s poultry industry (the fourth largest in the nation) at the Capitol and industry meetings to help protect it from potentially harmful legislation and animal activist groups. I will continue to look for successful strategies from other states so we can battle groups that want to wreck our nation’s reliable food production system. I can assure you that the Mississippi Poultry Association will join with other agriculture interests and take a proactive stance to protect our state’s largest agricultural industry.
Miss Haley Lynn James of Ellisville, Mississippi is the winner of the 2009 non-poultry science major. Miss James plans to attend Jones County Junior College with aspirations to become a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner. She is the daughter of Donald M. James and Mrs. Loretta Lynn James. The James family grows broilers in Ellisville for Sanderson Farms.

MPA SCHOLARSHIP WINNER
2009: Miss Haley Lynn James

THE JAMES FAMILY GROWS BROILERS IN ELLISVILLE FOR SANDERSON FARMS.

MPA President Mark Leggett awarded Haley the MPA scholarship.

Haley plans to attend JCCC.

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The Parklane Science Olympiad Team from McComb, Mississippi recently represented the state in the National Science Olympiad Tournament in Augusta, GA. All fifty states were represented with 2,400 total contestants. To represent the strength of the poultry industry in Mississippi, the team wore poultry shirts donated by MPA. Children of families with MPA connections are pictured here (from left): Anne Marie DeLee, Sarah DeLee, children of Anthony DeLee, who works for Sanderson Farms; Elizabeth Wallace, daughter of Gary and Belinda Wallace, MPA members and broiler producers; and Dallas McClendon, son of Rusty and Trina McClendon, MPA members and broiler producers. McClendon placed in the top 25 in the nation.

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The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides assistance to producers for livestock deaths that result from disaster. LIP compensates livestock owners and contract growers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather (hurricanes, floods, blizzards, disease, wildfires, extreme temperatures). Eligible losses must have occurred on or after January 1, 2008, and before October 1, 2011.

“This program provides livestock producers a vital safety net to help overcome the damaging financial impact of natural disasters,” said Michael R. Sullivan, State Executive Director for USDA Farm Service Agency.

The following table provides the final dates to file a notice of loss and/or application for payment for either 2008 or 2009 livestock losses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE OF LIVESTOCK DEATH</th>
<th>FINAL DATE TO FILE NOTICE OF LOSS</th>
<th>FINAL DATE TO FILE APPLICATION FOR PAYMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calendar Year 2008</td>
<td>11/13/09</td>
<td>11/13/09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/1/09 to 7/12/09</td>
<td>11/13/09</td>
<td>1/30/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/13/09 to 12/31/09</td>
<td>30 days after apparent death</td>
<td>1/30/10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Specific provisions for the other supplemental agricultural disaster assistance programs authorized by the 2008 Act will be implemented through separate rulemakings and announced at a later date. For more information on available supplemental disaster assistance programs, visit your FSA county office or www.fsa.usda.gov.
Brooding, providing a warm place for the baby chick to comfortably eat and drink, has long been known to be a very important aspect of broiler management that can determine subsequent performance and profitability in the commercial industry. The five most important aspects of brooding that must be maintained are heat, feed, water, lights and air quality. If you look at brooding from a scientific prospective, we know that a chick is unable to regulate its body temperature for the first several days of life and needs an external heat source. Research has shown that stressing baby chicks with cold or heat can lead to decreased performance as exhibited through lower weights and higher feed conversions. Since there is so much research telling us that chicks must be brooded correctly to reach their full potential, it is easy to assume that there must be research that tells us the ideal temperature to maintain within the chicken house. However, there are too many variables to consider for there to be one predetermined temperature. The age of the breeder hens producing the chicks, the depth and moisture level of the litter and the tightness of the chicken house are just a few of the variables that must be considered when developing a brooding program. A brooding program which is successful on one farm may be unsuccessful on another based on these variables. It may even vary on one farm from house to house depending on these and other variables on that particular farm.

A chick is at its most comfortable when it is in its thermoneutral zone. A chick is in its thermoneutral zone when its rectal body temperature falls between 103.6 and 104.2°F. (No, I do not expect you to take rectal temperatures of your chicks, although I have done it to prove my point to company personnel as well as growers.) So, how do you determine whether or not a chick is comfortable or uncomfortable? An integrator may give you temperature guidelines for brooding, but that is exactly what they are: guidelines based on scientific evidence under ideal conditions. Most of the time if you brood chicks within these guidelines, you will be doing a good job. However, conditions are not always going to be ideal. You can improve your performance by taking a few minutes each time you set foot in your chicken house and studying the behavior of the birds. The chicks will tell you if they are comfortable. Whether you have tube heat or brooders, if the chicks are huddling against the walls, they are trying to get away from the heat. If the chicks are huddled under the brooders or sitting directly under the tube heat in the center of the house or huddled in the feeder lids, they are too cold. Sounds simple, right? Well, it is. I have seen growers heat stress birds by running their brooders or tube heat too hot. Remember, even in the backyard when a mother hen broods her chicks, they come and go as they please as they need warmth provided by her body heat. They always have the option of getting away from the heat when necessary. However, if you keep the entire chicken house too hot, they cannot escape the heat, therefore they become dehydrated and starve out.

Most integrators will agree that overheating chicks is not the most common problem in the industry. Chilling chicks is more common, especially during the cooler months. It has been shown that even short periods (< 1 hour) of moderately cold temperatures (55°F) depresses weight gain and increases mortality. Cold stress can even cause late mortality in a flock. When a chick becomes chilled, its metabolism increases in an attempt to keep it warm. This increase in metabolism increases the tissues’ need for oxygen which causes the heart to work harder. This leads to right heart failure which manifests itself as ascites, or waterbelly, in broilers later in life.

When brooding, you must consider different variables that are present during each particular flock. For example, a chick derived from a young, or pullet, breeder flock (typically considered < 32 weeks of age), has a harder time regulating its body temperature compared to a chick derived from a prime age breeder flock. Rectal temperatures of these “pullet” chicks will be lower, in the range of 101-102°F, while chicks from older breeder flocks in the same environment will have rectal temperatures within the normal range (103.6 to 104.2°F). Therefore, these “pullet” chicks require higher brooding temperatures. Typically, two to three degrees higher is required for these chicks.

Because so much emphasis is placed on air temperature within a house, one variable that is often neglected is litter temperature. Chicks are in constant contact with the litter. The litter must be warm and dry. If it is cold and/or wet, it will act as an evaporative cooling pad and actually pull heat from the chick’s feet. Litter depth is another important factor to consider. The deeper the litter in a chicken house the better it will be able to maintain heat, especially during the wintertime.

It is not uncommon to see variability from house to house even on the same farm. Whether due to amounts of ceiling insulation or some other factor that makes one house tighter than another, you may have to brood houses hotter within the same farm.

Adequate amounts of feed within the range of the heat source should always be available during the brooding period. Supplemental feed lids placed near the heat source will encourage chicks to start eating sooner because they tend to seek out heat when they first arrive. There should be enough feed available within the thermoneutral zone so that the chick does not have to leave this zone to find feed. Like the litter, feed in the feed lids should be given time to preheat, so that chicks don’t shy away from it. This is especially true during the cooler months of the year.

In addition to feed, water availability is also important. Use the time between batches to clean and disinfect water lines before you receive chicks. Next, water line height is crucial. Chicks coming from different age breeder flocks may vary in size since younger breeder flocks lay smaller eggs which produce smaller chicks than those from older breeder flocks. Many times you will have to wait until immediately following placement to get the most ideal water line height for that particular flock. However, for starters, a good average estimate is the height of a soda can. Taping a soda can to the end of a waist-high stick can help you not only roughly
estimate the height needed for chicks to comfortably access the water, but it can also help you level the water line throughout the house. As a rule of thumb, I do not like running anything through the water lines the first few days. At this time the chicks are not drinking enough water to flush water through the lines. If you run products such as vitamins early, these can settle within the line and create a breeding ground for bacteria. Wait until the birds are consuming enough water to thoroughly move the water through the lines to help avoid the subsequent buildup this can cause.

Another significant aspect of brooding is lighting. In bright light intensities, chick activity is increased over that of chicks in low light intensity. The more active the chicks, the more they will eat and drink. High light intensity also allows them to locate the feed and water quicker. At least 2.5-foot candles of light should be provided early in the brooding phase for at least 23 hours each day.

Good air quality during brooding is also a key aspect of brooding correctly. To some growers it seems contraindicated to run fans while you are running supplemental heat. However, to maintain good air quality, you must do both. Ventilation is required to remove ammonia, dust and other irritants from the chicken house environment. At high levels, ammonia can cause eye irritation and respiratory issues. When ventilating, you should direct airflow toward the ceiling where it can mix with hot air and not fall directly on the chicks and chill them. Most modern chicken houses do this through inlet openings or vent doors. The proper opening size of these inlets should be emphasized. A large opening can allow the air to enter too slowly and fall to the floor too quickly and chill the chicks.

I would be remiss if I did not mention another important aspect of brooding preparation. Especially in cold weather, it is important to ignite your heat source no less than 24 hours before bird placement. This will allow the litter time to heat up. If the litter is new or wet, preheating should begin at least 48 hours before placement.

As you can see, I have not given you any temperatures within this article, not even as guidelines. You can research on-line, ask your integrator, or find articles in print that will furnish you with these numbers. The fact is that I truly believe that if you watch the chicks, they will tell you whether you are running your temperature too hot or too cool. When chicks are well spread out covering the chicken house floor eating, drinking and playing, they are comfortable, and these activities will be done at different temperatures on different farms depending on the multiple variables discussed in this article. They would not be doing any of these things if they were uncomfortable. If you don’t believe me, and you are one of those people who needs to back everything up with science, I challenge you to buy a thermometer from your local drug store and try taking a few rectal temperatures yourself. These types of thermometers are not as accurate as those used in research; however, if the temperatures you record are in the neighborhood of 103 to 104.5° F, you are doing a good job brooding. Soon, you will be able to identify when your chicks are within the normal ranges just by their behavior. The main goal of brooding is to get chicks off to a good start. If you provide them with adequate heat, feed, water, light, and air quality, you will be doing just that.

*MPA notes that the article above is a recommendation; however, you should follow your integrators guidelines. If you feel you need to go outside the guidelines, you should contact your service technician.*
Upcoming Events

September 8 – Grower Advisory Committee Meeting
Country Fisherman in Mendenhall, MS at 10:00 a.m.

September 17-20 – MPA 72nd Annual Convention
Hilton Sandestin Golf & Tennis Resort, Destin, FL. Call Becky Beard at 601-932-7560 for more info.

September 26 – Wing Dang Doodle Festival
Join MPA and the Forest Chamber of Commerce for the 5th Annual Wing Dang Doodle Festival in Forest, MS. The Festival will include food, fun, and music. MPA will be competing in the wing-cooking contest, so bring the coupon on the back of this newsletter for your free wing from our booth. Cash prizes will be awarded to the winning wings, so wish us luck! See the coupon on the back for more information.

December 8 – Grower Advisory Committee Meeting
Morgan’s on Main in Collins, MS. Time to be announced at a later date.

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Come Join MPA at the Wing Dang Doodle Festival in Forest, Mississippi on September 26, 2009

If you are an MPA member, bring this coupon for a free wing from our booth!

MPA will have a cooking booth at the Wing Dang Doodle Festival this year! We would like to invite everyone to come by and try our wings. There will be activities like arts and crafts, a pet show, motorcycle show, as well as music by blues musician Eden Brent. Admission to the event is free; the wing-tasting is $5. We look forward to seeing you there and appreciate your membership. Don’t forget to vote for your favorite wing of the day! Cash prizes will be awarded to the winning wings, so wish us luck! For more information about the Festival, call the Forest Chamber of Commerce at 601-469-4332.