THEN: Chicken is a luxury. The average chicken raised for food weighed just 2.89 lbs. in the 1940s.

NOW: Chicken is one of the nation’s most affordable and nutrient-rich proteins. After years of selective breeding by poultry scientists, the average broiler market weight is 6.18 lbs.

THEN: In 1940, one farmer fed just 19 people.

NOW: Today, each farmer produces enough food to feed 165 people for an entire year.

THEN: Chickens live in the barn with other animals or outside. Birds are left to forage for food, exposed to the elements and predators.

NOW: Chickens live in biosecure houses with access to unlimited food and water. The birds’ diets are specially formulated by poultry nutritionists.

THEN: The mortality rate for chickens in the early 1900s was around 40%.

NOW: In 2017, the mortality rate is only 4%, thanks to veterinarian supervision and advances in breeding and technology.

THEN: Little to no governmental oversight existed for poultry production and processing, and there were no rules regarding use of hormones or steroids.

NOW: The USDA FSIS has a strict set of regulations and frequently performs tests on all federally inspected poultry prior to sale. In 1959, federal inspection of broilers became mandatory.

THEN: Consistent year-round production of chicken is not possible, due to temperature extremes.

NOW: After years of technological advances, chicken houses are equipped with computerized lighting systems and are climate-controlled.

1 National Chicken Council
2 USDA
3 American Farm Bureau Foundation
4 American Egg Board