MAINTAINING COMPLIANCE WITH DRY LITTER POULTRY GENERAL PERMIT

By Tom Tabler, Extension Professor
Mississippi State University, Department of Poultry Science

There is often confusion about Mississippi’s Dry Litter Poultry General Permit in terms of what records poultry growers should be keeping and what the permit requires. The goal of this article is to address some of the confusion and make it easier to understand what is expected of Mississippi poultry growers concerning record keeping.

First, your dry litter permit is a different and separate document from your comprehensive nutrient management plan (CNMP). Your permit is issued through the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) and enforced through its Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Agricultural Branch.

The MDEQ is responsible for protecting Mississippi’s air, land, and water. In doing so, the MDEQ is also charged with safeguarding the health, safety, and welfare of all Mississippians by protecting, conserving, and improving the environment. As the population of the state grows and livestock numbers increase, more emphasis is being put on protecting and conserving the Mississippi environment.

While rules and regulations are often viewed negatively, especially by those being regulated, most people understand and appreciate why we have them and the role they play in maintaining our society. Currently in Mississippi, regulations require all poultry growers who operate dry litter poultry facilities to obtain coverage under Mississippi’s Dry Litter Poultry General Permit. This is one permit that covers the entire state, and operators must apply for coverage.

Regardless of the class of commercial poultry (broilers, pullets, breeder hens), all dry litter poultry operations are covered by the same permit. This means everyone has the same permit requirements and everyone is playing by the same rules. The Dry Litter General Permit was issued February 1, 2009, and will expire (for every permit holder) January 31, 2014.

Before this expiration date, all poultry operators must apply to MDEQ for a new permit. The intent of MDEQ is to reissue the dry litter general permit. So there will once again be a “general permit” that covers the entire state for dry litter poultry facilities that meet the eligibility requirements of the permit. Each poultry facility will have to submit its own, individual application or notice of intent (NOI). All eligible poultry facilities in the state will continue to be covered under one general permit with the same permit requirements for every facility. To obtain coverage under the newly reissued permit, a dry litter poultry notice of intent (DLPNOI) will have to be submitted in accordance with ACT 2, S-3 of the permit. Applications must be submitted before the existing permit expires (January 31, 2014).

The dry litter general permit in Mississippi is different from your individual comprehensive nutrient management plan (CNMP) that is tailored to your unique farming operation, soil conditions, geographic location, etc. These are two separate but equally
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important documents, and you must have each to be in compliance with current Mississippi regulations. Your CNMP is good for 5 years from the date it was issued and is not necessarily the same date as your dry litter permit coverage and expiration. If you built a farm last year or 2 years ago, or build a farm in 2013, the dry litter permit coverage will expire on January 31, 2014. However, your CNMP will expire 5 years from when it was developed. For example, if you build a farm in 2013, your dry litter permit will expire January 31, 2014, but your CNMP will not expire until 2018.

The dry litter permit covers activities associated with poultry farms, including, but not limited to, land application of poultry litter and compost, incineration, and composting of mortalities. However, to be eligible for coverage under the permit, there must be no discharge of process wastewater at the operation.

Process wastewater is any water used, directly or indirectly, in the operation of the poultry facility that may come in contact with chickens, litter, manure, compost, feed, etc. This includes, but is not limited to, spillage or overflow of poultry watering systems, or wash water from cleaning houses, stacking sheds, composters, de-cakers, and windrowing or other equipment. Process wastewater also includes any storm water (rainfall and storm water runoff) that comes into contact with any raw materials, products, or byproducts, including manure, litter, compost, mortalities, feed, or birds.

You may have questions concerning rainfall events after dry litter has been land applied. Regulations, as well as the permit, allow storm water runoff from fields only when the litter has been applied in accordance with the operation’s nutrient management plan and the permit. Be aware that the dry litter permit prohibits any dry weather discharges from your land application fields.

As animal feeding operations across the country have become larger and more concentrated, the potential for pollution from these operations has attracted the attention of the federal government. As a result, MDEQ is inspecting an increasing number of animal feeding operations in Mississippi, including poultry facilities. You should now expect your operation to be inspected at least once every 1 to 3 years.

Scheduled inspections are usually done near the beginning of the year. However, complaints to MDEQ are investigated as they are received, regardless of the time of year. All areas of the farming operation are fair game to inspectors. This includes outdoor facilities, composting areas, incinerator sites, stacking sheds or manure storage areas, and land application sites. Generally, however, inspectors do not enter poultry houses or anywhere that could pose a biosecurity risk or disease threat.

Most likely, the inspector will first ask to see your records. Poor record keeping or no record keeping at all is one of the common violations inspectors see for permit holders. Make sure accurate records are being kept on your operation. It takes extra time and work and there is always something more important and certainly more exciting to do than paperwork, but without proper documentation, you have likely sealed your fate when inspectors arrive at your farm. Regardless of how well you manage litter, compost, mortalities, and everything else—or how neat and tidy your operation is—you are likely looking at a fine or penalty on lack of adequate records alone.

A fine and penalty will not be cheap. Be aware that any person found violating any condition of the dry litter poultry permit is subject to significant civil penalties. This also includes the conditions in your nutrient management plan, which, upon approval, becomes an enforceable document. In addition, each day that a violation occurs is considered a separate and additional violation.

Know where your dry litter permit and nutrient management plan are at all times and be able to produce them on short notice (minutes, not hours). Inspectors are not required to give advance notice and may arrive unannounced at your farm. You must have all the required paperwork and be able to produce it for the inspector.

There are several items of paperwork that you are responsible for, including:

- Dry litter poultry general permit
- Certificate of coverage
- Nutrient management plan (NMP)
- Land application log sheet
- Monthly litter storage structures and/or piles inspections log sheet
- Monthly land application equipment inspections log sheet
- Monthly storm water management structures inspection log sheet
- Litter transfer record form (for litter transferred to other people)
- Daily mortality record keeping log sheet (mortality charts may serve for this)
- Daily incineration record keeping log sheet

For the monthly inspection records listed above, correct any deficiencies found as soon as possible and document corrective actions taken. You are required to keep these records on-site for 5 years. The forms you must use to stay

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in compliance with the dry litter permit are NOT included in your CNMP. They were mailed when your facility initially received permit coverage. You may also download additional forms from MDEQ’s website (http://www.deq.state.ms.us/MDEQ.nsf/page/epd_AgriculturalBranchEPD). See the “Dry Litter Poultry (DLP) AFO NOI and Forms Package” (the first link listed under “Commonly Used Applications and Forms” toward the bottom of the page). The forms are also available on the Mississippi Poultry Association’s website (http://www.mspoultry.org). Click on the “Growers” link and see “MDEQ Compliance Documents.”

You will need to demonstrate to the inspector that you know how much litter you are applying so as to remain in compliance with your CNMP. You must also have litter analyzed at least once annually for nitrogen and phosphorus so you know what you are applying. Soil must be analyzed at least once every 5 years for phosphorus content. Numerous websites have information on how to determine how much litter you are applying. One such site is cru.cahe.wsu.edu/cepубlications/pnw0533/pnw0533.pdf.

**Buffer requirements** come into play when you land-apply litter. Dry litter must remain at least 25 feet from the nearest adjoining property line and at least 150 feet from the nearest unowned occupied dwelling. When transferring litter to a third party, you must keep records of whom it is transferred to, and you must provide them analysis of the litter and guidance for applying it correctly. (See “Management Guidelines for Land Application of Animal Waste” included in the forms packet that was mailed when your facility received permit coverage.)

Once you appropriately transfer litter, you are no longer responsible for it. However, if you deliver and spread litter for someone else, you are responsible for it; and if you place or spread litter where it can pollute the waters of the state, it is your responsibility.

There are buffer zones associated with structures, as well. Any facility (barn, poultry house, compost or stacking shed, etc.) enlarged or significantly altered after February 24, 1994, must be at least 600 feet from the nearest unowned occupied home or business and at least 150 feet from the nearest adjoining property line. In addition, incinerators must be at least 150 feet from any unowned home and any residential or recreational area.

**Common problems that are seen during on-farm inspections** include:

- Raw materials being exposed to the elements
- Piles of feed or feed spills not properly cleaned up
- Material around composter and stacking shed not on a slab or under cover
- Ash and/or mortalities left to accumulate around incinerator
- Excessive odor, flies, and/or mosquitoes
- Tall grass around production areas (contributes to pest problems)
- Drainage issues and standing water problems
- Improper/incomplete composting (disease threat)

Raw materials and spilled feed can create problems (odor, flies, etc.) when they get wet and may contaminate storm water runoff, potentially harming groundwater supplies and surface waters such as ponds and streams.

**Common complaints** are:

- Odor from uncovered litter or manure storage
- Flies

- Dust and odor from clean out and spreading litter
- Piling uncovered manure before spreading
- Buffer zone issues
- Erosion problems
- Improper mortality handling—mixing dead poultry with manure, improper composting

The permit states that a poultry farm must not unreasonably affect human health and well-being, interfere with the use and enjoyment of property, or affect plant or animal life. Keeping litter and compost dry will go a long way in staying in compliance with the permit. Wet litter will lead to odor, flies, and possible runoff issues. People tend to assume there is an environmental problem associated with any odor they find offensive, and decomposing organic material (litter, mortality, and feed) is a prime source of odor on the farm.

If you transfer litter to a third party who piles that litter before spreading it and someone turns in an odor complaint, it could eventually lead back to you. Inspectors follow up on every complaint. They will visit the farmer who received the initial complaint and ask where the litter came from and if you provided a copy of “Management Guidelines for Land Application of Animal Waste” when the litter was transferred. If you did not provide these guidelines, the inspectors will visit you. Make sure you have done everything correctly to protect yourself.

Fly numbers can increase rapidly unless they are controlled. Flies breed in moist soil or partly decomposed organic material (litter, spilled feed, compost). Keep litter and compost dry, clean up feed spills, and limit availability of organic material to flies and larvae. Maintain compost bins and incinerators, and do not leave dead birds exposed to the environment. Pay special attention to the following areas of concern:

- Feed spills around storage bins
- Litter storage areas
- Litter loading areas
- Compost bins
- Litter and compost land application sites

There is one additional permit condition to be aware of. For any aboveground bulk storage tanks with total capacity of more than 1,320 gallons, or any single container greater than 600 gallons, the permit requires that you provide secondary containment or equivalent protective measures in the event of a potential spill. **Secondary containment** can be a clay dike or berm without a liner that will hold a potential spill of the largest tank inside the dike or berm. Additional information concerning spill containment is located at http://www.epa.gov/osweroe1/content/spcc/spcc_ag.htm.

Environmental protection will become increasingly important as the population grows and animal feeding operations become larger and more concentrated. Mississippi poultry growers are required to maintain records on the management of dry litter, mortalities, and compost associated with their farming enterprises.

The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality is charged with protecting the state’s air, land, and water. It is MDEQ’s responsibility to inspect poultry operations within the state and help growers maintain compliance with environmental rules and regulations. Good record keeping and sound, common-sense management practices will help protect our environment and keep Mississippi poultry operators and their farming enterprises in compliance with environmental protection regulations.
H ow about no sales tax on your propane or electricity? The 1.5 percent sales on energy sold to farmers and manufacturers, including poultry processors, will go away on July 1, 2014.

Repealing the sales tax on energy was a major accomplishment for MPA and a coalition including Farm Bureau and the Mississippi Manufacturers Association in the 2013 session. There were a couple of other changes to come out of the Legislature this year that benefit poultry growers.

MPA proposed repealing the sales tax on energy sold to farmers. The Legislature agreed but decided to wait a year to repeal it so that lawmakers could plan for the estimated $7 million loss to the state budget in 2014.

MPA grower members received a card asking them to call their legislators. Many of you did, and your calls made the difference.

Removing the tax brings Mississippi in line with the majority of states that no longer tax energy used as input in production. The sales tax on residential utilities was repealed in 1979.

The MPA accomplished a number of other goals that will benefit growers and processors, including:

**Making the Emerging Crops Loan Program Caps Permanent** – The $400,000 lifetime cap on loans was made permanent by removing a provision that could have dropped it back to $200,000 next year. MPA worked with the Farm Bureau and the Mississippi Bankers Association to get this done.

**Ensuring Consistent Statewide Food Regulation** – This made it clear that regulations over the marketing of food would be set by the Legislature, so there would not be a patchwork of local rules restricting or putting local mandates on food or food establishments. For example, cities cannot require menu labels, restrict the size of drinks, or ban toys in kids’ meals. Restaurants, grocers, convenience stores, small businesses, and Farm Bureau all recognized the threats to food production, processing, and sales from a patchwork of local restrictions.

**Creating a Farm-to-School Interagency Council** – This council, which includes MPA and Farm Bureau as members, will work to get more Mississippi agricultural products into schools and other state institutions.

**Supporting Mississippi State University Funding** – MSU programs that serve the poultry industry, such as the Department of Poultry Science, the College of Veterinary Medicine and Cooperative Extension got 6 percent increases in addition to bonds for construction projects such as a new animal and dairy science building that could include a wing for the Poultry Science Department.

**Stopping State Immigration Laws** – MPA urged legislators to let Congress develop a national solution to the problem. All the bills in the 2013 Mississippi Legislature died, and Congress is considering federal legislation.

How did MPA members have such a good session? Maintaining a constant presence at the Capitol, member involvement (your calls and emails) and building coalitions with other groups. That is how we accomplish things at the Capitol.
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It’s that time again – summer – which means MPA is gearing up for our Annual Convention! Plans are now being made to make this convention special. MPA members, invited guests, and very interesting speakers will once again flock to Florida to the sugar-white beaches of the gorgeous Emerald Coast waters for three days of sun, fishing, and golf.

KICK-OFF RECEPTION
We will have our kick-off reception on Thursday night, September 12 at 6:00 p.m. at the popular poolside party. Huge shrimp and cold drinks will be some of the items on the menu as we join our old and new friends to connect and discuss the past years’ events in our industry.

GUEST SPEAKERS
On Friday, September 13, we will begin the convention meeting by hearing the Congressman Steven Palazzo and Mississippi Senator Billy Hudson. John Starkey with U.S. Poultry will also be a guest speaker at our meeting.

LADIES’ PROGRAM
The Cobb-Vantress, Inc. Ladies Program will be on tap this year with Guinness Book Record Holder Howard Helmer entertaining us and showing us how to make delicious omelets. Then, get ready for a fun game of the famous MPA Scavenger Hunt. So, load your purses with lots of crazy items, and get ready, we are going to have a great time and win lots of great prizes.

TOURNAMENTS
Friday afternoon, golfer and fisherman can load up their carts and boats and go out and compete for great prizes provided by Vendworks, McNeely Plastics and International Paper Company. All prizes will be awarded on Saturday night at the awards program.

LIVE/SILENT AUCTION
On tap again this year is the Mississippi Poultry Foundation Live and Silent Auction. Our Allied and company members do a great job of supplying auction items. So start shopping, or call me, and I will shop for you. Last year, the auctions raised over $20,000.

SCHOLARSHIPS
Four scholarships were awarded this year to growers’ children and grandchildren – some majoring in Poultry Science – from proceeds of this auction. In the future, our goal is to be able to provide scholarships to each student majoring in Poultry Science.

REGISTRATION
The cost for MPA Grower members (single or couple) is $50.00 plus your hotel accommodations with room rates of $175.00 per night. Please note MPA cannot make your hotel reservations.

Call me at 601-932-7560 or email me at beard@mspoultry.org for registration and reservation information. I will be glad to send you a registration form by mail or email.

Hotel reservations at the Hilton Sandestin can be made online at www.hiltonsandestinbeach.com or by calling 1-850-267-9500. Ask for group reservations and mention “MPA” to be certain you receive the special rate.

The deadline for reserving rooms is August 11, 2013. After this date, even if rooms are still available, you may not receive the special MPA rate. Please make sure to book your room well in advance. I hope to see you in Destin!

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

**Thursday, September 13**
2:00-5:00pm Registration
6:00-7:30pm Gold Sponsor Poolside Reception

**Friday, September 14**
7:30-11:00am Registration
8:00-12noon Opening Business Session, Awards/Accolades
10:00-11:30am Cobb-Vantress Ladies Program and Speakers
Noon-4:00pm Vendworks, McNeely Plastics Product Golf Tournament

**Saturday, September 15**
8:00-11:00am Business/Board Meeting, John Starkey-Speaker
Noon-4:00pm International Paper Golf Tournament
6:00-9:00pm Diamond Sponsor’s Awards Reception and the Silent/Live Auction
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To help our government officials get a better understanding of how the poultry industry operates and how 7 billion people can be fed, MPA has been taking them on tours of farms and plants for the last year.

Last fall the Mississippi House and Senate Agriculture Committees and their staffs each spent two days touring farms and plants including Peco, Sanderson, and Tyson. They donned their protective wear and asked questions throughout the tour. The tours were so successful that it prompted members and staff to ask for more.

This May, the Senate Agriculture Committee visited Representative Michael Evans’ breeder farm in Preston and Lester Holdiness’ pullet farm nearby. The tour concluded with a visit to the Peco Hatchery in Sebastapol. Senator Giles Ward (R-Louisville) arranged for lunch at the Neshoba County xxxxxxx.

Also last fall, staff from Representative Gregg Harper’s office and members of the USDA’s Mississippi Natural Resources Conservation Services state office toured Tyson farms near Jackson to get an idea of some of the latest technology in poultry houses.

In June, staff from U.S. Senator Thad Cochran’s office toured Tyson facilities from hatchery to farm to processing plant.

Transparency is the buzzword at the moment – being open about how the industry operates – but more important are the personal connections: Mrs. Evans turning on the conveyer belt at her egg house, Mike Smith announcing how many people are on the payroll in Carthage, Paul Billingsley providing wings and strips in the test kitchen, or xxxx explaining how the trucks being loaded in Canton are headed to a Buffalo Wild Wings. These examples make the Mississippi poultry industry both personal and global.
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The 2013 Mississippi Poultry Association’s Poultry Management School took place on May 14 and 15 at the College of Veterinary Medicine at Mississippi State University. Over one hundred representatives from Marshall Durbin, Peco, Sanderson, Tyson, and Wayne, along with more than thirty allied member companies, attended this year’s school. The first day provided attendees an opportunity to learn more about Threats to the Poultry Industry (Tom Super), Poultry Resources at Mississippi State (Dr. Mary Beck), Environmental Compliance Education (Paul Bredwell), and What the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality Inspectors Look For (Ken LaFleur). Following these seminars, MPA’s allied industry and CASCO Products sponsored the Low Country Boil Dinner. This delicious crawfish and shrimp boil provided old and new friends alike an opportunity to catch up on the latest developments in the industry and to discuss the topics that were covered earlier in the day.

The second day offered a unique opportunity to the guests, because they could choose which seminar topics to attend that were most relevant to their particular fields of interests. Each section was equally attended, and the information provided helped address a wide range of issues and concerns.

Section one covered Design and Operation Considerations for Attic Inlets (Dr. Jody Purswell), Feed Withdrawals (Dr. Tim Cummings), and Lighting Options (Dr. Tom Tabler). Section two discussed Hatchery Chick Quality (Scott Martin), Breeders and Fertility (Dr. Chris McDaniel), and Gadgets, How to Use Them (Dr. Jeremiah Davis). Section three examined Diseases/Bio Security (Dr. Danny Magee), Pest Management (Dr. Jerome Goddard), and Emergency – Back Up (Jess Campbell). First South Farm Credit sponsored an appetizing lunch of chicken and vegetables at the Hill Poultry Science Building following the completion of the seminars and Management School.

MPA would like to thank all the participants this year that helped make Management School a great success. Special thanks to all our guest speakers that provided crucial educational material and training and our allied members that help make this event possible:

Aviagen, Inc.; Azomite; Big Dutchman; Bunge; CASCO Products; Ceva Biomune; Choretime Equipment; Cobb-Vantress, Inc.; Community Bank of Mississippi; CPM; Cumberland/Hired Hand; D&F Equipment; Deep South Poultry Supply; Elanco Animal Health; First Financial Bank; General Chemical; Georgia Poultry Equipment Company; H.J. Baker and Bro., Inc.; Hubbard Farms; Huvepharma, Inc.; Insul-Pro Plus II, Inc.; International Paper Company; Ivesco; Jones-Hamilton Company; Kemin Agrifoods; L.B. White North America, Inc.; Liphatech; Merial Select; Phibro Animal Health; Reeves Supply Co.; Southern Ag Credit; Taylor Power Systems; Vendworks; and Zoetis.
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Each year the Mississippi Poultry Association, through the Mississippi Poultry Foundation, awards four $1,500 scholarships to students of MPA families and/or Poultry Science majors. The scholarships are awarded based on academic performance, experience/knowledge of our industry, extra-curricular activities, and community involvement.

The 2013 Mississippi Poultry Foundation recipients are Mr. Benjamin A. Bishop, Ms. Hillary Elaine Hobby, Mr. William Cole Rogers, and Mr. Eric Wayne Upton.

**MR. BENJAMIN BISHOP** is from Rose Hill, Mississippi. He is the son of MPA members Mr. and Mrs. William and Kathy Bishop. Benjamin attends Mississippi State University, where he is majoring in Poultry Science with an emphasis in Veterinary Sciences. He has represented the state of Mississippi in the 2009 Poultry Judging competition in Louisville, Kentucky, and competed in the 2010 National Consumer Judging competition in Denver, Colorado. Currently, Benjamin is a member of the Mississippi State University Poultry Judging Team. After graduating from Mississippi State University, William plans to pursue a Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine, where he hopes to one day use his degrees to assist the poultry industry in its continual success in raising healthy and nutritious chickens.

**MS. HILLARY ELAINE HOBBY** is from Louisville, Mississippi. She is the daughter of MPA member Mr. Timothy Y. Hobby. Hillary attends the University of Mississippi Medical Center, where she is pursuing a degree in Radiological Sciences. She is on the Deans List, Honor Student, High School Who's Who Most Intellectual and Most Dependable, along with Miss Rodeo Mississippi Teen 2010. She is active in her church and community as a Bible School instructor and as a member of her church choir, Miss Rodeo Mississippi Association, Winston County Breast Cancer Awareness Group, and Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Upon graduation next spring, Hillary plans to pursue a career in Radiological Science but hopes one day to operate a camp for disabled children.

**MR. WILLIAM COLE ROGERS**

is from Collins, Mississippi. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Bill and Jerri Rogers. William attends Mississippi State University, where he is majoring in Poultry Science with a concentration in Veterinary Sciences. He is the Treasurer of Mississippi State University’s Poultry Science Club, Covington County Representative for the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation Young Farmers and Ranchers, Who’s Who Most Dependable, along with many other leadership awards. In the community, William spends his time serving his church as the sound technician, Faith in Action volunteer, Vacation Bible School worker, and Disciple Now volunteer. After graduating from Mississippi State University, William plans to further his education by pursuing a Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine. He hopes to one day use his degrees to assist the poultry industry in its continual success in raising healthy and nutritious chickens.

**MR. ERIC WAYNE UPTON** is from Kokomo, Mississippi. Eric is the son of MPA members Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth and Angel Upton. Eric has just recently graduated from West Marion High School. He plans on furthering his education this fall at a local community college, where he will take core curriculum classes before he attends a four-year institution. After graduating with a bachelor’s degree, Eric plans on attending the University of Mississippi School of Law. In 2012, Eric was selected to represent Marion County at the 2012 NRECA Rural Electric Youth Tour in Washington, D.C. He has been on the Honor Roll since the seventh grade, has received numerous band awards including First Chair Percussion for four years, and came in second place in the South Sate 3-A-Powerlifting Championship in 2010. Eric is active in his church, participating in youth activities and helping the elderly in his community, along with regularly partaking in Relay For Life Teams. In the future, Eric plans on using his education to help him become a policy maker, with a focus on creating policies that would help create jobs in under-developed industries in the United States.
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The Magnolia Beef and Poultry Expo in Raleigh, Mississippi, was a great success. The event was sponsored by Mississippi State University Extension Service, Community Bank, along with Jasper, Newton, Rankin, Scott, Simpson, and Smith Counties.

Though the weather prevented some potential visitors from attending, attendance was higher than expected. There were over forty booths, including MPA’s, that offered educational and other promotional material that many visitors felt were educational.

Besides the booths and great food, visitors were able to attend seminars that were scheduled throughout the day. Scott Black and Charles Swain, both of Cobb-Vantress, spoke to a crowded room of poultry growers on the impacts of negative and positive ventilation, along with new techniques and tips on how to make poultry houses more efficient when it comes to ventilation.

MPA enjoyed getting to see those who attended and those who stopped by our booth. As always, thank you for your participation, and we look forward to next year’s!
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“Growing Mississippi’s Economy Since 1937”
In 2010, the Mississippi State University Mobile Environment and Energy Laboratory (MEEL) was developed as a mobile platform to educate poultry growers, integrators, and students on the latest technologies and methodologies in the operation of broiler houses. The project was a $100,000 joint venture between the MSU Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering (ABE) and the USDA ARS Poultry Research Unit in Starkville, Mississippi. The two groups spent hundreds of man-hours developing the MEEL, the first of its kind for poultry. Ventilation and feeding/watering equipment were generously donated by Cumberland Hired-Hand and Chore-Time. To date, we have had the MEEL at 16 events across the state of Mississippi and made a demonstration at the Poultry House Construction, Retrofitting & Energy Conservation Short Course of the National Poultry Technology Center at Auburn University.

This past fall, we were requested to share our efforts in energy efficiency with swine producers at the Ventilation Management and Air Quality for Livestock Systems Field Day in Champaign, Illinois. The MSU ABE and USDA collaboration is at the research forefront of production energy issues in animal housing. However, we didn’t expect the response that came next.

On November 19, we were invited to bring the MEEL to the Mississippi Farmer’s Market in Jackson, Mississippi, for National Ag Day. The event was attended by locals and lawmakers as well as one hundred 5th graders from the Jackson Metro Area. We planned to take lawmakers through the trailer, but we set up a secondary tractor display because we thought the kids wouldn’t necessarily “like” the MEEL.

During the morning hours, we began touring groups of twenty 5th graders into the trailer. We discussed the size of the poultry industry in the U.S., the importance and size of Mississippi’s poultry production, and the elements (ventilation, lighting, feeding, etc.) of operating a poultry house. The students were continually amazed at the number of facts that ended in “millions” or “billions.”

We showed how ventilation was used to keep the broilers comfortable by ramping up the MEEL fans. The students got wide-eyed and were amazed at the automated operation of the system. Upon leaving the MEEL, students were very talkative and asking questions from what they learned from class. Most of the students knew how to measure air speed (in the general sense). The teachers asked, “What do students need to learn to be involved with the poultry industry?” and “What classes do students take to understand the technology?” We were as surprised at the positive response the young students had with the MEEL as the students were with fans, feeders, lights, and drinkers. In summary, the National Ag Day event was a “win,” highlighting the importance of state-of-the-art commercial poultry production to the state of Mississippi.

Our group was invited to present the MEEL during AgVentures at the Mississippi Agriculture and Forestry Museum on April 16 and 17. The event hosted 750 4th graders along with teachers and parents from the Jackson Area. Like National Ag Day, the young students were extremely responsive to the “bells and whistles” of the MEEL. More importantly, the teachers and parents accompanying the students were intrigued, almost in disbelief at the technological sophistication of modern poultry housing. Both teachers and parents asked how their students needed to prepare to work in the poultry industry and to learn about the technology.

Not once during either event did we receive questions about the oft-recurring negative portrayals of animal production in the national media (animal welfare, factory farming, etc.). Like entering an amusement ride, the young students were captivated by air whipping in from the inlets, the sounds of the fans, changes in lighting, and discussing topics they are learning in their science classes. We built the MEEL to teach growers and college students, but the MEEL may have an even greater role to play in educating the general public and policymakers on the complexity and technological needs of producing a safe and healthy protein source for an ever-growing population.
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The infections by avian reoviruses are widespread, and all commercial poultry flocks probably become infected at some time during the life of the flock. These viruses have been associated with a variety of disease conditions in poultry, including enteric and respiratory diseases, myocarditis, and the so-called stunting/malabsorption syndrome. However, the most common and well defined manifestation of the avian reoviruses is viral arthritis or infectious tenosynovitis.

Viral arthritis is usually seen in broilers between 4 to 8 weeks old, and it is an important cause of leg weakness and lameness. Chickens with viral arthritis are stunted, one or both hock joints may be swollen and inflamed, and in severe cases, rupture of the tendon may occur. Affected birds walk with a stilted gait or prefer not to move. Sometimes the rupture of the tendon is accompanied by severe hemorrhage which in turn causes green discoloration of the skin. Reoviruses are also associated with femoral head necrosis, where the hip joints are affected.

Although the mortality is low, the economic losses may be important due to poor growth and bad feed conversion, mainly because of the inability of lame birds to reach feed or water, deaths by trampling by healthy birds, and downgrading of carcasses due to the unsightly appearance of affected hock joints.

The control of viral arthritis is based on biosecurity and vaccination programs. The main approach to control viral arthritis has been vaccination using live and killed vaccines. Since baby chicks are most susceptible to infection immediately after hatching, vaccination programs are designed to protect these chicks during early days of life. This is accomplished by inducing high levels of antibodies (maternal immunity) in the breeder hens to be transferred to the progeny. The poultry industry typically vaccinates broiler breeder pullets and cockerels at least twice with live vaccines, and the pullets are vaccinated with two inactivated vaccines, usually between 12 and 18 weeks of age. Sometimes, a novel or unusual reoviruses that are not related to the common vaccine strains might cause significant problems in the field. Under such circumstances commercial vaccines may not be sufficient to protect the progeny, and therefore, it may become necessary to use an autogenous inactivated vaccine to complement the protection.

Although maintaining commercial flocks free of reovirus infection is virtually impossible, good management, biosecurity procedures, and properly designed vaccination programs are essential in the control of viral arthritis.
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John Milner serves as counsel to the Mississippi Poultry Association. John Brunini, Gene Wasson and Susan King round out this leading Environmental Law Group.

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On January 31, 2014, the current Dry Litter Poultry General Permit (General Permit) issued by the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) will expire. The new General Permit will be issued by MDEQ beginning January 2014. Growers will file a Notice of Intent (NOI) for coverage under the new General Permit.

In recent conversations with MDEQ staff, we have learned that no major changes to the permit are expected. Perhaps the biggest challenge under the new permit will be in the nutrient management plan that becomes enforceable under the new permit. Additionally, poultry farmers can also expect more inspections by MDEQ staff at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) direction. Not only will poultry farmers see more inspections, these inspections will likely be more scrutinized and include detailed reports of findings at a facility. Hence, now is the time to get into compliance and ensure coverage under the General Permit.

INSPECTIONS AND RECORDKEEPING

Although the current permit has been in effect for almost five years, MDEQ reports that approximately 200 facilities are still not permitted under the General Permit. With more inspections and more detailed reports expected under the new permit, those facilities not yet permitted should work quickly to complete the permit application process before the end of the year. MDEQ also reports that many facilities have information on file with MDEQ that is either incomplete or out-of-date. Consequently, facilities that are currently permitted should review facility records to make sure that all information provided to MDEQ is complete and accurate.

Under the new General Permit, facilities can expect to have an inspection by MDEQ every two to three years, especially since MDEQ is increasing the number of its annual inspections. Unscheduled inspections usually occur if MDEQ has received complaints regarding “smell” or “flies” near a facility. MDEQ reports that “poor or no record keeping” will be considered a serious violation under the new General Permit. All records must be maintained on site for no fewer than five years. MDEQ also cautions that during inspections a farmer may be asked to produce detailed instructions regarding the spreading of litter received from growers. Growers should provide farmers with these instructions, but each farmer has the ultimate responsibility for requesting these instructions from a grower and maintaining accurate records regarding the spreading of litter. MDEQ warns that if a farmer cannot produce these types of records, he/she may be liable if any stray litter is detected in nearby waterbodies.

NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

As previously stated, MDEQ has identified the nutrient management plan as perhaps the biggest challenge under the new General Permit since recent changes to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Code 590 will become effective under the new General Permit. The following provides a brief summary of requirements under NRCS Code 590.

The NRCS defines “nutrient management” as “managing the amount (rate), source, placement (method of application), and timing of plant nutrients and soil amendments.” The purpose of nutrient management is to (1) budget, supply and conserve nutrient for plant production; (2) minimize agricultural nonpoint source pollution of surface and groundwater resources; (3) properly utilize manure or organic by-products as a plant nutrient source; (4) protect air quality by reducing odors, nitrogen emissions and the formation of atmospheric particulates; and (5) maintain or improve the physical, chemical and biological condition of soil. The practice applies “to all lands where plant nutrient and soil amendments are applied, including operations associated with poultry farms. A nutrient budget for nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium must be developed that considers all manageable sources of nutrients including, but not limited to, green manures, legumes, crop residues, compost, animal manure, organic by-products, biosolids, wastewater, organic matter, soil biological activity, commercial fertilizer and irrigation water.

The following components must be included in the nutrient management plan under the new General Permit:

- Aerial site photographs/imagery or site maps, and a soil survey map of the site;
- Soil information;
- Location of designated sensitive areas and the associated nutrient application restrictions and setbacks;
- For manure applications – specific information regarding area residences who may be affected;
- Results of approved risk assessment tools for nitrogen, phosphorus and erosion losses;
- Documentation establishing that the application site presents low risk for phosphorus transport to local water bodies;
- Soil, water, compost, manure, organic by-product and plant tissue sample analyses applicable to the plan; and
- Guidance for implementation, operation and maintenance, and recordkeeping.

Please note that the above is not a comprehensive list and that all permittees under the new General Permit should review any applicable requirements under the Code 590 standards, especially those pertaining to site-specific issues at each facility. Additionally, any nutrient management plan should include periodic reviews to determine if adjustments or modifications are needed.

MPA ASSISTING MDEQ WITH THE NEW GENERAL PERMIT

Time flies – especially when expiration of a permit is on the horizon. The MDEQ has indicated that it will work with the Mississippi Poultry Association (MPA) on any changes under the new General Permit. One change that MPA is recommending is that growers be allowed to submit their company mortality reports to MDEQ in lieu of transferring this information to MDEQ-approved forms. To date, MDEQ seems receptive to this recommendation. Please feel free to contact John Milner (601-960-6842), Susan King (601-960-6846) or the MPA offices (601-932-7560) if you have any questions and/or suggestions regarding the new General Permit.
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A little over a year has passed since I arrived in Mississippi as head of the Mississippi State University Poultry Science Department. It’s been an exciting year and one I’ve thoroughly enjoyed. Interacting with MPA and your affiliate integrators and growers has been a rewarding and important part of the experience.

In the past year, we’ve seen dramatic change and growth as a department. I’d like to recap the highlights for you and outline some ideas for the future.

We have had a number of personnel changes this year. Dr. Tom Tabler joined us in July as Extension Professor filling the position vacated by Danny Thornton. Dr. Kelley Wamsley joined us in September from West Virginia, filling the vacant nutrition position. And Dr. Morgan Farnell will join us July 1 as Associate Professor from Texas A&M; he will bring expertise in hatchery and processing management and breeders. Changes were also made in several staff classifications to better position the department for the future.

One of the most important things we do is provide an excellent education for the next generations of poultry science graduates. With the dynamic young faculty now in place, our ability to enhance our academic and hands on experiences has been greatly improved and we are looking forward to more active recruiting in the future. Our judging team, under the coaching of Dr. Wamsley and Ms. Jessica Wells, is again having success on the national level. The 4-H Chain Project has grown in its second year, with xxx young people signed up. The Poultry Club is regrouping with more activities and plans to help with recruiting new students this fall.

On the facilities side, we have been aggressively working on improvements to the poultry farm at MSU. New research and Extension directions have brought the need to upgrade and renovate structures that have been neglected in recent years.

- Biosecurity has been improved with the addition of a new gate.
- A back-up generator system was installed last summer to prevent loss of birds and data during power outages.
- A Precision Feeding Unit has been added for Dr.

Wamsley’s research and an Amino Acid Unit was created in the old Battery House for Drs. Wamsley and Zhai.
- Part of the old Dorm is being renovated for space for Dr. Farnell.
- The Incubation Physiology Unit was upgraded with 4 new Naturform 1080 incubators for Drs. McDaniel and Kiess.
- Thanks to Georgia Poultry and Peco Foods, the two commercial houses are being retrofitted with new feeders, brooders, and LED lights; Weedun Environments has provided a sprinkler system to use in hot weather to reduce water usage by cool cells. Acme Fans are providing 10 new fans for the south house to make it comparable to the north house. Dr. Tabler is adding data loggers to allow tracking of energy usage by lights, fans, and brooders.
- Thanks to Chore-Time and Cal-Maine, colony cages will be installed in the back half of the cage house to allow hands-on training of students with the current industry standard cage systems.
- Plans for upgrading the Feed Mill are being formulated and assessed for feasibility; a feed mill with pelleting capability will allow expansion of both applied research and practical training of our students in an area that so far has been lacking.

All in all, it has been a very good year for Poultry Science and we are excited to be in a much stronger position than a year ago. We look forward to continued service to MPA and the entire Mississippi Poultry Industry.
UPCOMING EVENTS

MPA ANNUAL CONVENTION – SEPTEMBER 12-15
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If you want to join the Mississippi Poultry Association as a Grower Member, call the MPA office at (601) 932-7560 for more information!

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