

EMERGING TRENDS

2025 ■ Issue 1

A Newsletter of the Mississippi Poultry Association



COMPOSTING INSPECTIONS

BY THE BOARD OF ANIMAL
HEALTH TO USE THREE-TIER
GRADING SYSTEM

Dr. Jim Watson, State Veterinarian

You may have heard that the Board of Animal Health has stepped up inspections of poultry composters in the past two months, now instead of pass/fail grades, composters will be given grades of Pass, Provisional Pass and Fail.

The reason that the Board of Animal Health regulates poultry mortality disposal is to control the spread of diseases, and to do it in an environmentally sound manner.

BOARD OF ANIMAL HEALTH REGULATIONS ON MORTALITY DISPOSAL

105.01 No dead poultry, carcasses, offal or any parts of any dead poultry shall be disposed of by throwing or leaving along public roads, in fields or woods or in any place; but must be properly disposed of in an approved incinerator, compost system, or freezer.

105.02 The premises of each person growing poultry for himself or others, including turkeys, commercial eggs, hatching eggs and broilers for commercial purposes is hereby quarantined upon the placing of any dead poultry carcass (when death results from other than in connection with the slaughter thereof) in other than a, incinerator, compost unit or freezer unit approved by the Mississippi Board of Animal Health. Such quarantine shall not be applicable to any person growing poultry who provides and maintains a method of disposal of dead poultry carcasses that has been approved by the Mississippi Board of Animal Health as satisfactory to him to prevent the spread of disease.

<https://www.mbah.ms.gov/regulations/chapter-13/>

Composting and incineration are the two methods of disposal approved currently in Mississippi. When done properly, both of these methods use heat to inactivate disease causing organisms, and in the case of composting, produces an inoffensive stable product that can be applied for crop use and soil improvement. Unfortunately, over the years with grower turnover, there are very few people that understand the composting process, and our inspectors are finding a growing number of poultry farms failing inspections.

Improperly operated composters create runoff, odor partially decomposed carcasses which attract flies, vultures, dogs and other wild scavengers. This provides an opportunity for spread of disease between farms, and is a serious breach in a farm's biosecurity as well as putting neighboring farms at risk of disease spread.

On the 4 farms here in Mississippi that had outbreaks of Avian Influenza, we found vultures on the premises as well as poorly operated composters which could easily have contributed to the virus getting on the farm. This also put neighboring farms at risk due to the uncovered, partially decomposed birds recently dead from Avian Influenza laying in the composter shed.

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DR. EGANA-LABRIN**



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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:



First South
Farm Credit



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If you would like more information on becoming a MPA member, visit us online or call our office. We would be happy to discuss membership with you.

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As a result, we have stepped up our inspection of poultry composters within the past two months, generating lots of questions and concerns. The primary issue is that we have failed facilities due to a lack of carbon source (shavings) to be used in the composter. Most growers are simply covering the dead birds with litter, which does not provide all the ingredients necessary for the composting process. The other issue is that true compost has a lower nitrogen value and is



Pass/Provisional Pass Facility Example

not as valuable as straight litter. This is true because the carbon source or the shavings are a bulking agent necessary for true composting and



Pass/Provisional Pass Facility Example

less a desirable product for land application.

There are some individuals who are properly managing the mixing of carcasses and litter combined with turning of the pile to create a product that while not composted, does not contain large quantities of partially decomposed (mummified) carcasses which does not constitute a threat of spreading disease at the farm or when land applied.

Therefore, rather than a “Pass/Fail” system of inspection we are

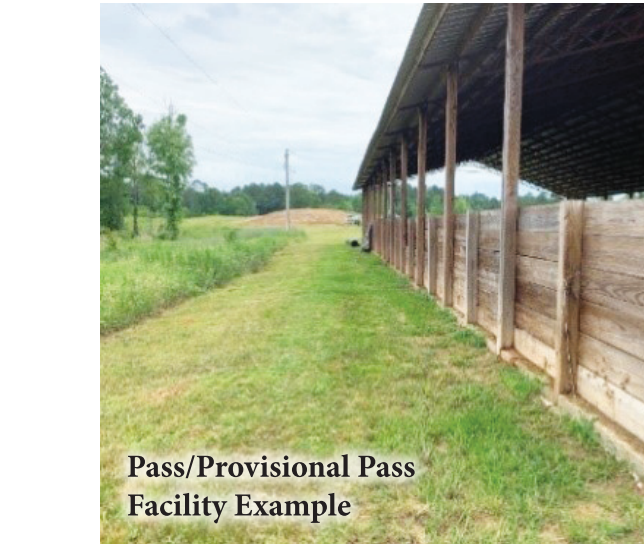
implementing a 3-tier system.

Pass: A properly run composter that uses shavings and has a truly composted product and does not attract vultures or other scavengers.

Provisional Pass: A properly run composter that uses only litter to mix with carcasses in the correct manner along with turning of the pile which results in a product that does not have runoff, uncovered birds and a product that does not have mummified carcasses. Also, it doesn’t attract vultures or other scavengers.

Fail: Improperly run composter, with or without shavings that poses a disease spread threat and attracts vultures and other scavengers.

On February 26th USDA rolled out the new Trump Administration 5 Point Strategy for combating Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza. One of the key strategies is to strengthen biosecurity, particularly as it regards to reducing the threat of wildlife introducing the disease onto a poultry farm. A very important component of this, is to properly manage the disposal of mortality to prevent spread of disease. ■



Pass/Provisional Pass Facility Example

therefore the nitrogen is diluted into a larger volume and worth less on a per ton basis. However, unless carefully managed, just using poultry litter to cover the poultry carcasses prevents the carcasses from decomposing, allowing un-decomposed carcass parts that have not gone through a proper heat to potentially spread disease and creates



Failed Facility Example



Failed Facility Example

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POULTRY HEALTH SEMINAR HELD AT THE MS AGRICULTURE MUSEUM

Dr. Danny Magee, Retired

Associate Professor and Director, Poultry Research and Diagnostic Laboratory

Department of Pathobiology and Population Medicine, College of Veterinary Medicine, MSU

The eleventh annual MPA Poultry Health Seminar was held at the Mississippi Agriculture and Forestry Museum in Jackson, MS on February 19, 2025. The program featured 12 speakers who covered a variety of topics that impact bird health and welfare as well as disease detection and prevention. The 110 attendees were appreciative of the information presented by the speakers as well as the support provided by the sponsors. This meeting was pre-approved for 4 hours credit by PAACO and 5.25 hours RACE credits.



Combining Pullet Vaccines: Observations, Adjuvant Types and Other Considerations - Dr. Dan Dominigo (Vaxxinova) said that the goal of vaccination is to immunize the birds to prevent clinical disease and maintain performance. While we know that the ideal procedure is to administer vaccines as the manufacturer directs, we could begin to consider combining products if we have healthy birds, good quality vaccines, and proper vaccine administration. But proper administration also involves knowledge of the type and volume of vaccine used, formulation of the vaccine, and where the product will be injected.



The Quest for a Universal Vaccine Against Avian Colibacillosis – Dr. Li Zhang (MSU Poultry Science) described the impact that avian pathogenic *E. coli* has on production in the poultry industry. Traditional approaches to vaccine development are not able to adequately protect against the multitude of strains of this organism. His research utilizes the organism's genetic “blueprint” and computational tools to search for the best candidates for a universal vaccine.

Role of Mycotoxins in Poultry Health – Dr. Dulmelis (DG) Sandu (Alltech, Inc.) explained what mycotoxins are and described how they affect poultry production.



They are present in all feeds and can negatively affect bird performance. It is important to recognize the lesions produced by these agents in order to develop a plan to identify them and decrease their impact on bird health and production.

Impact of Immunity on Sec-

ondary Disease Prevalence – Dr. Roy Jacob (Boehringer Ingelheim Animal Health) told the audience that three elements impact poultry immune health and performance: the bird, its environment and disease agents. There are times when the environment can negatively affect the bird's immune system and produce a transient depression of this system. Meanwhile, disease agents can produce a permanent suppression of the immune system. Managing all these factors is essential to maximizing the genetic potential of your flock.



Salmonella Framework Update – Dr. Jonathan James (Wayne-Sanderson Farms) described the current Healthy People 2020 Goals that USDA FSIS has had in place to reduce human Salmonella and Campylobacter illnesses. Since these goals were not achieved, new approaches have been proposed by USDA FSIS to meet the Healthy People 2030 goals. FSIS continues to get feedback from the poultry production industry on the logical and best practices needed to reach these goals. The National Chicken Council has urged FSIS to rescind the Proposed Framework and consider alternative approaches for addressing Salmonella in raw poultry products.

Regulatory Update – Dr. Jim Watson (State Veterinarian, Mississippi Board of Animal Health) reported that the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) had lifted the restrictions that had been in place on Mississippi poultry following the two positive HPAI flocks diagnosed in December 2024. In light of the potential of human infection, the MBAH has decided to upgrade the personal protective



equipment (PPE) and practices utilized by their personnel and recommends that the commercial poultry companies do the same.

MSU Poultry Lab: Disease Update – Dr. Natalie Armour Manginsay (Director, MSU CVM PRDL) informed the audience of the recent faculty changes at the lab in Pearl, MS. She explained how the lab partnered in December 2024 with Aggio to launch an electronic submission and reporting platform that integrates with the laboratory information management system. This platform facilitates electronic lab submissions; lab reports for multiple complexes in one place; and eventually, analysis of historical data. She also described the pattern of diseases seen at the lab since January 2023.

Avian Metapneumovirus Update and Discussion – Dr. Brandon Doss

(Huvepharma, Inc.) told the attendees when and where this highly contagious respiratory disease appeared in the multiple affected states and described the clinical signs shown by turkeys, broilers, breeders, and egg layers. After its introduction in California and North Carolina in late 2023, it spread across the US within 4 months. If you suspect this disease, which can be complicated by other respiratory pathogens, it is important to provide symptomatic support, collect tissues for diagnostics, sanitize drinking water, and improve ventilation.



Enterococcus genus affecting broiler chickens: Evolution of an emerging threat – Dr. Autumn Gregg (MSU CVM PRDL) explained the similarities and differences of two bacterial organisms - Enterococcus cecorum and Enterococcus faecalis – and how, when and where each organism type is found in broilers and breeders. Not every isolate of these organisms produces disease, but those that do survive longer outside the host than those

that do not produce disease. More research needs to be completed to determine the best disinfectant to use for each organism.

Five tips for managing and control of Enterococcus sp. infections – Dr. Martha Pulido-Landinez (MSU CVM PRDL) discussed the history of the lesions and diseases produced by these organisms. She



Importance of Darkling Beetle Control – Mr. Weston Harwell (MGK Animal Health) emphasized to the audience that a darkling beetle population can swell from 2 individuals to over 5 million in only 4 months. These pests are a threat to production costs (through lost feed and decreased feed conversion), biosecurity (through spread of diseases), the house structure itself, and animal welfare. He recommended a rotation of pest control products to interrupt the life cycle and control their potential explosive growth.



continued on page 8...

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continued from page 7...

Poultry Welfare Update: In-Ovo Sexing/Male Chick Culling – Dr. Chris Magee (USDA ARS Poultry Research Unit) reported that the egg layer industry culls an estimated 7 billion male chicks each year worldwide. Several European countries have banned or will ban the culling of male chicks. The entire EU may ban the practice in the near future. Therefore, countries are looking for alternatives to male chick culling. One of these alternatives is in-ovo sex determination which generally occurs about half way through the incubation process. Another is genetic engineering which allows for the detection of males BEFORE incubation. So far, no tested method is really practical. More research is needed for a viable solution. ■



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MISSISSIPPI'S OVERALL AGRICULTURE VALUE HITS \$9B

Ms. Susan M. Collins-Smith

MSU Extension Service

RAYMOND, Miss. -- Mississippi's agriculture industry remains vibrant with an overall production value estimated at \$9 billion, despite a drop in row crop prices.

Poultry is again the No. 1 sector of the agricultural industry with a value of \$3.8 billion, up 10.5% from 2023.

A rebound in broiler production in 2024 contributed to the commodity's stronger showing over last year, said Josh Maples, an agricultural economist with the Mississippi State University Extension Service.

"Price was up slightly, but this is really more of a production story," he said. "Mississippi produced an estimated 731 million broiler chickens in 2024, which is 3% higher than in 2023. It is not out of the question that the industry could hit a \$4 billion value of production total sometime in the next 5 years."

Forestry holds second place with a \$1.5 billion value, holding steady from 2023.

"Mississippi prices trended up slightly each quarter, but prices on average were down in 2024 versus 2023," said Eric McConnell, associate professor of forest business in the MSU Department of Forestry and Forest and Wildlife Research Center. "There was \$727.9 million paid to landowners for standing timber, while harvest and trucking added \$756.4 million of value to the industry."

Soybeans ranked third with a value of \$1.3 billion. Although soybean yield is expected to tie last year's record at 56 bushels per acre, the crop saw a 22% drop in value from last year.

Will Maples, an agricultural economist with MSU Extension, said waning prices are to blame.

"While we have planted similar acres of soybeans over the last three years, prices have declined year over year, driving the crop value estimates lower," Will Maples said. "Increases in livestock prices have helped limit the decline of the overall value of ag in the state since 2022."

Livestock, which includes beef cattle, dairy cattle and hogs, ranked fourth overall behind soybeans, with a value of \$578 million, a 14% increase from 2023.

With more rain for non-irrigated acres, soybean yield could possibly have hit a new record. Final yield estimates will be announced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Jan. 10, 2025.

"As always, when you talk about weather, it really just depends on where you're standing," said Trent Irby, an associate director with the Mississippi State University Extension Service and the former state *continued on page 15...*

Commercial Poultry Production Dual-Credit Course



Mississippi State University offers a unique opportunity for high school students to take an online poultry course while earning high school and college credits! Through this course, students will learn the basics of the poultry industry and be exposed to the numerous opportunities within the poultry industry.

Start Date: August 20, 2025

End Date: Dec. 11, 2025

Student Requirements:

- Any HS student classified as a sophomore or higher
- Minimum overall HS GPA of 2.0 on a 4.0 scale

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Mr. Robert Nathan Gregory

POULTRY WINNING STREAK IN MISSISSIPPI AGRICULTURE HITS 30 YEARS

MSU Extension Service

STARKVILLE, Miss. -- 2024 marks the 30th consecutive year for poultry to outperform every other agricultural commodity in Mississippi, and for the second time in three years, its farm gate value fell just shy of \$4 billion.

"We have seen a ramp-up in both broiler and table egg production in 2024 compared to production rates seen in 2023," said Jonathan Moon, poultry specialist with the Mississippi State University Extension Service. "This increase in meat and egg production directly impacts the value of the state's commercial poultry industry."

Poultry generated more than \$3.8 billion -- its second-best recorded yearly total and a 10.5% increase over 2023. The broiler production value rose nearly 6% to \$3.3 billion, while egg production totals increased almost 58% to \$484 million. Only 2022 saw a higher poultry production value for the state at \$3.9 billion.

MSU Extension agricultural economists compile production value estimates for agricultural commodities on an annual basis. Josh Maples, one of these economists, said broiler production's rebound from 2023 was a major contributor to the stronger value of production total.

"Price was up slightly, but this is really more of a production story," Maples said. "Mississippi produced an estimated 731 million broiler chickens in 2024, which is 3% higher than in 2023. It is not out of the question that the industry could hit a \$4 billion total value of production sometime in the next five years."

Like in most agricultural sectors, rising production costs continue to be a significant issue for the poultry industry.

"Producers have faced inflation in many key costs such as building materials and insurance," Maples said. "Grain prices were more favorable in 2024 which provided some relief, but overall costs of operation are still very high."

One input that producers are not paying as much for lately is feed ingredients.

"Feed ingredient prices have been much lower, closer to a historical normal, which equates to more profitability in the industry for both the broiler and table egg industry," Moon said. "Feed ingredient price fluctuations also definitely influence the price of eggs on the shelf at the local grocery store, but prices remain on the higher end mainly due to supply and demand."

Moon said extra costs for Mississippi poultry producers include rising property taxes and insurance premiums.

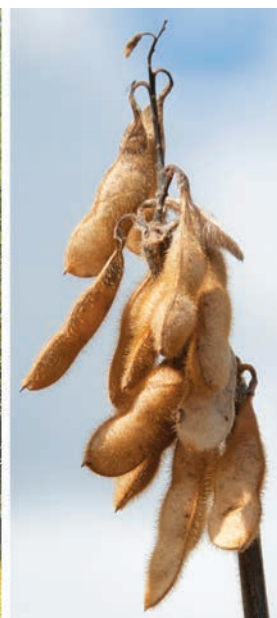
"The reason there has been an increase in property taxes is due to the fact that there has not been an inflation adjustment to property in the past 10 years," Moon said. "The adjustments will be phased in. Producers in certain counties have seen the increase this year, and the remaining counties will see the increase in 2025."

Higher egg prices were felt throughout the supply chain. The U.S. Department of Agriculture reports the average wholesale price of eggs averaged nearly \$3 per dozen during 2024 overall and closer to \$4 in November and December -- a 50% increase.

"Egg prices are very influenced by seasonal patterns driven by holiday demand," Maples said. "Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter are big holidays that drive demand. I do expect a decline in egg prices as we hit the middle of 2025. The USDA is projecting 2025 average prices to decline back to 2023 levels."

Another key driver is lower supply due to lower numbers of layer chickens. Moon said highly pathogenic avian influenza, or HPAI, was a contributor to the lower layer chicken totals.

"HPAI has taken a toll on the total number of commercial layers in the field across the country, which also directly affects the price of eggs at your local grocery store," Moon said. "Luckily, we didn't have any issues with HPAI to speak of this year, but it is definitely something that requires our utmost attention." ■



LEGISLATIVE LUNCHEON DRAWS 200 FOR OMELETS AND TENDERS

The Legislative Luncheon hosted by the Mississippi Egg Marketing Board and the Mississippi Poultry Association was held February 5, at Gal-loway Methodist Church in Jackson.



Over 200 guests were greeted by MPA and MDAC employees with a bag filled with goodies from MPA's allied members. MPA President, Mark Leggett, Ryn Laster, Chair of the Egg Marketing Board, and Hayes Patrick, Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce welcomed guests to the event.



Local television chef and author, Deborah Hunter, did an omelet demonstration for the crowd. Omelets were then cooked by legislators and the MS Ag Youth Council for the attendees. Salad and chicken tenders were served by Wayne-Sanderson Farms' employees. Thank you to Wayne-Sanderson Farms for always donating chicken to this annual event. ■

WELCOME TO MPA BECA

The MPA staff is back to its full strength with the recent addition of Beca Martin of Brandon. Beca joined MPA in January and will oversee the association's financial responsibilities, website and newsletter publication.

Beca is a native of Carthage, MS who has been working in the marketing industry for the past 14 years. She has worked with a range of clients developing strategies to brand and promote their companies and unique needs. As an entrepreneur, she brings a fresh perspective to MPA.



In her spare time, Beca enjoys time with her family and community service. Beca mentioned that she is eager to contribute to the team's success and the opportunity to gain a more in-depth knowledge of one of Mississippi's top agricultural industries. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions, concerns. She can be reached at martin@mspoultry.org or 601-932-7562. ■



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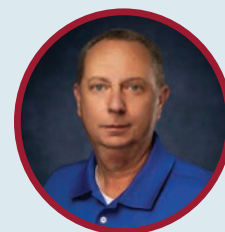


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UPCOMING ELECTIONS

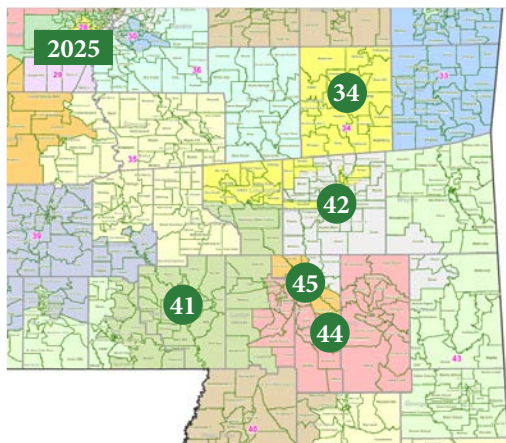
Mark Leggett, President, MPA

2025 will be a busy election year with cities holding elections and 18 special elections for legislators.

2025 Municipal Elections Schedule

April	1	Primary Election Day
April	22	Primary Runoff Election Day
June	3	General Election Day

Governor Tate Reeves set April 15 as the date for the special election to fill the vacancy in Senate District 18 (Leake, Neshoba, and Winston counties). The vacancy is due to the resignation of Jenifer B. Branning who was elected to the Mississippi Supreme Court.



The candidates for Senate District 18 are Mark Forsman, Lindsey Kidd, Jackson I. 'Ike' Melton, Marty Sistrunk, and Lane Taylor. All candidates are from Neshoba County except Forsman, who is from Winston County.

In other upcoming elections, candidates have qualified to run for the March 25 special elections in House Districts 82 and 23.

The candidates in the HD82 special election to replace Rep. Charles Young, Jr., D-Meridian, who died in December, are:

- Joe Norwood, a former Lauderdale County supervisor.
- Gregory Elliott, on the Meridian Civil Service Commission and the county Election Commission; and,
- Joseph Denson, a personal injury and criminal defense attorney who lists Accidents & Injuries, Car Accident, Medical Malpractice, Personal Injury, Criminal Defense on his firm's webpage.

In House District 23, candidates seeking to replace Rep. Andy Stepp, R-Bruce, who died in December, are:

- Former Rep. Perry Bailey, has qualified for the seat he held from February 2023 to January 2, 2024. Bailey was defeated by Stepp in November 2023.
- Colby Bollinger, a small business owner, from Bruce.
- Andy Clark who has run twice for the seat..
- Danny Lampley ran as a Democrat for the seat in November 2023 and lost to Stepp.
- Travis E. Wright, Mantee.

There will be elections for 15 current legislators due to a 2024 U.S.

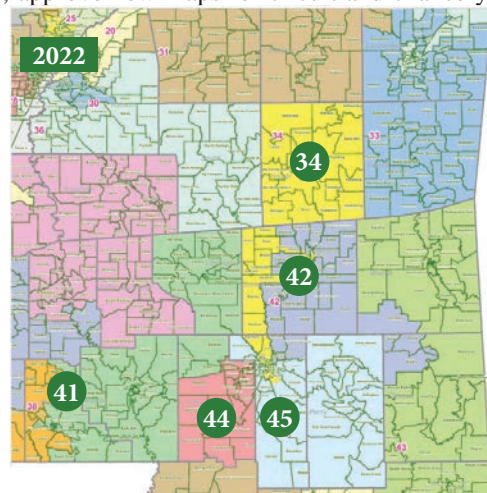
District Court ruling that the House had to redraw districts to create three new black majority districts.

The House passed a resolution to redraw five House districts, approve new maps for circuit and chancery

courts, and prepare for possible supreme court and appeals court redistricting. The Senate has a resolution to redraw 12 Senate districts.

Lawmakers drew new House and Senate districts in 2022 and elections were held using those districts in 2023. Then the U.S. District Court ruled on a

NAACP suit that three new black majority districts must be created – one in the House and two in the Senate.



To create one new majority black district in the House, required changes to five districts. The House plan does not require any incumbents to run against each other, but all five will run again in special elections later this year. They are:

- HD16 Rickey W. Thompson, D-Shannon
- HD22 Jonathan Ray Lancaster, R-Houston
- HD36 Karl Gibbs, D-West Point
- HD39 Dana McLean, R-Columbus
- HD41 Kabir Karriem, D-Columbus.

JR201 requires changes to 12 Senate districts to create two new black majority districts in Desoto County and in Hattiesburg. Districts in which there will be elections include:

- SD1 Michael McLendon, R-Hernando
- SD2 David Parker, R-Olive Branch
- SD3 Kathy Chism, R-Myrtle
- SD10 Neil Whaley, R-Potts Camp
- SD11 Reginald Jackson, D-Marks
- SD12 Derrick Simmons, D-Greenville
- SD19 Kevin Blackwell, R-Southhaven
- SD 34 Juan Barnett, D-Heidelberg
- SD41 Joey Fillingane, R-Sumrall
- SD42 Robin Robinson, R-Laurel
- SD44 John Polk, R-Hattiesburg
- SD45 Chris Johnson, R-Hattiesburg. ■

2025 Special Elections Schedule

May	19	Qualifying Begins
May	30	Qualifying Deadline
August	5	Special Primary Election Day
September	2	Special Primary Runoff Election Day
November	4	Special General Election Day

LEGISLATIVE SESSION RACING TO A CONCLUSION

Mark Leggett, President, MPA

It is always risky to write a summary of a rapidly changing legislative session before lawmakers leave the Capitol in April, but one thing we can say is that taxes have been top of mind for 2025.

The Senate and House each passed their tax reduction bills but at this point it remains to be seen what makes it into the lawbooks. The 2025 session is scheduled to end April 6. We are in the last few weeks of the session when the two sides come together, or they don't.

The House acted first on Jan. 16 passing a bill to phase out the personal income tax over 11 years, lowers the sales tax on groceries, adds a 1.5 percent city and county sales tax and add a 5 percent sales tax to gasoline and diesel going to the Miss. Department of Transportation. The Senate answered on Feb. 25 with a four-year phase down of the personal income tax from 4.0 percent to 2.99 percent, reducing the sales tax on grocery items from 7 percent to 5 percent, and increasing the current fuel taxes from 18 to 27 cents per gallon over three years. The Senate plan would adjust the excise tax by up to 1 cent every other year for inflation.

Both chambers passed bills that later died to help hold down property insurance costs. Both bills would provide grants of up to \$15,000 to strengthen homes and businesses against windstorm damage statewide. This is an expansion of a hurricane mitigation bill for coastal counties. The two bills have different funding mechanisms. Poultry farms would be eligible for mitigation grants under the bills. MPA

has been lobbying to support these bills as well as those to hold down property tax increases.

The Senate and House passed bills to clarify the way poultry houses and other rural farm structures (not including homes) are to be assessed for property tax purposes after new Department of Revenue regulations assessment manual caused a 106 percent increase in taxes. The bills assess property built before 2025 using the Department of Revenue's 2010 manual and for those after 2025 using the 2020 manual.

Lt. Gov. Delbert Hosemann has said stabilizing the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) has to be the first priority or there will be no extra funds for tax cuts or other funding needs. The House and Senate have taken different approaches to shore up PERS.

Both chambers sent the other bills to create about 20 study committees to look at everything from school consolidation to the impact of wind turbines on agriculture. If all the bills survive, the summer of 2025 will be busier than last year.

Some other bills, under consideration, would:

- Increase the speed limit by 5 miles per hour on interstates and state highways.
- Remove or extend the repeal date on the harvest permit.
- Allow all-terrain vehicles to run on the roads with a tag.
- Ban cell-cultured meat sales in Mississippi
- Require the Department of Revenue to make a list of items eligible for the 1.5 percent sales tax for farmers to remove the different interpretations by retailers.
- Require meat products to be labelled if they contain vegetable or insect protein.

The Senate and House redrawing their electoral districts and voters in five counties around Hattiesburg and Laurel will be voting on Senators this summer and fall. ■

MPA WELCOMES NEW ADDITION

Welcome Back Lauren & Baby Louie!

Our Event Coordinator, Lauren Fortenberry is back after the birth of her son Louie Collins Fortenberry. Tyler and Lauren welcomed their first-born on October 23rd, 2024. Louie was 5lbs and 15 ounces, he was greeted by family members, friends, and by his Scottish Terrier babysitters, Emma and Angus. ■



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continued from page 9...

soybean specialist. “We had some areas of non-irrigated production that had really favorable yields due to a few well-timed rain events, but many areas of the state took a big yield hit from lack of rainfall.”

Irrigation helps protect yield during drought years but advancing science and crop management are also important factors.

“The increases we have seen in yield as a state are a result of improved plant genetics and overall best management practices that our growers have implemented,” Irby said.

Cotton is the second most valuable row crop with an estimated value of \$496 million, a gain of 34% from 2023, which is attributed to an increase in acreage.

Cotton producers planted 520,000 acres -- up almost 30% from 2023. Yield is estimated at 1,118 pounds of lint per acre, an 8.3% increase.

“Some of the greatest yields occurred in the Delta, especially the north Delta where timely summertime rains occurred,” said Brian Pieralisi, MSU Extension cotton specialist. “We fared pretty well with the effects of Hurricanes Helene and Francine. Most of our crop was not at a stage for the devastating damage that is expected from hurricanes of this magnitude.

“Some of the early planted cotton had issues with hardlock and boll rot because of the associated rainfall,” he said, “but overall, fiber quality was good.”

Corn is valued at \$374 million, a decline of 50%, as a result of decreased acreage and lower prices. Producers harvested about 580,000 acres this year, down from 790,000 acres in 2023. Although yield was better this year, prices are down over \$1 compared to last year, Will Maples said.

“Each year corn and cotton trade acres so that is why we see one commodity higher and the other lower year over year,” he said.

The value of catfish declined 18% from last year, landing that commodity in seventh place with a value of \$214 million. Mississippi still leads the nation in catfish production with 29,000 acres. That is twice as many acres as Arkansas and Alabama, which round out the nation’s top three catfish producing states.

Multiple challenges, including marketing difficulties, high operating
continued on page 20...



4TH ANNUAL DIXIE NATIONAL CREPE COOK-OFF CONTEST

Tannah Christensen, MSU Extension Instructor

The Dixie National Rodeo is always an exciting time for Mississippi, bringing together livestock shows, rodeo events, concerts, and more. This year, MSU's Department of Poultry Science joined the festivities by hosting the 4th annual 4-H Crepe Cook-off contest on February 8th. Sponsored by the Mississippi Poultry Association, the Mississippi Egg Marketing Board, and the Mississippi Beef Council, the competition challenged contestants to demonstrate their food safety, cooking, serving, and presentation skills while preparing a nutritional crepe in just 60 minutes.

Participants got creative with their ingredients, incorporating everything from sweet cream cheese filling to mac and cheese, resulting in an array of delicious entries. WAPT's Maggie Wade stated, "It is amazing to see the talent of these young 4-H students who are creative, genuinely talented, and had so much fun! I was so impressed with their skill and the unique recipes they came up with. I can't wait until next year!"

Ten 4-H youth from across the state showcased their culinary talents in a fierce competition. Henry Klein from Madison County claimed 1st place with his King Cake Crepe, while Tyler Brooks from Noxubee County secured 2nd place. Lucy Haskins from Hinds County earned 3rd place with her strawberry cream cheese crepe. The judges had a tough time selecting winners, as the level of skill and creativity was outstanding. Raylee Reed and Joshua Hancock from Rankin County tied for 4th place, along with Amoury Austin from Noxubee County. Passion Terrell of Humphreys County, Heidi Hood of Forrest County, and Willow and Rober Cox-Osbourne of DeSoto County were all recognized for Best Beef in the contest. Dr. Laster said, "It's amazing to see the excitement these 4-H'ers have for cooking and being creative. Every single dish they prepared was well thought out and showed tremendous cooking skills. I'm so proud to be a part of such a great program and watch these kids have fun with eggs!"

The judging panel featured Dr. Ryn Laster, President of the Mississippi Egg Marketing Board and Director of Food Safety and Animal Welfare at Cal-Maine Foods, Inc.; Lauren Fortenberry from the Mississippi Poultry Association; and WAPT Multimedia Journalist Crystal Tisme. Meanwhile, WLBT News Anchor Maggie Wade served as the event's mistress of ceremonies, adding to the day's excitement. ■



"I am blown away by the 4-H crepe contestants. Each recipe was unique and delicious. I can't wait to see what they cook up at the omelet competition!" – Judge Lauren Fortenberry

POULTRY YOUTH PROGRAMS

Explore the world of poultry through hands-on activities, competitions, and educational opportunities! Whether you're interested in judging, cooking, or learning about poultry science, there is something for everyone!

✓ 4-H Club Congress – May 28th–30th

- ✓ Poultry Judging
- ✓ Egg Chef Challenge
- ✓ Avian Bowl

✓ FFA Poultry Judging Contest – April 11th

✓ 4-H Poultry Chain Project kicks off – May 18th

✓ 4-H Chicken & Turkey BBQ Cook-out Contests

- ✓ North Contest – July 1st
- ✓ South Contest – June 30th
- ✓ State Contest – July 14th

NEW



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Tannah Christensen
t.christensen@msstate.edu



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF POULTRY SCIENCE

Trump Administration EPA Region 4 Administrator Appointed

John Milner, Brunini Attorneys At Law

On February 24, 2025, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Lee Zeldin announced that President Trump has appointed Kevin J. McOmber to serve as regional administrator for the EPA's Southeast Region (Region 4). McOmber, a licensed professional engineer, will lead the implementation of President Trump's environmental agenda in Region 4, which consists of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and with six federally-recognized tribes.



Kevin J. McOmber

water resources, stormwater management and sustainable urban development, Kevin is the right person to lead the Southeast region, and I am ready to get to work with him”.

McComber's response stated: “I am humbled to be named Regional Administrator for the EPA's largest region – serving upwards of 63 million people across the eight Southeastern states. Collaboration with the many state, tribal and local partners across our region is vital to successfully implementing the Trump Administration's environmental priorities, and I'm excited to get to work.”

Prior to joining the EPA, McOmber served as Executive Vice President and National Community Practice Leader at Clinical Pathology Laboratories, where he led municipal and public infrastructure projects. EPA points out that, due to his career spanning over 37 years in civil engineering, construction management and community development, McOmber “brings a wealth of experience and leadership to his new role. His expertise in environmental planning, water resources,

continued on page 19...

Zeldin, a former New York Congressman who was sworn in as the 17th Administrator of the EPA on January 29, commented on McOmber's appointment: “Our EPA team continues to grow, and I am excited to welcome yet another outstanding professional to help us deliver on President Trump's mandate. Region 4 has a talented and tested leader in Kevin McOmber. With nearly four decades of experience in environmental planning,

BRUNINI ATTORNEYS AT LAW



Trey Jones

John Milner

Gene Wasson

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Brunini has premier expertise in environmental litigation, regulatory permitting and compliance issues as well as due diligence and transactional matters. John Milner was noted by Chambers USA as being “instrumental in developing Brunini's environmental practice” into the leadership position it holds today.

John Milner serves as counsel to the Mississippi Poultry Association and has special expertise in poultry-related environmental issues. Partner Gene Wasson also has impressive abilities in the environmental sector. Partner Trey Jones has significant environmental litigation experience.

Listing of areas of practice does not indicate any certification of expertise. Any decision with respect to legal service should not be based solely on this or any other advertisement.

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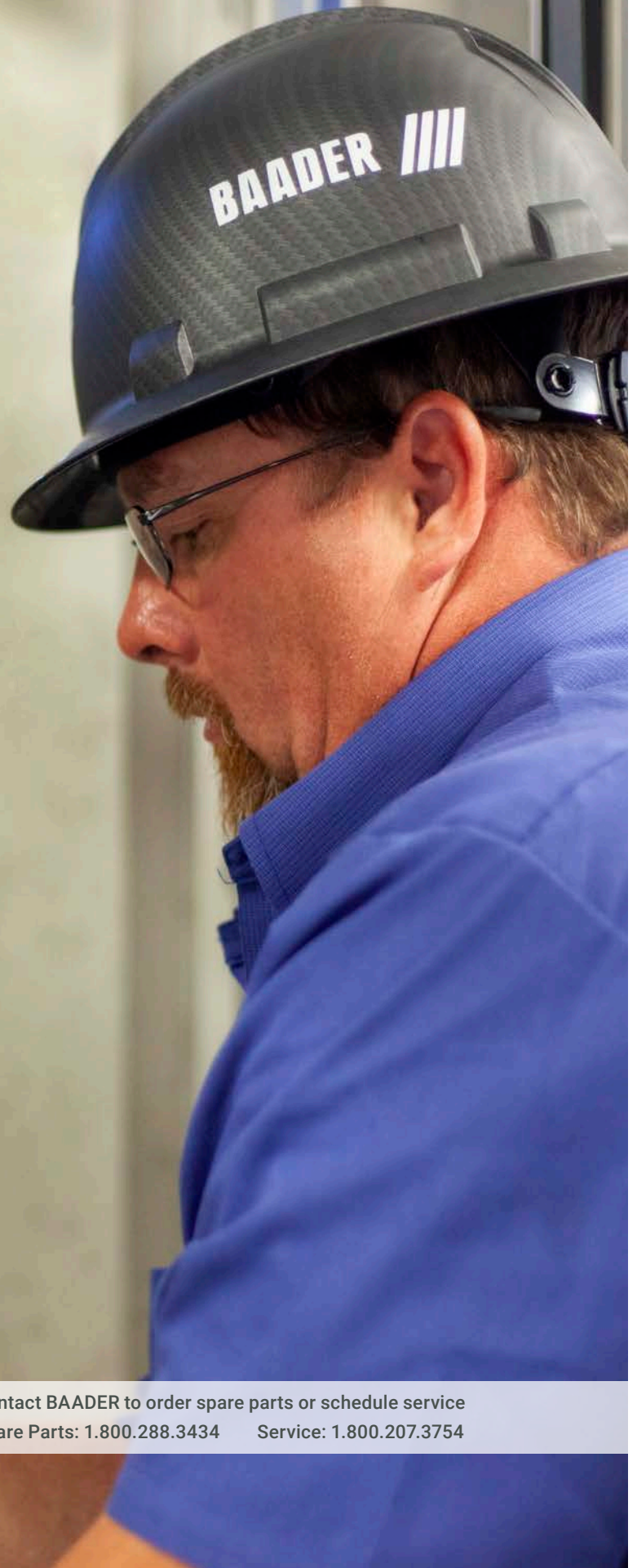
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CALS Distinguished Fellow

Joshua R. Moore, Cal-Maine is Newest MSU CALS Distinguished Alumni Fellow for Poultry Science

Joshua R. Moore (Bachelor of Science in Poultry Science 2000) has dedicated his career to Cal-Maine Foods, Inc., the largest producer and distributor of fresh shell eggs in the United States. Since joining the company as a management trainee, he has steadily advanced through leadership roles.

Moore began his career in Edwards and advanced to production manager before moving into general manager roles in Florida and Ohio. He has successfully led the company through two new acquisitions and played a key role in integrating the Cal-Maine culture into the acquired entities. Since 2018, he has served as vice president of operations, overseeing large-scale production and operational efficiency in Ohio, Kentucky, Arkansas, and Kansas.

Moore has served as president of the Ohio Poultry Association and remains an active board member. He contributes to the industry

through advisory roles, including serving on the U.S. Shell Egg Academy Advisory Board, the Ohio Department of Agriculture Advisory Committee, and panels at Penn State, Ohio State, and Purdue University.

Beyond his professional commitments, Moore is a guest speaker, sharing insights at industry conferences and universities. He is dedicated to advancing poultry science and workforce development.

Moore and his wife, Mary Lee, reside in Ohio and have two children, one of whom will be attending MSU in the fall.

Moore joins other Distinguished Fellows: Dr. Wallace Morgan, former head of the Poultry Science Department, Dr. Karen Christensen, senior director of animal welfare for Tyson Foods; Sherman L. Miller, President and Chief Operations Officer of Cal-Maine Foods, Steve McLaurin, special projects manager for Peco Foods, Dr. Ryn Laster, director of food safety and animal welfare at Cal-Maine Foods, Inc., and Dr. Sue Ann Hubbard, a veterinarian with her own consulting firm. ■



continued from page 17...

stormwater management and sustainable urban development will be instrumental in advancing EPA's mission to protect human health and the environment. McOmber also has a long history of collaborating with state and local agencies to ensure the successful execution of complex, multi-disciplinary projects."



Project is carried out efficiently and effectively." Other top leaders in the Region 4 states also congratulated McOmber, including Georgia Governor Brian and Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear.

The Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, Chris Wells, joined other environmental agency leaders in expressing congratulations and a desire to work closely with McOmber: "We at MDEQ look forward to further enhancing our long-standing working relationship with Region 4

Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith applauded McOmber's appointment: "I congratulate Mr. McOmber and look forward to working with him as he leads the EPA Southeast Region. This is a job of some consequence. I am confident he will work hard on behalf of Mississippians, which includes continued cooperation with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to ensure the Yazoo Backwater Area Water Management

and welcoming Mr. McOmber to his new role".

McOmber will seek to implement the Trump Administration EPA agenda under the leadership of EPA Administrator Zeldin, who was sworn in on January 29, 2025. Zeldin's supporters touted him as the right fit for prioritizing economic growth while still protecting the environment. Zeldin confirmed this in a statement following his confirmation: "We will take great strides to defend every American's access to clean air, clean water, and clean land. We will maintain and expand the gold standard of environmental stewardship and conservation that President Trump set forth in his first administration while also prioritizing economic prosperity."

Agriculture groups applauded Zeldin's confirmation, lauding his approach to deregulation:

Ethan Lane, Vice President of Government Affairs for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, said in a statement: "For too long, the EPA has stood for 'Ending Production Agriculture. We look forward to an EPA that acknowledges the conservation efforts that are only made possible by cattle farmers and ranchers—America's original conservationists."

We will continue to monitor the initiatives that Administrator Zeldin and Region 4 Administrator McOmber make that have the potential to impact the poultry industry and other agricultural sectors. If you have any questions concerning this article, please contact John Milner, MPA Counsel at jmilner@brunini.com or (601) 960-6842; or Mark Leggett, MPA President, at leggett@mspoultry.org or (601) 832-7560. ■

MSU WELCOMES DR. EGANA-LABRIN

Mississippi State University's College of Veterinary Medicine recently appointed Dr. Sofia Egana-Labrin as an Assistant Clinical Professor at the Poultry Disease Research Laboratory (PDRL) in Pearl, MS.

Dr. Egana-Labrin is a poultry virologist and diagnostician with 14 years' experience in the field of avian health, including poultry diagnostics and applied virology research. After graduating with her Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree from Austral University of Chile in 2010, Dr. Egana-Labrin worked for seven years as a veterinary researcher and diagnostician in the Avian Health and Diagnostic Lab at the University of Chile's School of Veterinary Medicine.

She obtained her Ph.D. in Animal Biology at the University of California, Davis in 2022, where her research focused on understanding of the viral evolution and pathogenicity of variant avian reovirus strains. Since 2022, Dr. Egana-Labrin worked as a Postdoctoral Research Associate at the University of Maryland, where



Dr. Sofia Egana-Labrin

she performed research on infectious bursal disease (IBD) virus, avian reovirus and avian influenza (AI) virus. She has also been involved in various collaborative research projects studying chicken immune responses, feed additives, and disease-resistant poultry lines.

Dr. Egana-Labrin is committed to mentoring the next generation of veterinarians and poultry professionals and aims to advance avian disease diagnostics and vaccine development through collaborations with other laboratories, universities, private companies, and stakeholders. In her free time, Dr. Egana-Labrin enjoys painting, cooking and outdoor activities. ■

continued from page 15...

Contcosts and decreased prices, have led to slight decreases in Mississippi's catfish acreage in the last several years.

Among other commodities in the state, hay is valued at \$171 million, up 13%. Rice production value is \$168 million, a gain of 20%. That increase was due to a rise in acreage. The state's specialty crops are worth \$115 million, an increase of 2%.

Sweet potatoes are valued at \$82 million, a 10% decline from 2023. Peanut producers harvested 25,500 acres, 30% more than last year. The crop has a value of \$24.5 million, up 11% from 2023. Wheat value plunged 41% to \$19 million.

Each year, eligible producers receive a variety of government payments through safety net plans, including crop insurance and relief efforts. Those payments totaled \$214 million this year, down 19.5% from 2023. These payments are included in the total value of production for the state. ■

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References:
1-3. Data on file at Boehringer Ingelheim.

2025 MPA POULTRY MANAGEMENT SCHOOL

Lauren Fortenberry, Event Coordinator, MPA

The 2025 MPA Poultry Management School will be held May 19–20 in Starkville. Both days of the meeting will be held at the MSU College of Veterinary Medicine with lunch on day two moving to the MSU Poultry Science building. We will have a crawfish boil at 6:00 p.m. in Starkville on the 19th. The location and more details will be announced soon. Transportation will be provided to and from the crawfish boil. We are doing the booths again this year. Your table will be out for both days at the MSU College of Veterinary Medicine outside the auditorium. You can pay for your booth, registration fee, and sponsorship on our website, mspoultry.org. For parking and hotel information, Lauren Fortenberry will be sending an email about that soon! ■

Monday, May 19th, 2025

Start Time	End Time	Topic	Speaker
1:00	1:15	Welcome/Housekeeping	Ed Fletcher, MPA Chair
1:15	2:00	HPAI Cost, Update, Biosecurity Audits	Dr. Jim Watson, MBAH
2:00	2:30	HPAI Consequences for You & the Producer	Steve McLaurin, Peco Foods
2:30	3:00	Enterrococcus	Dr. Rachel Theimann, Koch Foods; Dr. Mueez Ahmad, Arm & Hammer
3:00	3:30	Break	
3:30	4:30	Senior Service Techs Advice	Kathy Moore, Koch Foods; Gena Blakeney, Matt Mitchell, Tyson Foods; Cliff Prine, Amick Farms; Jason Creel, Peco Foods; Richard Nobel, Mar-Jac; Stevens Bateman, Wayne-Sanderson Farms
4:30	5:45	Board Buses for Crawfish Boil	
6:00	8:00	Hospitality Time	

Tuesday, May 20th, 2025

Start Time	End Time	Topic	Speaker
8:00	8:15	Poultry Science Dept. Update	Dr. Ken Macklin, MSU Poultry Science
8:15	8:45	Salmonella Control on the Farm	Dr. Ken Macklin, MSU Poultry Science Dr. Tim Boltz, MSU Poultry Science
8:45	9:15	What service people need to be looking for	Dr. Travis Cigainero, Ceva
9:15	9:45	Lab Submission Guidelines	Dr. Natalie Armour Manginsay, MSU PRDL
9:45	10:15	Break	
10:15	10:45	Getting Ready for Summertime	Dr. Joseph Purswell, USDA ARS
10:45	11:30	Management	Dr. Joel Cline, Wayne-Sanderson Farms



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Recipe submitted by members Angel & Ken Upton



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MPA FOUNDATION SUPPORTED THE EDUCATION OF 21 STUDENTS IN 2024

Mark Leggett, President, MPA

At its meeting last year, the Mississippi Poultry Foundation (MPF) board transferred the \$25,000 raised for the Becky Beard Memorial Scholarship to the Mississippi State University Foundation to create an annual scholarship of \$1,000 for students who have worked in the industry while pursuing an MSU Poultry Science degree.

The board approved \$2,750 to the MSU Poultry Science Department for 10 scholarships for high school students to take college poultry science courses under a new dual enrollment program.

The board also approved a donation of \$10,000 to the MSU Foundation to bring the MPF Endowment at MSU to \$65,000.

The scholarship auction at the MPA Convention grossed \$35,212 for the foundation. Our new auctioneer, Miss. Rep. Lance Varner of Florence, did an outstanding job at the live auction. The average winning bid per item for both the live and silent auctions combined was the

highest in the last 10 years. We appreciate everyone who donated an item and those who bid on the items.

During 2024, the MPF assisted 21 graduate and undergraduate students with their education through the scholarships or travel grants below. ■

Mississippi Poultry Foundation Scholarship	\$16,000	4 Students
MPF Endowment	\$2,000	2 Undergraduate Students
First Financial Bank Scholarship	\$1,500	2 Undergraduate Students
International Paper Research Grant	\$5,000	3 Graduate Students
Bank Plus Travel Grant	\$2,500	2 Students
Southern Ag Credit Travel Grant	\$1,500	3 Students
First South Farm Credit	\$2,000	2 Students
College Of Veterinary Medicine Travel Grant	\$1,000	2 Students
Becky Beard Memorial Scholarship	\$1,000	1 Student

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2025 BEST CHICKEN SALAD

Congratulations Patty's Pans!

In case you're wondering who has the best chicken salad in Mississippi, it's Patty's Pans of Lucedale! According to those voting in a Mississippi Poultry Association Facebook poll and a taste-testing team.

Patty's Pans is located out in the country on Old Highway 26, though it is not a sit-down restaurant they do cater and have "grab 'n' go" snacks, pans, and casseroles at their location. Proud owners Ben and Patty Hare started their catering business 25 years ago. They enjoy feeding and giving back to their community.

"Our business has been used more as a ministry; we try to feed the homeless monthly or bimonthly. We look for people in need of help, it hasn't really been about getting rich, but the Lord blesses us and allows us to keep going. It is a family-oriented business, if they are not related, they become family", said owner Patty Hare. When asked what the secret was to the amazing chicken salad, Patty said, "it is made with love from a passed down family recipe."

This year marked a new participation record! With over 150 restaurant

nominations and over 1,600 votes. The other two restaurants in the finals for the Best Chicken Salad in Mississippi were Scranton's in Pascagoula and Beachside Bistro in Bay St. Louis!

James Faison of Mar- Jac Poultry MS, LLC, one of the tasters said, "All 3 finalists had outstanding chicken salads. The participation from Mississippians in voting for the best chicken salad was great to see and the number of locally owned restaurants was great to see. I did not realize how popular chicken salad was. It was fun to be part of the judging team and getting to eat the three best chicken salads in Mississippi."

MPA Immediate Past Board Chair Mack Walker of Tyson Foods and Dr. Ryn Laster of Cal Maine Foods presented a plaque to the Hare's at the Dixie National Rodeo. ■



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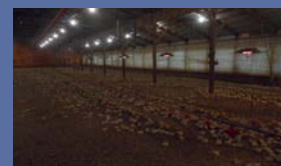
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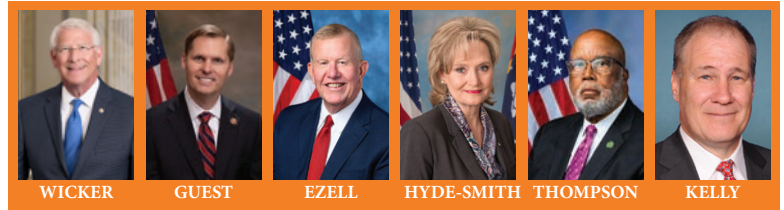
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MS CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION NAMED TO KEY POST



Mississippi's Congressional delegation holds key positions on House and Senate committees that are important to Mississippians in general the poultry industry specifically.

Mississippi's senior Senator, Roger Wicker, is the Chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee for the 119th Congress. Wicker is also a senior member of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, having served previously as the chairman and ranking member for the 116th and 117th Congresses, respectively. His other committee assignments include the Environment and Public Works Committee and the Rules and Administration Committee.

Sen. Cindy Hyde-Smith is the chair of the Senate Agriculture's Subcommittee on Commodities, Derivatives, Risk Management and Trade. She also serves on the following subcommittees of the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry: Conservation, Forestry, Natural Resources, and Biotechnology and on Livestock, Dairy, Poultry, and Food Safety. She is also a member of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources and the Committee on Rules and Administration.

In late January, the Senate Committee on Appropriations named Hyde-Smith chair of the Senate Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee and added her to the Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee.

In the House, Rep. Trent Kelly, of the 1st District serves on the House Armed Services Committee and is chair of the Seapower and Projection Forces Subcommittee. He serves on the following committees of House Committee on Agriculture: Livestock, Dairy, and Poultry, and Forestry Subcommittee. Kelly is vice chair of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence and chair of the Defense Intelligence & Overhead Architecture Subcommittee.

Rep. Bennie Thompson, 2nd district is the Ranking Member of the Committee on Homeland Security, which he chaired during the last term.

Rep. Michael Guest, 3rd District, chairs the House Committee on Ethics. He also chairs the Committee on Homeland Security's Subcommittee on Border Security and Enforcement. On the Appropriations Committee, he is on the following subcommittees: Energy and Water Development, and Related Agencies; Homeland Security; and Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies.

Rep. Mike Ezell, 4th District, chairs the Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. He is vice chair of the House Committee on Natural Resources's Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries and serves on the Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources. ■

MSU POULTRY CHAIN CHANGED GRAND CHAMPION'S LIFE

The 2024 Poultry Chain, the 12th annual, drew 170 students ranging from ages 8-18 and 40 of Mississippi's 82 counties had participants in the project. MPA has been a sponsor of the Poultry Chain since the beginning.

I am Layton Varner, and I live in Florence, Mississippi with my dad, mom, and brother. I am a senior at Florence High School where I serve as Student Body President. I am a Student Ambassador for the MS Secretary of State and also serve on the MS Agriculture Youth Council.



I have been involved in 4 H for 8 years. My first project in 4 H was the Chick Chain. At the time, we had just moved into a new home, and wanted to start a farm. The Chick Chain was an easy way to get started with this dream because it didn't require much, other than a small brooder, small coop, and willingness to learn something new! I remember the morning my mom went to the post office to pick up my first order of chicks. The sun was not even up when they arrived at our house. I was so excited to see and hold them!

The journey that shaped my life began there!

I continued the Chick Chain Project from 5th grade through 12th grade. Each year we learned new things about our project such as: biosecurity, flock management, nutrition, and over all bird health. I was able to collect and sell eggs to those in the community. I also sold laying hens and made a profit on the chicks we raised. Our hens were so popular that people would call us after our show at the State Fair to ask if we had any for sale! The Chick Chain is more than tossing feed and pouring water in a pen. Part of the project is keeping a record book. Within the record book I documented nutritional intake information, flock fatalities, biosecurity protocols we follow, and anything else pertaining to my project. This process taught me how important it is to be responsible, keep good records, understand profit and loss, and learn the basics of raising healthy poultry.

The person that has been the most impactful in my 4H journey is my mom. She encouraged me to get involved with 4H through the Chick Chain Project. The Chick Chain Project became a segway for my many other 4 H endeavors. I now serve as the State 4H Reporter and a State 4 H Ambassador. There's no doubt that if it were not for my mom encouraging and helping me through my projects, that I would not have found the success I have today.

One of my favorite parts of the Chick Chain project is seeing the chicks grow into big, healthy hens. My chicks grew so fast that if I missed seeing them for a day, it was crazy how much they changed in such

a short time period. I also loved going to gather eggs and every once in a while finding a huge oversized egg that I knew would be a double yolker. These were a treat. But my most favorite memory of the years I had in the Chick Chain was MS State Fair 2025. It was my last Chick Chain project, and my mom, dad, brother, and two best friends were there when the winners were announced.

They were announced in order from 5th place to Grand Champion. As each name was called in my division I knew my chances of placing were dwindling. However, somehow I heard these words, "Senior Grand Champion Meat Bird goes to Layton Varner!" My friends went wild! I remember being so excited to finish this project strong. We later took one of my birds on the Midway for photos with my banner!

When asked the question, "If I could advise one person looking to join a 4 H poultry project, what would it be?" My reply is, "DO IT!" The poultry projects are an easy way for youth and families to get involved, learn about agriculture together, without much overhead at all! This project has been life changing for me. Money earned from winnings have helped to put a new roof on our barn, and added to my college fund. While having success is fun, the treasure that I have found in poultry projects are lifelong memories and lessons learned alongside my family. We spent time outside together, learning, brainstorming, and problem solving. I have made memories that will last a lifetime, and I encourage others to do the same! ■





MPA FOUNDATION TRAVEL GRANT AIDS MSU VETERINARIANS TO PRESENT RESEARCH AT SCIENCE FORUM

Natalie Armour Manginsay, BVSc, MAM, PhD, DACPV

Associate Professor and Director, Poultry Research and Diagnostic Laboratory

Department of Pathobiology and Population Medicine, College of Veterinary Medicine, MSU

Two MSU Poultry veterinarians presented their research at the International Poultry Scientific Forum in Atlanta with the help of the Mississippi Poultry Foundation College of Veterinary Medicine Travel grant from the Mississippi Poultry Foundation.

Dr. Autumn Gregg



Drs. Marcela Arango and Autumn Gregg shared the \$1,500 travel grant that allowed them to attend the International Poultry Scientific Forum that was part of the International Production and Processing Exposition in January. Both are veterinarians in the

Poultry Masters training program at the MSU Poultry Research and Diagnostic Laboratory (PRDL), located in Pearl.

Dr. Arango presented on her research evaluating the exposure of Mississippi broiler breeder flocks to avian metapneumovirus (aMPV) based on aMPV ELISA titers. aMPV, the cause of swollen head syndrome (SHS) and turkey rhinotracheitis (TRT) in chickens and turkeys respectively have exploded in chicken and turkey flocks across the U.S. since late 2023. Mississippi has had no confirmed cases of aMPV to date. Dr. Arango analyzed 70 submissions from 25- to 50-week-old broiler breeder flocks from all six broiler integrators in Mississippi. ELISA results revealed that 57% of the farms were seronegative, 40% were suspect, and 3% were seropositive.

Dr. Marcela Arango



These results indicate that at least two broiler breeder flocks were likely exposed to aMPV, while a number of others may have been exposed. Clinical signs were not reported in the seropositive flocks, suggesting that flocks infected with aMPV may sometimes not show signs of disease.

Dr. Arango graduated with a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree from the University of Antioquia in Colombia. After graduation, Marcela worked as a poultry production veterinarian in Colombia for six years before she moved to the United States. Dr. Arango obtained

her Master of Science degree from the University of Arkansas (Poultry Science) where she learned about intestinal health and focused her research on *Enterococcus cecorum* infections in broilers.

Currently, she is pursuing her Master of Veterinary Science in Poultry at PRDL and is expected to graduate in May of 2025. Her goal as a poultry veterinarian is to provide meaningful contributions to the poultry industry through practicing quality medicine, maintaining and promoting bird welfare, and collaborating with colleagues.

Dr. Gregg's research focused on investigating *Enterococcus cecorum* and *Enterococcus faecalis*, which have been increasingly implicated as causes of disease in chickens. She analyzed 604 cases of *Enterococcus* sp. received by the PRDL from January 2023 to October 2024 and found that the prevalence of *E. cecorum* in both 2023 and 2024 was lower than *E. faecalis*. *E. cecorum* was however more commonly isolated from 3–4-week-old broilers with visible lesions (including pericarditis, femoral head necrosis and vertebral osteoarthritis), while *E. faecalis* was

more commonly isolated from the yolk sacs of chicks younger than 1 week of age without visible lesions and from hatchery samples in cases of decreased hatchability.

Dr. Autumn Gregg received her BS in Animal Science and Agribusiness from Oklahoma State University in 2020 and her Doctor of Veterinary Medicine from the School of Veterinary Medicine at Louisiana State University in 2024. She is currently pursuing her Master of Veterinary Science in Poultry at Mississippi State University's Poultry Research and Diagnostic Laboratory and is expected to graduate in May 2026. Her goal as a poultry veterinarian is to provide a safe and efficient food supply by ensuring the health, welfare, and productivity of poultry while preventing and managing disease through collaboration with colleagues. ■

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DR. DANNY MAGEE'S ROLE AS A MENTOR

RECALLED AT CEREMONY TO HANG HIS PORTRAIT IN HALL OF FAME AT MSU

Teaching and mentoring were common themes from those who spoke about Dr. Danny Magee before his portrait was hung in the Mississippi Poultry Hall of Fame.

The ceremony at the Mississippi State University Poultry Science Building on January 24 added the 38th portrait of leaders of the industry. They include founders of companies, professors and researchers, growers, and management of poultry companies.

Dr. Magee retired as Director of the MSU College of Veterinary Medicine Poultry Research and Diagnostic Laboratory (PRDL) in Pearl, MS, in 2022, but he has remained active with the Mississippi Poultry Association helping to plan and moderate seminars.

Those who spoke about Dr. Magee recounted his influence in their lives and on the industry in the state.



Dr. Lanny Pace, former director of the Mississippi Veterinary Research and Diagnostic Laboratory System of which the PRDL is a part, recounted Danny's efforts in "getting the poultry lab up and running" when it first became a part of MSU. Dr. Pace also credited Dr. Magee with getting the graduate poultry veterinarian program going at MSU, noting that he had influenced so many students.

Those students include Dr. Sue Ann Hubbard, who worked under Dr. Magee at the lab. Dr. Hubbard, also a poultry grower, recounted how Danny helped her and her husband euthanize 10,000 chickens after Hurricane Katrina.

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SOUTHERN AG CREDIT TRAVEL GRANT

ALLOWS MSU STUDENTS TO PRESENT POULTRY RESEARCH

Dr. Ken Macklin, Department Head, MSU Poultry Science

Three Mississippi State University graduate students presented their research at the International Poultry Scientific Forum (IPSF), held in conjunction with the International Poultry Processing Exposition in Atlanta thanks to Southern Ag Travel Grants awarded by the Mississippi Poultry Foundation.

Southern Ag Credit makes an annual \$1,500 donation to the Mississippi Poultry Foundation for this travel grant. The grants were first awarded in 2016.

“Southern Ag Credit is pleased to assist MSU students in presenting their research at the IPSF. Their research will further the growth of the poultry industry. Southern Ag Credit is committed to investing in future generations that will continue to ensure a strong poultry industry,” said Brent Barry, regional vice president of Southern Ag Credit.

Charis Waters is a PhD student under Dr. Pratima Adhikari at MSU, specializing in poultry nutrition research. She has participated in numerous nutrition trials aimed at improving laying hen production and performance. Her recent work focuses amino acid ratios in laying hens across their lifecycle, from pullet development to late lay.



Charis Waters

Charis' presentation was titled - Understanding the Branched-Chain Amino Acid (BCAA) Interactions on Bone Morphology of Pullets (6-12 weeks of age). The objective of the study was to examine the role of branched chain amino acids on Hy-Line W-36 pullets (6-12 weeks old). Results from this study highlight

that a lower Val:Lys ratio combined with a higher Ile:Lys and Leu:Lys ratio in pullet diets may improve bone quality, supporting better skeletal health and growth potential in growing laying hens. Implementing these balanced BCAA ratios during the critical 6–12-week developmental stage may improve skeletal health, reduce the risk of bone-related issues, and support the long-term productivity of laying hens in the future.

Haley Fugate is a Master of Science student under the advisement of Dr. Li Zhang. Her research focuses on understanding bacterial virulence and developing innovative solutions to combat poultry diseases, with a particular emphasis on reducing the impact of avian pathogenic E. coli through targeted interventions. The title of her abstract at IPPE was - Assessment of pagP gene Function In Avian Pathogenic Escherichia coli Pathogenicity Using A Broiler Chick Challenge Model.



Haley Fugate

The goal of the research was to determine if the pagP gene is needed for an E. coli infection in broiler chickens. Results suggest that the pagP gene

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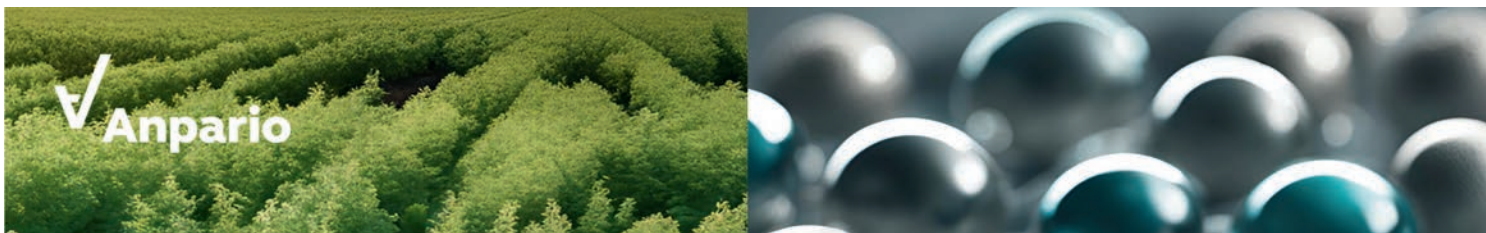
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Dr. Phil Stayer, former veterinarian with Sanderson Farms, now a consultant, said throughout Dr. Magee's career in the private sector or at MSU, "he's always teaching."

Dr. Natalie Manginsay, who followed Dr. Magee as director of the poultry lab, said "the kindness he and his family showed to me is one reason, I did not go back to my home country" of South Africa.

Dr. Kent Hoblet, dean of the CVM from 2006 to 2023, said Danny would have an enduring legacy as "role model and a team builder."

That legacy is evident in Danny's son Chris, now a poultry veterinarian with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, who said that going as a kid to a company hatchery, "it was evident the impact he had on people." ■

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FIRST CONFIRMED CASE OF AVIAN METAPNEUMOVIRUS REPORTED IN MISSISSIPPI

*Natalie Armour Manginsay, BVSc, MAM, PhD, DACPV
Associate Professor and Director, Poultry Research and Diagnostic Laboratory
Department of Pathobiology and Population Medicine, College of Veterinary Medicine, MSU*

Mississippi saw its first confirmed case of Avian Metapneumovirus (aMPV) in Mississippi when a farm of 38-week-old broiler breeders tested positive for aMPV-A by PCR testing on March 3. The farm was near the Alabama state line.

Below is information about the disease adapted from an article in Emerging Trends written last summer by Dr. Natalie Manginsay, director of the MSU Poultry Research and Diagnostic Lab.

Avian metapneumovirus is a highly contagious virus in the family Pneumoviridae, genus Metapneumovirus. Four distinct subtypes (subtypes A, B, C, and D) of aMPV are recognized, and subtypes A and B are widespread in chicken and turkey producing countries across the world. aMPV infects the upper respiratory tract of poultry, causing swollen head syndrome (SHS) in chickens and turkey rhinotracheitis (TRT) in turkeys. The virus can also affect the reproductive system, resulting in significant drops in egg production.



Figure 3. aMPV-infected broiler breeder hen showing neurologic signs (stargazing/opisthotonus) (Photo: Dr. Cole Taylor, University of Georgia)

infection and may play an important role in the spread of the virus. There is currently no clear evidence of vertical (egg) transmission of aMPV from hen to progeny.

Clinical signs and lesions. Most cases in the current outbreak in chickens have involved 4- to 9-week-old broilers as well as broiler breeders. More severe disease with higher mortality has been reported

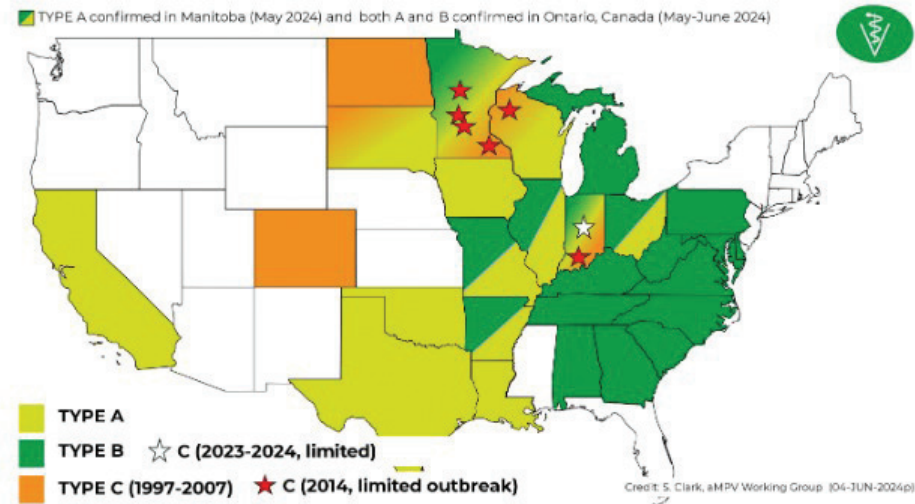


Figure 1. Map of avian metapneumovirus subtype A, B, and C detections in the U.S. as of June 4, 2024 (Image credit: Dr. Steven Clark, aMPV Working Group)

in broiler breeders after peak production. Decreased feed intake and huddling with lethargy is followed by upper respiratory signs, including sneezing, snicking, coughing, nasal and eye discharge (including foamy eyes), and conjunctivitis (reddened eyes). A few days after the appearance of the first respiratory signs, prominent swelling around the eyes, sinus swelling and/or swelling of the whole face/head may be noted

Reports of neurologic signs are common, particularly in affected turkey and broiler breeder flocks, with some birds showing twisted necks, stargazing, head shaking, disorientation and loss of coordination (Figure 3). Broiler breeder hens are more often affected by aMPV than roosters, and peritonitis, polyserositis (with infection around the heart, liver and airsacs) and pneumonia have been observed in hen mortality.



Figure 2. aMPV-infected broiler breeder hen with marked facial and sinus swelling (Photo: Dr. Cole Taylor, University of Georgia)

In broiler breeder and commercial layer flocks in the current U.S. outbreak, egg production drops ranging between 0.5 and 10% have been reported. Severe egg production drops between 10 and 40% in turkeys are not uncommon. Eggshell changes appear to be rare in the

current outbreak in the U.S., but egg quality changes (including a loss of pigmentation and eggshell deformities) may occur and have been reported internationally. Affected broiler companies have not reported noticeable effects on the hatchability of the eggs from infected flocks.

Control and prevention. It is critical that producers adhere to rigorous biosecurity programs and practices to ensure that avian metapneumovirus is not introduced into more Mississippi flocks. aMPV control options have been recently expanded in the U.S. with the use of autogenous vaccines and the importation of live and killed commercial vaccines. There is no treatment for aMPV infection, but antibiotic treatment may be used as a tool to reduce the severity of the disease by controlling secondary

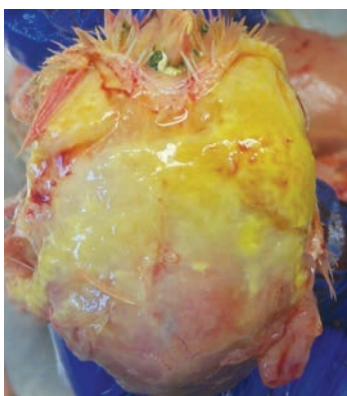


Figure 4. Bacterial infection of subcutaneous tissue of the head in a 43-day-old broiler chicken infected with aMPV sub-type B (Photo credit: Dr. Dallas Clontz, Veterinary Diagnostic Pathology)

bacterial infections. Good flock husbandry and management significantly reduce the losses experienced in infected flocks. ■

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plays a crucial role in E. coli virulence, as when it was deleted from the E. coli genome there was a significant reduction in birds' mortality and lesion severity. These findings highlight pagP as a promising target for vaccine development, offering a potential strategy to mitigate colibacillosis and improve poultry health and productivity.



Jorge Urrutia

Jorge Urrutia, originally from Guatemala, received his undergraduate degree in Animal Science at Texas Tech University. He then moved to Mississippi to pursue his master's at MSU in poultry science, focusing on management and nutrition. Currently, he is working on his PhD in Poultry Nutrition with Dr. Kelley Wamsley.

His IPPE presentation was entitled - Maximizing 17 To 28 D Growth Performance Of Broilers with and Without a Subclinical Necrotic Enteritis Challenge Through Corn Particle Size And Feed Quality. The objective of this project was to determine the optimal combination of corn particle size (600, 900 or 1200 µm) and feed quality (40, 60 or 80% pellet) to maximize broiler chicken performance from 17 to 28 days of age.

The results show that there was an improvement in feed conversion in birds fed a corn particle size of 900 µm vs either a 600 or 1200 µm. The research also showed that corn particle size of 900 µm and having a high percentage of pellets (>80%) in the feed produced heavier birds. Additionally, he observed less severe necrotic enteritis in birds fed diets with most of the feed being intact pellets (>60%). This research suggests that feeding different corn particle sizes and high feed qualities can positively impact bird performance and potentially mitigate the impact of subclinical necrotic enteritis. ■

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

** Mississippi Poultry Association Scheduled Meetings*

APR 6.....2025 Legislative Session Ends
APR 10Beef & Poultry Expo, *Laurel, MS*
APR 19.....Easter At The Ag Museum, *Jackson, MS*
MAY 19-20.....*Poultry Management School
MSU Poultry Science Auditorium
JUN*MPA Board of Directors Meeting

JUN 6-8.....Pickle Fest, *MS Ag Museum*
AUG*Breeder-Hatchery Seminar
SEPT 11-14.....*MPA Convention, *Destin, FL*
*Board of Directors Meeting
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OCT 2-13MS State Fair, *Jackson, MS*
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