



# PASTURED POULTRY TUNE-UP

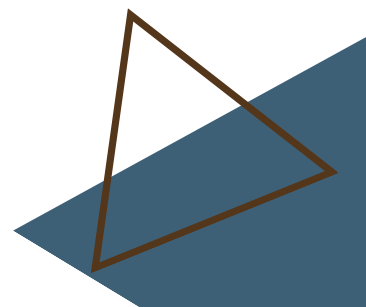
5 Keys to a Profitable Enterprise

**GROWING**  
**FARMERS**

# WELCOME!



Pastured poultry production is on the upswing on many small farms nationwide. With a low cost of entry and minimal cash and land needed upfront, poultry production is a popular option for the beginner farmer. However, many struggle to make money with poultry. Let's look at several key factors that are going to determine your profitability.





# FEED



Feed conversion is something we don't usually think about. It is easy to throw feed in the feeder and move on to other chores. But do your birds have enough feeder space per bird, and are they wasting it?

Adult chickens will need 4" of space per bird along trough feeders, and 1" along round feeders that remain full of feed. If there is any less space, competition from other birds will limit feed access and growth or laying potential. Feeder height is also critical to limit feed waste. Have the feeder edge at "chin" level for the birds. If they have to stretch, it is okay. The same rule applies to water height. If you are raising broilers, keep in mind that feed conversion decreases after the birds pass the five-pound dressed mark. Don't let your birds get too big.

Another tip is to not let the grass that your birds are on get over 10" tall. If the grass gets too tall and old then they will tend to leave the grass alone and go for costly grain.



# CLEANING

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Cleanliness is crucial. Are your pens being moved enough and are the waterers routinely getting cleaned? Dirty water can really hurt potential growth and encourage disease. Your birds should be moved as close to daily as possible. This not only keeps your birds clean but will help encourage your birds to eat more grass and bugs and less expensive feed.



# CHORES

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Efficiency is important not only for profitability but also quality of life. If it takes a half day to move feed and water 2,000 birds, you need to take a hard look at your system. Chicken structures play a big role in efficiency. Many of the popular designs on the market are too heavy and cumbersome, not to mention expensive. Time yourself moving the birds and look for areas that can be improved. To do chores efficiently, walk or drive both ways “loaded” as much as possible.





# BROODERS

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Brooder care is key. This is where most people lose their birds or birds get a weak start that they usually can't overcome. Make sure your brooder is dry and has lots of natural light. If you start to smell ammonia or "chicken smell" then more bedding should be added to soak in the chicken litter. More issues than not are related to damp bedding and watering areas.

Keep everything clean - especially waterers. Make sure the brooder is draft-free the first week but has the ability to circulate air as the birds age. A stale, hot brooder can wreck havoc on older birds. Use an official brooder temperature chart and follow it closely. Once the birds are old enough according to the chart to handle your farm's low temperatures they should be promptly moved outside.





# PREDATORS

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Predation can suck the life out of your chicken enterprise and cause unnecessary stress on you and the birds. There are many ways to control predators but there are only two really effective methods:

1. Sleep with the birds with your gun and forget having a life.
2. Get a good guard dog.

By guard dog, I don't mean some house pet, but a professionally trained guard dog. If you get a dog, listen closely to the trainer's tips and don't make friends with or pet the dog. Yes, they have those big eyes but befriending the guard dog usually ends with a guard dog sleeping under your porch while the chickens are left to nature's mercy.





Finally, enjoy what you do! Don't forget the reasons that you started raising poultry and if you are disgruntled with your current progress, take a step back and look for the factors that are at the root of the issues. Making improvements is part of any good business, but taking satisfaction from a job well done is just as important as your cash profit.





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