

## Myths and Facts about Delmarva's Broiler Chicken Industry

### Myth

Chickens are fed **hormones**.

### Fact

It has been illegal in the United States since the late 1950s to feed hormones to commercially raised chickens. Federal regulations carefully govern feed ingredients and additives and the federal Food and Drug Administration inspects feed mills and requires feed manufacturers to keep detailed records of feed ingredients.

### Myth

Broiler chickens (chickens raised for meat rather than eggs) are raised in **cramped cages in dirty houses** where the welfare of the birds is ignored.

### Fact

Cages are not used in broiler chicken production and chickens are free to roam about the house as much as they like. The most important job of growers is to ensure a comfortable environment for the birds. This includes careful control of temperature, humidity, air quality, and making sure there is plenty of food and clean water. Unlike free range chickens, chickens raised in comfortable controlled conditions are protected from harsh weather, predators, and many disease-causing agents.

### Myth

Poultry manure is the largest source of **water pollution**.

### Fact

Only a small portion of water pollution is caused by poultry manure. A report issued by the U.S. Geological Survey indicates that the Susquehanna, the Potomac, and the James Rivers contributed about 95 percent of the annual nitrogen load and about 87 percent of the annual phosphorus load from the nine major rivers draining to the Chesapeake Bay from 1990 to 1998. Delmarva's chicken industry is not in any of these three watersheds. Poultry growers in our region are among the national leaders in environmental

protection, both in terms of agriculture and society as a whole. Chicken manure/litter is a valuable resource for many growers who use it in a controlled, responsible manner for their crop farming or make it available to other farmers who use nutrient management plans so it does not cause pollution. Delmarva's poultry industry is at the forefront in developing alternative uses for manure/litter.

### Myth

"Factory farms" are used to raise broiler chickens.

### Fact

Not true! Family farms raise broiler chickens. The average poultry farm on Delmarva is family owned and operated, just as they are throughout the U.S. Thanks to technological advances and improving animal welfare standards, a family can raise tens of thousands of birds in several houses at a time while still keeping birds healthy and safe. Nearly 1,700 farm families raise broiler chickens on Delmarva and rely on the income from poultry to keep their farms profitable. This helps ensure preservation of family farms.

### Myth

Bigger chickens are the result of **unnatural growing conditions** that include medicine-laced feed.

### Fact

Today's chickens grow larger and faster. This is a result of natural cross-breeding, improved diets and health care, and housing optimized to each stage of the chicken's growth.

### Myth

Antibiotic usage in poultry is creating **disease-resistant bacteria** that threaten human health.

### Fact

Antibiotic use in the chicken industry has declined in recent years. When needed, they are used under the strict control of licensed veterinarians to keep animals healthy and treat any health problems that occur. This ensures

that American consumers will have a continued safe and healthy supply of meat, poultry, milk and eggs. Antibiotics approved and regulated by the federal Food and Drug Administration have been used in animal production safely for more than 40 years, resulting in healthier animals.

### Myth

Work in poultry processing plants is **dangerous, minimum-wage work.**

### Fact

Delmarva's poultry industry is dedicated to workplace safety and has made great strides in ergonomics. Automation has reduced repetitive motion jobs. Competitive starting wages for processing plant workers on Delmarva are well above minimum wage and the employment package includes health insurance, paid vacations, and other benefits.

Prepared by:  
Delmarva Poultry Industry, Inc.  
16686 County Seat Highway  
Georgetown, DE 19947-4881  
302-856-9037  
dpi@dpichicken.com  
www.dpichicken.org  
August 2010



b\myths & facts