How Should I Get My Buffers Ready for Winter?
By Jim Passwaters
Vegetative Environmental Buffers Coordinator

For the most part, vegetative environmental buffers require little winter maintenance. There are a few things to check on, though, that will reduce headaches and costs come spring, giving your plantings the best chances for surviving the blustery, snowy months.

If you still have irrigation working on your buffer, remember to disconnect the water line before frosts arrive. Failure to do this may cause the pipes to freeze and create issues. There is no need to winterize the pipes going along the trees or shrubs. These pipes drain themselves, so there should be no issues.

Winter is the best time to prune any trees or shrubs. After several frosts, the trees become dormant and sap doesn't flow as freely. Look for any weak branches that may crack or break, especially under a heavy snow or ice event, and trim them with clean cuts.

For those growers who have grasses adjacent to tunnel fans, it is not necessary to cut them back. The grasses will regrow from their crowns. However, for appearances’ sake, some folks think they look better if trimmed. That’s fine – but resist the temptation to do it now. I recommend waiting until March to do that trimming, and cut the grasses to about 4 inches above the ground. At that height, you can’t use a lawnmower, but I have found the hedge trimmers are very effective at cutting these grasses. And while I have no personal experience with it, I have been told the dried grasses make an excellent carbon source for composters.

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How Should I Get My Buffers Ready for Winter?

Continued from page 1

If you have a pollinator plot, after several frosts it can be mowed to a height of 4-6 inches. Doing so will help scatter seeds that will keep the plot productive.

Overall, though, your buffers require much less winterization than your chicken houses do – so that’s one less thing to worry about.

If you have unanswered questions about this, feel free to call me at 302-236-0470 or email at passwaters@dpichicken.com.

A Low-Cost Vehicle Cleaning and Disinfection System

By E.R. Benson, R.L. Alphin, D.P. Hougentogler, A.K. Szostek, and J.R. Moyle

Biosecurity is one of the few preventative techniques available for most major avian diseases. Biosecurity can be used both to prevent diseases from entering a facility (“isolation”) and to keep diseases already present on a farm from leaving the farm (“containment”). Highly pathogenic avian influenza resulted in the death of almost 50 million birds in the United States in 2015. Newcastle disease virus continues to run rampant in exhibition and backyard birds in parts of California. In both cases, poor biosecurity and quarantine has lead to expansions of the outbreak.

Vehicle traffic can often contribute to the problem, since a vehicle’s suspension and tires are in intimate contact with potential contaminants. It is difficult to effectively clean a vehicle since there are many difficult to reach areas under the vehicle. A team of Delmarva researchers and university students developed a low-cost, open source and portable vehicle undercarriage decontamination system. It’s designed to be built with things that are already at the farm or can easily be purchased at the hardware store.

Timely Topics first covered this decontamination system in the September 2018 issue. In the last two years, the system was improved after being evaluated two ways. In the first approach, the coverage of the system was evaluated using paper strips that changed color when treated with a special spray. In the second approach, galvanized steel coupons inoculated with a vaccine strain of the same type of Newcastle disease virus as in California were attached to the truck using magnets and the truck was driven through the decontamination system. Three coupons orientations (horizontal, vertical, and

Continued on page 4
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A Low-Cost Vehicle Cleaning and Disinfection System

Continued from page 2

complex) were chosen to test the system’s ability to target various locations on the truck. One peroxide disinfectant (i.e. Virkon S) and one detergent (Simple Green) were used to determine the differences in decontamination effectiveness between a disinfectant and detergent. Viral material from the coupons was removed, added to pathogen-free eggs, and evaluated.

The system was able to reduce the amount of detectable virus by about 100 times. While it can’t guarantee that it will get rid of all potential virus material, it can reduce it significantly, helping to save your flock – or your neighbors.

Benson is Professor, Department of Animal and Food Sciences, University of Delaware.

Infectious Coryza Detections Prompt Biosecurity Alert

Infectious Coryza, a highly contagious poultry disease that does not pose any threat to humans, has been detected in a few flocks on Delmarva, following multiple detections earlier this year on Pennsylvania commercial farms. It has now been found on Delmarva, but not in any Delmarva commercial broiler farms as of mid-September. Additionally, it is the time of year when birds start to migrate, so the possibility of avian influenza coming to our area is also increasing.

Therefore, it is important that all poultry growers practice good biosecurity to protect their birds for this and other diseases. This is a good time to review and check the biosecurity practices on your farm.

Some important biosecurity practices are:

- Have dedicated shoes and clothes that you use only on the farm
- Curtail visits to auctions, live bird markets, swap meets, etc. until the risk of disease has passed
- If you have employees, make sure they follow all biosecurity practices, including not living with people that work on other farms
- Make sure to clean and change clothes before and after trips to locations that other growers frequent (stores, restaurants, DPI meetings, etc.)
- Clean and properly placed footbaths
- Prevent contact between your birds and wild birds
- Avoid contact with sick/dead poultry or wildlife. If contact does occur, wash your hands with soap and water, and change and wash clothing before having contact with healthy domestic poultry and birds

Alphin is Senior Instructor/Allen Laboratory Manager, Department of Animal and Food Sciences, University of Delaware. Hougentogler is Senior Research Associate, Department of Animal and Food Sciences, University of Delaware. Szostek is CANR Unique Strengths Undergraduate Research Scholar, Department of Animal and Food Sciences, University of Delaware. Moyle is Senior Agent/Poultry Specialist, University of Maryland Extension.

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Litter transport programs have been options for Maryland and Delaware chicken growers for years – one of several tools available to protect water quality. Now, cost-sharing incentives for moving chicken litter out of sensitive areas in the Chesapeake Bay watershed are also available to farmers receiving litter from Accomack County, Virginia chicken growers.

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and chicken processing companies jointly support a litter transport program that can place litter in dozens of central and western Virginia counties. Until this summer, though, only litter generated in two central Virginia counties, Rockingham and Page, could qualify. Now, the program has expanded to include litter owned by Accomack County’s family farmers growing chickens.

“The goal is to encourage development of self-sustaining poultry litter markets outside the Chesapeake Bay watershed, as well as certain designated areas within the bay watershed,” the DCR says in fact sheets about its program.

Up to 400 tons of litter can be eligible for a $20/ton incentive payment to a litter broker or a litter end user. Accomack litter can be sent under the program to the following Virginia localities:

- Greensville
- Sussex
- Southampton
- Surry
- Charles City
- New Kent
- James City
- Isle of Wight
- Suffolk
- Chesapeake
- Virginia Beach

To apply for a litter transport payment, a litter broker or litter end user must complete a Poultry Litter Transport Incentive Request Form (DCR199-184) and a Virginia W-9 tax form. The completed forms should be sent to:

Poultry Litter Transport Incentive Program Department of Conservation and Recreation 12 Sunset Blvd. Staunton, VA 24401

Incentive requests must be approved by DCR prior to litter transport, and after approved litter has been transported and applied, DCR must receive additional forms certifying that the litter reached its destination and is on the ground within 30 days of the litter application. For complete instructions, visit dcr.virginia.gov/soil-and-water/nmlitter or call 804-786-6124.

Setting the Record Straight in The Baltimore Sun

When Food & Water Watch placed a letter to the editor in The Baltimore Sun insisting Maryland farmers must “reduce pollution” and that Maryland must “end factory farming” before putting any pressure on Pennsylvania to improve its efforts to meet Chesapeake Bay water quality goals, we knew we had to set the record straight. We followed up with a letter of our own, which the Sun published, noting that in 2017, Pennsylvania sent more nitrogen flowing into the Bay (111 million pounds) than Maryland and Virginia combined (103 million pounds), according to Chesapeake Bay researchers. And we observed:

“In the past 30 years, farmers in the entire Chesapeake Bay watershed have cut their collective nitrogen pollution by 25 percent. But in the same time period, nitrogen runoff from stormwater in urban areas increased – yes, increased – by 21 percent, going from 34 million pounds a year in the 1980s to 41 million pounds in 2017.”

The letter was widely shared on social media, boosting our efforts to ensure farmers get deserved credit for all they’ve done to protect water quality.
Here's How to Continue Maryland AFO Permit Coverage

The Maryland Department of the Environment’s General Discharge Permit for Animal Feeding Operations, also known as the AFO permit, will expire on November 30. A draft revised AFO permit was approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in August, and MDE will hold public hearings on that draft AFO permit on October 21 at 6 p.m. at the Wicomico Youth & Civic Center in Salisbury, Md. MDE is asking for DPI’s help in making growers aware of the current permit’s expiration – and the steps a grower needs to take to continue permit coverage uninterrupted until the revised permit is finalized.

If you are an existing operation that is currently registered, you must complete the following in order to continue your permit coverage:

• Notify MDE at least 60 days prior to the permit’s expiration (by October 1, 2019) that the AFO is still in operation through completing and submitting the Notice of Continuation of Coverage (NOCO) form. A NOCO form was sent to all AFOs currently registered under the 2014 AFO Permit.

• Send in the Notice of Intent (NOI) form and applicable fee within 60 days after the new permit is effective (or no later than January 30, 2020). Growers are encouraged to check the ‘number of animals’ field in their current AFO permits, using the ‘Status of Animal Feeding Operations (AFO) Applications’ tool at

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Here's How to Continue Maryland AFO Permit Coverage

Continued from page 6

mde.maryland.gov, to make sure it is accurate when filing the NOI.

Since 2009, MDE has not collected fees associated with AFO permits, to encourage CAFOs to come into compliance with the AFO program as it got off the ground. This year, though, the General Assembly of Maryland explicitly prohibited MDE from waiving discharge permit fees for AFOs. This table compares the existing, waived fee structure with MDE’s new fees in its proposed regulations. MDE will hold a public hearing specific to these proposed regulations on October 21 at 4 p.m. at the Wicomico Youth & Civic Center in Salisbury, Md.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Small CAFO (&lt;37,500 chickens)</th>
<th>Medium CAFO (37,500-124,999 chickens)</th>
<th>Large CAFO (&gt;125,000 chickens)</th>
<th>&gt;350,000 square feet chicken house capacity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009 Regulations (had been waived by MDE)</td>
<td>$120 annual fee</td>
<td>$600 annual fee</td>
<td>$1,200 annual fee</td>
<td>$1,200 annual fee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed New Regulations (cannot be waived by MDE)</td>
<td>$60 per 5-year permit cycle; no annual fee</td>
<td>$300 per 5-year permit cycle; no annual fee</td>
<td>$800 per 5-year permit cycle; no annual fee</td>
<td>• $2,000 application fee, and • $1,200 annual fee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the General Assembly was in session and as lawmakers mulled changes to AFO regulations, DPI paid close attention to this process and weighed in many times. Our goal was to reduce, as much as feasible, the burden of new fees growers would face.

DPI will also continue to review the draft changes to the AFO permit and the proposed regulations make sure these regulations are not any more burdensome for our Maryland growers.

If you should have any questions, please contact the Maryland Department of the Environment AFO Division at 410-537-3314.

Rolling Process for Delaware Young Farmer Loan Program

Here’s the link:
agriculture.delaware.gov

The Delaware Aglands Foundation Board is using a rolling application process for its Young Farmer Loan Program to offer young farmers more flexibility in acquiring a farm. The program provides Delaware farmers between 18 and 40 years old long-term, no-interest loans to help purchase land, reducing the financial impact on farmers just starting out or looking to expand.

Applicants must have at least three years of farming experience, and their net worth must not exceed $300,000. Eligible farms must contain at least 15 acres of cropland and must not be enrolled in a conservation easement at the time of purchase. The 30-year, no-interest loans may fund up to 70 percent of the value of a property’s development rights, defined as the difference between full market value and agricultural value, up to a maximum of $500,000.

Interested applicants can visit agriculture.delaware.gov for an information and application packet or contact Deputy Secretary Austin Short at 302-698-4500 or austin.short@delaware.gov.
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REFERENCES
1 Data on file.
2 Data on file.

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“We consider you to be on the front lines. We’re counting on you.”

That was the message delivered to flock advisors for Delmarva’s chicken companies at an August 22 workshop, held to update the chicken company employees who see growers and their birds the most on avian diseases circulating in the U.S.

The workshop, led by veterinarians and lab directors from Delaware and Maryland, also gave the flock advisors training in how to swab chickens’ throats for mucus and correctly store those swabbed samples in tubes for later disease testing. Dr. Jo Chapman, the Maryland acting state veterinarian, welcomed the flock advisors with that “front lines” message.

Dr. Dan Bautista, director of Lasher Laboratory, shows proper swabbing technique on a chicken at a poultry disease workshop for flock advisors on Aug. 22.

Continued on page 11
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The flock advisors were also trained in how to properly handle field-swab samples of chicken mucus without contaminating the samples – in test tubes, transported in coolers – before they can be tested in a lab. Flock advisors performing this sample collection in the field are designated “Authorized Poultry Testing Agents” under the National Poultry Improvement Program, and they are critical to the ongoing avian influenza and other avian disease surveillance programs that Delaware and Maryland conduct to protect both states’ poultry industries.

In the briefing, held at the University of Delaware’s Carvel Research & Education Center, Dr. Dan Bautista, the University of Delaware’s Lasher Laboratory director; Dr. Shankar Mondal, the Maryland Department of Agriculture Salisbury Laboratory director; and Dr. Karen Lopez, the Delaware Assistant State Veterinarian, shared news of common avian diseases found in Delmarva flocks and elsewhere in the U.S. Some are occurring far from Delmarva, like cases of Virulent Newcastle Disease in California; others are on Delmarva’s doorstep, like outbreaks of Infectious Coryza in Lancaster County, Pa.

“Biosecurity is essential on an everyday basis, but more so than ever in the face of an outbreak,” Lopez said.

While Delmarva’s commercial broiler chicken flocks have not shown any signs of Coryza, Bautista said, sampling of backyard flocks in Delaware have shown evidence of the disease in those home-raised birds.

“Coryza is here. We just have to tell our growers not to get too relaxed,” Bautista said. “Let’s not get complacent as winter comes. There are diseases in backyard flocks that we don’t have in commercial flocks. That’s a check for us – it means we’re doing something right on biosecurity.”

Dr. Marie Severyn, veterinarian for Amick Farms, demonstrates a safe way to hold a chicken while swabbing it for a mucus sample in those home-raised birds.
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Managing Water Quality and Assessing Broiler Welfare: A Grower Meeting

Here's the link: poultry-growers-meeting-oct8.eventbrite.com

The University of Maryland Extension, University of Delaware Cooperative Extension and Delmarva Poultry Industry, Inc., along with Impact Poultry Products, invite you to attend a farm management meeting for poultry farmers on Delmarva to be held Tuesday, Oct. 8.

The topics that will be addressed are: “Poultry Water Quality & No Antibiotics Ever Programs” by Dr. Tom Tabler, from Mississippi State University, and “On Farm Assessment of Broiler Welfare” by Dr. Shawna Weimer, of the University of Maryland.

Registration is free, and a light dinner will be provided. This project is partially supported by an Agriculture and Food Research Initiative Competitive Grant from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture, and also sponsored in part by Impact Poultry Products. For over 25 years IMPACT-P(NA) – the only dry, need-activated biological litter amendment on the market – has been helping growers get an edge over the competition by improving the litter with each flock.

The meeting will be 6-8 p.m. at Caroline-Dorchester County Fairgrounds’ 4-H Park, 8230 Detour Road, Denton, Md. Register by Oct. 4 at poultry-growers-meeting-oct8.eventbrite.com.

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In the past 12 months, inspectors from the U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division have been conducting inspections on farms and nurseries in Maryland. These inspections have focused on employers with H-2A workers and have required employers to produce years of required records. Following the inspections, severe fines and penalties have been issued to employers.

After hearing about these inspections, the University of Maryland Agriculture Law Education Initiative partnered with the Maryland Department of Labor and Licensing Regulation and created some resources to help better prepare farm employers for these inspections. The first is a self-audit worksheet to help employers do an internal review of operations and record keeping related to both H-2A and non-H2A employees. The second is a recorded webinar on this subject that is available for download. Find both resources at umaglaw.org.

Remember: If you have migrant or seasonal workers (non H-2A), you are subject to the federal Migrant and Seasonal Worker Protection Act (MSPA). For more information on this law and what is requires check out this publication and for more information, please contact the Agriculture Law Education Initiative at 410-706-7377 or umaglaw.org.

It is very likely these inspections will continue to occur throughout Maryland in the near future. If you have H-2A, migrant and/or seasonal laborers at your operation, please take advantage of the resources above and make sure your operation is in legal compliance prior to an inspection.

The University of Maryland and Delaware Cooperative Extension will conduct an Annie’s Project for Women Managing Commercial Poultry during the fall of 2019 in Rhodesdale, Md. Annie’s Project focuses on the many aspects of farm management and is designed to empower women in overall farm decision making and to build local networks throughout the state. The target audience is farmwomen and women involved in agriculture with a passion for business, agriculture, and involvement in farm operation; the course is open to anyone interested in farm management practices. The program will be held at Eldorado Brookview Fire Department Hall, 5752 Rhodesdale Eldorado Road, Rhodesdale, MD 21659.

The cost of the entire course including meals and materials is $75. There is an additional $100 fee for FSA Borrower Training attendees. Please register by Oct. 5 - space is limited. For more information and to register, visit extension.umd.edu/annies-project or call 410-758-0166 or email jrhodes@umd.edu.
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In today’s broiler industry, producers are relying less on antibiotics and putting more attention on animal welfare than ever before. One result of this trend is that growers are being challenged to improve litter management. High litter moisture (>35%) has been correlated with increased risk factors related to bird health and welfare. Litter moisture can be reduced through proper drinker management and ventilation to maintain a low house relative humidity (Rh <50%). Though proper drinker management does not place a financial burden on the grower, the same cannot be said about ventilation rates required to maintain a low Rh. Depending on conditions, decreasing Rh by just 20% could increase heating costs by 45% due to the higher ventilation rates required.

A possible alternative to primarily using ventilation to control litter moisture could be maintaining a moderate Rh level (50-60%) and increasing air movement over the litter through the use of circulation fans. Traditionally, circulation fans have been used primarily to minimize temperature stratification, improve temperature uniformity and conserve energy. Circulation fan systems designed to meet these objectives do not typically produce a significant level of air movement at floor level which limits litter drying. However, to obtain the level of litter drying required to optimize bird health and welfare, a greater level of air movement at floor level is likely needed.

The objective of this study was to evaluate the combined effects of maintaining a moderate house Rh level (50-60%) and moderate level of air movement (150 feet/minute) across the floor on litter moisture, paw health and coccidia sporulation. A total of five flocks were studied on two commercial broiler farms (two houses per farm). One house on each farm did...
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Air Movement at Floor Level Can Keep Litter Dry

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not use circulation fans (control), and an adjacent house (treatment) was equipped with eight 24-inch 1/3 horsepower circulation fans that operated continuously throughout the flock. Both houses on each farm were managed similarly and were ventilated to maintain a moderate Rh of 50-60%.

The study demonstrated that the combination of maintaining a house Rh between 50-60% and an average velocity at floor level of 150 feet/minute resulted in a more consistent environment throughout the house. During cold weather, when temperature uniformity tends to be more problematic, the treatment house temperatures differed by less than 5°F over 99% of the time, while control house temperatures varied less than 5°F only 50% of the time.

Thermal images showed areas beneath tube heaters in control houses often exceeded 120°F during colder weather, while in the treatment houses floor temperatures ranged between 85°F to 100°F. These differences in floor temperatures led to uneven bird distribution in the control house. Birds often gathered near sidewalls to avoid areas under the heaters in control houses, while birds were more evenly distributed in treatment houses. Differences in bird distribution influenced litter moisture profiles. By three weeks, litter moisture was often 20-25% in treatment houses versus 25-35% in control houses. Furthermore, sidewalls in treatment houses tended to be less than 25% in moisture versus >30% in control houses during the cooler times of the year.

With drier litter, footpad lesions were typically lower in treatment houses. By the end of each flock, usually less than 30% of birds scored showed signs of severe lesions in the treatment houses whereas over 50% of birds displayed signs of severe lesions in control houses. If a paw value of $1.00/pound is assumed, the treatment effect could have the potential to save up to $3,000 per year for a 25,000-bird house growing a 4.5-pound bird.

No significant differences in coccidia sporulation were noted between control and treatment houses, which demonstrated that drier litter conditions in the treatment house had no negative impact on oocyst sporulation rates.

The producers observed that ammonia levels were consistently lower in the treatment house. Ammonia measurements taken over the first four weeks of one flock found an approximate 50% reduction in ammonia concentrations in the treatment house versus control (15-25 ppm vs. 30-40 ppm).

This research was funded by USPOULTRY and the USPOULTRY Foundation, and made possible in part by an endowing Foundation gift from Wayne Farms.

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Vigilance in Your Hiring Process
By Allyson Jones-Brimmer ~ Animal Agriculture Alliance

Are the employees working on your farm there to help care for your animals? Do their goals align with your business? Unfortunately, it’s a common strategy for some animal rights activist organizations to have individuals go “undercover” on farms to record videos that can be taken out of context, stage scenes of animal mistreatment or encourage abuse to record it without doing anything to stop it.

The Animal Ag Alliance, a non-profit dedicated to bridging the communication gap between farm and fork for more than thirty years, monitors animal rights activists and offers these tips regarding hiring:

• It is vital to thoroughly screen applicants, verify information and check all references.
• Be cautious of individuals who try to use a college ID, have out of state license plates or are looking for short-term work.
• During the interview, look for answers that seem overly rehearsed or include incorrect use of farm terminology.
• Search for all applicants online to see if they have public social media profiles or websites/blogs. Look for any questionable content or connections to activist organizations.
• Require all employees to sign your animal care policy. Provide training and updates on proper animal handling training.
• Require employees to report any mishandling to management immediately.
• Watch out for red flags, such as coming to work unusually early or staying late and going into areas of the farm not required for their job.

Always trust your gut – if something doesn’t seem right, explore it further. Be vigilant and never cut corners on your hiring process, even if you need to hire someone quickly. Doing your homework on every job applicant may be time-consuming, but it can ultimately save your business’ reputation. As always, it is important to work with local legal counsel to ensure compliance with federal and state laws for your hiring process.

You can find farm security resources and background information on animal rights activist organizations at www.AnimalAgAlliance.org or reach out to the Alliance at Info@AnimalAgAlliance.org or 703-562-5160. As members of the Animal Ag Alliance, we have access to more detailed resources on hiring and farm security. If you have suspicious applicants on your farm, contact us to verify if the individuals have connections to animal rights activism.

Here’s the link: www.AnimalAgAlliance.org

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Nominate a Farm for an Environmental Excellence Recognition

Here’s the link: www.uspoultry.org/environment

USPOULTRY is now accepting nominations for the 2020 Family Farm Environmental Excellence Award. The award recognizes exemplary environmental stewardship by family farmers engaged in poultry and egg production. Those eligible for the award include any family-owned poultry grower or egg producer supplying product to a USPOULTRY member or an independent producer who is a USPOULTRY member. Nominations are due Oct. 31.

All semi-finalists will receive a trip that covers travel expenses and hotel accommodations for two nights to attend the 2020 International Poultry Expo, part of the International Production & Processing Expo (IPPE) in Atlanta, Georgia. Each will also receive a Family Farm Environmental Excellence Award sign to display near the entrance of their farm.

The winner and runner-up of each region will be named at a special award ceremony that will take place at the end of the Animal Agriculture Sustainability Summit, held in conjunction with IPPE. Each regional winner will also receive a $1,000 cash award. In addition, the farm for each regional winner will be spotlighted on USPOULTRY’s website, and the Association will help publicize the farm’s award in local, regional and national media.

Competition details are available on the USPOULTRY website at www.uspoultry.org/environment.
LEADelaware Taking Applications for Class VI

LEADelaware, the state’s agriculture and natural resources leadership program, is now accepting applications for its sixth fellowship class, which will run for two years beginning January 2020. Applications must be received by October 1, 2019; applicants will be notified of their selection in early December. Participants in the past have included growers and producers, agribusiness professionals, educators, marketers, consultants, agency employees, and service providers. Many DPI members have completed LEADelaware fellowships.

During the fellowship, LEADelaware participants develop leadership skills within the food, fiber, and natural resources industries. The program is designed for individuals who seek to resolve the economic, environmental, and policy challenges facing the world’s farming and food systems. LEAD programs across the United States challenge participants to engage and be a voice for the future of agriculture.

The program consists of 10 sessions throughout Delaware and Washington, D.C., where fellows actively learn about the current issues impacting agriculture and natural resources in Delaware and around the world. Learning and interactions occur through site visits, seminars, expert panels, team activities, and workshops.

The fellowship culminates with an international study trip during the second year of the program that is selected and planned by the cohort. Previous classes have explored agriculture in Argentina, Chile, New Zealand, and Peru. Class V will travel throughout Vietnam and Cambodia in February 2020.

Applications are available online at http://sites.udel.edu/leadelaware, by contacting Aubrey Jerman at the Delaware Department of Agriculture via email at aubrey.jerman@delaware.gov, or requesting an application by phone at 302-698-4500.

LEADelaware is a partnership between the Delaware Department of Agriculture and University of Delaware’s College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, in collaboration with agricultural businesses, organizations, and other industry partners.

Farmers Put Down Chicken Litter in the Fall. Here’s Why

In August, unsigned ads in several newspapers on the Eastern Shore of Maryland and Virginia’s Eastern Shore criticized the practice of applying chicken litter to farm fields in the fall, mistakenly assuming those nutrients aren’t intended to be used until spring planting. DPI sent letters to the editors of many Delmarva newspapers correcting the record. Most of the papers ran the letters. Below, we’re printing an adapted version of our letter, hoping it can help you in any conversations you may have with friends and neighbors about this topic.

This fall, farmers on the Eastern Shore will spread chicken litter on the soil to supply nutrients, micronutrients and organic matter – the very things crops need to grow. It makes sense to many of us why pungent, plant-powering litter is applied to fields in the spring, when crops like corn take root. But what reason would a farmer have to apply litter in the fall?

Good reason, in fact. Farmers use chicken litter as an organic, slow-release plant food to...
Family Farmer Relief Act Raises Chapter 12 Bankruptcy Debt Limit
By Paul Goeringer
University of Maryland Extension Legal Specialist

Congress recently passed and the President has signed the Family Farmer Relief Act of 2019. This change in the law will raise the aggregated debt limit in Chapter 12 bankruptcies for family farms to $10 million, up from $4.4 million. This increase in the aggregated debt limits will allow for more family farmers to qualify for the Chapter 12 bankruptcy option.

The word “bankruptcy” can often make us think of failure, but it is not necessarily the case. In the United States, bankruptcy is a statutory procedure which allows a debtor to obtain financial relief and undergo a judicially supervised liquidation or reorganization of the debtor’s assets for the benefit of creditors. In the United States, bankruptcy is a process controlled by federal law but states have passed legislation to create lists of property exempt from bankruptcy. In many states, for example, the debtor’s home can be exempt from the bankruptcy proceeding.

Chapter 12 is a special form of bankruptcy applicable only to eligible family farmers and fishermen and was first established in 1986, during the height of the farm crisis. Chapter 12 of the U.S. Bankruptcy Code created to allow for business reorganization and debt repayment to avoid liquidation of the farm.

Proponents have argued that the increased debt limit is necessary to keep up with increases in land values and size of farms over time. Chapter 12 filings have also been on the rise over the past year. According to proponents, increasing the debt limit will allow more family farmers to take advantage of Chapter 12 and avoid the complex and expensive alternative of Chapter 11. The increased debt limits were supported by many agricultural groups, including Farm Bureau and Farmers’ Union.

Opponents of the bill argued raising the debt limit could have negative impacts on farmers. The American Bankers Association argued that the increase could increase the cost of credit for farmers in the long run.

If you have questions on Chapter 12, please check out this overview article: https://drum.lib.umd.edu/handle/1903/20162.

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Farmers Put Down Chicken Litter in the Fall. Here’s Why

Continued from page 23

nourish small grains like barley, wheat and rye, which can be made into everything from cow silage to craft beer. These crops, planted in the fall and harvested the following year, are hardier in cold weather than summer annuals like corn and soybeans. In addition, their roots hold soil in place, reducing overwinter erosion and improving water quality in every watershed. When chicken litter hits a farm field in autumn, its nutrients are being locked into the soil for a purpose, not just to wait around for spring planting.

You might also see chicken litter from family-owned chicken farms being trucked to other farm fields this fall. Doing so puts litter in the hands of farmers whose fields can most benefit from its nutrients, and it moves litter out of sensitive watersheds. Delmarva’s chicken companies help fund litter transport programs, and today, about 10 percent of the region’s chicken litter is transported before it’s applied.

The litter transport program is just one tool farmers reach for to improve water quality, both in the Chesapeake Bay and in other watersheds. Their commitment to the environment has cut agriculture’s nitrogen and phosphorus loads to the Bay by 25 percent, even as nutrient levels in stormwater runoff from urban areas have increased. Our states have more work to do to improve our region’s water quality, but we’re confident farmers will continue to be part of the solution.

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Immersive Farm Tour is a Hit at the Fair

*A young fairgoer takes a virtual reality tour of a chicken farm at Delmarva Poultry Industry, Inc.’s exhibit at the Delaware State Fair.*

"Oh, wow!"
"They have more room in there than I thought."
"Are those water lines?"
"That is so cool!"

That's a sample of the reactions we heard at DPI's booth at the Delaware State Fair after fairgoers strapped on a headset and tried our virtual reality tour of a chicken house. With the support of the National Chicken Council, which produced 360-degree videos for its Chicken Check-In campaign, DPI is making it possible for people who will probably never set foot on a chicken farm to see for themselves what the inside of a chicken house looks like.

At the fair, we also showed videos showcasing Delmarva chicken growers and their environmental stewardship, and we gave out hundreds of freebies – pens, lip balm, water bottles and fuzzy chicken stickers – to people who stopped to spin our prize wheel and answer a trivia question about chickens. There were opportunities to talk to teachers interested in having DPI speak to their classes; to household grocery shoppers curious to know what label claims on chicken really mean; and chicken growers considering membership in DPI.

Dedicated DPI members volunteered at our exhibit inside the Delaware Department of Agriculture Commodities Building for all 10 days of the fair, and we could not share chicken's story at the fair without them. Thanks to the following fair volunteers for trekking through the hot fairgrounds, staffing our air-conditioned exhibit, and educating the public about what we do:

- Jacob Abbott
- Maureen Duffy
- James Fisher
- Troy Foxwell
- Joanne Guilfoil
- Rich Hernandez
- Deanna Husfelt
- Wanda Loockerman
- Bud Malone
- Bill Massey
- Jim McCabe
- Mack McCary
- Steve Morris
- Lori Morrow
- Holly Porter
- Frank Pusey
- Bobbie Reed
- Daniel Reifenstein
- Faith Elliott Rossing
- Garrett Sammons
- Paul Shipper
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- Amy Syester
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Annual Meeting,
Director Selection Takes Place in November

*DPI’s* annual member meeting, when members will elect a slate of directors for 2020, is scheduled for November 12 at 7 p.m., at the University of Delaware Carvel Center, across the street from *DPI’s* offices west of Georgetown, Delaware.

All *DPI* members are welcome to attend the annual meeting, which will include a review of *DPI’s* accomplishments in 2019. In addition, we’ll bring to the annual meeting the virtual-reality tour of a chicken farm we displayed at the Delaware State Fair this year, so any member can experience it.

Members who plan to attend the annual meeting should RSVP to Lori Morrow, secretary/treasurer, at 302-856-9037 or morrow@dpichicken.com by November 5.