

TRENDS

A Newsletter of the Mississippi Poultry Association

HURRICANE KATRINA TWENTY YEARS LATER

Mark Leggett, MPA President

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina devastated the poultry industry from eggs to exports. Assessing damage, helping employees, restoring operations, and preparing for the next Big One are what those who went through the storm remembered.

At the time, Mississippi was the fourth largest poultry producer, raising 790 million broilers. MPA President Mike Pepper estimated that 80 percent of the houses at the time sustained damage, but some hatcheries, feed mills, processing plants, and ports were also out of commission for varying lengths of time.

Katrina, which had been a Category 5 at one point in the Gulf of Mexico, hit Mississippi as a Category 3 storm with winds of 125 miles per hour. In addition to the storm

surge along the Coast, the duration of the winds inland were two destructive features of the storm.

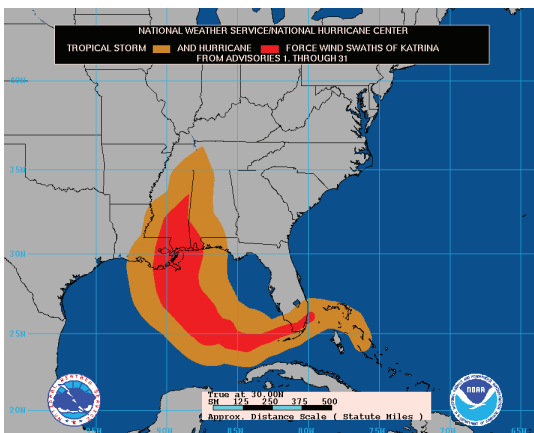
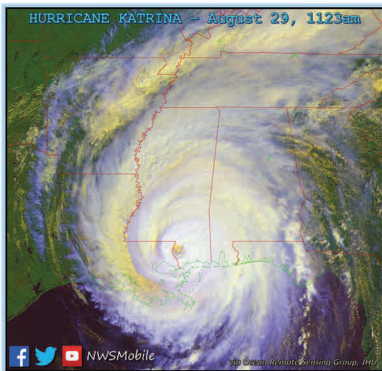
According to a USDA report, 6 million chickens died in the wind-destroyed houses and the lack of fuel afterward when diesel generators to keep the chickens cool in the August heat ran dry. Getting diesel to the places where it was needed was a daily priority for weeks.

Growers, company personnel, and state agency personnel worked for weeks with little sleep to get the industry back in production. First, the roads had to be cleared before trucks could get to farms.

Peco Grower Jon Wilson, in Jasper County, according to the Clarion Ledger lost 1,700 birds and one house. The 13-year-old house cost \$66,000 to build in 1992 and would cost \$150,000 to re-build in 2005.

"It was a bad day. Who would have ever thought that 100 miles from the Gulf Coast, we would have hurricane force winds for eight hours. I had a whole house that caved in, and it tore 50 feet of tin from another one. We had to push the whole house down and bury it," he said at the time.

"Pretty much anyone from I-20 South
...continued on page 4



WHAT'S INSIDE:

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STATE DIRECTOR

■ 2025 BREEDER
HATCHERY AGENDA
AUGUST 13TH

■ BoAH VULTURE
PROTECTION

■ POULTRY
MANAGEMENT
SCHOOL RECAP

■ SPECIAL
ELECTIONS

■ 2025 CONVENTION
SEPTEMBER 11TH - 14TH

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Issue!
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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:

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Georgia Poultry Equipment Company, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Hog Slat, Inc., stands as a leader in the manufacturing and distribution of poultry equipment worldwide. With a reputation built on delivering comprehensive, turnkey system solutions, Georgia Poultry specializes in supporting poultry producers from initial construction to ongoing maintenance. Their expertise spans new builds, remodels, complete equipment packages—including feeding, watering, ventilation, and climate control—as well as repair services and an extensive inventory of parts and supplies. This full-service approach ensures poultry farmers receive tailored, high-quality solutions designed to maximize efficiency and operational longevity.

Locally, Georgia Poultry is deeply committed to serving the Mississippi poultry community through its seven store locations in Kokomo, Magee, Philadelphia, Bay Springs, Forest, Waynesboro, and Brookhaven. These stores provide on-farm services, quick access to repair parts, and personalized support to meet the specific needs of local producers. As a global manufacturer and distributor, Georgia Poultry combines local accessibility with international expertise, making it a trusted partner for poultry operations of all sizes seeking innovative, reliable solutions.



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EMERGING
TRENDS
A Newsletter of the Mississippi Poultry Association

2025 ■ Issue 2

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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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was shut down,” said Steve McLaurin, special projects manager for Peco Foods. “Our people’s safety was our biggest concern. Getting fuel for generators was a hard thing and then it got really hot right behind Katrina, but back then most people didn’t have solid sidewall houses, and they could let the curtains down.”

As the map shows, the storm came in at the mouth of the Pearl River and hurricane-force winds were recorded north of Meridian.

Larry Gandy was working for Marshall Durbin, later bought by Mar-Jac Poultry. With a processing plant in Hattiesburg, Marshall Durbin was one of the most southerly companies. Help from outside the area was important.

“The north Alabama division of our company sent down service techs and generators to help us. And people we didn’t know would just show up unannounced to help. We had people show up from Enterprise, Ala. bringing 100 gallons of diesel fuel in a barrel or a tank.”

Tyson Complex Manager Mack Walker, who has worked in the industry for 50 years, said “It was a mess. The main thing was that nobody was prepared. Nobody had gas in our company vehicles, growers didn’t have diesel. We had water for a while, then the water went out. We had never had anything like that.”

Tyson headquarters sent down truckloads of food, ice, and diesel from Arkansas. The Mississippi Highway patrol stopped one truck carrying diesel, put a national guardsman in the cab and sent the truck to New Orleans. Other companies reported diesel diverted to hospitals.

Mississippi State University’s annual report on commodities noted in December 2005 that “Poultry’s estimated value fell 6 percent to an estimated \$1.98 billion in 2005, mostly caused by hurricane losses. The industry’s value topped the \$2 billion mark for the first time last year and had been in a modest expansion before the hurricane hit.”

As of Friday (September 2005), 10 of 14 processing plants in Mississippi were not operating, according to Richard Lobb of the National Chicken Council in Washington, as the Delaware News Journal reported.



Plant personnel had lost power or suffered damage to their homes and had to take care of their families. Companies shifted production to other plants outside of the path of the storm that were able to operate. At the time, “about 70 percent of all U.S. poultry exports were shipped

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out of the affected ports (Mobile, Gulfport, New Orleans, and Pascagoula.)..... Poultry stocks in cold storage in the region have also been heavily affected, and exporters and traders are still assessing the volume of lost product,” according to a Sept. 1, 2005, report by the U.S. Meat Export Federation.



In 2005, Gulfport was a major poultry export hub with stacks of refrigerated containers at the State Port of Gulfport. Carried by the

20-foot storm surge, those containers became battering rams and demolished homes and businesses all along the Gulfport waterfront and then it was weeks before the containers with rotting meat inside could be removed.



Five years ago, on the 15th anniversary of Katrina, the Biloxi Sun Herald, wrote “15 things the Mississippi Coast May Have Forgotten About Hurricane Katrina” and Number 13 is the chicken containers. “A month after Katrina rotten chicken and other contents from the giant shipping containers still sat and stunk in Gulfport neighborhoods near the state port of Mississippi, while the disagreement continued about who should clean up the mess... All told the article reported, “Katrina left enough storm debris to fill 400 football fields 50 feet high.”



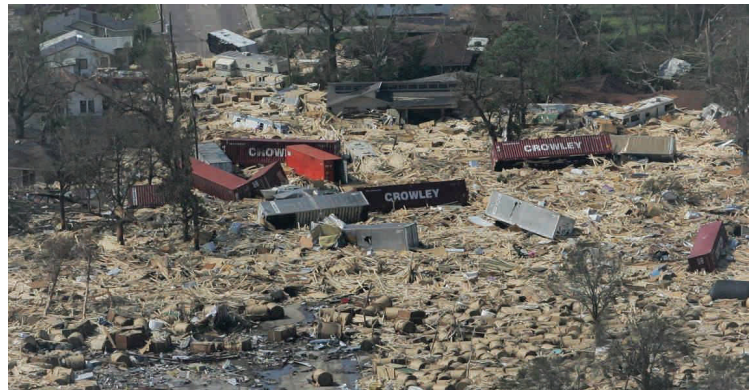
Twenty years after the storm, neither Gulfport nor Pascagoula has returned as a poultry shipping port and most product moved to other ports. Across the state line, New Orleans Cold Storage (NOCS) re-

ported losing 52 million pounds of chicken to Hurricane Katrina, according to a Jan.1, 2006 Warehousing World magazine. Pic Billingsley, Sanderson Farms’ Director of Development and Engineering, at the time said the storm, “impacted all the infrastructure that supported our operations. We put a team together to assess damage to our facilities and growers. We made sure everybody was safe and those impacted we gave them support. We took care of our employees.”



The Sanderson crisis management team held uncounted meetings about how to get diesel and natural gas. Hatcheries and feed mills were a major concern because “if the hatcheries lost power that would prolong the delay by three weeks – if we lost that it could be a disaster short term,” Billingsley said.

“As bad as it was, it did make our company a better company. We had a crisis management team that evolved from that. We put together a



manual with accountability for different people,” said Billingsley who retired recently.

To prepare for future events, we backfilled tanks, maintained our inventory, we added additional storage, and our vendors added additional storage. Once we enter hurricane season, our crisis management team meets and we have a detailed script to make sure the next time we are very prepared.” The lessons learned and the disaster manual created served the company well in the 2021 ice storm that crippled Texas.

The industry learned from Hurricane Katrina and will not be caught unprepared for the next one. State Veterinarian Dr. Jim Watson said, “Everybody was scrambling in the immediate aftermath to get roads cleared and to get generators. The integrators responded and did a lot for themselves, not waiting on FEMA or the state government to do things for them. We (Board of Animal Health) permitted disposal and kept records. The Industry coordinated and got that (burial) done.” ■

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MS POULTRY & EGG PRODUCTION INCREASED IN 2024

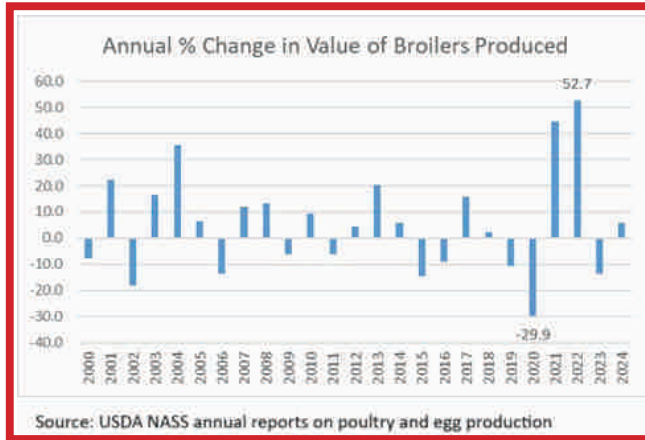
Mark Leggett, MPA President

Mississippi broiler farms produced 1.5 percent more chickens and 1.5 percent more in pounds of meat and registered a 5.9 percent increase in value in 2024 versus 2023, according to the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS).

Mississippi poultry farms in 2024 raised 669.8 million broilers weighing 4.4 billion pounds valued at \$3.34 billion, according to the annual report produced each April for the prior year. Mississippi's 5.9 percent increase in value closely matched the rate for the nation, and the state slightly exceeded the increase nationally for head and pounds.

The value of broilers produced in the United States during 2024 was \$45.4 billion, up 6 percent from 2023. The total number of broilers produced in 2024 was 9.33 billion, up 1 percent from 2023. The total amount of live weight broilers produced in 2024 was 61.1 billion pounds, up 1 percent from 2023.

Mississippi again ranks sixth in all three categories: head, pounds, and dollars, and all three are 7 percent of the national totals. Georgia is first in all three categories and North Carolina is second in all three categories. Third place varies with Alabama third in head raised, but Arkansas third in pounds and value.



The NASS report includes broiler, turkeys, and eggs. Of the combined total, 65 percent was from broilers, 30 percent from eggs, and 5 percent from turkeys.

The value of all egg production nationally in 2024 was \$21.0 billion, up 18 percent from \$17.9 billion in 2023. Egg production totaled 109 billion eggs, down 1 percent from 10 billion eggs produced in 2023.

Mississippi ranks 21st in egg production and value in 2024 with 1.4 billion

eggs produced at a value of \$305.6 million. The number of eggs was 2.5 percent higher than in 2023, but the value in 2024 was down 0.48 percent.

The top egg producing states are Iowa at 13.4 billion eggs, Ohio at 12.35 billion, Indiana at 10.7 billion, Pennsylvania at 8.3 billion and Texas at 6.1 billion. Cal-Maine, the nation's largest egg producer is headquartered in Ridgeland.

Broiler production in Mississippi saw a sharp rise during the 1990s, peaking in 2005 at 853 million birds, then slowly trending down. The pounds produced peaked in 2008 at 4.8 billion, but the highest value achieved was in 2022 at \$3.65 billion, according to NASS records. The accompanying chart shows changes in value in the 21st century. The most pronounced annual swings in value have come since 2019 due to the lockdowns related to COVID and the reopening afterward. ■

MPA MOURNS THE DEATH OF BUD WEST MISS. POULTRY HALL OF FAME 2011

MPA Hall of Fame member Coyt Coleman 'Bud' West, Jr., 88, of Hattiesburg, MS, passed away peacefully on Tuesday, March 18, 2025, at Asbury Hospice House in Hattiesburg, MS. Born on July 5, 1936, in Jackson, Mississippi, Bud lived a full and cherished life but he lived it his way.

Bud grew up in Overt, Mississippi and graduated from Jones County High School and Jones County Junior College. He completed his academic career by graduating from Mississippi State University and was a lifelong loyal Bulldog. He had a long, prominent career with Sanderson Farms. When Sanderson Farms decided to expand and build new locations in Mississippi, Texas and Georgia, Bud led the effort to build the live operations at each of these locations. He was recognized for his contributions to the poultry industry with his induction into the



Mississippi Poultry Hall of Fame in 2011. Bud was a member of the Overt Masonic Lodge and Laurel Shrine Club.

Bud managed his family's farm after graduating from MSU in 1960. After Hurricane Camille in 1969, he joined Sanderson Farms as a pullet handling supervisor. He was promoted repeatedly and was eventually placed in charge of Sanderson Farms' live production expansions in McComb, MS in 1993, in Texas in 1997 and Georgia in 2005. He eventually returned to the company headquarters in Laurel as director of production. He retired in 2005.

In lieu of flowers memorials may be made to <https://www.stjude.org/> St. Jude Children's Hospital, Mt. Olive United Methodist Church Cemetery Fund or Asbury Hospice House in Hattiesburg 304 South 40th Avenue, Hattiesburg, MS 39402. ■



TWO POULTRY SCIENCE STUDENTS RECEIVE 2025 FIRST SOUTH FARM CREDIT SCHOLARSHIPS

Lauren Fortenberry, Event Coordinator, MPA



Two Mississippi State University poultry science juniors will continue their education with the help of the 2025 First South Farm Credit Scholarship.



Noah Adam Lee, Peoria, Illinois

This is the sixth year in a row, First South Farm Credit has donated \$2,000 for two scholarships to the Mississippi Poultry Foundation (MPF). The Foundation's Scholarship committee composed of educators chose the recipients.

Noah Adam Lee, son of Stephen and Laura Lee of Peoria, Illinois, is a graduate of Dunlap (Ill.) High School. After obtaining a degree in poultry science, he plans to work in the poultry industry.

The second recipient is Kalyn Nelson, daughter of Jarri-son and Casey Nelson of Trinity, Alabama. Kalyn is a graduate of East Lawrence High School. She is currently attending Mississippi State University where she is pursuing a degree in Poultry Science. After graduation, she plans to obtain her master's degree and then work in the poultry industry.



Kalyn Nelson, Trinity, Alabama

The First South Farm Credit Scholarship, the most recent one created through the MPF, has assisted 12 students with \$1,000 scholarships since it was created in 2020. ■



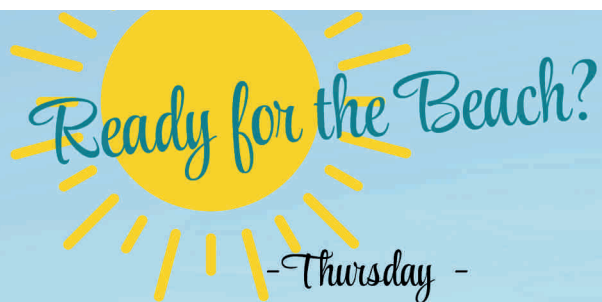
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The 2025 MPA Convention

is set for September 11th-14th at the Hilton Sandestin Golf Resort & Spa.
See page 29 for sponsorship opportunities.

-Thursday-

Platinum Cocktail Hour - 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.
Located on the Barefoot's Deck.
Cocktails and hors d'oeuvres will be served.

-Friday-

Past Chairman's Breakfast - 7:30 to 8:30 a.m.
Commissioner Andy Gipson, Guest Speaker
This event is by invitation only.

Lady's Program - 9:00 to 11:00 a.m.
Perfect Day will be leading a flower arrangement class.
Each lady will be able to take home their own arrangement. When registering, be sure to mark if you are attending under the activity options.
Sponsored by Cobb- Vantress Inc., DSM Nutrition, Huvepharma, and Jones-Hamilton

Business Session - 9:15 to 10:15 a.m.
Dr. Ashley Peterson, the National Chicken Council's Vice President of Scientific and Regulatory Affairs, Guest Speaker

International Paper & McNeely Plastics Golf Tournament - 12:00 p.m.
Located at the Links Course.
Lunch will be served.
Shotgun start at 1:00 p.m.

The American Packaging Fishing Tournament - 12:00 p.m.
Located at West Pass Marina Fishing Docks behind Brotula's Restaurant.
International Paper will provide lunch at the dock. QC Supply & Cumberland will sponsor coolers with refreshments and American Packaging will be sponsoring prizes.

-Saturday-

Business Session - 7:30 to 8:15 a.m.
Lavon Gray, Certified Leadership Coach and former NCAA referee, Guest Speaker

Brief updates on their poultry-related work from: MSU Division of Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine, MS Board of Animal Health, MSU Extension Service, MSU Dept. of Poultry Science, MSU College of Veterinary Medicine, USDA Agricultural Research Service, MSU Dept. of Agricultural and Biological Engineering.

- FREE TIME!! -

Visit the beach, go shopping, watch football, or whatever you like.

Caricaturist Tim Banfell - 5:00 to 8:00 p.m.
Sponsored by Burroughs Diesel and Diamond V

Photo Booth - 5:00 to 8:00 p.m.
Sponsored by Burroughs Diesel, Zee Company, American Packaging, and Water Tech Inc.

- MS Poultry Foundation Auction -
Silent Auction Ends - 6:30 p.m.
Live Auction Begins - 6:45 p.m.
Uses Handbid Software sponsored by Aviagen
To participate in either the live or silent auction, you must register and sign into Handbid. For more information on using Handbid visit us online at mspoultry.org under Events - Calendar.

Diamond & Gold Sponsor's Awards Reception - 5:30 p.m.
The Golf and Fishing Prizes will be awarded.
Televisions in the Lobby are provided by International Paper.

Registration is Open!



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PROTECT YOUR FLOCK AGAINST VULTURES AND THE DISEASES THEY SPREAD

At the Board of Animal Health meeting in April, Dr. Jim Watson said the one thing all the outbreaks of avian influenza in commercial flocks in the state had in common were vultures attracted to improperly maintained composters. Below is the content of a brochure the Board produced about preventing vultures from infecting your flock.

How do vultures spread HPAI (bird flu) ?

The Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) virus is found in wild migratory water birds. Vultures are scavengers, eating dead animals, including carcasses of wild birds that may have died from HPAI. Vultures visit waterways where migratory water birds stop during migration. Vultures that become infected with the virus may die; however, they may spread the virus to other locations before death.

Vultures can carry the virus on their feathers, feet, and in their feces. When

vultures visit a poultry operation, they can contaminate buildings, the ground, equipment, and compost bins. The virus can then be tracked into the poultry houses by people, equipment, small birds, rodents, or insects.

How can I protect my flock?

Prevent pathogens from entering your poultry houses by practicing excellent biosecurity. Only clean clothing, footwear, and equipment should be allowed to enter poultry houses when chickens are present. Wash or sanitize hands regularly. Follow all instructions in your company biosecurity plan.

What can I do about vultures?

-Habitat Modification: Removing roost trees or food sources will deter vultures. Vultures eat dead animals, so they are naturally attracted to compost bins. Compost should be properly constructed and covered with 10 to 12 inches of shavings. If vultures persist in visiting a compost shed, construct a barrier to prevent them from entering the shed.

-Harassment: Harass vultures when they arrive at the roost site just before dark. *The goal is to prevent even a single bird from roosting.* Do this for at least three days in a

...continued on page 11

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row. Pyrotechnics coupled with the use of effigies often works. Other harassment ideas: lasers, air horns, motion-activated sprinklers, and paintball guns.



Example of vultures on compost shed. Photo credit: MBAH



Example of an effigy. Photo credit: USDA-APHIS-WS

-Effigy: (a fake or dead vulture)
Landowners can acquire effigies from the USDA Wildlife Services or build their own using a dog training duck dummy painted black outfitted with fake black wings and black tail. Proper installation is crucial. Hang the effigy by its feet from a high location so birds notice it. A real vulture carcass is extremely effective to deter vultures. It does require a permit from U.S. Fish and Wildlife.

-Exclusion: Install perch inhibitors (bird spikes, bird wire) to eliminate perching areas. The installation can be time-consuming and may not be cost effective for large coverage areas.

-Lethal control: Property owners are required to have a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service migratory bird depredation permit before using lethal control. Scan QR code for permit info:

**Mississippi Farm Bureau has a blanket permit for its members.*



Biosecurity and Vultures

If you are a poultry producer, you know about the importance of biosecurity- the daily practice of keeping disease-causing viruses, bacteria, and parasites (called pathogens) off your farm and away from your flock.

But did you know that vultures can spread pathogens that make chickens sick, including the virus that causes Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), also known as bird flu?

Scan code below for Vultures – USDA WS Wildlife Disease Management Technical Series.



Barriers Exclude Vultures from Compost Sheds

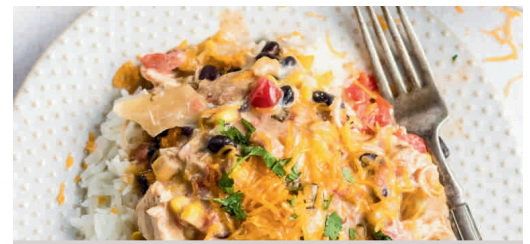


Mississippi Board of Animal Health

mbah.ms.gov

msstatevet@mdac.ms.gov

601-359-1170 ■



How to Make Catch Night Fiesta Chicken

Ingredients:

- 1 pack of chicken tenders
- 1 can of black beans, drained
- 1 can of whole kernel corn, drained
- 1 can of rotel
- 1 packet of taco seasoning
- 1 packet of ranch seasoning
- 8oz of cream cheese
- Sour cream
- Cheese
- Green onions
- Chips or tortillas

Step 1: Put all the ingredients in the crock pot and let cook for 3-4 hours until chicken is done.

Step 2: Shred chicken.

Step 3: Add 8oz of cream cheese, after the cheese softens, mix it!

Step 4: Garnish with sour cream, cheese, and green onions.

Step 5: Serve with chips or make a wrap!

It is a great week night supper, packed with protein and full of flavor!

*Recipe submitted by:
Representative Vince-Michelle Mangold*



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FOUR MS POULTRY FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

Lauren Fortenberry, Event Coordinator, MPA

The 2025 Mississippi Poultry Foundation Scholarship winners have been chosen! This is the 22nd year the scholarship has been awarded and the ninth year since the scholarship amount increased to \$4,000 per student.



Kandace Upton, Kokomo, MS

tends Pearl River Community College. Once she graduates, she plans to attend the University of Southern Mississippi and pursue a degree in elementary education.

Hayden Kilgore is the son of Jon & Leanne Kilgore and Elizabeth & Scott Minchew. His father is a grower for Amick Farms. Hayden is a graduate of West Jones High



Hayden Kilgore, West Jones, MS

School. He is currently attending Mississippi State University where he is pursuing a degree in poultry science. After graduation, he plans to work in the poultry industry.



Allie Welch, Simpson County, MS

plans to attend a Copiah-Lincoln Community College this fall to pursue a degree in agribusiness. After graduation, she plans to work in the agriculture industry.

Alyssa Moak is the daughter of Kristi and Brad Moak. Alyssa is a graduate of Lawrence

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Alyssa Moak, Lawrence County, MS

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General Biosecurity Assessment

APHIS Veterinary Services will work with producers to review structural and operational biosecurity plans and practices. Structural biosecurity includes measures used to construct and maintain coops, pens, poultry houses, and other facilities. Operational biosecurity includes practices, procedures, and policies that farm owners and workers follow consistently. We will recommend strategies to strengthen your biosecurity plan and practices to prevent the introduction of HPAI.

Email poultry.biosecurity@usda.gov or call **844-820-2234** to request a general biosecurity assessment.

To help expedite the intake of your wildlife or general biosecurity assessment request, please provide the following information when you email or call us:

- Premises name
- Premises ID (if known)
- Premises 911 street address (the actual location of your flock)
- Premises city, State, and zip code
- Premises coordinates (decimal degree format, if known)
- Production type
- Requestor's name, phone number, and email address



Required for Commercial Operations Affected by HPAI or Operating in a Control Area

Biosecurity Compliance Audit

If your commercial poultry operation has been confirmed positive for HPAI, you must pass an Infected Premises Restock Biosecurity Audit before restocking if you wish to be eligible for indemnity for the restocked poultry.

If you are moving poultry into a designated buffer zone, you must pass a USDA Buffer Zone Placement Biosecurity Audit to be eligible for federal indemnity for any birds that moved onto the premises.

Contact the APHIS Area Veterinarian in Charge (www.aphis.usda.gov/contact/animal-health) or your case manager to request this audit.

Cost Share Support

USDA will share up to 75 percent of the costs to fix the highest-risk biosecurity concerns identified by the assessments.

For More Information

To learn more about the voluntary biosecurity assessments for operations not affected by HPAI or the required audits for operations confirmed positive for HPAI, visit www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/hpai-poultry.

www.aphis.usda.gov/animalhealth

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FFA POULTRY JUDGING CONTEST BRINGS FUTURE POULTRY PROS TO MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY

Tannah Christensen, MSU Extension Instructor

On April 11, 2025, Mississippi State University proudly welcomed FFA members from across the state for the annual State FFA Poultry Judging Contest. The event brought together a talented group of students, 20 junior division competitors from five counties and 25 senior division competitors from six counties, to put their poultry knowledge to the test.

Participants demonstrated their expertise by completing a series of intensive judging tasks, including selecting live meat-type chickens for broiler breeding, evaluating and placing live egg-type hens, and grading ready-to-cook carcasses and parts. These critical skills align with real-world industry practices and highlight the importance of accurate selection and quality control in poultry production. A huge congratulations to the Puckett FFA team, which took home first place honors in the senior division! Team members Brayden Tullos, Paxton Lemoine, Matthew Grice, and Wyatt Sebren showcased outstanding skill and knowledge across all contest components. The team will advance to the national competition in Indianapolis this fall.



Brayden Tullos, Paxton Lemoine, Matthew Grice, Wyatt Sebren

Events like this not only sharpen students' judging abilities but also connect them to future opportunities in poultry science and agriculture. Mississippi State University Department of Poultry Science is honored to host such a meaningful event and play a small part in supporting the next generation of poultry industry leaders. ■

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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. Free background information upon request.

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Recent MAHA Commission Report DRAWS FIRE ON POTENTIAL IMPACT ON AG INDUSTRY PRACTICES

John Milner, Brunini Attorneys At Law

A May 22, 2025 preliminary report issued by Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. that rolls out the Trump Administration's "Make American Healthy Again" (MAHA Report) initiative has been strongly criticized by Mississippi Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith. MAHA is intended to focus on childhood chronic disease but the MAHA Report drew fire from Sen. Hyde-Smith about MAHA Commission findings and recommendations related to exposure to pesticides and other environmental chemicals used in agricultural production.

In a May 20 Senate subcommittee hearing held in advance of the release of the MAHA Report, Sen. Hyde-Smith confronted Kennedy, as summarized in her May 22 press release:

"I expressed concerns to the Secretary that this initial MAHA report would ignore sound science and unfairly target American agriculture, modern farming practices, and crop protection tools that two percent of the population relies on to help feed the remaining 98 percent. He said the information I had about the report was just simply wrong... I remain concerned [that] this report may be used to set the stage for a new regimen of standards based on fringe theories that could upend the sound farming practices that have made American farmers the most productive in history."

A group of Republican senators and representatives in sending a letter to Kennedy urging the commission to use "sound science and risk-based analysis in its policy decisions, particularly on crop protection tools and food-grade ingredients." Additionally, major agricultural groups released a statement echoing major concerns with what the final report will contain. The MAHA Commission intends to issue its final report to President Trump in August of this year.

Central to the MAHA Report and Kennedy's subcommittee testimony is glyphosate, the active ingredient in numerous pesticides and herbicides, including Bayer's Roundup. Kennedy claims that glyphosate is a top contributor to America's chronic health crisis. Kennedy emphasized the widespread use of glyphosate worldwide and linked it to rising rates of chronic illness. Critics of Kennedy's stance warn that sweeping restrictions on pesticides could severely disrupt the U.S. food supply chain, affecting both farmers and consumers.

Moms Across America ("MAA"), joined by other public interest groups, have sent a letter to Kennedy, as well as President Trump and EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin, calling for a national ban on

glyphosate and 83 other pesticides that have been banned in Europe and other countries. The letter claims that glyphosate “is linked to cancer, reproductive impacts, sperm damage, increased prenatal births, birth defects, androgenizing baby girls, embryonic cell damage in utero, liver, kidney, and thyroid damage, neurological disorders, and nervous system damage.” These groups have also sent out a petition nationally to be signed and sent to EPA that seeks this 84-compound ban, stating to EPA that “America has a physical, mental, and reproductive crisis, and glyphosate in a significant contributing factor to all of these severely critical issues. Your agency must take action now to protect the health and future of our country.”

Compounds included in the MAA ban list are routinely used in the poultry industry. Consequently, MAHA’s focus on these agriculture-related chemicals bears careful scrutiny by industry leaders. This is a fast-moving and many-faceted process so MPA intends to closely scrutinize developments, in coordination with other poultry and agricultural associations, so that MAHA’s impacts can be better understood, analyzed and reported to you.

If you have any questions concerning this article, please feel free to contact John Milner, MPA Counsel, at jmilner@brunini.com, or Mark Leggett, MPA President, at leggett@mspoultry.org. ■

continued from page 13...

County High School. She is currently pursuing a Poultry Science degree at Mississippi State University. After graduation, she plans to make a positive impact in the poultry industry.

The winners are chosen by the Foundation’s Scholarship committee composed of educators at the university, community college, and high school levels based on the students’ ACT scores, school transcripts, and an essay displaying their knowledge of the poultry industry. ■



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EPIDEMIOLOGIC UPDATE: AVIAN METAPNEUMOVIRUS CASES IN MISSISSIPPI SINCE INITIAL DETECTION

Dr. Sofia Egana-Labrin, DVM, PhD

Assistant Professor and Poultry Virologist, PRDL, Mississippi State University

Since the first confirmed case on March 3rd, Mississippi State University's Poultry Research and Diagnostic Laboratory (PRDL) located in Pearl, MS has observed a marked increase in avian metapneumovirus (aMPV) cases among broiler and breeder flocks. This update summarizes recent diagnostic findings, outbreak trends, and recommendations to assist poultry producers in managing the threat.

Understanding aMPV Detection Challenges - aMPV detection can be difficult in the field because there is a short incubation time during which birds can have mild and sometimes unnoticeable initial clinical signs. The aMPV clinical picture is often worsened by secondary infections resulting in more evident signs later in infection, by which time the virus may be difficult to detect. PRDL poultry veterinarians follow a multi-pronged approach to diagnose aMPV, with three diagnostic categories: aMPV confirmed, aMPV presumptive and aMPV suspect. Cases are assigned to one of these three categories based on a combination of clinical signs, postmortem and histopathologic lesions, and PCR and serological test results (Table 1).

Table 1. Avian metapneumovirus diagnosis categories.

Category	Parameters
aMPV confirmed	Positive RT-PCR
aMPV presumptive	Clinical signs (if live) and necropsy lesions and histopathology and/or seroconversion
aMPV suspect	Equivocal/suspect clinical signs (if live) and necropsy lesions and histopathology and/or serology



Figure 1. Broiler breeders with twisted neck, facial swelling and incoordination.

Clinical signs include sneezing/snicking, rales (respiratory noises), coughing, nasal and ocular discharge (foamy/frothy eyes) and conjunctivitis (reddening of the eyelids). Signs observed later in infection include depression, swelling of the sinus, wattles, face and head, and in some cases neurologic signs like head shaking, twisted necks, stargazing and disorientation (Figure 1). In broiler breeders there are reports of a drop in egg production and poor egg quality. Lesions noted

at necropsy might include facial cellulitis (infection and inflammation under the skin), exudate in the cranial bones and middle ear, tracheitis, pneumonia, peritonitis, polyserositis (exudates around the heart, liver

and air sacs).

The molecular test that can detect the presence and amount of aMPV viral genetic material in a sample is known as aMPV RT-PCR (Reverse Transcription Polymerase Chain Reaction). The PRDL has RT-PCR tests for aMPV subtypes A, B and C. A positive result is expressed as a "CT value", where the lower the CT value, the more virus is present in the sample. The serological test that detects the presence and amount of antibodies in the field serum samples is the aMPV ELISA (Enzyme-Linked Immunosorbent Assay). ELISA results are expressed in titers that should be interpreted using the geometric mean titers (GMT); using the IDEXX kit, a GMT greater than 2,000 indicates aMPV seroconversion, a GMT between 397 and 2,000 is considered suspect or equivocal (further testing is required), and a GMT below 397 indicates no seroconversion (additional testing is recommended if there is any suspicion of aMPV).

When and Where Cases Occurred - Between the first detection of aMPV by RT-PCR on March 3rd and May 15th 2025, the PRDL received 68 submissions from five companies involving broilers and broiler breeders showing signs suggestive of aMPV infection (Figure 2). The sample type included: birds submitted for necropsy, tissues (heads with necks attached), and tracheal or sinus swabs in Brain Heart Infusion (BHI) transport media.

Of the 68 submissions:

- 42 (62%) were confirmed aMPV subtype A via RT-PCR.
- 19 (28%) were presumptive aMPV.
- 7 (10%) were suspect aMPV.
-

Over half of confirmed cases occurred in April. The affected broilers were mostly between 47 and 50 days of age. Breeder ages ranged from 26 to 98 weeks (Figure 3).

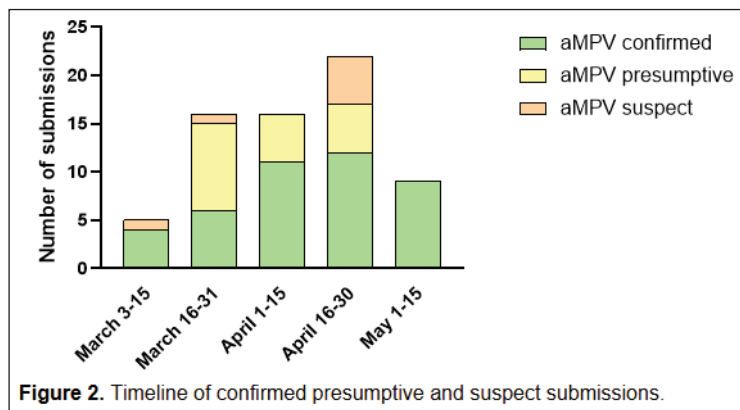


Figure 2. Timeline of confirmed presumptive and suspect submissions.

Clinical Signs and Laboratory Findings - The submitted live birds presented with one or more clinical signs described above. Neurologic signs were observed in 33% of the live submitted birds, mainly broiler

breeders (e.g., twisted neck, incoordination). The necropsy findings revealed one or more of the lesions described before. Noticeably, birds in 49% of the necropsy submissions had swelling of the sinus, face, and/or heads. The histopathology test suggested the presence of viral inclu-

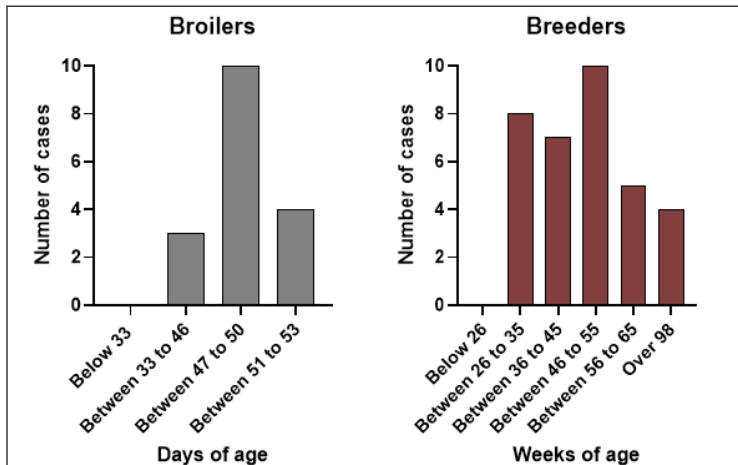


Figure 3.A. Range of age in affected broiler chickens. **B.** Range of age in affected broiler breeders.

sions in 29% of the samples and osteomyelitis of the skull was observed in 31% of the swollen heads (Figure 4).

Within the 42 confirmed cases, the aMPV subtype A RT-PCR CT values ranged from 18 to 39, indicating a range from high to very low viral loads. To improve chances of detecting the virus by PCR, samples (birds for necropsy, tissues, swabs in BHI tubes) should be submitted as soon as clinical signs are identified.

Regarding the serological test, the ELISA geometric mean titers (GMTs) in the presumptive aMPV cases ranged from 2,502 to 19,364, indicating that the birds were exposed to aMPV and produced antibodies against the virus, although the virus was no longer present and therefore could not be detected by RT-PCR. The ELISA GMTs in suspect aMPV cases ranged from 608 to 1,221. In those cases, re-submission of live birds or blood samples a couple of weeks later was recommended.

Finally, most of the birds diagnosed with aMPV at necropsy (83%) had secondary bacterial infections involving organisms like *Escherichia coli*, *Staphylococcus* spp., *Salmonella* spp., *Enterococcus cecorum*, and *Gallibacterium anatis*. Coinfections with Infectious Bronchitis Virus (DMV/1639 genotype) were also noted.

Takeaways and Recommendations - Avian metapneumovirus continues to spread and severely impact the health of commercial poultry in the U.S. The recent USDA approval of aMPV vaccines will aid control but may interfere with diagnostics, especially serology. To ensure an optimal diagnosis:

- Submit one of the following sample types as soon as the first respiratory signs are noted:
 - ◊ Birds for necropsy
 - ◊ Whole heads with full-length necks from euthanized or freshly dead birds
 - ◊ Sinus, tracheal or choanal cleft swabs in BHI broth tubes
 - * Samples should be collected from clinically affected and unaffected houses to aid detection by PCR.
 - * Tissues and BHI samples should be kept at refrigeration temperature and submitted to reach the lab as soon as possible

- ◊ sible the same day (preferably) or next morning.
 - Monitor vaccine response with follow-up ELISA testing.
- Proactive monitoring and early detection remain vital to limit spread

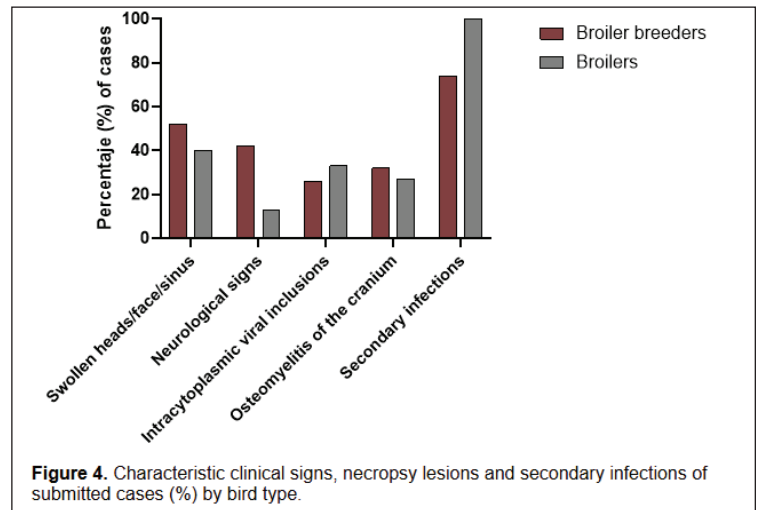


Figure 4. Characteristic clinical signs, necropsy lesions and secondary infections of submitted cases (%) by bird type.

and economic losses from aMPV outbreaks. Considering the rapid spread of aMPV in Mississippi and other states, producers should be on guard and maintain excellent biosecurity. ■

WHAT SHOULD OUR NEXT CHICKEN DISH CONTEST BE?

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2025 MANAGEMENT SCHOOL WELL ATTENDED

*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 annual MPA Poultry Management School was held at the Wise Center on the campus of Mississippi State University on May 19-20, 2025. This program featured 18 speakers who covered a wide variety of topics. The 189 attendees included 80 from poultry production companies and 67 members of the allied industry. This meeting was well supported by MPA's allied members who again sponsored the Allied Dinner, this time at a new location, Poor House Venue. This meeting was pre-approved for 4 hours credit by PAACO and 5 credit hours by RACE.

MPA Chairman Ed Fletcher (Koch Foods) opened the meeting with comments and a welcome for all those in attendance, then turned it over to Danny Magee (MSU, retired), who served as moderator for the meeting. Mack Walker (Tyson Foods) led us all in prayer before the speakers started.

HPAI Costs, Update, Biosecurity Audits - The first speaker, Dr. Jim Watson, State Veterinarian (MBAH), gave a sobering report of the high costs associated with the three recent outbreaks of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in Mississippi (Greene, Copiah and Noxubee counties). On the bright side, there have not been any repeat breaks in Mississippi. Since wild birds can carry and spread the virus, any and all commercial and backyard flocks are at risk of exposure. Therefore,

biosecurity is extremely important and must be improved whenever and wherever possible.

HPAI Consequences for You and the Producer

- This topic was addressed by a panel of three experienced managers: Steve McLaurin (Peco Foods); Scott McKinion (Tyson Foods); and Nic Smith (Tyson Foods). They discussed the challenges of managing an avian influenza outbreak both for the grower and the company. Service personnel worked seven days a week until the farm was clean. In-house composting required 150-180 truckloads of carbon material, delaying farm re-entry by four months. Financially, the grower and the company will likely lose more than they get in indemnity payments. The discussion highlighted the importance of wildlife surveillance, especially during hunting seasons.



Salmonella Control on the Farm

- How do we decrease the prevalence of Salmonella on chicken at the processing plant? This question was addressed by Dr. Tim Boltz (MSU Poultry Science Dept.). Realistically, controlling Salmonella in poultry production requires a



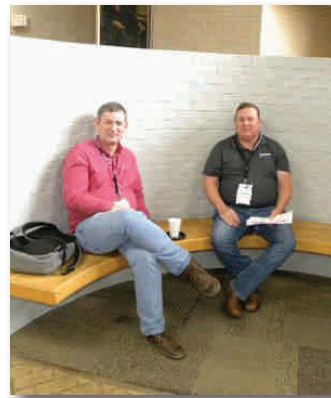
multifaceted approach that starts at pre-harvest. Components in this strategy include biosecurity at all production levels, feed and water sanitation, vaccination, litter management, and routine monitoring across the entire production chain. Regular cleaning and monitoring were highlighted as key strategies to prevent salmonella contamination.

Senior Service Techs Advice – This impressive panel of experienced poultry service techs [Kathy Moore (Koch Foods); Gena Blakeney (Tyson Foods); Matthew Mitchell (Tyson Foods); Kenny Walters (Amick Farms); Jason Creel (Peco Foods); and Stevens Bateman (Wayne-Sanderson Farms)] ranged in time of service from 3 to 32 years. They discussed the challenges and strategies of service technicians in the poultry industry. Key challenges include biosecurity, increased paperwork, and adapting to different grower demographics. The technicians emphasized the importance of building relationships, being respectful, and providing hands-on help. They highlighted the need for new growers to be coachable and for experienced service techs to be approachable and willing to teach. Their discussion also covered the importance

of using available tools and maintaining old houses to improve efficiency and livability. The session concluded with a call for technicians to “inspect what you expect” from growers.

MSU Poultry Science Department Update – This information was provided by the Head of the department, Dr. Ken Macklin. He announced the most recent hires for the department: Dr. Chrysta Beck, a physiologist with immunology expertise; Brenda Temple, the new business manager; and Conner Daniels, Ag Technician. With these additions, the department is fully staffed. The department hosted the Collegiate Poultry Judging event for the first time at MSU. It was well-received and left a positive impression on participants from various regions. Research facilities were highlighted, both current and planned. The current/incoming undergraduate student enrollment is 50; graduate student enrollment is 26.

Enterococcus - The discussion of this important topic was handled by two speakers: Dr. Mueez Ahmad (Arm & Hammer) and Dr. Rachel
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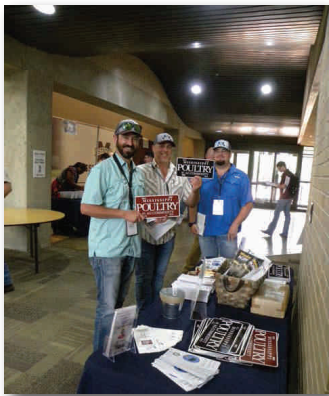
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Thiemann (Koch Foods). Dr. Ahmad focused on the Enterococcal disease syndrome affecting breeder chicks. Key indicators he mentioned included: breeder chick mortality (1.5-3%); pullet mortality and polyarthritis (>1%); reduced hatch of fertile (<88%); early embryonic mortality (3-14%); early chick mortality (1.5-4%); and chronic daily mortality and culling. Hatchery sanitation and multi-pronged control programs, including probiotics, were recommended to reduce bacterial levels and prevent horizontal transmission. The industry faces significant hatchability losses, impacting protein and meat supply, and driving market prices up.

Dr. Thiemann presented an analysis of *Enterococcus* spp. infections in poultry, noting 622 cases since March 2023 across Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and Tennessee. *Enterococcus faecalis* was the most common species (344 cases), followed by *Enterococcus cecorum*. The most affected sites were the yolk sac, liver, bone, joint, and heart.

Infections peaked in the first week of the bird's life, typically due to *Enterococcus faecalis*. Effective control measures included hatchery sanitation; maintaining tray wash temperatures at or above 140°F; reducing condensation in the tray washer; rotating between acid and alkaline tray wash cleaners; and maintaining disinfectant concentrations. Reducing stocking density and moving away from sex-separate operations were also recommended.

What Service People Need to be Looking for – This topic, covered by Dr. Travis Ciganero (Ceva) focused on identifying and addressing issues in the poultry industry, particularly chick mortality and health. Key points included the importance of first understanding normal conditions, such as yolk size and color, to better understand and identify abnormalities. He emphasized the significance of ventilation and air quality, noting that chickens' respiratory systems are more efficient than mammals. He also highlighted the role of the bursa and thymus in immune function and the impact of biosecurity measures on disease prevention. Practical tips for inspecting chickens and interpreting



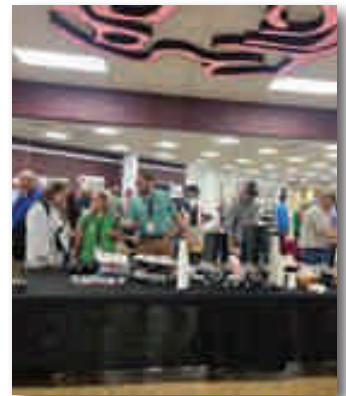
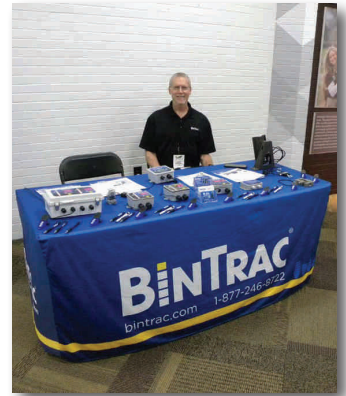
signs of health or illness were provided, stressing the need for detailed observation and feedback to hatcheries.

Lab Submission Guidelines – This important information was explained by Dr. Natalie Armour Manginsay (MSU CVM PRDL). She covered sampling techniques and requirements for PCR testing in poultry, emphasizing the importance of sample type, quality, and quantity. Key points included the use of BHI broth for various diseases, the necessity of polyester tip swabs, and the rejection of samples of poor quality or contaminated. Specific sampling techniques for diseases like avian influenza, Newcastle disease, and avian metapneumovirus were detailed, highlighting the need for proper swabbing and broth inoculation. The lab's new workflow for IBV detection and the importance of timely, properly packaged necropsy submissions were also discussed.

Getting Ready for Summer - The role of fans in poultry houses is critical, especially during the hot summer months. Dr. Joseph Purswell (USDA ARS) explained that fans, typically single-speed fans, face mechanical losses from the accumulation of dirt and debris, affect-

ing their performance. Lab tests show the ideal fan output, but real-world conditions often result in 10-20% lower air flow. He highlighted the importance of regular maintenance, including cleaning, replacing belts, and checking idlers. He suggested performing belt slip tests on fans after 200 hours of runtime to monitor belt condition and investing in a sheave and belt wear kit to easily check the condition of fan pulleys and belts. Dr. Purswell noted that fans closer to the control room experience higher static pressures, with a 15% decrease in output near the pads. He also discussed the impact of pad length on airflow and the need for preventative maintenance to avoid costly repairs.

The Causal Pie: Environment and Disease Prevention – In his own unique, entertaining, yet informative style, Dr. Joel Cline (Wayne-Sanderson Farms) explained to the audience how they can use the causal pie to describe the development of conditions that are multifactorial. If you control your piece of the pie, you may be able to prevent the development of a situation or a disease. If others in the production chain control their own piece of the pie, the chances of that situation or disease developing are reduced even more. So, the bottom line is, control what you can control and encourage others to do the same. ■





STUDENTS FROM AL & IL WON THE 2025 FIRST FINANCIAL SCHOLARSHIPS

Lauren Fortenberry, Event Coordinator, MPA



For the 16th year in a row, First Financial Bank donated \$1,500 to the Mississippi Poultry Foundation for two scholarships. The Foundation's Scholarship Committee, composed of educators, chose the recipients.



Kalyn Nelson, Trinity, Alabama

The \$1,000 scholarship winner is Kalyn Nelson of Trinity, Alabama. She is the daughter of Jarrison and Casey Nelson. Kalyn is a graduate of East Lawrence High School. She is currently attending Mississippi State University where she is pursuing a degree in poultry science. After graduation, she plans to obtain her mas-

ter's degree and then work in the poultry industry.

The \$500 scholarship winner is Noah Adam Lee of Peoria, Illinois. He is the son of Stephen and Laura Lee. Noah is a graduate of Dunlap High School in Dunlap, Illinois. He is currently attending Mississippi State University where he is pursuing a degree in poultry science. After graduation, he plans to work in the poultry industry.



Noah Adam Lee, Peoria, Illinois

First Financial Bank has provided \$24,000 in scholarships to 35 students since the creation of the FFB Mississippi Poultry Foundation scholarship in 2010. ■

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MPA MOURNS THE TRAGIC LOSS OF JEFF LITTLE, MPA BOARD MEMBER

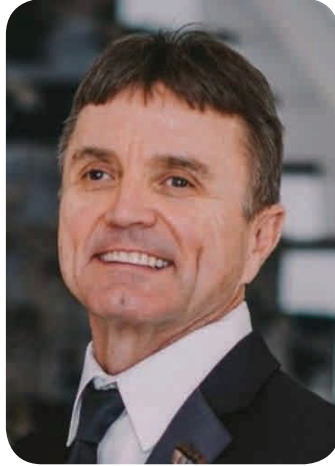
Mark Leggett, President, MPA

MPA Board member Jeffrey C. Little of Brandon died in a boating accident in Alabama April 16.

He was Performance Solutions Manager at dsm-firmenich Animal Nutrition and Health. Jeff was an active and supportive member of MPA throughout his career and was serving on the MPA Board of Directors as one of two allied industry board members.

After graduating in 1984 from Mississippi State University with a degree in Poultry Science, Jeff owned a broiler farm in Rankin County before he went to work for McCarty Farms as a broiler service representative.

Prior to joining dsm, he worked for Anpario, Boehringer Ingelheim, and Merial Select in sales positions. He was widely known and respected across the poultry industry in the Southeast United States.



His obituary notes he built “a respected career marked by hard work, reliability, and deep relationships. His professional life reflected the same values he carried into his home and community: consistency, humility, and a servant’s heart.” A member of Pinelake Church since 2000, Jeff’s life “was a reflection of his deep love for the Lord and his calling to serve others.”

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made to Delta Streets Academy in Greenwood, Mississippi ■

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SCHOLARSHIPS ANNOUNCED

FROM MISS. POULTRY FOUNDATION-CREATED ENDOWMENTS AT MSU

Mark Leggett, President, MPA

Students from Arkansas and Georgia received scholarships through two endowments created by the Mississippi Poultry Foundation Board of Trustees at Mississippi State University.

Kendall Parks of Cumming, Ga., was chosen to receive \$3,000 from the Mississippi Poultry Foundation Endowment scholarship by the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at MSU. A freshman at MSU majoring in poultry science, Kendall is the fourth generation of her family to pursue a career in the industry. This is her second year to win the MPF Endowment Scholarship. She graduated from East Forsyth High School and will graduate from MSU in 2028.



Kendall Parks, Cumming, GA

The Mississippi Poultry Foundation Board of Trustees created the endowment at MSU in 2016 and has been growing it through periodic donations since then. The Endowment now stands at \$65,000.

The MSU College of Agriculture and Life Sciences also chose Henley McAdams, originally of El Dorado, Ark., to receive the Becky Beard Memorial Scholarship. Henley received \$900 through the Becky Beard Scholarship created by the Mississippi Poultry Foundation as an endowment at MSU. A poultry science major with a minor in microbiology, she is also an undergraduate research assistant in the Poultry Science Department. She says on her LinkedIn page that her “passion lies in food safety, biosecurity and the pursuit of justice.” She has already gained experience in the industry working in 2024 as a human resources summer intern at Peco Foods in West Point.



Henley McAdams,
El Dorado, AK

The Becky Beard Memorial Scholarship was created to honor the 30-year career of Becky Beard, MPA’s long-time Administrative Assistant who was instrumental in organizing the Foundation’s annual scholarship auction. After Becky’s sudden death in 2020, the Foundation’s Board of Trustees created the scholarship and MPA members responded with donations that allowed the Board to endow a perpetual scholarship through an endowment at MSU. The BBMS is awarded to poultry science students who have work experience in the poultry industry. ■

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See page 9 for convention agenda.



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LEGISLATIVE SPECIALS ELECTIONS

SOME COMPLETED, MORE COMING THIS FALL

Mark Leggett, President, MPA

Selected Mississippi voters will head to the polls in August and November to elect legislators due to court-ordered redistricting of the Legislature.

The summer and fall elections follow three legislative special elections in the first half of the year. Two of the upcoming special elections are to fill vacancies created when legislators were elected mayors.

In 2022, the Legislature drew new districts based on the 2020 Census and the NAACP sued in federal court to force the creation of more black majority districts. In May, the court outlined a schedule for special elections in 14 new districts.

During the 2025 legislative session, the House redrew districts in Chickasaw, Lee, Lowndes, and Monroe counties, converting HD22 into a black majority. The House map did not involve pairing any house members into one district to create a new district with no incumbent. The court accepted the House map

The Senate amended the 2022 maps to create open black majority seats in DeSoto County and in Forrest County but the plaintiffs challenged the DeSoto districts. The court eventually accepted a DeSoto area plan drawn by the state Board of Election Commissioners composed of the governor, attorney general and secretary of state.

In the Senate, Sens. Chris Johnson, and John Polk, both Hattiesburg Republicans, were placed in the same district, but Polk announced in March that he was retiring. The new district, 5045 without an incumbent is in downtown Hattiesburg. Just prior to the June 9 qualifying deadline, Sen. David Parker, R-Horn Lake, announced he would not be running, creating an open seat in DeSoto County, 502.

Elections in Southeast Mississippi include:

Senate District 42. Incumbent Robin Robinson, R-Laurel, faces her brother, Randy Robinson and Donald Hartness, who Robin defeated in 2023. This seat will be settled in the August Republican primary.

SD44. Incumbent Chris Johnson, R-Hattiesburg, faces Christopher Lott in the Republican primary and the winner faces Shakita Lott, D-Hattiesburg in November.

SD45 is a new open seat. Former Democratic Hattiesburg Mayor Johnny Dupree will face Republican Anna Rush in November.

In two other districts, incumbents are unopposed: Sen. Joey Fillingane, R-Hattiesburg, and Sen. Juan Barnett, D-Heidelberg.

In **Northeast Mississippi**, Reps. Rickey Thomson, D-Shannon, faces a Democratic opponent in House District 16, Republican Jon Lancaster of Okolona faces a Democrat in SD22, and in HD41 Rep. Kabir Karriem of Columbus faces a Democrat challenger. Reps. Karl Gibbs, D-West Point, and Dana McLean, R-Columbus have no opposition.

In the **Desoto County** area districts, there are four races with one open seat, and all will be finally decided in November.

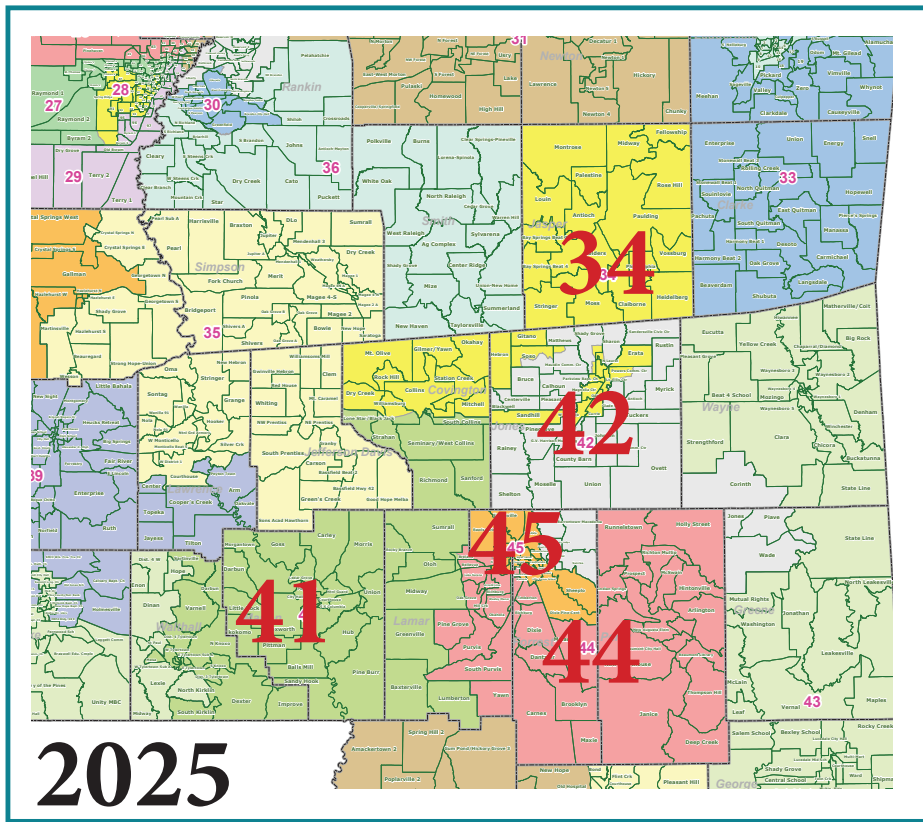
Earlier this year, three special elections filled three vacancies.

Lane Taylor of Philadelphia won the special election in Senate District 18 to replace Jennifer Branning in the district that includes all of Neshoba and parts of Leake and Winston counties.

Perry Bailey won the special election in House District 23 including Calhoun, Lafayette, Pontotoc, and Webster counties. Bailey first won this seat in a 2022 special election, was defeated for re-election in the 2023 Republican primary by Andy Stepp, who died in December 2024.

Gregory Elliot won the special election for H83 in Lauderdale County. He replaces the late Rep. Charles Young, D-Meridian, who died last year.

The June municipal elections created two new vacancies as Sen. John Horhn, D-Jackson, was elected mayor of Jackson and Rep. Orlando Paden, D-Clarksdale was elected mayor there. Gov. Tate Reeves will set a special election date for those two vacancies. ■



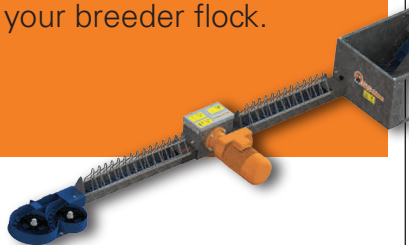
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MCDONALD NAMED STATE FSA DIRECTOR

Mark Leggett, President, MPA

Chris McDonald of Brandon is the new State Executive Director for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA), according to a press release from U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins.



Chris McDonald

Prior to his new position, Chris served nine years at the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce as Director of Federal and Environmental Affairs at the Mississippi Department of Agriculture & Commerce. He was MDAC's legislative liaison at the state capitol. He had been MDAC Commissioner Andy Gipson's appointee to the State Farm Service Agency Emergency Board.

Chris grew up on a cattle farm in Montgomery County and went on to earn a Bachelor of Science degree and two master's degrees in animal and wildlife science from Mississippi State University. Before his time at MDAC, he worked for the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks for 13 years.

MPA sent letters to Senators Roger Wicker and Cindy Hyde-Smith in support of Chris for the position.



Dane Maxwell

Rollins also named Dane Maxwell as State Director for Rural Development in Mississippi. He is a U.S. Marine Corps veteran. He retired from law enforcement and is a successful businessman creating two successful national companies. He was elected Mayor of his hometown of Pascagoula, and later elected Mississippi Public Service Commissioner serving the southern twenty-seven counties in Mississippi. ■



Ag Commissioner Gipson Congratulates MDAC's McDonald

PROPERTY TAX RELIEF ONE OF SEVERAL AGRICULTURE- RELATED BILLS LAWMAKERS PASSED IN 2025

Mark Leggett, President, MPA

The Legislature come through for agriculture during the 2025 session, especially for poultry growers who were facing a doubling of their property taxes.

The 2025 regular session adjourned without a budget that includes services vital to the industry, but lawmakers returned in a special session to pass a budget.

Lawmakers also extended the harvest permit program for three more years, banned cell-cultured “meats,” set penalties for improper labelling of meat products, and required the Department of Revenue to produce a list of items that qualify for the 1.5 percent sales tax rate on farm equipment.

Last summer growers learned that a new property tax manual for counties being implemented from 2023 to 2026 would result in a 106 percent increase in property taxes on poultry farms. MPA member Sen. Brian Rhodes, R-Pelahatchie, introduced and steered into law, a bill to prevent the increases for farms built before January 1, 2025.

Rhodes’ legislation incorporated into **HB1878** requires that “rural structures” (not including residences) built before January 1, 2025, would be subject to the 2010 DOR manual and those built after that date would be taxed using the new manual released in 2020.

County boards of supervisors approve the tax rolls the first Monday in July for the next year.

On the truck weight bill, MPA lobbied to have the repeal date removed entirely from the harvest permit law that allows feed and live-haul trucks to carry up to 88,000 pounds, but all the Senate and House could only agree on in **HB953** was extending the repeal date to 2028.

In another tax bill, **SB 2266**, mandates that by August 1 the DOR publish a list of items by eligible for any sales tax exemption or reduced sales tax rate for the holder of a commercial farmer permit. This bill takes effect July 1, 2025.

In 2009, the DOR responded to a request from MPA for a letter ruling on what items in a poultry house were eligible for the 1.5 percent sales tax rate. MPA grower members and allied members who sold the items submitted a list to DOR and the letter ruling outlining the Department’s guidelines on poultry house equipment was issued. The letter ruling was renewed this year.

Two meat-related bills passed with only one dissenting vote this session. **HB1006** bans the manufacture and sale of lab-grown meat developed from animal cells grown in vats. The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce’s Consumer Protection Division will enforce the law once the bill takes effect on July 1.

The other meat bill, **HB913** requires meat products to be correctly labelled by processors, retailers, and restaurants to inform consumers if they contain lab-grown, insect or plant proteins. MDAC will also inspect under this bill.

It is not meat, but seafood and crawfish sold in Mississippi will have to declare the country of origin. Both MDAC and the Department of Marine Resources will enforce the law starting July 1. The bill also creates a task force to make recommendations on domestic and imported seafood, the seafood industry and expanding markets for Mississippi seafood.

Senate Bill 2204 requires a sheriff, chief of police, the director of the highway patrol, constable, or any other peace officer to report to the Mississippi Agricultural and Livestock Theft Bureau (MALTB) any theft, burglary, robbery or attempted theft, burglary, or robbery of agriculture-related items. The MALTB is to maintain a registry of reports of stolen agriculture-related vehicles.

The Legislature also changed the agritourism law to require the posting of one sign at the entrance to the farm and defined “beneficial substance” which includes a plant biostimulant, soil amendment and/or plant amendment for soil amendments to bring the definition in line with American Plant Food Control Officials’ definition.

It took the governor calling a special session (May 28-29), but the state finally has a state budget for the fiscal year starting July 1.

The Legislature increased funding for the Animal Disease Response Fund that allows the Board of Animal Health to respond to outbreaks of avian influenza and other diseases. The \$250,000 fund was increased to \$450,000.

Any increase was rare among state agencies as legislators were cautious about increasing spending after voting during the regular session to eliminate the state’s personal income tax. That vote was the primary reason the Senate and House were unable to agree on a budget at the end of the regular session in April. The House sent the Senate version of the tax bill to the governor when the Senate was expecting to negotiate further.

State revenue collections are running close to last year. The current fiscal year ends June 30.

The Mississippi State agricultural units mostly saw small increases in their appropriations for the FY26 fiscal year. Some of the few agencies receiving an increase in funding included the Department of Environmental Quality, the Division of Medicaid, the Department of Corrections, and the Department of Agriculture and Commerce.

The total state support budget decreased 18.74 percent to \$7.86 billion. The state support budget includes the \$7.1 billion general fund and the approximately \$700 million from funds that are mostly the result of lawsuits the state won over the last few decades and the 1-cent of the 7 cent sales tax for education. Some of the federal funds that came to the state as a result of COVID were zeroed out in the FY26 budget. ■



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2025 TORNADOES IN MISSISSIPPI CAN'T BE GOOD FOR INSURANCE RATES

Mark Leggett, President, MPA

I am not a meteorologist or an insurance executive, but the 2025 data on tornadoes through April 30 can't be good for insurance rates going forward.

The location of tornadoes changes as the seasons change with Mississippi hitting its peak early in the year. Now, though, researchers are saying the long-recognized Tornado Alley is shifting eastward.

Through April 30, Mississippi led the nation in tornadoes according to weather websites, and the number of tornadoes recorded is almost three times the average of 1999-2023. Mississippi has had 96 tornadoes in 2025 compared to an average of 34 through the end of April 1999-2023.

On 1999-2023 totals, more than half of Mississippi tornadoes occurred from January through April. There is a second smaller peak in late fall.

Accuweather.com reported in May that Mississippi and Illinois lead the nation in 2025 tornadoes through April 30. Mississippi had seven in the first four months of 2024 and 96 in the same period of 2025. Nationally, there were 539 last year in the first third of the year compared to 710 this year.

Nationally, the number of tornadoes is ahead of the average and higher than any year in recent history except 2011, according to the Weather Channel.

Several weather networks have reported on a shift of the traditional tornado alley from west of the Mississippi to more tornadoes east of the Mississippi River. Fox Weather calls the new location, "Dixie Alley.

Fox Weather says, "Recent years have revealed a surprising trend: tornado hot spots are moving east from their traditional homes. Scientists have tracked an increase in tornado activity across the Mississippi River Valley, especially in states like Tennessee, Kentucky, Arkansas, and even parts of Mississippi and Alabama. This eastward shift is

not a minor adjustment, but a clear movement documented over several decades. The number of tornadoes in the traditional alley (Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska) has slightly decreased, while the frequency and intensity in the new regions have climbed sharply.

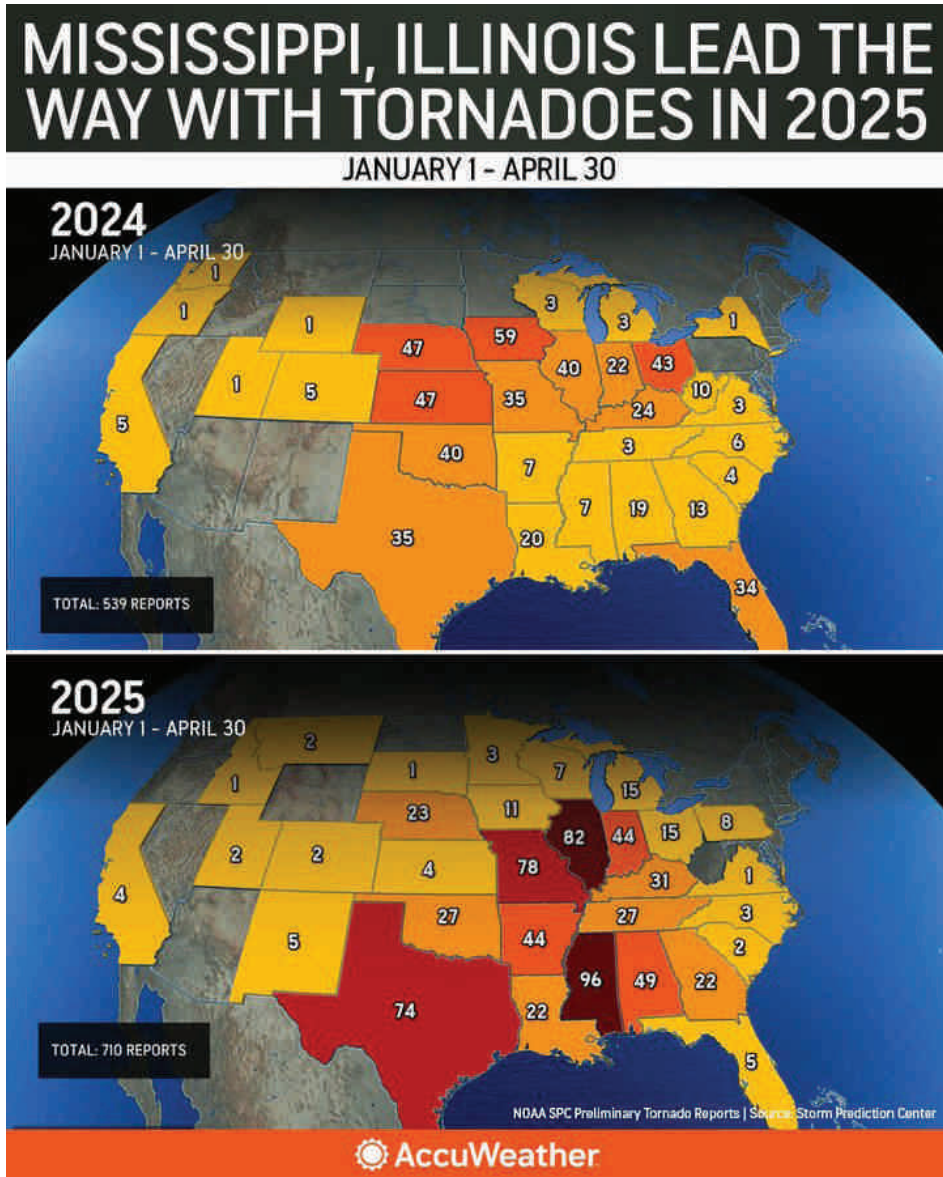
Tornadoes here are often more deadly, not just because of their strength, but because they strike in areas with dense tree cover, challenging terrain, and higher population densities."

ClimateCrisis247.com drills down to the county level to find where tornadoes are more common. Mississippi and Alabama have eight counties each in the website's list of the top 25 counties where tornado activity has increased.

"To determine the counties where tornado activity is increasing the fastest, Climate Crisis 247 reviewed data on historical

tornado tracks from the Storm Prediction Center of the NOAA's National Weather Service. Counties were ranked based on the average annual increase in the number of tornados from 1950 to 2023," the website states.

In Mississippi, counties with the website's ranking are: Warren (25), Scott (20), Lauderdale (18), Hinds (12), Yazoo (11), Smith (10), Rankin (5), Leake (4). The other nine counties not in Alabama and Mississippi, are three in Colorado, two in Illinois, and one each in Kentucky, Louisiana, Illinois and North Dakota. ■





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2025 BREEDER HATCHERY

The 2025 Breeder Hatchery seminar will take place August 13th in Raymond, MS at Hinds Community College. Registration will begin at 8 a.m. in the Eagle Ridge Conference Center with the first speaker starting at 8:25 a.m., lunch at 12:15 p.m., and concluding at 3:15 p.m.

The speakers are still being nailed down, but our topics will include male sorting, hatchery ventilation, pullet uniformity, bed bugs, and hatchery sanitation. Some of the speakers you will see are Dr. Mueez Ahmad with Arm & Hammer, Kyle Daniel with Duck's Poultry, Randall Vickery with Aviagen, Dr. Jim Watson with MS Board of Animal Health, and Dr. Danny McDonald with Control Solutions.

This seminar is free for all to attend. If you would like to register or sponsor this event, please visit our website www.ms poultry.org. You will find additional information about the event and the option to register under the Event Calendar. ■



Breeder Hatchery Agenda

8:25 - 8:30	Welcome & Prayer	Jonathan Moon
8:30 - 9:00	Properly Managing Step Down Programs and Machine Calibration	Phillip Perry
9:00 - 9:30	Male Grading	Kyle Daniel
9:30 - 10:00	Chick Quality & Trouble Shooting	Dr. Mueez Ahmad
10:00 - 10:15 BREAK		
10:15 - 10:45	Pullet Uniformity	Randall Vickery
10:45 - 11:15	Hatchery Ventilation	Scott Ballinger
11:15 - 11:45	Breeder House Fire Prevention & Construction	Bruce Hall & Doug Dickinson
11:45 - 12:15	Mites & Flies	Dr. Danny McDonald
12:15 - 1:15 LUNCH		
1:15 - 1:45	Bed Bugs in Poultry Operations	Dr. Brett Nolan
1:45 - 2:15	aMVP Vaccination Experiences	Dr. Tim Cummings
2:15 - 2:45	HPAI Update	Dr. Jim Watson
2:45 - 3:15	Hatchery Sanitation	Dr. Sue Ann Hubbard



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4-H'ERS "BEYOND READY" AT 2025 MS POULTRY CLUB CONGRESS

*Tannah Christensen,
MSU Extension Instructor*

The 2025 Mississippi 4-H Club Congress was a powerhouse of talent, teamwork, and tough competition. Senior-level 4-H'ers from across the state gathered in Starkville with one goal: being "Beyond Ready." This year's poultry events were nothing short of exciting, with fierce competition and outstanding participation. Two major competitions- the Egg Chef Challenge and Poultry Judging- highlighted the depth of knowledge and creativity our 4-H'ers brought to the table.

The Egg Chef Challenge sizzled with culinary creativity as 11 competitors put their best recipes to the test. After careful judging and plenty of taste-testing from our judges- Lauren Fortenberry (MPA), Dr. Donna Peterson (MSU), and Peyton Taylor (MSU), Kelcey Beene of Alcorn County cracked the top spot with her crowd-pleasing eggnog ice cream. Roxie Roberson from Union County earned second place with her deli-

icious hashbrown casserole. Elliott Haffey of Itawamba County rounded out the top three with a meringue dessert- Australian pavlova.

The flavors and presentations were top-notch across the board! In the Poultry Judging contest, 26 participants showcased their skills in evaluation, grading, and knowledge of poultry production. The competition was close, but Rankin County emerged victorious. Congratulations to team members Joshua Grice, Matthew Grice, and Will Ross for taking

first place! Lincoln County followed closely in second place, featuring impressive performances by Joseph McDaniel, Julian Chavez, Preston Morse, and Eden Conn. Union County secured third, with team members Mae Garrett, Adalyn Hogue, Eden Hogue, and Lily Sacran delivering strong performances. Lily Sacran also took high individual for the entire contest.

In addition to the competitions, participants dove into hands-on learning through engaging workshops and tours. To train agents, volunteers, and 4-H'ers, this year, a few Omelet and Crepe Workshops were offered. These were huge hits and gave participants culinary, food-safety, and techniques needed to succeed at the State Fair and Dixie National contests. Mean-

while, the Inside the Scoop Poultry Tour offered a behind-the-scenes look at poultry operations, giving youth a broader understanding of the industry and its importance to Mississippi agriculture.

The 2025 Club Congress was an unforgettable experience, showcasing not just competition but camaraderie, learning, and leadership. Congratulations to all participants, and thank you to the volunteers, educators, families, and donors who continue to support our Mississippi 4-H Poultry Program. These youth truly are beyond ready for the future of agriculture! ■



Matthew Grice, Joshua Grice, Will Ross



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UPCOMING EVENTS:

** Mississippi Poultry Association Scheduled Meetings*

- AUG 13..... *Breeder-Hatchery Seminar,
Eagle Ridge - Raymond, MS
- SEPT 11-14..... *MPA Convention, Destin, FL
*Board of Directors Meeting
*Allied Industry Meeting
- OCT 2-13 MS State Fair, Jackson, MS
- DEC 11-12..... Homestead for the Holidays
MS Ag Museum - Jackson, MS




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