Growing broilers in Oregon
Facts for the potential grower

J.C. Hermes

The Oregon situation
The Willamette Valley’s mild year-round climate is ideal for growing broilers. Most Oregon broilers are grown on family farms distributed west of the Cascades, from Eugene to the Columbia Gorge. At present, there are about 65 broiler growers in the State; and there are three integrators, who own 10 additional farms.

On many of the family-owned farms, broiler production is only a part-time endeavor. In many cases, one member of the family works off the farm or farms other crops while others in the family care for the chickens.

The minimum size for a new broiler farm is about 125,000 chickens per year, but the average family broiler farm produces about 300,000 per year.

Broiler production
Producing broilers is a year-round proposition. They’re grown to about 7 weeks of age before processing. Then the grower has about 3 weeks to clean and prepare the growing facilities for the next brood. This schedule allows the grower the opportunity to produce slightly more than five broods per year.

In most cases, broilers are grown in large buildings with a partially or completely controlled environment to maintain the necessary conditions for maximum growth. The buildings used in broiler production vary in size; newly constructed buildings average about 45 feet wide by 400 feet long. Most have dirt floors, insulated walls and ceilings, metal siding, and a concrete footing around the perimeter.

James C. Hermes, Extension poultry specialist, Oregon State University.
Contracts

Oregon broiler growers are under contract to one of three integrators (see the righthand column). Contracts provide advantages to both growers and integrators:

- Integrators don’t have to own numerous farms, and they employ only the people who run their farms—but they can count on a certain amount of production at an agreed-on price.
- Growers have the security of not having to sell animals on the open market, and they have the backing of a large company—but they’re still in business for themselves.

Under most contracts, the integrator provides to the grower the birds, the feed, any needed medications, and technical advice. In addition, the grower doesn’t have to pay the costs to deliver chicks and feed or to ship the birds to market.

The grower is responsible for providing the growing environment, bedding, heating, utilities, and labor. Overall, the grower supplies between 10 and 15 percent of the cost of producing the birds, and the remainder is borne by the integrator.

Grower payment depends on the contract, which may vary from integrator to integrator and from time to time. In general, growers are paid by the weight of birds produced, the number of birds produced, or the amount of space in the chicken house.

Payment may be:
- guaranteed,
- based on growth and feed conversion, or
- tied to current market prices in the Northwest or in the Southern States.

An integrator may base payment on your production skills compared to other growers. In some instances, premiums are paid to the top growers based on body weight, feed conversion, and carcass grade.

Discuss your contract with your integrator, in detail, before you reach any agreement.

Organizations

Oregon Fryer Commission is an agency of the Oregon Department of Agriculture; its purposes are promotion, education, market expansion, and research for the broiler industry. Commissioners are growers, elected from among their own ranks. The commission is financed through a mandatory 0.25 cent per pound assessment on all Oregon-grown broilers.

The commission also oversees a labeling law that requires all fryers sold in Oregon to be labeled with the state in which they’re grown.

Oregon Broiler Growers Association is a statewide organization that runs solely on the dedication of its members. It’s a nonprofit group that uses its finances from dues and promotions to support broiler research and scholarship at Oregon State University and other worthy causes, including 4-H.

The membership is divided into three chapters (South Willamette, Mid-Willamette, and Clackamas); these have regional grower representation, and they correspond to the three districts of the Oregon Fryer Commission.

More information

For further information, contact:
- your county office of the Oregon State University Extension Service;
- the OSU Extension poultry specialist (503) 737-2254; or
- the OSU Department of Animal Sciences, Poultry section, (503) 737-2301.

Oregon poultry integrators

Belozer Poultry Farms (Lynden), Oregon City, OR 97045; (503) 656-6819.

Fircrest Farms, Creswell, OR 97426; (503) 895-2161.

Pederson’s Fryer Farms, Tacoma, WA 98442; (206) 537-0243.

Oregon Fryer Commission

Commissioners are growers, elected from among their own ranks. The commission is financed through a mandatory 0.25 cent per pound assessment on all Oregon-grown broilers.

The commission also oversees a labeling law that requires all fryers sold in Oregon to be labeled with the state in which they’re grown.

Oregon Broiler Growers Association is a statewide organization that runs solely on the dedication of its members. It’s a nonprofit group that uses its finances from dues and promotions to support broiler research and scholarship at Oregon State University and other worthy causes, including 4-H.

The membership is divided into three chapters (South Willamette, Mid-Willamette, and Clackamas); these have regional grower representation, and they correspond to the three districts of the Oregon Fryer Commission.

More information

For further information, contact:
- your county office of the Oregon State University Extension Service;
- the OSU Extension poultry specialist (503) 737-2254; or
- the OSU Department of Animal Sciences, Poultry section, (503) 737-2301.

Oregon poultry integrators

Belozer Poultry Farms (Lynden), Oregon City, OR 97045; (503) 656-6819.

Fircrest Farms, Creswell, OR 97426; (503) 895-2161.

Pederson’s Fryer Farms, Tacoma, WA 98442; (206) 537-0243.

Oregon Fryer Commission

Commissioners are growers, elected from among their own ranks. The commission is financed through a mandatory 0.25 cent per pound assessment on all Oregon-grown broilers.

The commission also oversees a labeling law that requires all fryers sold in Oregon to be labeled with the state in which they’re grown.

Oregon Broiler Growers Association is a statewide organization that runs solely on the dedication of its members. It’s a nonprofit group that uses its finances from dues and promotions to support broiler research and scholarship at Oregon State University and other worthy causes, including 4-H.

The membership is divided into three chapters (South Willamette, Mid-Willamette, and Clackamas); these have regional grower representation, and they correspond to the three districts of the Oregon Fryer Commission.

More information

For further information, contact:
- your county office of the Oregon State University Extension Service;
- the OSU Extension poultry specialist (503) 737-2254; or
- the OSU Department of Animal Sciences, Poultry section, (503) 737-2301.

Oregon poultry integrators

Belozer Poultry Farms (Lynden), Oregon City, OR 97045; (503) 656-6819.

Fircrest Farms, Creswell, OR 97426; (503) 895-2161.

Pederson’s Fryer Farms, Tacoma, WA 98442; (206) 537-0243.