

ALABAMA Poultry

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE ALABAMA POULTRY & EGG ASSOCIATION



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Montgomery, AL 36101

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Wyers takes advantage of Environmental Quality Incentives Program, EQIP

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When Bartley Wyers graduated from Auburn University with a degree in poultry science, he vowed never to get involved with farming. Wyers grew up on a farm and decided that farming was not what he wanted to do for the rest of his life. He wanted to use his degree in some other aspect of agriculture. After 10 years of working in the processing and marketing departments with a local chicken processing company, he wanted a change. He decided it was time to return to his roots and get into farming.

Wyers purchased a farm in 1999 in Eldridge, Ala., a small town in western Walker County. He now operates a 450-acre farm which has 120 acres of pastureland, 320 acres of forestland and has a 15,000 breeder egg operation. In addition to the poultry production, Wyers also has a 50 cow/calf Black Angus herd which he plans to increase in the future.

Since Wyers purchased his farm, he noticed several improvements that needed to be done in order to make his farm productive and environmentally sound. He contacted the Natural Resources Conservation Service and, with their assistance, developed a conservation plan to improve his operation. To accomplish his goals, Wyers applied for and received financial assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program or EQIP, a program that is administered by NRCS. EQIP is a voluntary program that provides technical as well as cost-share assistance to landowners who face threats to soil, water, air and related natural resources on their land.

Commercial poultry producers are faced with mortality management on a daily basis. Wyers was using a worn 10-year-old incinerator to dispose of poultry mortality.

"A properly maintained and used incinerator is one of the most biologically safe disposal methods," says Anthony Hudson, NRCS district conservationist, who works with Wyers as he implements his conservation plan. Wyers says, "The primary advantage of incineration is producer convenience. A properly sized incinerator can reduce daily mortalities to a comparatively small

amount of ash in a few hours." That's a real plus for a young farmer who is also working an off-the-farm job.

Incineration provides a higher level of biosecurity than other mortality management options. Carcasses that could potentially spread disease or attract insect pests or vermin are quickly reduced to ash during the incineration process. Wyers goes on to say, "I knew that improperly designed or operated incinerators can cause odor and air pollution problems."

Since his incinerator was old and was showing wear, he knew it was time to upgrade to a new system. His old incinerator was no longer efficient because it had several cracks. With cost-share assistance from EQIP funds, Wyers has installed a new incinerator. Wyers stated, "Because I received EQIP funds, I am now able to reach goals on my farm that will leave the land in better shape for many generations to come than I found it."

Sign-up for application to participate in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program is available on a continuous basis. Throughout the year, there will be batching periods. For more information about the program, contact your local NRCS office.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program sign-up announced

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is taking applications for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). EQIP is a voluntary program that provides assistance to farmers who face threats to soil, water, air, and related natural resources on their land. Persons engaged in livestock or agricultural production are eligible for the program.

Eligible land includes cropland, pasture, private non-industrial forest land, and other farm or ranch lands. NRCS works with the participant to develop a conservation plan that identifies problems, land use objectives, and planned practices.

This plan becomes the basis of the cost-share agreement between NRCS and the participant. NRCS provides cost-share payments to landowners under these agreements that can be up to 10 years in duration.

Persons interested in entering into a cost-share agreement for EQIP assistance may file an application at any time.

The date of the first batching period for state-wide concerns is Dec. 15. The date of the first batching period for local concerns is Jan. 1, 2006. For more information about the program, contact your local NRCS office.

Calendar of Events

AP&EA Christmas
Open House
Dec. 7, 2005
AP&EA Office
Montgomery

AP&EA Board of
Directors Meeting
Dec. 8, 2005
AP&EA Office
Montgomery

International Poultry
Expo
Jan. 25-27 2006
Atlanta

AP&EA "Evening of
Fun"
June 3, 2006
Birmingham

AP&EA Annual
Meeting
& Convention
July 23-24, 2006
Sandestin

Alabama Broiler
Industry Seminar
Oct. 10-11, 2006
Auburn

Alabama
Breeder/Hatchery
Workshop
Nov. 7-8, 2006
Auburn