



# Small Farm Field Day

Funding provided by Golden LEAF Inc.

## PASTURED POULTRY

### RESEARCHERS

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### OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this demonstration is to show alternative means for poultry production and to evaluate the carrier state of food safety pathogens with this system.

### OPPORTUNITY

Pastured poultry can be integrated into the farming systems of limited-resource farmers. The production of poultry on pasture can contribute to the development of healthy local and regional food systems. The method is attractive to the small farmer because there is a low capital investment, labor costs are low, and the operation provides sustainable poultry production. Further, there is good potential for extra farm income, because of the demand for poultry grown without antibiotics. The opportunities exist for the independent poultry producers to process poultry and sell directly to customers because they are exempt from inspection under federal law.

### METHOD

A movable chicken tractor is utilized to demonstrate the production of pasture-raised poultry. Chicks must be on pasture vegetation daily for a minimum of half of their life span. They must be exposed to fresh pasture daily. The bedding must be managed to avoid capping, odors, and to prevent birds from kneeling on fecal material. With this system, no synthetic growth stimulants or medications or antibiotics are used. Birds are not debarked, and must be moved in rotation to allow restoration of vegetation. Flock density must be low so that free movement and natural social behavior will take place.

### DISCUSSION

Pastured poultry producers, regulatory agencies and consumer groups have expressed concern about the microbiological quality and safety of these raw produces. There is potential for dissemination and growth of human pathogens, such as *Salmonella sp.*, *Campylobacter sp.*, and others. As many as 100 percent of mass-produced broilers have been reported to harbor *Campylobacter jejune*. Very little is known about these pathogens as they relate to pastured-poultry production.

This demonstration will assess and show the microbial status of pastured poultry and recommend appropriate sanitation practices to pastured poultry producers.