



# Starting a Meat Bird Operation and Being Compliant

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BA Family Farms

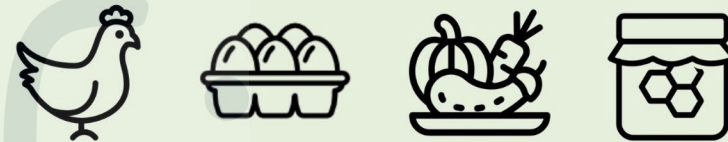
Trent Butler

# Who We Are

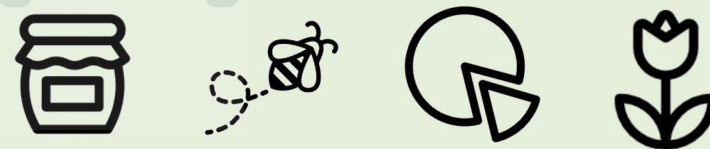
- Family Farm located outside of Indianola, Iowa  
20 Minutes south of Des Moines
- We raise:
  - Pasture raised meat birds
  - Bees
  - Produce
  - Value added products from produce
    - Jams and Jellies



*FAMILY FARM LOCATED IN INDIANOLA, IOWA.*



WE RAISE PASTURE POULTRY, BEES, AND  
PRODUCE WITH OUR FOCUS ON  
REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE.  
HOMEMADE JAM, JELLY, AND SCONES.



 **@BAFAMILYFARMS**

**BAFAMILYFARMS@GMAIL.COM**



# About Us

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- Grew up raising livestock
  - Cattle
  - Goats
- College
  - Iowa State University
    - Agriculture Studies
- Large Family Farm
  - Managed Cattle
    - Rotational Grazing
- Iowa Department of Agriculture – NOT Department of Inspections and Appeals
  - Disclaimer- I am not speaking on behalf of the State.

# Why We Started

- Abundance of beef and pork at local lockers
  - Traveled around the Central and South Central portions of the state
  - Beef and pork were available at all of them
- Lack of local poultry in their retail cases
- No local poultry processors





# First Round of Birds

- Ordered 20 Cornish Cross
  - Planned on doing them for ourselves, family, and friends
- Did some research- not enough
- Bought a few feeders and waters
- Made a makeshift brooder in the basement
  - Stock tank and heat lamp
- Used equipment that was already around



# First Round of Birds

- Raised birds in a 16ft bumper hitch trailer as a coop
- Had challenges with weather
  - Arrived middle of October, processed middle December
- 8 weeks later they were ready to process
  - Winter
  - Waters were freezing constantly
  - Manure built up
  - Used heat lamps constantly
  - Processing was very difficult
    - Scalding, plucking, etc.



# First Round of Birds

- Packaged birds and kept some for ourselves and gave the rest as Christmas presents
  - Overall feedback on the birds were good
- Wasn't sure if we'd raise them again
- Fairy simple project, wasn't sure if it was worth it



# Year 1

- Spent a lot of the remainder of the winter joining Facebook groups and learning from other people on their experience raising meat birds
  - Breeds
    - Cornish Cross, Bresse, Red Ranger, etc...
  - Housing
    - Coop, free range, chicken tractor
  - Hatcheries
    - Welp, Hoover, McMurray, (Iowa)
  - Feed
    - Organic, Non GMO, traditional



# Year 1 - Using what worked

- Metal cattle water as a brooder
  - 3 weeks in basement
    - Smell
    - Hard to clean
    - Noise
    - Fire hazard- using a heat lamp in the basement





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## Year 1- Using what worked

- Chicken tractor route
  - Old worn out calf shed on skids
  - Old bent up cattle panels
  - Tarps
  - Zip Ties
  - Electric fencer around outside





# First Chicken Tractor

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# First Chicken Tractor

- Feeder down the middle
  - PVC pipe cut in half, hung from the roof
- Water- normal water that you had to fill that sat on the ground, too heavy to hang from roof.







# First Chicken Tractor

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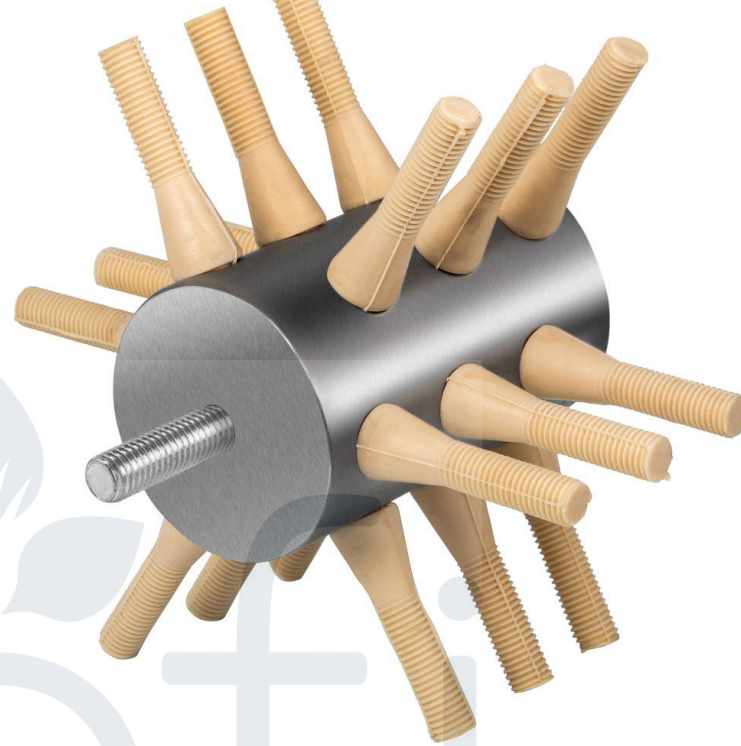
- Moved everyday with a 4 wheeler
- Took two people to move it
  - One to drive the 4 wheeler and one to scare the birds
  - Lost a few from moving
- Predator problems, added chicken wire to the bottom portion
- Wasn't as weather proof as needed
  - Loss due to weather and predators were the biggest issue



# Processing

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- The first group we did that year was hand plucked
- Only did 25 but took forever
- Water temperature is very important
- Drill tool helps but didn't have any success
- Investing in a plucker was worth the investment





# First Year Marketing

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- We just did smaller groups of birds this year and we marketed them by making Facebook posts on some local group pages
- We had quite a bit of interest in them
- Took orders and sold out of birds every time
- Made a waitlist for the following groups

# Year 1 - Second Round

- Decided there was a demand for birds
- Would try selling birds at local Farmers Market
- Researched Rules and Regulations under Iowa Department of Inspections, Appeals, and Licensing (DIAL)
- Spoke to DIAL for what all I would need
  - Warehouse license
    - \$75.00 first year
    - Inspected freezer
  - Farmers Market License



# Inspected Birds

- One state inspected facility in Iowa
  - 2 hours away
  - Took 25 birds to be inspected and planned to sell them at markets
  - Advertise our custom birds but have inspected birds at the market to show customers
  - Compliant

# Farmers Market

- Took our freezer to the market each Saturday
- Found it difficult to talk to people about birds
- Developed relationships with other vendors and regular visitors to the market
- Made some different jellies/jams and kept developing more relationships with more customers
- Some success with inspected birds- more success with custom birds

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## Direct to Consumer

- Social Media
  - Joined groups
  - Developed customer relations
    - Facebook and Instagram
  - Transparent with pictures
    - Posting pictures on how the birds are raised
    - Tells a story that consumers are missing with store bought products
- Farmers Market
  - Met people and spoke to them about our birds and scheduled farm pickups





# Direct to Consumer

- 1000 Bird Exemption
  - “1,000 birds per calendar year to household consumers only – keep records”
  - Can only raise and sell 1000 birds in a calendar year
  - All birds must be labeled as “Exempt Poultry” P.L. 90-492.
  - Can only sell birds Direct to Consumer
  - Advertise bird availability via farmers market or social media

# Direct to Consumer

- Advertising bird availability
  - Posted on Facebook group pages when our birds would be available
    - Advertise your birds for what they are and why your birds are better
    - Pasture raised, no hormones, etc..
  - Took orders and put people on a waitlist for when birds would be available
    - Biggest takeaway from taking orders was getting a deposit when they order.
    - We had a lot of people back out or having scheduling issues when it was time for pickup
      - Any amount of a deposit seems to help, we did \$1.00 per bird

# Direct to Consumer

## Processing Facility

- Sanitary
- Products must be wholesome

## Records must be kept

- Number raised
- Birds lost
- Slaughter dates
- Sales
  - Buyers name and contact information, number of birds purchased





# Year 1 Recap

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- Produced 100 Birds
- Sold 25 birds at Farmers markets after being harvested up in Greene, Iowa
- Sold remaining 75 birds direct to consumer
  - Majority Facebook
  - Customers picked them up at the farm
  - Wait list for following year
- Learned A LOT, but wanted to continue

# Practical Farmers of Iowa Cost Share

- “This Cost Share supports aspiring or existing grazers who wish to adopt regenerative grazing practices that improve forage, soil and water quality. “
- This Cost share can also help expand livestock enterprises through improved grazing management.
- Applied for the Cost Share program
  - Grazing infrastructure cost share
  - Could purchase portable housing, temporary fencing supplies, and water distribution supplies

# Practical Farmers of lowa Cost Share

- Purchased 2 12x12 chicken tractors
- Poultry Netting
- Temporary fencing
- Solar Fencer





# New Chicken Tractor

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- Benefits
  - Light weight
    - Easier to move
    - Could move tractor more often
  - Move on my own
    - Lowered labor costs
  - Fits more birds
  - Better for weather conditions
    - Completely covered on top and could be fully enclosed in bad weather





# New Chicken Tractor





# Chicken Tractor

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- 12' X 12'
- Holds up to 75 birds
- Recommend 50 birds
  - Limited feed space
  - Limited water space
- Run feeders down the middle
  - Raise feeders and waters as birds grow





# Chicken Tractor

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- Chicken tractors help spread out manure
- Reduce long term labor by not having to clean out coop
- Cleaner for the birds
- Allows access to fresh grass
- Fertilizes area that the tractors are moved across





# Chicken Tractor



## Year 2

- We raised 500 birds throughout the year
- Discontinued DIAL's license
- Sold majority of the birds direct to consumer- custom exempt
  - Created facebook page
  - Took orders and created waitlist
- Continued going to our local famers market to expand local customer base
  - Took custom orders and sold value added products



## Year 2

- We processed almost all of the birds at home
- Local restaurant ordered 25 birds
  - Had to be inspected
  - Straight to restaurant- no warehouse license needed
- Had some challenges with hatcheries
  - Health
  - Shipping
- Overall, it was a learning year with the new tractors and we felt like it was successful, do we continue to grow.. If so what rules and regulations are next...



# Rules and Regulations

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- 1000 Bird Exemption
- 20,000 Bird Exemption
- Custom Exempt
- State Inspected
- USDA Inspected

# 1000 Bird Exemption

- Produce and process up to 1000 birds
  - Birds that you own
- Sell direct to consumer
- Keep records on who the birds were sold to
  - Name and contact information
- Can NOT sell birds at a Farmers Market
- CAN take orders for birds with on farm pick up
- All birds must be labeled as “Exempt Poultry” P.L. 90-492



# 20,000 Bird Exemption

- Operate as a State licensed locker
  - Enclosed facility
  - Sewer Certificate
  - Water Certificate
  - Pass inspection with IDALS
    - Regular visits from inspector
    - Quarterly if all looks in order
- You can only harvest YOUR own birds
- You can NOT harvest anyone else's birds
- All birds must be labeled as "Exempt Poultry" P.L. 90-492
- Birds can be sold as any inspected bird can (within the state)
  - Talk with Des Moines office prior to going this route

# Custom Exempt

- Licensed locker with IDALS with the intent to process other people's livestock/poultry
- Regular visits from an IDALS inspector
  - Yearly water certificate
  - Sewer Certificate
  - Pass quarterly inspection
- Process other peoples' birds and your own
- Pre-operational records, Operational records, other information that is required by the State.
- All birds must be labeled as "Exempt Poultry" P.L. 90-492
- Birds are Not For Sale, and can not be resold, must be used for personal use by the owner

# Inspected Facilities

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- State Inspected Licensed facility
  - Inspector present every slaughter and/or processing day
  - Pass regular tests (state tests and establishment tests)
- Birds can be sold:
  - Restaurants
  - Direct to consumer
  - Farmers Markets- with Farmers Market license
  - Anywhere within the State





# Inspected Facilities

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- USDA Licensed Facility
  - Inspector present every slaughter and/or processing day
  - Pass regular tests (USDA tests and establishment tests)
- Birds can be sold:
  - Restaurants
  - Direct to consumer
  - Farmers Markets
    - With Farmers market license
  - Anywhere within the USA



Do you plan to sell poultry that you raised, either live or dressed?

NO

No license required if you are raising poultry for only yourself and your family. You may slaughter and process the poultry yourself on your own property or transport them to a licensed custom slaughter facility (locker plant). See IDALS MPI<sup>1</sup> website to search facilities in your area.

YES

Do you plan to sell **dressed** poultry or poultry products to retailers, restaurants, or directly to home consumers via farmers markets, internet sales, or other means?

YES

To sell dressed poultry or poultry products to home consumers or businesses, the birds must be slaughtered and processed under inspection by the state or federal Department of Agriculture, or under an appropriate exemption. You may need a license from the DIA<sup>2</sup> Food and Consumer Safety Bureau to store and transport dressed poultry (warehouse license) or a farmers market license to sell poultry at a farmers market. See additional information on the reverse side.

YES

Do you plan to sell **live** birds for slaughter, either in groups to a slaughter plant or privately to one or more individuals?

YES

No license required to sell directly to slaughter facility. Contact the facility for more information.

YES

No license is required to sell **live** birds directly to a private buyer. The new owner(s) may elect to slaughter and process the birds themselves on their property, or have the birds transported to a licensed custom-slaughter facility (locker plant); see IDALS MPI<sup>1</sup> website to search facilities. Note that the birds must arrive at the locker and be **slaughtered under the new owner(s) name(s) and NOT the producer's name**. Custom-slaughtered poultry may NOT be sold after the fact as this constitutes sale of uninspected poultry and is a **crime**. If you have not sold all of your birds, the remainder should be processed under inspection at an official poultry plant. This will allow you to legally sell the remainder of the poultry at a later date.



# IDALS vs DIAL

- Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship
  - Meat and Poultry Bureau
    - Provide a meat and poultry inspection program in cooperation with the USDA/ Food Safety and Inspection Service for intrastate commerce
    - Who you would contact with 20,000 exemption, and state inspected facility, custom exempt processing
  - Wallace State Office Building  
502 E 9th Street  
Des Moines, IA 50319  
515-281-5321



# IDALS vs DIAL

- Department of Inspections, Appeals, and Licensing
  - Farmers market falls under this category
  - Any licensing needed to keep meat and poultry on location
    - Warehouse licensing
  - 6200 Park Avenue  
Suite 100  
Des Moines, IA 50321
  - (515)281-3425

# Year 3 Plans...

- We will continue to grow
- Planning on raising more birds due to demand
- Planning to continue direct to consumer
  - Custom exempt route
- Slowly upgrading equipment to help make processing go smoother
  - Scalders
  - Plucker
  - Freezers

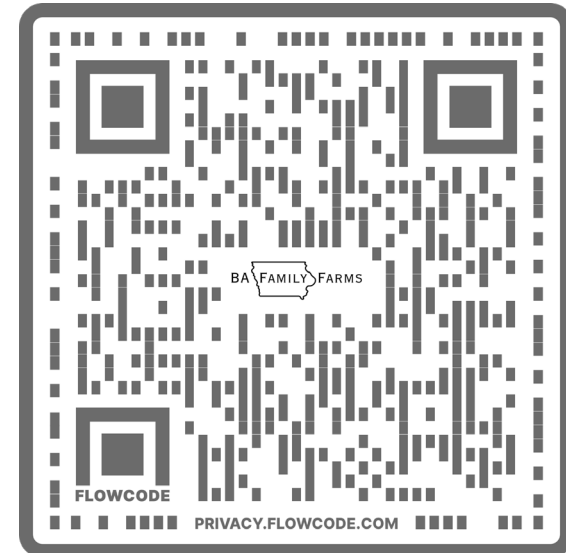


# Biggest Take Aways

- What is your end goal
- Find a bird that will get you there
- Start small and grow when you can
- Ask questions
  - DIALS or IDALS
- Network with others
- Never stop learning



# BA FAMILY FARMS



# Questions?

