

Our very first
sign

Happy Birds
Poultry Farm



A typical slaughter day
at our farm.



We are a crew of 3 (occasionally 4, if we are saving hearts and livers on that day OR have a larger than usual flock required to meet orders).



As mentioned earlier Stacey has crowded the birds up to the holding pen adjacent to the slaughter kill floor door) he picks up 2 birds at a time and puts them in the kill cones, he stuns them with the electric stun knife and bleeds them by cutting the carotid artery on each side of the neck (No chopping the heads off and letting them flop around where the old adage “Like a chicken with its head cut off” came from) the inspector needs to see the head attached to the chicken on the clean side of the facility. We have 8 kill cones, so Stacey will repeat this step 4 times, filling the cones.

When the eighth bird is in the cone and bleeding, he will take the first two birds and dip them in and out of the scalding several times for a few seconds each time. Testing if the feathers are ready to be plucked, by pulling on a few. When they are ready to be plucked they will be put in the plucker and this step again is repeated until all 8 birds are in the plucker.

The plucker is then switched on and the birds are tumbled about on and against rubber fingers attached to the floor and walls of the plucker for a 30-90 seconds. The plucker is then switched off and Stacey hangs a bird in the shackles and pulls any wing or tail feathers that the plucker may have missed. He then passes the plucked bird through the slide up window to the clean side of the slaughterhouse.



The chickens land on a food grade expanded stainless steel table.





Here Frank, removes the oil gland, then hangs the bird in a shackle on the trolley track attached to the ceiling. He then opens “vent” of the bird and pulls the “vent” still attached to the intestines, out of the bird enough that the inspector (who stands on the line between Frank and I) can see the heart, liver and lungs and confirm that they are all healthy and viable, with no ingesta or fecal leakage from either breakage, puncture or disease. IF either are present the bird is condemned for compost.



This is also the phase at which the inspector checks the head for signs of disease. After the inspector is satisfied that the bird is good, they push the bird down to me.

After the inspector check, I remove the head and neck and the viscera by hand and use the “lung gun” to vacuum the bits that may remain behind and the kidneys. I then rinse with cold water, inside and out, do any pin feathering and or trim that needs doing, then dip in the aforementioned antimicrobial dip and put the bird into the chill tank. This process is repeated for each and every bird until we are out of birds.

The birds then chill for approximately an hour, while we clean and have lunch as mentioned in the timeline. After that is done, we temp check three of the last and larger birds to go into the ice bath. We are in our second set of whites for the day. IF these birds are at proper temp, we begin the bagging and sorting process.



Stacey takes a bird from the chill tank and places it on the carousel peg, where it drains briefly while he loads the rest of the carousel. He then puts a bag down over the bird and removes the bird in the bag from the peg.

He then squeezes as much air out of the bag as he can and spins it creating a twist at the top of the bag, he then staples the bag with a stainless steel hog ring staple and drops it into the shrink tank.



We use a specialty bag designed expressly to package chicken. The tank contains hot but not boiling water and the bag shrinks due to the heat and compresses the air out of the bag as it does so, creating a nice finished and sealed package. The chicken is in the water for 3-6 seconds



The individually bagged birds are then weighed and labeled. How many are individually bagged depends on the number ordered and the number we save for our store that slaughter day. The birds destined for cutting in the processing room are loaded into the cart, covered and wheeled over to the processing room. IF there are more birds than the cart will hold, these birds are bulk packed into large bags , (5-7 per bag) stapled and carried to the processing room.



Once in the processing room,
Stacey begins cutting and
each cut is placed in it's
coordinating meat lug/tote.



I begin packaging, vac-sealing, weighing and labeling each package of cuts. I also record each price filling each order as I do so. The finished packaged orders are then either placed on trays to freeze for delivery the following day or placed in coolers for fresh delivery the following day.



The majority of our product goes out as frozen on day of slaughter product by our choice. We feel that a chicken or a cut of chicken that is properly cooled and immediately frozen is the best quality product, providing our customer with a consistent **FULL** shelf life.



Our most recent storefront.

