

Many of these counties have adopted ordinances requiring set-backs for poultry houses of 200 feet from property lines and 500 feet from dwellings as part of their zoning regulations. These distances, in most cases, have provided more than reasonable protection for all parties involved while allowing small farmers the opportunity to operate poultry farms successfully. In addition to set-back measures, poultry farms can also use vegetative buffers and diversion fences near the exhaust fans to reduce air and dust movement when deemed necessary.

The issue of set-backs from property lines and dwellings for poultry houses is an important one. In many cases, opponents of poultry house construction have advocated the need for excessive and unreasonable set-back requirements to severely restrict or totally eliminate building because of the large amount of land needed to comply. For example, requiring a 1,500 foot set-back for construction of a poultry house would require more than 260 acres to site an average size broiler operation. A set-back of 4,000 feet would require more than 1,600 acres to build houses. In many of Georgia's counties, 1,500 feet would eliminate more than 80 percent of the poultry production operations and could cause concentration of production with the largest, most wealthy landowners. Since air does not move far from the exhaust fans, and most of the odor associated with poultry production does not come from the production house but rather from the occasional application of the litter, 200-foot set-backs from property lines and 500-foot set-backs from dwellings for poultry houses provide reasonable protection for neighbors.

Some will claim that air from poultry houses is the cause of health problems for certain people living in close proximity to a poultry farm. No evidence indicates that poultry farms pose any specific health risk to people in general. Poultry farms have been operated for more than 50 years in Georgia by thousands of farm families. The fact that these families have not experienced any significant health issues attributable to these operations would suggest that poultry farming is no more of a health risk than any other type of farming.

## Conclusion

Georgia is the number one poultry producing state in the nation with some 4,000 farms in operation. We have a long history of growing, processing and marketing poultry without causing environmental or nuisance problems. Many communities in Georgia have relied upon the stable, consistent tax base provided by poultry farms to build and support local infrastructure. Farmers depend on their land to make a living and historically have been good stewards of their property. Farming in general is much more beneficial to the environment than almost any aspect of urbanization, so protecting farmers from urban encroachment is important in protecting our environment as well as our food supply.

Farms generally represent "green spaces" that protect the environment and preserve the country atmosphere. Well-managed poultry farms operating with best management practices and within state regulations need not be a source of environmental or nuisance problems for a community. Providing reasonable zoning regulations in a community will allow farmers to participate in a very dynamic and economically beneficial business while also ensuring the ability of neighbors to peacefully coexist.

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