

# **POULTRY PROCESSING FACILITIES AVAILABLE FOR USE BY INDEPENDENT PRODUCERS IN THE SOUTHERN REGION**

**By  
Skip Polson  
April 2002**

Poultry production in the United States is dominated by the industrial model developed and refined over the last 60 years. This conventional model of vertically-integrated production, processing, and marketing has taken over the US poultry industry. As a result, nearly all of the slaughter and processing plants formerly available to independent producers have closed.

Despite the nearly total domination of the US poultry market by large corporate producers, in recent years a growing number of people have added poultry production enterprises to their farms. They have done this as part of their ongoing effort to diversify their farms and to satisfy an increasing demand for poultry which are not produced using industrial methods. Most of these independent producers use a variety of production systems which differ substantially from the confinement approach used by the conventional poultry industry. Many of them want to include slaughter and processing in their enterprises so they can sell a ready-to-cook product to their customers. Some of these producers are able and willing to do the processing themselves, while others would be very glad to hire someone else to do this task. Therefore, the purpose of this research effort was to identify federal or state inspected processing plants which will do (or will consider doing) custom processing of poultry for independent producers.

This report was compiled for Heifer Project International's North America Program. Partial financial assistance for the preparation of this report was provided through a grant to Heifer Project International from the USDA's Southern Region Sustainable Agriculture, Research and Education (SARE) program (project number LS 99-105).

Search Process Used:

The starting point for this search was the [Meat and Poultry Inspection Directory, December 1998](#) which is published by the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). This 754-page directory (not yet available in electronic form) contains listings of FSIS offices and laboratories nationwide, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) offices, Food and Drug Administration (FDA) field offices, USDA meat inspection establishments, and USDA poultry inspection establishments. This directory is published semi-annually and is for sale (\$38 per year) by:

The Superintendent of Documents  
U.S. Government Printing Office  
Washington, D.C. 20402  
(202) 512-1800  
(202) 512-2250  
(For this directory, please refer to Order Processing Code 5602.)

The directory's "USDA Poultry Inspection Establishments" list covers 225 pages and includes approximately 9,900 establishments. I manually searched this list and identified all of the poultry processing facilities in the Southern Region which are approved by the USDA for slaughtering. After verifying that the largest industrial plants on the list would not be willing to do custom poultry processing for independent producers, I eliminated all of these plants. These plants include those owned and/or managed by Tyson, Perdue, Gold Kist, Cargill, Con Agra, Wayne Poultry, Seaboard Farms, Marshall-Durbin, Pilgrim's Pride, Townsends, Cagle's, Choctaw Foods, Peco Foods, Rocco Turkeys, Rocco Farm Foods, Columbia Farms, House of Raeford, and Golden Rod Broilers.

This selection and elimination process yielded 77 plants in the 13 states and two territories in the Southern Region:

Alabama – 5  
Arkansas – 12  
Florida – 3  
Georgia – 7  
Kentucky – 4  
Louisiana – 4  
Mississippi – 8  
North Carolina – 6  
Oklahoma – 3  
Puerto Rico – 4  
South Carolina – 4  
Tennessee – 3  
Texas – 8  
Virgin Islands - none  
Virginia - 6

I contacted all of these plants to determine their willingness to consider doing custom slaughter for independent producers. The questions I asked the plant managers are attached (Attachment 1).

Almost all of these plants are large industrial facilities, related in some way to conventional poultry production, even though they are not owned by one of the largest vertically-integrated companies. Some of them have a slaughter

capacity of 150,000 birds per day. They are simply not designed to keep small batches of birds separate from other birds.

Some of the managers of these plants were quite sympathetic to the idea that independent producers might want to utilize the services of a plant like theirs. However, they explained that their scale of operation and plant design made that a practical impossibility. For example, the chilling tanks in many of these plants hold 13,000 birds or more, and it takes two or three hours for the birds to pass through the tank. Keeping batches of several hundred birds separate from all the other birds being processed that day would require extra chill tanks to hold each batch of birds or stopping the processing line for a couple of hours between batches. These actions would make the cost of processing small batches of birds at such large facilities prohibitively expensive.

They also explained that most managers of automated processing plants would not want to process birds that differed by more than one or two tenths of a pound in weight from the birds they normally process. The different-sized birds would cause problems for their automated equipment and dis-assembly line.

Some plant managers said that biosecurity concerns (about avian influenza and Newcastle disease) and USDA requirements prevent them from taking birds from independent growers. Therefore, they only process birds from their own company farms or from contract growers who have been under the supervision of one of their company's technical representatives.

I supplemented this directory search by asking members of the American Pastured Poultry Producers Association (APPPA) for the names of custom processing plants which they use. This request was published in Issue Number 13 of APPPA Grit! (Summer 2000). All the plants recommended in this manner were contacted to determine if they could be included in this report.

I also contacted government agricultural officials in each state and territory in the southern region to see if they knew of any slaughter and processing facilities to add to this list. The official state and territory contacts I used are those listed in "Legal Issues For Small-Scale Poultry Processors - Federal and State Inspection Requirements For On-Farm Poultry Production and Processing" compiled by Janie Hipp, J.D., LL.M. and edited by Skip Polson, December 2001. This report may be found on the APPPA web site ([www.apppa.org](http://www.apppa.org)) or obtained from NCAT/ATTRA by calling 800-346-9842.

### **USDA Approved Poultry Processing Plants Available for Custom Processing**

By following the process described above, I ultimately identified only 11 plants in the entire Southern Region whose managers were willing to consider doing custom slaughter and processing for independent producers. These plants are

listed here by state or territory, and each one is described briefly. All of them are USDA-approved unless stated otherwise.

Alabama – none

Arkansas – 2

Florida – none

Georgia – none

Kentucky – none (but a state-approved mobile processing unit is available  
and described below)

Louisiana – none

Mississippi – 2

North Carolina – 1

Oklahoma – none

Puerto Rico – 1

South Carolina – 1

Tennessee – none

Texas – 3

Virgin Islands - none

Virginia - 1

**Arkansas**

Blue Mountain Farm, Inc.  
P. O. Box 76  
Fox, AR 72051

Phone: 870-746-4704  
Fax: 870-746-4774  
Email: [bluemtn@aristotle.net](mailto:bluemtn@aristotle.net)

The plant is located in the town of Leslie, in the north central part of the state, about 90 miles north of Little Rock.

Contact person: Luke Elliott

This plant does custom processing of poultry only (chickens, turkeys, guineas, quail or pheasants) as well as slaughtering their own birds. Plant capacity is 200 birds per day. They can do Kosher or Halal processing. In business since 1998, they will consider buying birds from others and marketing them themselves. The plant is not certified organic, but they are interested in obtaining organic certification. Prices: \$2.55 per whole bird for USDA processing, bagging, labeling and freezing; \$3.15 per bird for complete cut up; \$8.50 per whole turkey.

-----

Red River Packing Company  
800 E. Moore  
Searcy, AR 72143

Phone: 501-594-5465

Searcy is about 50 miles northeast of Little Rock.

Contact person: Don Thomas

Mailing address:  
P. O. Box 24008  
Little Rock, AR 72221

Mr. Thomas has been involved in the poultry business all his life. His plant currently butchers ostrich and other small stock. He would have to add a scalding and plucker appropriate for broilers, but he is definitely willing to consider doing this for chickens and turkeys. He does a lot of marketing now and would consider selling birds raised by others. The plant is certified organic. Visit this web site ([www.organicfoodsinc.com](http://www.organicfoodsinc.com)) for more information.

## **Kentucky**

Partners for Family Farms (PFF)  
P. O. Box 22259  
Lexington, KY 40522

Phone: 859-233-3056

Contact person: Sue Weant

A state-approved Mobile Processing Unit (MPU) for Small Livestock Species is available for rent through PFF. The MPU is a 20-foot long and 8-foot wide gooseneck cargo trailer with an enclosed aluminum shell. It is air-conditioned and fully equipped for slaughtering any kind of poultry. It is also approved for processing fresh water prawns.

The MPU has a retractable awning on one side and it is designed to be parked beside a concrete pad where the killing, scalding and plucking can be done outside under the awning. The evisceration and cleaning of the carcasses are done inside the MPU. The renter of the MPU must provide all of the labor, therefore the number of birds which can be butchered in one day depends on the skill and speed of the workers. The MPU's equipment should be able to handle 400 birds per day.

The MPU was designed in consultation with state and federal officials, and it was first available for use in 2001. It is federally exempt for up to 20,000 birds per individual user. It is also state approved by the KY Cabinet for Health Services. Birds processed in this MPU may be legally sold anywhere in KY. Currently the state approval applies to whole birds only; further cut-up is not permitted, and hearts, gizzards and livers may not be sold.

Persons who want to use the MPU must first complete a two-day training session to learn how to set up and operate it. This training session costs \$50 per person. Persons who successfully complete this training are eligible to use the MPU for the next 12 months. Retraining is required annually (at a cost of \$25 per person). A user agreement must be signed each time the MPU is rented. Persons qualified to do halal or kosher processing could do that in this MPU as long as they have also completed the MPU operator training.

Moving the MPU requires at least a half-ton truck with a gooseneck ball and electrical connections for the trailer lights and brakes. It must be used at an approved location (beside a concrete pad with electric and potable water

supply, waste water disposal through an approved sewer, and an approved composting system or other method of solid waste disposal).

For more details about operator training and requirements for renting the MPU, contact PFF. Currently the MPU rental cost is \$50 for a 48-hour period.

### **Mississippi**

Mushbah Taj Halal Meat Processing  
Bassfield, MS 39421

Phone: 601-943-5710

Bassfield is in south central Mississippi, about 30 miles northwest of Hattiesburg.

Contact person: Taj

While this company's primary business is slaughtering goats, they also do sheep, cattle and some poultry. They can handle any kind of poultry, with a capacity of up to 500 broilers per day. In business since 1994, they are well equipped to do halal and kosher processing, and they are able to buy birds from others for resale. The plant is not certified organic. Prices: 99 cents per pound of carcass weight for whole birds; 50 cents per bird for defat, deskin and cut up.

-----

B. C. Rogers Foods  
4688 Highway 80 E  
Morton, MS 39117

Phone: 601-469-2337

Morton is in the central part of the state, about 30 miles east of Jackson.

Contact person: Johnny Rogers (at extension 4301)

Mr. Rogers would consider custom processing of broilers only, at the end of their own processing runs. They raise their own birds and have a plant capacity of 1.8 million birds per week. Further processing is possible, but not desired because it would be very difficult to keep other birds separate from theirs. Halal processing is possible, but not kosher. They do not buy birds from others for resale. Prices: slaughter – 16 cents per finished pound; plus 3 to 4 cents per pound for packaging.

**North Carolina**

Rose Hill Farm  
2305 Jay Shambley Road  
Pittsboro, NC 27312

Phone and fax: 919-742-6584

Pittsboro is in the central part of the state, about 30 miles west of Raleigh.

Contact person: Andy Youngblood

This plant has been in operation since 1998. It is equipped to slaughter any poultry (turkeys or smaller) and rabbits. Capacity: 500 birds per day, with the ability to do further processing (deboning and cut up). They can do halal processing but need an appropriate Muslim person to do the killing. They raise and market their own birds, and are willing to consider marketing birds raised by others. The plant was certified organic at one time, but that certification was not renewed. It could easily be certified again if there was desire to do so. Prices (for slaughter and bagging whole carcasses): chickens - \$1.50 per bird (plus 25 cents per bird for deboning and cut up); ducks and turkeys - \$3 per bird; quail and pheasants - \$2 per bird; and rabbits - \$3 each.

**Puerto Rico**

Industrias Avicolas de Puerto Rico, Inc.  
Km 37.3 St Rd 14, Bo. Palmarejo  
Coamo, PR 00769

Mailing address:  
P. O. Box 229  
Coamo, PR 00769

Phone: 787-825-2080

Coamo is about 16 kilometers inland from the south central coast.

Contact person: William Acosta, Production Manager; or Ivan Rodriguez, Vice-president.

This company has been in business since 1977, and has 150 contract growers. The plant has a capacity of 90,000 birds per day, and they are willing to do custom slaughter of young birds weighing less than seven pounds live. They only process chickens, either whole or cut up, and can do kosher or halal processing. For prices, contact Mr. Acosta.

### **South Carolina**

Palmetto Pigeon Plant  
333 Broad Street  
Sumter, SC 29150

Phone: 803-775-1204

Mailing address:  
P. O. Drawer 3060  
Sumter, SC 29151

Sumter is in the east central part of the state, about 45 miles east of Columbia.

Contact person: Tony Barwick

This plant is willing to slaughter young chickens. They do some already, along with squab, rabbits and quail. Plant capacity is about 20,000 birds per week. They can do Kosher and Halal processing. This company has been in business since 1923. They raise their own birds. They do not buy birds from others for resale. Prices: slaughter – \$1 to \$1.50 per bird (customers provide their own packaging); cut up – 25 cents per bird; deboning the breast – 25 cents per bird.

### **Texas**

Fran's Fryers  
3360 FM 308  
Milford, TX 76670

Phone: 972-493-5305  
Email: [fransfryers@juno.com](mailto:fransfryers@juno.com)

Milford is about 40 miles south of Dallas.

Contact person: Mr. Fran Sweet

Mr. Sweet has been in business since 1993. His plant has a capacity of up to 1,200 broilers per day. Mr. Sweet buys birds from others for processing and resale. He also rents his facility to others who wish to do processing themselves; this allows them to do Kosher or Halal processing if they wish. The plant is not certified organic. In addition to broilers, he also butchers sheep and goats but this part of his operation is not USDA approved. Prices (for batches of at least 250 birds): \$1 per bird for those who wish to use his facility; \$1.86 per bird if he does the processing for them; further processing costs 25 cents per pound of gross carcass weight; the customer supplies all bags, boxes and labels.

-----

Tai Hung Farm and Tai Hung Poultry Wholesale  
13227 Old Richmond Road  
Houston, TX 77083

Phone: 281-495-8847

Contact person: Cathy Syma

This company has been in business since 1990, and will do custom slaughter and processing of chickens and turkeys. The plant capacity is 1,000 birds per day. They do not do further processing and cut up. They cannot do Kosher or Halal processing, but are skilled in providing birds for the ethnic Chinese market. They raise their own birds but they would also buy birds from others for resale. The plant is not certified organic. They also slaughter rabbits. Prices: \$1.50 to \$2 per whole bird.

-----

Windy Meadows Family Farm  
8045 CR 4209  
Campbell, TX 75422

Phone: 903-886-7723

Email: [mhale@worldlogon.com](mailto:mhale@worldlogon.com)

Campbell is about 60 miles east of Dallas.

Contact person: Mike Hale

This new state-certified (not USDA) slaughter facility is expected to be ready for operation by the end of May 2002. It will handle young chickens (broilers) only, with a capacity of about 450 per day. This plant will not do further processing. It

will be able to do kosher or halal processing if the customer provides the proper person to do the killing. The owners raise their own birds, and occasionally they also buy birds from others for resale. Price: \$2 per bird.

### **Virginia**

New Market Poultry Products  
P. O. Box 220  
New Market, VA 22844

Phone: 540-740-4260  
Fax: 540-740-4296  
Email: [dlw@shentel.net](mailto:dlw@shentel.net)

New Market is near I-81 (Exit 264) about 85 miles west-southwest of Washington, DC.

Contact person: David Whitehouse

This company has been in business since 1989. Their plant is able to process up to 65,000 spent hens and broilers per day. Whole birds only, they do not cut up the birds; and they do not process other species. They do not do Kosher or Halal processing. They are not interested in marketing birds raised by others, but they would buy heavy breeder hens for 12 cents per pound delivered to the plant. The plant is not certified organic but application for that status has been made. Price: \$1 per bird.

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment 1 – Interview Questions for Poultry Processing Facilities

**ATTACHMENT 1**  
**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR POULTRY PROCESSING FACILITIES**  
**Data Collection for SARE '99 Report – Skip Polson**

1. Do you do custom slaughter and processing for independent poultry producers? Would you consider doing it?
2. If no, do you know anyone in your state who does?
3. If no, thank you very much. (End of interview.)
4. If yes, what poultry will you process? Chickens, turkeys, quail, pheasants, guineas, pigeons, others?
5. Plant capacity: How many birds can you process in one day?
6. What is price per bird for slaughter, processing, bagging and boxing?
7. Other services: Do you do further processing? Cut up?
8. Do you have the ability to do Kosher, Halal, or other special processing?
9. What is your source of poultry? Do you raise your own?
10. Are you involved in marketing? Would you simply purchase someone's birds and market them yourselves?
11. How long have you been in business?
12. Are you a certified organic processing plant? Do you have any interest in obtaining certification?
13. Do you process other species besides poultry?
14. Verify name, address and phone number of the plant.
15. Is there a specific person producers should contact?

Thank you very much.

Disk: SARE 99

File: Poultry Processing Facilities Report 020425