



# JERICHO SETTLERS' FARM

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## 12 Annual VT Grazing Conference 2008

### Broilers on Pasture From Day One – Mark Fasching & Christa Alexander: Jericho Settlers Farm

Broiler chicks will forage on pasture right from the start if you give them the chance. Learn how Christa Alexander and Mark Fasching raise Cornish cross meat birds in a day range system that gives broiler chicks access to pasture from the day they arrive on the farm. The chickens are part of a whole farm system, including sheep, pigs, beef cattle, layer hens, and vegetables. They will also share their experiences with pastured poultry management and direct sales through their CSA, farmstand, and farmers' markets.

#### OUTLINE

- 1) Summary of process: raise chicks on pasture the day you get them in the mail.
- 2) Sources of chicks
  - a) Hatcheries
  - b)
- 3) Equipment needed
  - a) Pasture housing with floor and doors
  - b) Electricity to pasture housing for heat lamp
  - c) Heat lamps or foil pasture hover
  - d) Pine shavings
  - e) Gravity waterers
  - f) Feed troughs
  - g) Electric fencing/fence charger
  - h) Molasses & vinegar (for energy and coccidiosis prevention)
  - i) Shovel to clean out shavings in pasture housing
  - j) Grit
  - k)
- 4) Preparation before chicks arrive
  - a) Mow area where chicks will spend first 2 weeks
  - b) Electrical needs
  - c) Set up fencing
  - d) Set up housing/shelter
    - i) Type of housing
    - ii) Heat source or hover

- e) Water and feed setup
  - i) Source, type
  - ii) Troughs for feeding
  - iii) Waterer types, gravity fed bell waterer works well
  
- 5) Day before chicks arrive
  - a) Put mash in feeders
  - b) Check that heat lamps work
  - c) Check that elec fence is hot
  - d) Fill up waterers
  
- 6) Processing chicks on day of delivery
  - a) Double check with Hatchery where they are shipping chicks
  - b) Call Post Office a day or two before delivery to let them know you are expecting birds.
  - c) Pick up chicks ASAP when you get the call from the PO
  - d) Keep covered on drive from PO to pasture home
  - e) Handle chicks carefully, dip each birds beak in molasses-vinegar water
  - f) Sprinkle some mash on cardboard
  - g) Compost dead chicks
  
- 7) Housing
  - a) Hoophouse models
  - b) Plywood houses
  - c) Floors and closeable doors for nighttime protection
  - d) Open floor hoophouses outside of main house for rain protection
  - e) Heat lamp in main house – lighting on a timer, slowly reduce evening lighting over the first week.
  
- 8) Feeding and watering
  - a) Check mash daily – don't overfeed which can lead to Ascites
  - b) Fresh water and molasses-apple cider vinegar water daily
  
- 9) Fencing-protection
  - a) Elec poultry netting
  - b) Good elec fence charger with adequate ground
  - c) Chicken wire inside elec fence to keep chicks inside and predators out
  
- 10) Causes of Mortality
  - i) Diseases
    - (1) Pasted vent
    - (2) Coccidiosis
    - (3) Ascites
  - ii) Predation
    - (1) aerial: hawks, owls
    - (2) ground: weasels, skunks, dogs, cats, rats
  - iii) Other
    - (1) Hypothermia
    - (2) Heat stroke
    - (3) overcrowding
  
- 11) Grow out period
  - a) Ruminants grazing ahead of broilers (sheep easy to start with)
  - b) Dock pasture pens up to brooders a few days before moving chicks out of brooders

- c) Move brooders away from pasture pens “out of sight- out of mind”
- d) Day range system until processing at 8 to 9 weeks

12) Resources

- a) Pastured Poultry Profits – Joel Salatin
- b) Plamondon website – Robert Plamondon [www.plamondon.com](http://www.plamondon.com)
  - i) [http://www.plamondon.com/pasture\\_hover.html](http://www.plamondon.com/pasture_hover.html)
  - ii) <http://www.plamondon.com/brooder.shtml>
- c) Kingbird Farm website – Karma Glos [www.kingbirdfarm.com](http://www.kingbirdfarm.com)
  - i) Broiler production: <http://nofany.org/offandf/01articles/organicbroilerking.pdf>
  - ii) Brooder safety: <http://nofany.org/offandf/01articles/organicbroilerking.pdf>
  - iii) **Humane and Healthy Poultry Production**, *A Manual for Organic Growers*, by Karma Glos
- d) Free range poultry <http://www.free-range-poultry.com/>
- e) Old books, new books
- f) Pasture walks – workshops [www.nofavt.org](http://www.nofavt.org); <http://www.uvm.edu/~pasture/>

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