

State and Local

Poultry industry growth causes expansion in A&M department

By Clark Miller
Staff Writer

People in the United States now consume more poultry than pork, and poultry consumption is even gaining on beef. To keep up with the accelerated growth of the poultry industry, the poultry science department at Texas A&M has modernized and expanded its facilities.

In May 1986, the department moved into its \$5 million, high-tech production center on FM 2818 near Easternwood Airport. The facility allows the poultry department to do everything from hatching a bird from an egg to selling the bird as chicken nuggets seven weeks later.

Dr. C.R. Creger, head of the poultry science department at A&M, says he doesn't know of a college poultry center in the country that is as modern and efficient as the one at A&M. "It has had the impact of recruiting students and has greatly helped our outside research funds," Creger said.

Funds from outside research have increased 100 percent in the year and a half since the new facility opened, he said.

The number of students also has increased dramatically. In 1982

there were 13 undergraduate students in the poultry science department. Today there are 47, a more than 300 percent increase.

Because the poultry industry has been rapidly expanding, not all the student and research fund increases can be attributed to the new poultry center, but it has made a significant contribution, Creger said.

"Almost all the advances in poultry research have come at the university level," he said.

The new center allows A&M to be a leader in poultry research, he said. Researchers at A&M have helped develop antibiotics that combat disease in poultry and have developed vitamin requirements and other nutritional requirements of poultry, he said.

The researchers even have affected the Thanksgiving Day meal by aiding in the development of a white turkey. White turkeys are almost the only color of turkey commercially produced because it is easier to process the white bird than one that is a darker color.

However, Creger said, the most important goal of the department is education, such as teaching students to judge poultry for quality.

The poultry center comes with its own judging barn and, combined

with the coaching of Dr. Willie F. Krueger, a professor in the poultry science department, has produced the national collegiate poultry judging team for the past two years.

Creger said the department also has a perfect placement record for its graduates.

Janet Greer, a junior poultry science student at A&M, said the hard part of graduating is deciding which job to select, because the new poultry center gives students experience in almost every facet of the poultry industry.

The center, which is composed of 17 buildings and covers 16 acres, looks like a park with a few buildings strategically scattered between the trees. Special care was taken to preserve as much of the grass and as many of the trees as possible, Dale Hyatt, farm manager of the poultry center, said.

"We even produce our own fertilizer," Hyatt said, explaining what 3,000 birds can do to keep grass green.

Despite the fact that 3,000 birds are capable of making a big mess, the center is remarkably clean. Most of the buildings housing the birds have automatic cleaning systems that push the manure to the end of the

barn and into a fertilizer spreader.

Everybody who works at the center spends time sweeping and shoveling to keep the barns clean and the odor that usually accompanies a place with a large concentration of poultry is absent, Hyatt said.

The site also has a small processing plant where students learn how to produce food products from the birds raised at the center.

The process includes the slaughter, cleaning, smoking and packaging of birds for consumer use. The students can produce smoked chicken and turkey, franks, nuggets and eggs, all of which are sold at the plant at prices comparable to supermarket poultry prices, Hyatt said.

Although the poultry department isn't competing with the supermarkets' prices, he said, the facility does produce a better product.

"Our eggs are much fresher than the supermarkets'," Hyatt said. "Their eggs may be seven days old but ours are one or two days old."

All the birds raised at the center are used for research or teaching purposes, he said.

Creger said the center gives the department a much better image around the country.

Protesting taxpayers threaten rebellion over rate increases

DALLAS (AP) — Groups of irate taxpayers could stage a tax rebellion in Texas despite a recent opinion by Attorney General Jim Mattox that tempered the power of rollback elections, a protest leader says.

Tax protester C.A. Stubbs of San Antonio said, "The anger and frustration of taxpayers everywhere has reached a fever pitch. The pendulum is about ready to swing in the direction of a total tax rebellion in Texas."

Stubbs is president of the newly formed Texas Association of Concerned Taxpayers. At the group's first convention in San Antonio two weeks ago, almost 2,000 people attended.

A growing number of taxpayer movements across the state are requesting rollback elections in protest of tax increases. And officials say irate taxpayers have become even more determined in their efforts in reaction to Mattox's ruling on the constitutionality of such elections.

In a legal opinion issued Sept. 25, Mattox ruled it was unconstitutional for voters to roll back a county's tax rate.

Although the opinion does not carry the weight of law and would have to pass a court challenge before it could be enforced, it was a blow to tax protesters.

To some, the opinion left more questions than it answered. The ruling didn't address rollback attempts involving other taxing entities such as cities, school districts or hospital districts.

Mattox spokesman Elna Christopher said the opinion didn't discuss the other issues because the inquiry from DeWitt County officials involved the legality of county rollback elections and nothing else. "It would not surprise me to get some requests for opinions" on the other issues, Christopher said.

Debbie Wheeler, special projects director in the office of general counsel at the State Property Tax Board in Austin, said, "We're not sure what it does to any of the past rollback elections."

"Since (previous rollback elections) are over and past, it probably doesn't apply to them, but we're not sure at this point. We're still looking at the opinion."

Tax protester Stubbs, who retired to San Antonio after being on the federal payroll for 31 years, said he considers Mattox's ruling "a declaration of war on the taxpayers," and his group has asked for the attorney general's resignation.

"We charge that if there was something wrong (with the 1982 tax revision), he or his predecessor could've ruled back then," Stubbs said. "Up until this time, it hasn't been challenged by anyone."

The state's 1982 tax reform law said that if county commissioners raised the tax rate more than 8 percent over the previous rate, citizens could gather signatures on petitions and call an election to limit the increase to 8 percent.

Officials in DeWitt County asked if that was legal because the state's constitution says county commissioners are the only ones with the authority to set county tax rates. Mattox said the constitution prevailed.

Stubbs said tax rate increases wouldn't be necessary if elected officials were more frugal.

"If all of these political entities will start biting the bullet the same way we, the people, have been biting it for five years, we'll get a whale of a lot more bang out of our bucks," he said. "We have never seen a budget — anybody's budget — that couldn't be whacked by 10 percent and the essential business still be carried on."

New almanac shows Texas crime rate on rise

DALLAS (AP) — The cover of the 1988-89 Texas Almanac pictures a sunny, calm beach, a picturesque scene that belies the grim and sometimes unsettling statistics included in the book.

One of the first discrepancies is found on page 26 with a cover story on Texas beaches and its problems with litter. But the truly unnerving facts appear on page 261, under the section entitled "Crime and Punishment."

The 12-page section is a fascinating compendium of news and statistics on Texas crime rates.

"In 1986, the crime rate took a leap of almost 4.9 percent . . ." the book says. "The state's six largest counties — Bexar, Dallas, El Paso, Harris, Tarrant and Travis — have a total crime rate of 8,894.2 index crimes per 100,000 population." Index crimes are murder, rape, aggravated assault, armed robbery, burglary, theft and motor vehicle theft.

Individually, Potter County (Amarillo) in the Panhandle had the highest crime rate in 1986, reaching 13,202.8, an increase of 27 percent over the previous year . . ." the book says. "Dallas County, with 12,352.19 crimes per 100,000, and Tarrant County, with 11,425.19, followed Potter.

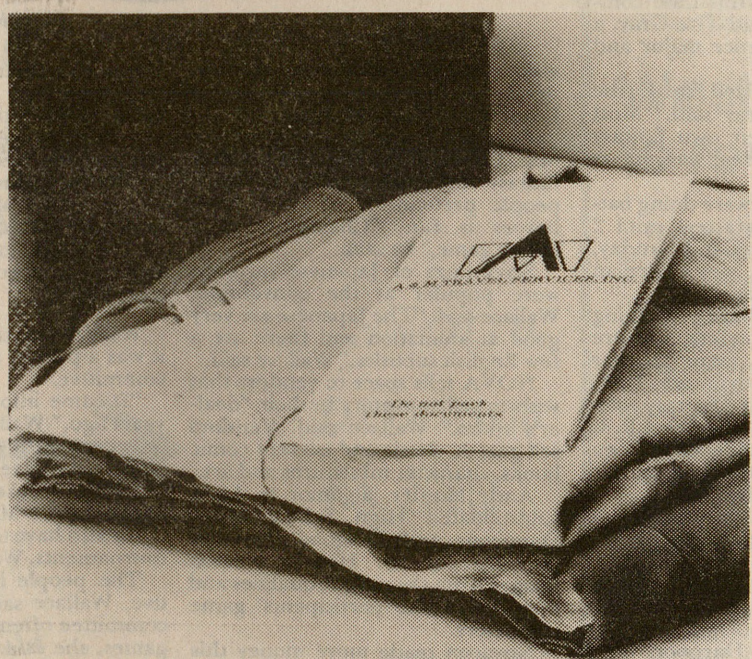
"Texas' high crime rate has brought about another phenomenon: An average of one in every 43 of the state's citizens is under some sort of supervision by the criminal justice system. This includes the number of people on felony or misdemeanor probation, on parole, in prison or in local jails."

However, the almanac does contain some other interesting information that is not as negative as that of the crime rate.

A historical piece on the movie industry in Texas written by Mary G. Crawford, associate editor of the almanac, details the Hollywood invasion.

Crawford traces the development of Texas movies from the 1920s, when a rash of movies made in San Antonio capitalized on military posts in the Alamo City, to the 1984 Academy Awards ceremony in which films made wholly or in part in Texas scored seven of the top eight Oscars.

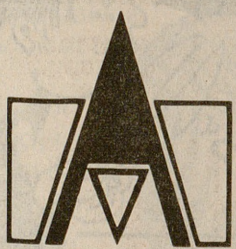
The Texas Almanac, published by the Dallas Morning News, is a 130-year-old journalistic tradition, costing \$14.95 for a hardback copy and \$8.95 in paperback. The book is distributed by Texas Monthly Press.



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