

Farm Business Grows With Cage-Free Poultry

After growing up on a successful dairy farm, Aaron Brand never imagined that he'd end up running a thriving farm-to-market poultry and apple business. Brand says consumer demand for locally grown food drove his recent decision to put up a new "cage-free" barn for 2,500 chickens.

"Farmers have to adapt and change, and I've certainly had to do that as much as anyone," says Brand, who after graduating college had hoped to return to his family's dairy farm. Economics dictated otherwise. Armed with experience working on a poultry research farm during college, Brand bought 50 laying hens and began selling eggs in 2005. "Those flavorful brown eggs sold really fast to family and friends, and I realized there might be good potential," says Brand. Two years later he raised 300 hens, acquired 6 acres of apple trees adjoining his family farm, and still helped with the 70-cow dairy herd.

Brand says his egg and apple business grew steadily through sales at the farm, at farmer's markets, and to grocers and restaurants. "I didn't see myself as an egg and apple salesman, but that's what I've been doing and it's going well."

That success encouraged him to build a new poultry barn in 2016 that houses 2,500 hens now laying about 2,400 eggs a day. "The barn has automatic waterers and feeders, is climate-controlled, and has an air exchanger for excellent ventilation," Brand says. The hens walk around, get plenty of exercise, and eat when they want. During nice days they're able to go outside to eat grass and scratch in the soil."



Aaron Brand with cage-free poultry inside his new barn (above left). His chickens lay flavorful brown eggs that sell fast. Brand Farms sells many other products including apples and apple products such as crisps and cider.

Brand says his flock is extremely healthy even though the birds aren't given antibiotics. Egg yields have improved in the new surroundings and the new barn saves him considerable labor in caring for the flock. The chickens eat healthy with a special GMO-free corn-based feed from his local elevator. Part-time employees help at the farm and work at farmer's markets selling many products bearing the Brand Farms name, including eggs, jams, jellies, apples and apple products such as crisps and cider.

"We're serving a market segment that's growing by leaps and bounds," says Brand. He plans to develop a larger farm store with a full commercial kitchen, using one of their older barns to raise broiler chickens and



Brand Farms operates a thriving farm-to-market poultry and apple business. Their cage-free chicken barn allows chickens to go outside to eat grass.

harvesting apples from the 10 acres of trees he planted last year.

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Outhouse Fitted With Modern Flush Toilet

When hunters visit Pat Murphy's Ozarks ranch, the remote cabin they stay in doesn't have an indoor bathroom.

Visitors are surprised and pleased when they open the door of the nearby outhouse to see a regular flush toilet.

"This cabin is 2 miles from our house and on a hill with a spectacular view. A lot of the guys bring their wives who find old-fashioned outhouses a little gross," Murphy explains.

Ozarks codes allowed Murphy to vertically bury a perforated 55-gal. steel drum wrapped with filter fabric and backfilled with gravel.

Murphy poured a concrete pad with a 4-in. hole that lined up with a hole in the top of the tank. The toilet flushes directly into it, fed by water from a 100-gal. tank

behind the outhouse. The tank is filled by a pond that's 10 ft. higher than the toilet. The water flows through 200 ft. of 1-in. Pex pipe.

"A small 12-volt pump, powered by an ATV battery charged by a trickle solar panel, fills the toilet tank," Murphy says.

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Visitors staying in a remote cabin at an Ozarks ranch are pleasantly surprised to find a modern flush toilet in the outhouse. A solar-powered, 12-volt pump fills the toilet tank.

