Raising Hungarian Partridge

Kristin Merriman
Hungarian Partridge Manager

The Hungarian Partridge is quite a popular game bird; however due to some of its qualities, it is far from popular when it comes to actually raising the birds. In early March 2013, MacFarlane Pheasants, Inc. began construction on the new “Hun Building” that would produce around 60,000 adult Hungarian Partridge that originated from L’envol de Retz in France in one hatching season of about four months. I, a recent college graduate, was put in charge. Knowing nothing about the Hungarian Partridge but with an excellent building and knowledgeable peers to guide me, I was ready for the challenge.

The Hun Building became a more than familiar place for me. Gathering information on what these birds are like was the first step in learning how to raise them. Through various sources, I learned their size and behavior make them difficult birds to raise. This type of partridge when hatched is extremely small and fragile. No matter how many people told me how tiny they were I was still surprised when I received my first hatch of 5,261 chicks. They were the size of quarters!

Gene and Nancy Burken, highly experienced Hungarian Partridge managers, were two very insightful people that gave us excellent guidance. The Burkens have the unique method of raising these tiny chicks on tables. Each table has a top made of mesh wire and plastic black siding for the chicks to be placed inside with an electric brooder hung over each table. Our ‘tableroom’ consists of 28 tables and brooders; we raise the chicks off tiny red quail feeders and use mason jars and gallon waterers. Additionally, we placed paper towels on the wire because the chicks’ legs can still slip through! The tables eliminate the risk of stepping on the tiny chicks and provide a controlled environment. The chicks stay on the tables for seven days and then move to the floor into the ‘A’ room. I was surprised at how fast the chicks grew. By the second day they had doubled in size and by the seventh day some were close to jumping off the table!

Transitioning between rooms was probably the hardest part in raising the birds because of the high level of stress it causes. It is extremely important to have a strong eye on any gaps or cracks in the rooms the birds were moving to; I learned pretty quick they like to squeeze into anything. Temperature control was a key factor due to the fact that the birds are prone to piling when they get too cold. The ‘A’ rooms are divided into three sections when the birds move off the tables in order to keep the flocks smaller and more manageable. These rooms operate with gas brooders and the birds are transitioned from mason jars and gallon waterers to minis that flow off bell waterers.

Picking is a concern we prepared for with these birds since this breed can be pretty nasty. At 18 days of age we fit the birds with an ‘A’ bit. The bits work by preventing the bird from closing its beak all the way. This eliminates the bird’s ability to grab feathers or skin but it can still eat and drink. The bit is a ‘U’ shaped piece of plastic that is placed inside the bird’s mouth using its nostrils to hold it in place. At 5 weeks the birds have the ‘A’ bit taken out and a ‘B’ bit placed as they are moved into the larger ‘B’ rooms. The only difference between the ‘A’ bit and ‘B’ bit is that the ‘B’ bit is larger. By this time the birds are much larger and in two more weeks are ready to go outside.

It has been quite a challenge learning the ins and outs to raising the Hungarian Partridge. However, we surprised ourselves in how successful we have been. The adult birds are very healthy and happy to be outside. I love their lively attitude; they will definitely be an interesting hunt bird, to say the least.

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For close to the last 10 years I’ve observed and learned the differences between commercial ringneck pheasants available throughout the US. These different breeds are often named after the farm or region of the country they originate. Most of this variation came about to meet specific market requirements or preferences. Bird size or coloration would probably be the most identifiable characteristics.

But despite some clear differences, there are other traits the commercial farms are keenly aware of but probably get little or no attention in standard pheasant breeder selection programs. Traits such as chick livability, chick thriftiness, and move-out loss are clearly important to the success of any pheasant farm.

Our eyes opened to this clearly when we began importing French partridge in 2008. Despite being raised under the same management and facilities, we were much more successful with the French stock. Clearly in France they are evaluating and improving their breeding stock, and we were seeing the benefits of this work.

In the spring of 2010 we began a project to improve our pheasants, named the Ringneck X Project. Under the supervision of Dr. Nick Anthony from the University of Arkansas we began the evaluation and development of a new sub-breed of pheasants from within our genetic pool. The main goal was to focus on improving performance during the first 6-7 weeks of life, while maintaining or enhancing standard characteristics.

In the spring of 2011 we began breeding the initial birds with the identified traits. At that point we formed the new line of pheasants. Further evaluation began during the hatch season of 2012 and is ongoing into 2013.

In our trials we’ve experienced a significant reduction in starve-out loss (mortality during days 1 thru 5). We also experienced reduced losses during the initial days outdoors after move-out. These are both critical times where a high percentage of the overall mortality occurs in a typical flock of pheasants. Some other early observations of these birds are they appear to develop mature coloration earlier and are very uniform in size.

Up to this point our flock size for the Ringneck X has been relatively small, but from our results we will begin the evaluation of the birds on a larger scale starting in 2014. Sarah Baker, who was hired this spring, will join the project with Dr. Anthony. Further evaluation will be done on flight characteristics and “in the field” bird performance.

Overall the vision of the project is to produce hardy, quality pheasants that have higher survival rates during the rearing period, while maintaining the classic traits of our pheasants.

At MacFarlane Pheasants we continue to work toward being on the leading edge of the pheasant industry, the Ringneck X Project is another example. I’ll keep you posted as we go.
Managing My Own Farm

Brian Klein - penmanager@pheasant.com

For the past 10 years I was managing the flight pen operation, but last December I was given the assignment to manage the Milton farm. The Milton farm is 15 miles from the Janesville farm and historically raises 100,000 pheasants, from day old chicks to maturity. Was I ready to manage my own farm?

I have a good understanding of raising pheasants in flight pens, but starting chicks is a different story. Even though I've been around the barns and the chick crew for 10 years, I had limited knowledge of what actually went on in the barns. Luckily Brad Mingeuy, an employee at the Milton farm for over 15 years, has the knowledge of how the barns operate and a solid understanding of what it takes to raise chicks.

As we headed into the 2013 “Chick Season” I was given a schedule of anticipated hatch dates, number and sex of birds to arrive. From there I created a calendar of events; when did the birds go from the “A room” to the “B room”, when to put peepers on, expected day of move-out and drop dead day of move-out.

The three most important things are having a plan, providing structure and learning from mistakes.

Looking further ahead, I designed an updated map of the flight pens I then created a chart including the square footage of each unit, and the number of birds the unit would be capable of raising, whether they were hens or roosters, early season or late season. With this information a flow map was created, I projected which units would be needed to hold each hatch and what sex would go into the unit. By having this information, it allows me to know the order in which the units need to get tilled/planted, and how many feeders and waters go into each pen. All of this was completed before we received our first hatch March 20th.

While preparing for our first hatch, I was busy learning the ins and outs of the barns. How do brooders work? How does the alarm system work? How do all the controls in the barn work? Why isn't all of this information written down? How am I supposed to instruct people what to do when I don't know what to do? I soon realized that I needed to take it step by step. I often tell new hires that it takes one year just to see and understand how the whole farm works, advice I needed to listen to.

There is a small crew of 4 people at the Milton location, so it is important for everyone to have an understanding of each operation. We all share a role in night checks, weekend checks, maintenance, lawn care, chores, barn set-up and pen set-up. We have run 5 of 9 hatches through the barns already and most of the flight pens are full. We certainly have room for improvement in the barns, but the birds in the flight pens look fabulous!

When it comes to managing the farm, in my opinion, the three most important things are having a plan, providing structure and learning from mistakes. To answer my question, I don’t know if I was ready to manage my own farm at the time, but I certainly am now with a great crew by my side.
Healthy pheasants with long beautiful tails…That’s what we strive to produce every day. One of the determining factors in the end product is the cover in the pens. Much effort is undertaken to ensure that there is sufficient cover for all the birds on the various farms.

We rotate, yearly, between planting the pens and letting the natural local vegetation emerge. Lambsquarter, corn and sorghum are the crops of choice when planting here. It provides good cover, stands up through the winter, and provides some sustenance. On the downside, it needs irrigation when we have dry summers and it grows through the netting making it difficult to put the pens up and down in inclement winter weather. As far as natural vegetation we have a mix of lambsquarter, ragweed, and some native grasses. Lambsquarter is the favored natural cover crop. Its bush like structure and stout branches help it stand up through autumn into winter and provides good low and intermediate cover. Ragweed on the other hand provides good first use cover but fades quickly as its leaves shrivel in the cool weather leaving only stalks. It also grows vigorously through the nets and can pull them off the wires and posts if not kept in check.

Our main method for controlling noxious weeds such as ragweed is spraying with a 2-4-D product. The ragweed and lambsquarter often come in together with the ragweed quickly overtaking the latter. It is at that point that we spray. By spraying while the ragweed is over the lambsquarter very little damage is done to the lambsquarter itself. There are also areas where the two weeds will grow in patches or strips parallel to each other. In this case we simply “spot spray” the ragweed being careful to avoid the lambsquarter.

Lush and healthy cover is a must for producing quality birds but just as important, is the open space in the pens. The birds need space to sun themselves and eat and drink. A lack of open space can be detrimental to the birds as they will chase and pick each other because space is limited. We mow paths in the middle of the pens as well as the perimeters near the fence lines. We also make plenty of space where the feeders and waterers go to encourage the birds to eat and drink.

The importance of cover and the right proportion of open space is the key to raising healthy happy birds. By keeping the desired vegetation in and the undesired out through cover management techniques you will be providing the birds with shelter that encourages growth and can be repeated year in and year out.

**The importance of cover and the right proportion of open space is the key to raising healthy happy birds.**

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### New Pen Design

**• Brian Check - briancheck@pheasant.com**

With budgets being tighter everywhere it is a good policy to be more efficient with as many aspects of one’s operation as you can. We recently added a new pen, changing the design to be more cost effective.

Our standard design was 80’ by 150’ on each side with a drive lane down the middle and several of these placed in series. The change we made was essentially to take out the dividing fences and rotating the drive lane to the shorter side. So the pen is 160’ by 400’ this allows feeders and waters to be placed on the long side to facilitate those chores. But more importantly it reduced the amount of materials to build the pen and time to construct. Also by rotating the lane we reduced the number of gates to four from sixteen from our standard design, greatly reducing cost, maintenance and build time. The new design will also be easier setting up the pens annually, tilling, planting, covering crops and feeding.

So remember, one can always find new solutions to operational issues by looking outside the box or in this case the pen.
MacFarlane Pheasants has been raising French Partridges for six years. We have imported eggs from L’envol de Retz in France for all six of the years. They are a beautiful bird with brown backs, gray chests, streaked flanks, speckled necks, a black band across their eyes and orange-red feet. We raise over 45,000 Redlegs in one season. There are on average four hatches with about 11,500 chicks in each. The barn they are raised in is split into two rooms, 1A and 1B. The ‘A’ room is about 2500 square feet and the ‘B’ room is around 4800 square feet. Many bird raisers believe Redlegs are one of the easiest birds to raise in captivity, but being a mother to up to 12,000 birds in one room will always create some challenges.

The French Redlegs are raised first in the ‘A’ room from a day old up to six weeks old. The Redlegs rapidly grow until four weeks of age and then they slow down. With their fast growth stages means the ‘A’ room transition needs to happen at the right speed to minimize stress. When the ‘A’ room is first set up there are many feed flats, 150 birds per flat, placed around the room. There are four mini water dishes syphoning off each plasson, 21 plassons with 84 minis. The room is set at 95 degrees with good airflow, and there is an electrical feed system with adjustable height. With so many chicks in each room it is very important to make sure the chicks are well fed, the water system is always clean and the room is set to the right temperature. Each hatch is different so it is important to watch and listen to the bird as they transition to each stage of growth. As the birds get older, the feed flats and minis start to come out of the room. At two weeks of age they start to use only the electrical feed system with feed pans that get filled every four hours and are using plassons for their water supply. If during any walking over but after a day they are pushed over by a few people. The ‘B’ room contains more plassons and a larger feed system to accompany the bird’s growth. The Redlegs typically stay in the ‘B’ room until nine weeks of age. These birds have strong flying abilities, so it is important for us to keep the lights down in the barns to eliminate any large flushes. No one likes thousands of birds flying towards their face. After nine weeks of age they are large enough to be put outside in the flight pens without escaping. In about 16 weeks of age they are 92% of their adult weight.

**The French Redleg Partridges are known for their flying ability and their speed. They use their big chest to propel into the air flying uphill and downhill.**

The French Redleg Partridges are known for their flying ability and their speed. They use their big chest to propel into the air flying uphill and downhill. They hold well in cover and can flush quickly giving hunters a challenge. These flighty birds will give any hunter a true test of their shooting ability and a real prize in the end. Anyone up for a challenge should purchase the French Redleg Partridges.
Hen Barn Expansion

• Trudy DeRemer - t.deremer@pheasant.com

Have you ever had a craving for a tasty pheasant dish, but not want to go through all the work of going out and hunting for a pheasant, cleaning it, and then still having to cook it? Or have you ever had that craving as a non-hunter or it is not hunting season? At MacFarlane Pheasants we are doing the work to provide you with the pheasant to make your delicious dish without all the extra work.

At our Hen Barn location we are able to raise small flocks of our meat line pheasant and evaluate how well different families perform. Within the small flocks we are able to evaluate efficiency and quality, and from there we are able to pick our top breeding families. These top performing families are the breeders that produce the high quality product that we sell to our customers. With having the capabilities to take a closer look at our pheasants, we can produce a great tasting pheasant at a price that a typical family can afford.

It seems like there are not enough hours in the lives of everyone today so a lot of the hunters that provide pheasant meat for their family and family friends do not have the time to hunt. A side effect of having a lack of time is the demand for our pheasant products has increased. Within the law of ‘Supply and Demand’ we are falling short. At this time we are not able to produce enough pheasant to meet the demands of our current customers and that of our future customers within our current facilities. This fall we will be breaking ground on a new facility where we can continue to look at our breeding program, improve our pheasants, and increase production in order to continue to meet the demands of our customers with a high quality product that is standard with the MacFarlane name. Along with the expansion will come extra work, but I am personally looking forward to the challenges that come with a larger facility as I know that it will allow for more work to be done to produce the highest quality pheasants that we can.

The Issues Around Supply and Demand for Late Season Pheasants

• Bill MacFarlane - bill@pheasant.com

One of the biggest issues I hear from our mature bird customers is the price and availability of late season (March and early April) mature pheasants. Preserves understandably struggle to understand why a March pheasant costs more than an October pheasant. And producers are finding that March is now becoming one of their biggest months for sales, and are grappling with the issues that arise from holding birds that long. My article will try and lay out some of the issues.

Most preserves set up their prices with a membership fee and then a “per bird” fee on top of that. To preserve customers, a bird is a bird, and preserves don’t want to price birds differently in October than in March. Also, hunting in March isn’t always as great an experience as it might be in October as cover is usually poorer and birds have a lot more tendency to run. Even the dogs might not perform as well, if it’s warm. So again preserves hesitate to charge more for March hunts than October hunts. It seems to me that there has been a shift in hunting also. Here in Wisconsin, there is very little bird hunting in late December, January or even February, where March is now often the biggest month of all for preserves. So my point is made that preserve owners see increased demand for March hunts and preserves don’t want to charge more for March hunts.

Producers hatch birds from April thru early August. But mid-August day old chicks are only old enough to be moved to the outside pens by early October, and October weather can be fickle. If a producer moves out August chicks into the pens in October and there is snowfall, or near freezing temperatures, six or seven week old pheasants don’t tolerate that type of weather very well, i.e. they may die. These early August hatches producers keep are mature by mid-December. Then, any birds sold by that producer after mid-December cost the producer more as the birds stay on the farm in January and February and eat even more feed. In today’s markets, even a “holding” or “maintenance” feed costs 15 cents per pound, and mature pheasants eat about 1.2 lbs. of feed per week. So for every week that birds are held after mid-December, the producer spends about 18 cents per bird for feed. In addition to the extra feed cost, just the fact the birds are there costs money, and if there is no snow, the birds need to be watered, and there is a cost to feeding them and watching over them. And though minimal, there is some mortality experience when holding the birds. Worst of all is the threat of a snowstorm that could bring down the pens and let the pheasants escape.

Another cost on top of all of this is as March approaches, pheasants begin to want to breed, meaning the cocks will start killing the hens and killing each other. So after the birds have been held and fed from December til March, then the producer has to deal with losing birds.

So producers recognize that their customers, (the preserves) want March birds, and producers hold birds for preserves til March. But the cost to hold birds to March is significant.
On December 27th, 2012 we decided to build a brand new Hungarian Partridge facility. After deciding against retrofitting one of our buildings and renting other space, building from scratch was the best option. The site for the new “Hun” building and pens was chosen to be on some farm land between the “Main Farm” and the “Breeder Farm” that is now called the “Center Farm”. The first hatch was scheduled for March 15th so we had to do a lot of the planning and design on the go. In addition to the building, the infrastructure such as electricity, roads and the well, all had to be put in. Working on a project like this at that time of year is very difficult, if we weren’t stuck in the snow it was the mud.

The building itself is 42’x 320’ and divided into 9 rooms with the table room in the middle and two “A” rooms and two “B” rooms working out each way from the table room. We built the building the same way that the birds would eventually grow through the building, starting in the middle and working to the ends. We had to do this to keep ahead of the birds as they were moved through the barn. It was like building 9 buildings that happened to touch each other. Each two rooms share a small “work room” that works as an entrance for daily chores and a control room. The electrical layout for controlling all of the lights and ventilation was very elaborate and took a lot of time to get done and working just the way that we wanted it to.

The other big project, I oversaw last winter was an expansion of our meat bird breeding facility. I took 3,000 sq. ft. of floor brooding space and converted it into a 4,500 bird caged breeder facility. We built walls dividing the space into four rooms and cut in a cement gutter with a chain drive barn cleaner before the cages were put together. The Big Dutchman cages that we purchased have a conveyor belt between each level of cages that catches the manure and then when started, dumps the manure into the barn cleaner and takes it out to a waiting manure spreader. The cages showed up in little pieces with bad directions. It was like putting together erector sets that were the size of school buses. In the end, we were able to put it all together.

The MacFarlane Pheasants staff and I are proud to announce the 9th Bi-Annual International Pheasant Management seminar scheduled for March 2nd through March 5th, 2014 at our farm and the Ramada Inn in Janesville, Wisconsin. I know that I speak for many of the staff when I say that the seminar is a must-attend event that we are excited to host every two years. We are hoping that along with our veteran attendees, we have many new faces this upcoming seminar.

When I speak to past attendees about our seminar, I have never received a negative response. The seminar is an event that brings in people from all over the world that are interested in raising gamebirds. Not only is the seminar informative, it is also a time for producers to come together in a social setting to discuss the gamebird industry. We assure you that your head will be full of new tips and facts on raising birds and your belly will be full from the delicious meals that are included in your $500 registration fee. From the minute you arrive to Janesville, you are a guest of MacFarlane Pheasants and all of our staff help with any questions or needs you may have.

The 3 day seminar extensively covers all aspects of the pheasant industry and our farm. The 2014 seminar includes presentations from Dr. Robert Porter, University of Minnesota; Dr. Susan Watkins, University of Arkansas; Dr. Keith Bramwell, University of Arkansas; representatives from Best Vet Solutions, other producers, and plenty of the MacFarlane staff. This line up of speakers is a do-not-miss group of professionals. Besides presentations by the leaders in the pheasant industry, there are extensive tours of our farm and hands on necropsy and egg breakout labs, which are valuable to any attendee, whether new or old.

If you have any questions feel free to email me at s.pope@pheasant.com or call 800-345-8348. You can also sign up online at www.pheasant.com/Resources/2014Seminar. The registration for the 9th Bi-Annual Seminar is $500, and it includes lunch and dinners Sunday thru Wednesday, 3 days of seminar sessions, the full tour of MacFarlane Pheasants and both the necropsy and egg breakout labs. We hope to see you on March 2nd, 2014 for a full three days of knowledge and fun!
Going into my first season as Brooder Manager, I didn’t completely understand what exactly I was getting into. I hadn’t had any experience with day old chicks and I rarely ever entered the barns during my first year with MacFarlane Pheasants. It wasn’t until after the third or fourth hatch that the true identity of “brooder manager” hit me.

Every day and every flock is different. Each barn has its own character and quirks. There are hundreds of different ways and philosophies to get the same task accomplished. There was a lot of good and bad information to sort through, but no real “free” time to step back and think about it. Some days seem to go as planned; most days seem to have a little chaos and frustration thrown in just to “keep the brooder crew on their toes.” Everything about the job comes back to paying attention to the finest details. There are so many variables that come into play, each hatch, each barn, and the weather. The true art of being the brooder manager involves tweaking those variables, ever so slightly, and monitoring how birds respond. Whether it’s raising or lowering the temperature in the barn two degrees or changing light intensity, the barn controls and settings are a never ending tool box that can be a blessing or cause serious problems. It’s all about “listening to the birds!”

The amount of technical and biological experience I have gained in such a short time is incredible to me. There have been plenty of tough, frustrating days this season along with plenty of rewarding times and “AHA! moments.” It’s amazing to look at the number of birds moved through our brooder operation

and to think I have had a hand in raising all of them! Brooder Manager is not a position for everyone, but I have enjoyed the fast pace and challenges that I have become accustomed to. Overall, I feel this season has been a successful one, with plenty of room for improvement and tons more to learn.

The Brooder Manager Learning Curve
- Brian Davis - b.davis@pheasant.com

If you’re looking for a 9-5 job with weekends and holidays off, raising birds is not for you. Birds don’t care if it’s a weekend or a holiday. They need to get fed, taken care of, and looked after 7 days a week. As a means to that end, we have implemented a new schedule to better accommodate the needs of the birds.

Our process and bird care crew have switched to ‘seven days a week’ for a schedule. That means we are now fully staffed seven days a week. This allows us to complete any job, any day of the week, without the worry of having enough staff. Last minute things that pop up can be addressed easily and quickly. No more worries about pushing important items off until the next day. By making this change, we have increased the quality of bird care on our farm.

Our brooder crew has switched to this new seven days a week schedule as well. Anyone that raises day old chicks knows that some of the biggest problems can arise at night, when no one is around. To alleviate some of those concerns, we have started a 2nd shift. So in addition to being fully staffed seven days a week, there is also an employee present from 2 pm – 11 pm. That means someone is on site 17 hours a day. Someone that is on site can respond to alarms and problems right away and that helps everyone sleep better at night.

As an unforeseen benefit, our employees are working less. People can only be pushed so hard. Giving them a set schedule with regular days off has made them more productive and efficient. So not only have we increased our quality of bird care, we have increased our employee satisfaction as well.

The benefits of this type of schedule are obvious. With the increased staff on site, issues get addressed almost immediately. The 2nd shift has eliminated the need for a separate individual to check on the birds at night. Because that person is here so late, the number of alarm calls have been cut down by 75%. Taking care of birds can be a tireless job and this new schedule has been an effective tool for improving the process.

Bird Care: A 7 Day a Week Affair
- Chris Theisen - chris@pheasant.com

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Three years ago Bill gave me the task of helping him organize the speakers for the North American Gamebird Association. At first I didn’t understand the benefits of this task; however, this quickly became a part of my job that I enjoy and look forward to every year. The North American Gamebird Association Convention moves every year and in 2014, the 3-day event, February 9th-11th, will be held in Nashville, TN at the Inn at Opryland.

There are many reasons why I look forward to the convention every year, but the number one reason is the knowledge that not only the speakers bring with them but the experiences the attendees bring as well. During the breaks and during the lunches and dinners, the NAGA Convention acts as a forum for the attendees to discuss what goes on at their farms or preserves. It is a great place to meet other people in the industry and exchange knowledge or tricks-of-the-trade.

Bill and I have worked on an extensive and impressive list of speakers for the 2014 Convention. We are proud to announce Howard Vincent, CEO of Pheasants Forever; Dan Asche, the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and Dr. Fidelis Hegngi, Senior Staff Veterinarian from USDA, APHIS, among many others will be speaking. The Convention will include new topics and approaches to the gamebird industry. Whether you are concentrating on the producer or preserve side of the industry, all sessions are jam packed with valuable information which you will be able to use back home.

If you are looking for more information regarding the 2014 North American Gamebird Association, visit the great new website for NAGA, www.mynaga.org. The website provides loads of information that is useful to anyone in the industry. I hope to see you and your family in Nashville, TN on February 9th to the 11th. Bring your cowboy boots and come on down to Music City!

Managing our Vehicles

Art Schumacher
Logistics & Maintenance Manager

Managing vehicles at MacFarlane Pheasants can be as simple as a passenger vehicle registration to a cost effective replacement of an engine. MacFarlane’s has various licensure requirements. We have farm and heavy farm licenses, passenger and truck, along with International Reciprocity (IRP) having their own licensure regulations. Also with licensing, the vehicle title must be on file. With new title laws in place, any vehicle with a lien on it, the owner will not receive the title.

Accurate insurance must be applied to each particular vehicle, whether it is collision, liability, or the combination of both. Plus, it is important to have proof of insurance accompanying each vehicle.

MacFarlane’s maintenance department keeps a track board for periodic maintenance of each vehicle to ensure they are in working order. Communication is of the utmost importance as the drivers need to inform the maintenance department immediately of any mechanical concerns before the next work shift.

Contacting vehicle vendors to check warranty items for coverage of repairs, as well as, contacting repair services for those that have expired is necessary in order to keep cost repairs to a minimum.

Matching the needs of each specific farm department with the necessary vehicle is a constant balancing act for the maintenance department.

Cooperation within the maintenance department and the other farm departments has made it possible for the large fleet of vehicles to successfully meet the needs of the MacFarlane Farm operation.
Egg picking season has come and gone with focus being shifted from egg numbers and cull rates to moving breeders in preparation for next year’s egg season. As this transition begins we, as employees, change our hats from egg pickers and pheasant farmers to crop farmers.

In years past, breeders were moved to offsite locations while turning the breeder farm over. This season multiple breeder flocks were condensed mid-June to open up pen space for early breakdown on the breeder farm. These pens would then be useable towards the end of July for breeder placement without sacrificing valuable pen space used for hunt birds.

So you may ask, what does turning the breeder farm over mean? In a snapshot it equates to moving and sorting all 34,000 plus breeders to pens with vegetation in order for them to come out of production and molt. When this is accomplished, feeders, huts and plassons are removed from the empty pens to get pressure washed and repaired if needed. All pens are rotovated, planted, then the clean equipment is placed back into the pen for future use.

In between moving birds and planting pens, repairs to the netting, fences, doors and gates are made to insure flocks do not intermingle once placed.

Turning the breeder farm takes patience, communication, forward planning and a little help from Mother Nature. Being that we are moving birds in July when temperatures can reach in the 100’s, days start before sunrise to maximize bird movement. Planning and communicating with the other branches of the farm is a necessity prior to move out. Having crates available in the catch pens, tractors with a tiller and planter fueled and waiting allow for teardown to go smoothly. Communicating with employees so everyone knows their task at hand creates efficiency and minimal downtime. When all of this is compiled, turning the breeder farm can take place within 2-3 weeks. From this point we look towards Mother Nature for rain to insure our planted vegetation grow fast, thick and tall. This is to protect our valuable breeders from the elements of winter when they are placed back on the farm starting in September. And when Mother Nature has different plans, we then have access to irrigation.

As time approaches for breeders to be placed back into pens, paths are mowed around the perimeter of the pen for finding food and water along with an x design for easier bird movement when driving breeders. At this point we have irrigated the cover for over 2 months where vegetative growth, both planted and weeds, has grown tall and thick enough not to be effected from winter conditions.

Call us today
800-345-8348
on the availability on mature birds!
20 years at MacFarlane Pheasants

20 years at MacFarlanes, does that make me sound old? Trust me, I’m not as old as that sounds, nor do I feel it. It is hard to believe I have been here for 20 years. I sometimes still feel like that teenager when I started in the 90’s learning new things all the time around here. Even to this day I still am constantly learning new things about pheasants.

I started out through a business co-op class in high school and at that time I hadn’t even heard of a pheasant. I was amazed at how large scale this industry really was. MacFarlane Pheasants was a bit smaller then, with the office, store and breakroom all sharing one little building. We even still had ‘farm’ in the name of our company.

When I started in 1993, Bill MacFarlane would still schedule every single order that came in the company; whether it be the day-old chicks, full-grown birds or dressed (ready to cook) birds. Over the years at MacFarlanes, I saw this firm grow and evolve. It grew to the point that one man could not manage it all anymore: from sales to scheduling deliveries, over-seeing production aspects, to managing the financing of a company. So in 1998, Bill MacFarlane trusted me with the responsibility of mature bird sales and scheduling.

It was both exciting and scary undertaking this new task, but they had confidence in me that I could do it and guided me the whole way through. Back then MacFarlanes sold a total of about 150,000 full grown birds (pheasants and partridge). Now this past season (Fall 2012 through Spring 2013) we increased in size to a record number of 552,000 mature birds that were sold and delivered.

I don’t know how we ever got along back then compared to the spoils of technology we have nowadays. In the 90’s cell phones were not as popular, not every person would have one, nor every company. Trying to get a hold of a driver on the road felt like you were sending smoke signals to reach them. Not to mention trying to get ahold of the crews on the farm to get a message passed to them quickly was almost impossible. And being able to email our crews, or our customers, information they may need instantaneously, while I am even on the phone with them is extremely convenient.

I have seen progression in many aspects in this company and I know it won’t stop there. While we continue to grow, one thing I know that always remains constant is our service to our customers. With the innovative minds I work alongside with every day, I can’t wait to see what we can do next to make your experience with MacFarlanes a positive and long lasting one.

Presently - Mature Sales Coordinator

Trying to get a hold of a driver on a road, felt like you were sending smoke signals to reach them

Hatching Hungarian Partridges

MacFarlane Pheasants is once again hatching Hungarian partridges to supply our mature bird customers with a top quality hunting bird.

It has been 12 years since we last hatched Hun eggs that were supplied to us from various sources both domestic and international. This time we have gone with a well-known and highly respected egg supplier in France. We received 8 shipments of eggs from L’envol de Retz starting back in February.

We made sure to get eggs from breeders that were Mycoplasma free and from a region where the Reticuloendotheliosis Virus (REV) is not a potential problem. Both of these pathogens can cause serious health issues in Huns, and we needed to be confident that we were starting with a clean source.

We also tested Huns that were on our farm prior to the 1st hatch for REV to make sure they would not be a possible source that might spread this disease. The results came back clean.

Since we haven't hatched Huns in our hatchery for over a decade, there were some details to rediscover about incubating and hatching this species.

Temperature and humidity are the same as for ringnecks, but Huns take 12-15 hrs. longer to hatch so they need to be set earlier.

Also, the hatch window for Huns is not as easily controlled as with pheasants. There will always be a significant number of late hatch chicks. We found that up to 10% of the chicks will hatch 12-24 hrs. later than the majority of the birds. This makes it necessary to do 2 takeoffs. The 1st is done when the majority of the chicks are dry and active. The 2nd takeoff is done up to 24 hrs. later.

You can’t wait for all the chicks to hatch because the early chicks will over heat in the hatcher baskets and chick quality will suffer.

Fertility and hatchability start out good early in the season resulting in overall hatches of 76%. However, as the season progresses these qualities decrease and hatches become much poorer.

Over the entire season we hatched just under 60,000 Hun chicks that went to our new facility to be raised.

In all it was a successful 1st season and we look forward to doing even better next year.

800.345.8348 • www.pheasant.com

Ben Lawton
Hatchery Manager

20 Years Ago Char Debroux

Trying to get a hold of a driver on a road, felt like you were sending smoke signals to reach them

20 Years Ago
MacFarlane Pheasants Inc. is home to the affordable gourmet meal made at home! Our online store will help you find the type of pheasant breast meat or whole dressed pheasant you’re looking for; whether you need pheasant breasts or smoked whole pheasants or our new pheasant pie. MacFarlane Pheasants also supplies other game meats including buffalo, duck and quail and now pasture raised, whole organic chicken!

Be sure to visit our Recipes tab and look over the easy pheasant recipes as well as other game meat recipes to enhance your experience.

www.pheasantfordinner.com

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