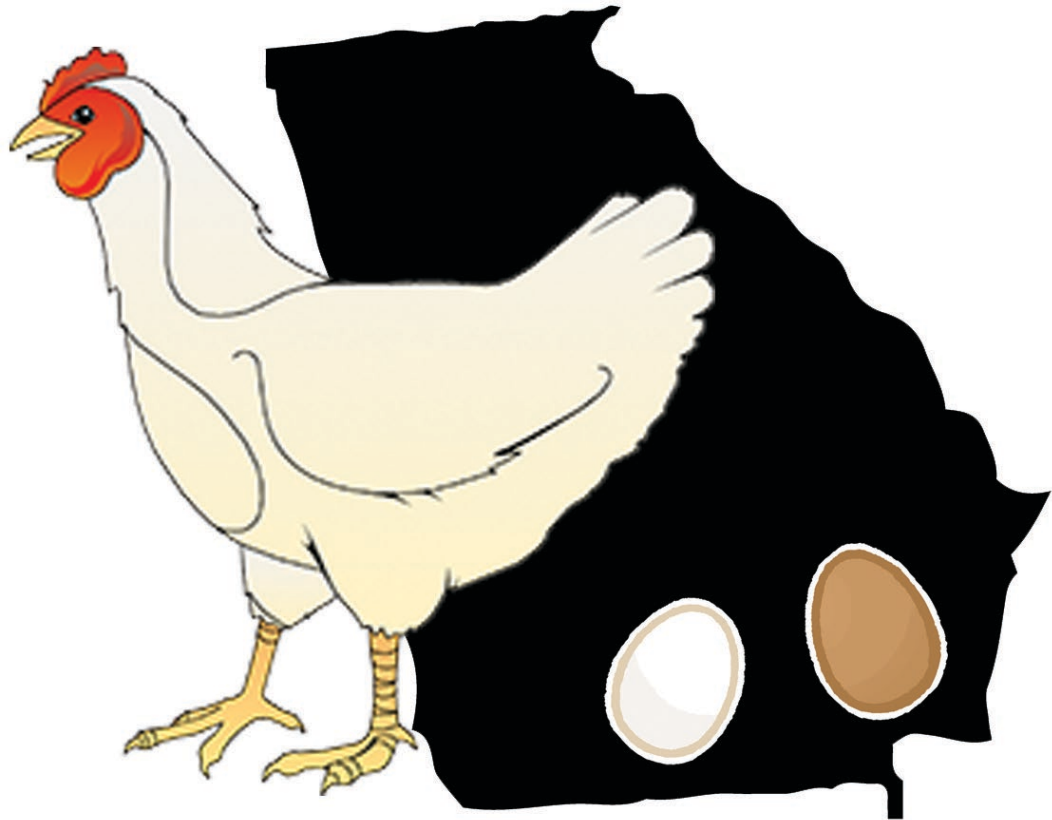


Georgia: The Poultry State Full of Hungry People

By Henley Brock Moon



The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness estimated there to be 10,443 Georgians experiencing homelessness on any given day in 2019. That may not seem like much compared to Georgia’s 10.62 million residents, but housing and feeding over ten thousand individuals is still a daunting task. However, given Georgia’s massive poultry industry, no one should go hungry.

There are too many chickens—both broilers (chickens raised to be eaten) and layers (chickens raised for laying eggs)—being raised in the state of Georgia for any of its citizens to be hungry. According to Carl Weinberg in his essay, “Big Dixie Chicken Goes Global: Exports and the Rise of the North Georgia Poultry Industry,” \$308 million of chicken left the state of Georgia

in 2001. That is a lot of chicken. It seems obvious that chicken farms would have to sell out of state and overseas to find buyers for all of their poultry products when generating that kind of volume. Yet, that kind of volume could also make feeding the homeless of Georgia very easy.

Carl Weinberg also tells of the early years of Georgia chicken farming, before they managed to export \$308 million in a year. He told of Jesse Jewel, who helped increase the production of chickens by creating a system that allowed him to give chicks and feed on credit, buy them from the farmers later so they could turn a profit, then drive the raised chickens and eggs down to Florida to sell at a profit himself. The story sets two major precedents for Georgia chicken farming. First, the money is out of state. This supports exporting, which does not help the homeless population. The second precedent, however, shows how easily existing chicken farms can aid the establishment of new chicken farms without taking a major loss themselves. The homeless population obviously cannot pay the roughly \$2.8 million (that number is a high estimate of one chicken per Georgian experiencing homelessness per day) worth of chicken that it would take to feed them for a year, so chicken farms might need to get creative with how they would still make a profit.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture, Georgia produced 189.6 million chicks in 2019. If unable or unwilling to donate some of these young layers and broilers, the Georgia chicken farms could sell chicks and feed on credit to nonprofit Georgia farms and then buy back enough adult chickens and eggs to cover the cost when selling to overseas markets. The nonprofits would need to sell back to the bigger farms at a price high enough to stay afloat, and donate their remaining broilers and eggs to shelters, kitchens, or even the Georgia Food Bank.

Obstacles for this plan exist, like transporting chickens from nonprofits to places accessible to the homeless and gathering the manpower for a chicken farm with wages low enough to succeed at feeding the homeless. However, the precedent for increased chicken productivity exists, and people affected by homelessness need to be fed. And if chicken can feed everyone in Georgia, then the practice might spread to a national, maybe even global level.

Works Cited

- “Georgia Homelessness Statistics.” United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, <https://www.usich.gov/homelessness-statistics/ga>.
- “Southern Region News Release Chickens and Eggs.” National Agricultural Statistics Service Georgia Field Office, United States Department of Agriculture, 23 December 2019. https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Regional_Office/Southern/includes/Publications/Livestock_Releases/Chicken_and_Eggs/2019/ckpress1219.pdf.
- Weinberg, Carl. “Big Dixie Chicken Goes Global: Exports and the Rise of the North Georgia Poultry Industry.” *Business and Economic History On-Line*, Vol 1, Business History Conference, 2004. https://thebhc.org/sites/default/files/Weinberg_0.pdf.