



## Growing Smart Chickens

Clint Anderson spoke at the Treynor Optimist Club on January 23 about growing Smart Chickens. He has two chicken houses that have been in operation for one year.

Clint married Melissa Helbling 13 years ago. They have two children, ages 6 and 12. He works at Central Life Sciences, making horse food.

Clint says he is the only Smart Chicken grower in the county, although several other people have expressed interest. His chicken barns are 43' by 510'. Each building holds 26,000 chickens and they arrive in a single semi with 52,000 chicks. They include pullets and roosters.

The buildings have 12 heaters hung from the ceiling and heat probes that hang about a foot off the floor. There is one division

curtain in each building and it is used to restrict the chicks the first six days. The buildings are heated with natural gas. They are cooled with large swamp coolers.

They receive the chicks when they are 8 hours old and raise them for 50 days. Then he takes two weeks to clean and prepare the building for the next batch. Clint is paid by the pound for raising the chickens. The dead chickens are put in the manure pile. Clint sells the manure. He has a special attachment on the tractor to separate manure from good wood shavings when cleaning the building. He has a 10 year loan on the building and a 12 year contract with Smart Chicken.

Smart Chicken prefers the chickens at 6.02 pounds. Clint has averaged 7.5 pounds. The last batch he had to put the chickens on a diet after 48 days. The baby chicks are given a high protein meal to get them started. Then they switch to pellets.

The company supplies the food for the chickens. They send out a crew to load the 16 trucks when the chickens are ready for market. To catch them, Clint simply turns off the lights to the building and the workers can pick them up, using a red light on their helmet to see.

Clint has a 2%-3% mortality rate. He checks the barns for dead chickens three times daily. That also gets the chickens up (they are generally lazy), so they eat more and grow faster. It also releases the heat trapped by the chickens, keeping them from overheating.

A field guy from Smart Chicken visits about once a week. They use 3-4 inches of wood shavings for bedding. The company likes to have the chickens gain one pound for every two pounds of feed, but Clint has averaged 1.7-1.8 pounds of feed per pound of chicken.

One day something scared some of the full grown chickens and they fell over. They were too fat to get back up, so he and his wife spent several hours tipping them back up.