

NEWS

From GEORGIA TECH'S ENGINEERING EXPERIMENT STATION

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Passed First Winter Test

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WOOD-WARMED CHICKENS DID FINE

For Immediate Release

ATLANTA, GA.....Wood-heated chicken houses could be the latest thing on the agricultural scene.

Working with funds from the Georgia Department of Agriculture, engineers at Georgia Tech's Engineering Experiment Station have shown that wood can provide an excellent alternative to the conventional fuels now used to heat poultry growout houses.

Propane, a non-renewable and sometimes hard-to-get resource, is the predominant fuel presently used to heat buildings for raising chickens. It is the rising cost of this fuel and the resultant slimmer profit margins for the farmers that are behind the move to find an alternate fuel, according to Richard Combes of EES.

This past winter provided the first cold weather test for a wood-fired furnace that was installed last summer in a growout house in Carrollton, Ga. Combes said that the wood heating system was a success.

"Two flocks raised this winter were heated with warm air from the wood furnace," Combes said. "The first flock, which was shipped to market on Dec. 17, was heated 100 percent with wood heat. No propane at all was used. The second flock, shipped two months later in February, was heated 75 percent with wood heat and 25 percent with propane."

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According to Combes, each of these flocks consisted of about 16,200 birds.

National Weather Service figures show that the area of north Georgia around Carrollton experienced temperatures during the winter in the low teens with the lowest about 6 F in January. It was during these extremely low temperatures that that the wood furnace had to be backed up with propane.

But Combes is optimistic that by adding insulation or caulking to the building gas won't be necessary even at the really low temperatures.

The success of this experiment with wood energy is particularly important for Georgia, according to Combes, because of the availability of large quantities of wood waste in the state, primarily from sawmills and logging operations.

Recent figures show that there are 120 trillion BTU's of wood energy available per year in Georgia. This is enough energy to heat, for one year, all of the homes and commercial businesses now in the state. And additional calculations show that only 2.8 trillion BTU's would be required to heat all of the 4,500 chicken houses in Georgia for one year.

Georgia Tech received assistance on this research project from the Georgia Poultry Federation, which represents the state's poultry industry.