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## Presentation from the USDA Agricultural Outlook Forum 2017

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# Slow Growth Broilers (Alternative Breeds)



# How to Define?

- Heritage Breed or Cross?
- Daily Weight Gain? And at what age or weight?
- Feather Color?



# A Working Definition

- Working definition = no more than 50gms per day growth (0.11# per day)
- Current Average Growth Rates are about 60gms per day (0.13# per day)
- Large Birds can be well over 70 gms per day (0.16# per day)



# Other Characteristics

- Colored Feathers
- Active
- Perch
- Hardy
- Farmers enjoy raising chickens like this!
- Older facilities are productive again?
- Love to go outside?
- Preferable meat quality?
- Benefits of a drier chicken house?





# Why?

- Because “we have gone too far” and the current fast growing broiler birds have too many “Growth Rate Related Issues”?
  - Leg Health
  - Feathering issues
  - High Moisture
  - Meat Quality has become an issue
- The Breeder Birds are pretty severely restricted to keep them production (and reproductive)



# What Determines Growth Rate for Broilers

- Feed Intake is the primary factor
  - More specifically protein/energy intake and retention.
- Modern broilers are selected for the high capacity for feed intake.
- Heritage strain broilers have a lower appetite.





# Achieving Slower Growth



## Genetics

- A pure Heritage Breed or Cross with Commercial Breed
- Crosses will have lower appetites and consume less feed.

## Nutrition

- Primarily strict Protein Intake
- Birds can partially compensate with higher intake
- Supplementing with whole grains and limit

# This is a different business

- 7 or 8 more days to 6#s
- Poorer Feed Conversion
- Likely lower chick cost
- Much more active
- Drier litter
- Better Livability
- Less breast meat, more leg meat
- Processability



# Parents

**Male**



**Females**









# Broilers

**Current Modern Breed Cross**



**Trial Cross 2016**





- Current Modern Breed Cross



- Trial Cross 2016





They like perches....if they are  
designed right!





These are different birds!

