

Scenes from the 2010 Virginia Biological Farming Conference
Institute for Advanced Learning and Research, Danville, VA
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Why Pastured Poultry?

Mike and Teresa Walters, Stillwell, OK

- Reviewed by Katherine Smith

During their presentation Mike explained, in answer to a question, that he didn't do Salatin-style pastured poultry because he loves to walk among the flocks, even when they're penned. Each pen is surrounded by high fencing, and contains a walk-in modified hoop house for shelter from weather. He went on to explain his methods, illustrated with PowerPoint operated by his wife Teresa. I found the pictures engaging and exactly instructive of the point being made. The audience of 60 had other questions, all of which were answered precisely and gently. The best of these just might have been in answer to the one about "that mysterious utility pole in your turkey pen--what's it there for?"

"Well, it's to hold my great-horned owl trap" was the reply. There followed the most down-to-earth description I've heard of that tension between knowing your crop, your game warden's rules and your neighbor's concerns. I would use that trap in an instant if I had a great horned owl problem. Mike devised the horned owl trap himself, as well as his feed mixes, feeders, watering bowls and shelters.

Mike and Teresa Walters raise and sell pastured chickens, heritage and "big-breasted" turkeys, on their acreage near Stillwater, Ok. In addition, they work off-farm, care for their two children, and raise lots of vegetables for their own use. With an impending move to another nearby location, they will be testing their flocks under tree shade. The tree shade experiment is their response to the challenge from the "housed poultry trade," which maintains that birds kept outside will not gain market weight due to stress brought on by fear of overhead predators.