Game-Bird Preserve Business Development Guide

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Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture
April 2013

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About this project

Dan Burden is a program coordinator in Iowa State University's Value-Added Agriculture Program. This research was funded by a special grant from the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, *Game-bird preserve alternative-enterprise models: Soil and water conservation and value-added income diversification.* This publication is available split into four sections. Information about the grant, and a copy of each section, can be found online at: www.leopold.iastate.edu/grants/xpsp2012-db

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Game-Bird Preserve Business Development Guide

Part One: Introduction to Preserve Hunting

Just a note about me and the challenge of writing about this subject: I have written a lot about preserves, visited them and presently am an active member-client. I have never run one but have been involved in many other areas of marketing and agri-business development. Please consider the following a loose collection of ideas and guidelines for developing practices that work for your business. I encourage you to review your operation and to take a minute to look over the many business-development topics listed in the Additional Resources section of this publication.

I like hunting preserves and have a family membership for the exact same reason that most people have one: I love working my dog and having a quality outdoor experience with family and guests. Don't get me wrong, I live for wild bird hunting, but in many states, there simply is not the length-of-season or number of birds to properly introduce beginning dogs or hunters to upland field craft. I also believed that a regular "touch up" to the dog-handler skill set is never a bad investment.

As a bird hunter who grew up a poor working-class Wisconsin mill-town kid, and came to dog ownership later in life, I never saw myself as a potential preserve client; but when I sent off the deposit check for our German wirehaired pointer puppy in the face of Iowa's disappearing bird habitat and dwindling pheasant population, I knew a preserve membership would be a necessary part of the training kit. I wanted my hairy little Wunderkind pup to see birds, a lot of birds. He would be a tad over five-months old about the time the September-first opening of the Iowa preserve season rolled around, and it would be time to sniff a few feathers and see how he handled himself.

I work for a national value-added agriculture research and resource center. A small part of my job is supporting preserve businesses and farmers looking to develop them to diversify their on-farm income. I've come to the conclusion that there is no perfect preserve, and that preserves are either liked or disliked for some very simple reasons. Here are a few things to think about that may help you select a preserve and have a quality experience.

Preserves are great for working gundogs. They constitute an extended hunting season and a dog that sees a longer season, works more birds, and has more points and retrieves is a better dog. If you don't have a dog, but like to hunt, consider splitting a membership with a friend who has one.

Let's consider the preserve as a business from the operator's standpoint. Success depends on selling memberships and renewals. Before you judge that as commercially self-serving and blatantly capitalistic, consider that memberships, paid well before the season opener, guarantee a certain amount of operating revenue to cover pre-ordering birds, managing the habitat, paying insurance bills and similar overhead costs. Almost every decent preserve has a membership policy, it just helps with business planning; however, membership rates and what you the client get in return for the initial fee considerably varies from one operation to the next.

Consistent return-members are almost always died-in-the-wool gun-dog freaks. Most, but not all, preserves also service "walk-in" non-member clients at twice the going rate for members. Walk-ins tend to be non-dog-owners who have a dog-owner friend and or the casual bird-dog owner who wants a pre-season warm-up. Few non-dog-owners are going to dig deep into the wallet to hire a dog and handler for each outing. However, I should mention that this was precisely how I introduced my wife to the magic of hunting birds with pointing dogs, when we explored bringing a puppy into our family.

If you are considering joining a preserve or are passionate about getting into the business, call around to your friends who actively work dogs and ask them about the preserves in your area; consider what they like and dislike about the operations. When you tell them you are thinking of joining a preserve, they will probably invite you out as a guest on their membership. Of course, it would be considerate for you to buy your own birds, contribute some gas money, perhaps buy an after-hunt libation, or whatever else you should do as a decent buddy since your friend has subsidized your fun.

If you talk to hunters in general about preserves you frequently get the "those preserve birds are too easy," and "where's the fun in that, heck, it's like shootin' fish in a barrel" opinions. Let's face it. Most of these folks are far too cheap to spend a day at a preserve; are not dog owners or serious dog owners, and far more full of baseless opinion than worthwhile knowledge.
You also may encounter the "I believe in keeping hunting free" person. This mindset completely ignores the reality that someone else has always subsidized the fun, be it the "they who pay" farmers or ranchers who manage the food plots and habitat, pay the taxes, and plant the crops; taxpayers via the conservation agency that manages the public land; or the members of advocacy organizations (Pheasants Forever, Quail Forever, National Wild Turkey Federation, Duck Unlimited, and others) who selflessly worked to raise community money to develop the habitat programs that purchase ground and enhance game and non-game wildlife populations.

This same critic also may complain about the landowner who is now "all leased up." Real story: The clown was recently evicted under threat of a trespassing charge from that farm or ranch since permission was only asked once, years back, and the miscreant has returned year after year and brought along untold numbers of friends, yet never thanked the landowner with a note, phone call or small gift. I suppose the aforementioned attitudes are yet another very good reason why I like hunting preserves: You will rarely, if ever, find that kind of jerk wandering around on one. When you arrive at a preserve, your party will be warmly received as a welcome guests and have your own exclusive secure area to hunt. In this day and age, that constitutes considerable value to you the client.

The truth of the matter is, whenever I get the old "those preserve birds are too easy" or "where's the fun in that," I'm pretty sure the individual is a commentator and not a player. The reason is simple. If you actively hunt behind a great pointer you will have easy birds and difficult birds; some birds the dog will catch on the ground. There are times when this will happen on a private farm or ranch, public hunting area, or preserve. My toughest and most enjoyable day with my dog was a solo early-season pheasant hunt on a preserve; my easiest and least fulfilling was along an amazingly productive road ditch during the regular season when two of us limited-out in about fifteen minutes behind a badly handled flushing dog. Every day afield, preserve or otherwise, is a unique outing. Like all outdoor experiences it will have its ups and downs, perfect days and less-than perfect days.

Actually, this is why I absolutely love early-season preserve work. I don't always shoot the number of birds I release, but my pointer can hone that magic nose and tracking-intercept ability under the toughest conditions. If I know there is a released bird in the cover, I will work and rework the cover to try to find it. The dog learns that he needs to be thorough. He gets used to me directing him to likely coverts, and develops trust in me as I increasingly understand more of his behavioral nuances. As fall progresses and the grass dies back, each hunt gets better and easier for him. By the opening of the regular season, he is coffin-nail tough and sharp as a tack. He anticipates my whims, works off my little whistles and hand signals; and at a glance, I know what he's thinking. After this kind of tune-up, a wild-bird outing is usually a fantastic day afield for the two of us and our guests.

Preserve habitat it is about cover for birds and dogs. Hard-flying birds are great, but a small part of the total equation. Well-managed habitat, a challenge but not impossible to hunt, and services for dogs are what quality preserves deliver. That translates into varied cover with ample edge habitat (mowed trails and food-plots) in which dogs can work their magic noses and birds can show off their escape and evasion skills.

It is quite common for overzealous or novice dog handlers, especially if they have only one dog, to overwork the dog, and good preserve operators keep this in mind. A good preserve will give you a safety briefing and will have water, a lot of water, especially during hot weather, in the form of wading pools, or five-gallon jugs and pans placed around the field.

Believe it or not, some novice or just plain stupid handlers simply think a dog ought to be able to "tough it out," and that to stress the dog is a way to harden it to field work. This is of course an excuse for not spending the time to train and condition the animal, nonsense that borders on blatant animal cruelty, and Russian roulette that could kill the dog. If the animal is an out-of-shape housedog, it will have compounded stress levels, performance, and recovery issues, just like an out-of-shape human. A birddog is an amazing animal athlete. Under extreme working conditions they endure serious physical punishment just like any well-conditioned extreme-outdoor-sport human athlete.

I know one preserve operator who drives out halfway through the hunt on an ATV with a cooler of non-alcoholic beverages and chilled dog water. The hunters and dogs are encouraged to take a break. The operator also collects harvested birds so that the hunters can lighten their game bags. If it is warm, the birds immediately go on ice in his ATV's cooler. It is a nice touch. Due

to service like this, this owner-operator seldom advertises for new clients and has all the loyal members he wants to run his operation at a comfortably efficient and financially-viable level.

Another excellent preserve makes a point to provide fresh centrally-located water resources in each field before the day's hunt, and to make sure that clients know exactly where they are located. From what I have learned from these preserve operations, a five-gallon jug of water and a plastic dish-washing tub go with us on all hunts; when I stop to hunt, the tub usually is full of water on the ground by my Jeep. I consider it back-up hydration; my dog stays hydrated and hunts longer and harder.

Almost every preserve will offer a safety briefing and require some orange clothing, a signature on an activity waiver, and either a small-game license or single-day preserve license. This is standard operating procedure throughout the industry, and is in the best interest of the participating humans, dogs and the future of the sport, so don't be offended by it. Most preserves have a minimum charge and extra charges for guides with dogs, dressing birds, clay-target warm-ups, servicing large-groups and similar extras. Some have clubhouses, full-service accommodations, food, corporate meeting areas and overnight accommodations. Many preserves host dog trials and training workshops. Discounts on these events usually are extended to all clients on the operation's mailing list.

An often overlooked in fact is that preserves can help to make mediocre dog handlers into far better handlers. Of course this depends a great deal on the receptiveness of the handler. If a handler is willing to ask for and be open to advice, the preserve is a great place to meet new friends, learn about training clubs, and get a lot of free and very useful handling tips.

Experienced guns and handlers like to talk about what they know. They are not doing it to puff up their egos; they share their thoughts because they honestly want you to enjoy the experience at the level they have devoted much of their lives and a good portion of their income to attain. If you are aggravated by a particularly serious dog-training problem, contacts and services for local professionals are available at almost every preserve.

Preserves are great time for accelerating the learning curve when introducing new canine or human hunters to the sport. Some preserves have "training fields" with paths that divide smaller blocks of short-height cover that are great for developing pups and working with problem dogs. A private environment where you know there is game, and can concentrate on developing the charges in your care, is well worth the monetary investment compared to slogging miles of public ground before finding the first and perhaps only bird of the day. Some preserves offer hunter-safety classes, Becoming an Outdoor Woman programs, off-season outdoor-education workshops, and host clay-target shoots and tournaments. Many offer off-season member access for dog training and summer pond fishing.

Take a day before the preserve season opens to visit with owners or managers of a few operations and look over the cover. This in itself is a fun low-cost outing, and you may come away with a few changed preconceptions. No matter how long any of us have played this game there are always more things to learn. The more we learn, the more deeply we appreciate our dogs and wonderful facets of our sport. After all, any upland experience is not really about birds,

it is about spending precious moments with our friends and family and enjoying the outstanding performance of a great-working gundog.

Game birds are those birds that historically were wild game or decorative fowl but are now raised commercially for their meat or egg production; some quail, pheasant and grouse species are raised as "flight-ready" birds for release in hunting preserves. Game birds may include guinea fowl, partridges, peacocks, pheasants, pigeons and doves, quail or squab (a young pigeon), swans, wild turkeys and some ducks, such as mallards or wood ducks. Of these species, only pigeon, quail, squab and wild turkey are native American species. Game birds are also raised for exhibit or for hobby purposes.

The game bird industry in the United States produces millions of birds for sale to restaurants and for direct marketing to consumers. The number of birds in the United States is estimated at around 10 million pheasants, 37 million quail, 4 million chukar partridges, 1 million mallard ducks, 200 thousand wild turkeys and several other bird species.

The game bird breeding business is relatively new, and anyone interested in it should acquire as much information as possible prior to any financial commitment. Much of the early rearing and processing information was adapted from the domestic poultry industry. Their experience and knowledge regarding incubation, brooding, management and disease control, and market development continue to be valuable assets to the game bird industry. Those producing game birds can learn from the experience of others by contacting cooperative producers and trade associations.

The production of game birds requires specialized housing, netting or fencing systems; specific knowledge in the diseases common to game birds; and an identified market. Game bird production can take the form of “flight-ready” birds for release programs (where the birds are for sale to state game departments, private individuals or shooting preserves); an “exotic bird” business for the pet trade (pea fowl, guinea hens); or as a domestic poultry business specializing in gourmet table fare or ethnic specialties (pheasants, quail, duck). This is a business that can be started with minimal investment; for instance, raising exotic quail and non-game pheasant species for homeowners and hobbyists can be a profitable side business. In some areas, production of game birds requires specialized permits and licenses; in others, only a sales tax registration is necessary to conduct business.

On the West Coast of the United States, native quail species, decimated by habitat loss, are produced for reintroduction by bird lovers and sporting organizations. In the Midwest, pheasant and chukar partridge growers can make a profit by supplying grown birds to outdoor sporting clubs for recreation, as well as frozen birds to restaurants. There even is a niche market of those consumers who purchase farm-raised game bird eggs as an alternative to large-scale, commercially produced chicken eggs. Pickled quail eggs, canned or frozen smoked pheasant and duck for oriental cuisine are increasing in popularity as gourmet specialty items.

This publication deals with creating and running a successful preserve-hunting business. A game-bird production business for meat, egg or live-bird production for non-preserve markets is outside the focus of this overview. If you are interested in those areas of value-added

agriculture, a great number of resources exist in the way of books, university extension publications, internet articles and trade publications

With respect to a game-bird hunting-preserve business, it is important to remember that to be successful one should strive for outstanding customer service, have a competitive pricing structure, and focus on a quality environment for working dogs. A quality environment for working dogs and concentrating on the needs of handlers is of paramount importance. Preserves offer extended seasons where this can be accomplished under more controlled conditions that a public wildlife area. Outside people who criticize the ethics or merits of preserve hunting do not usually understand how this very specialized market is served.

A hunting-preserve business primarily generates its revenue from people who own hunting dogs and are intent upon "getting their dogs on birds." Great dogs develop from exposure to birds in the field under training and hunting conditions. The important thing to remember is that this business is about hunting upland birds with dogs. They compose perhaps the entire base of your repeat customers and your "field marketing staff" who will spread word of your business to like-minded clients and their friends and family.

The bird-hunting by non-dog-owner clients also is a part of the business. These usually are guests of members and 'walk-ins" who want an outing with a family member or to introduce a friend or family member to hunting or hunting dogs. They may be one-time clients or turn into repeat clients if they have a particularly positive experience and a friend or friends with gun dogs who can guide for them. Most preserves have dogs and handler services for an additional fee.

Initiating a preserve business is not difficult; just remember that no matter how long any of us chase upland game or work with game birds, either as a business or a sport, there are always new things to learn and things on which we can improve. With attention to detail, knowing your customers and delivering a quality package to them, it is possible to create an outstanding, sustainable and very enjoyable business venture. In the following pages we will discuss the fundamentals and particulars of preserve businesses, profile several successful ventures and provide two example enterprise budgets that cover the costs associated with two different hunting-preserve models.

Game-Bird Preserve Business Development Guide

Part Two: Creating a Great Business

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Getting Started

In general, it has often been repeated in books, magazine, Internet articles and in university MBA classes that there are six basic steps to successfully marketing any product:

- Define your market.
- Learn about your market.
- Know the benefits of your product to your market.
- Advertise to your market.
- Teach your market about your product (advertise the benefits of your product).
- Capture your customers and keep them coming back.

Actually, it is better to consider these six things as stages or logical progressions within a formal marketing plan that is part of a dynamic (reviewed and ever-evolving) business plan. Any business should have a business plan. Before you even get to that point, however, you should develop a simple feasibility study to see if this business is right for you. This can be very simple. Take a pad of paper and turn the previous six points into questions on to a blank page, then answer them to the best of your ability. Jot down notes; these are your brainstorming work-pages. The questions will look something like this:

- How do I define market? (Who is it?)
- How can I learn about my market? (Who are my contacts; who can help me?)
- What are the unique benefits of my product in this market? (How do I fit in with the competition?)
- How will I get the word out about the operation?
- How will I develop my market for my product?
- How do I reach and sustain the client base that particularly suits my operation?

Of course you have to produce a product, so, if you are starting from scratch you will have to develop an example enterprise budget of rough expected costs and revenue generated from a given number of clients over the course of the season. Revenue projections for the first year should be very conservative. Consider sustained gradual growth and how this affects the profit line, as well as how you could start small and grow the business:

- What stuff do I need to do this?
- Initial and ongoing costs of operation?
- Revenue generation? (Most preserves in the Midwest have “down months” where early-season hot weather and mid-winter severer weather may limit activity. Sit down with a calendar and try to figure out how many clients for how many weeks it is possible for you to service on your preserve during a typical season. Run best- and worst-case scenarios. This also should also give you some ballpark idea on how many birds you could go through in great, typical and lean seasons.

There is one final question, and it is a big one:

- Am I and my family situation suited to running this type of business? If so, why? If not, why? (This is a serious question. If your spouse or partner or family is not 100% committed to your vision, you may have serious problems down the road when the usual hiccups and growing pains of the venture put some pressure on your life.)

ROI (Return on Investment)

Eventually, one should estimate Return on Investment (ROI). One of the best ways to do this is to employ the DuPont Model. With respect to game bird operations, "The DuPont Model for ROI for a Pheasant Operation," (http://cdp.wisc.edu/Management.htm) from the McFarland Pheasants Workshop, University of Wisconsin at Madison, March 2010, prepared by Kevin Bernhardt, UW-Platteville, Center for Dairy Profitability, is an outstanding resource.

The Big Idea

This business is about people wanting to work their dogs on live birds. It is about dogs and owners. The "hunting" is part of that thing; this is not some simulated wild-bird hunting experience. Actually, a good preserve experience can be even more challenging with respect to fair chase. Quality habitat and quality of service to gun-dog owners is what this business is all about. Many highly successful western bird-hunting ranches blur the two by augmenting their wild populations with released birds. It seems like a truly wild experience to the client, but habitat is may be well stocked prior to the clients hitting the field. For you, the preserve operator, this game is about return clients who renew memberships and bring guests. In this business, success depends on selling memberships and renewals. Consistent return-members are almost always gun-dog enthusiasts.

Memberships and renewals are critically important. Before you judge that as commercially self-serving and blatantly capitalistic, consider that memberships, paid well before the season opener, guarantee a certain amount of operating revenue to cover pre-ordered birds, habitat management, bill paying (insurance, feed) and similar overhead costs. Almost every decent preserve has a membership policy; it helps with business planning. However, membership rates and client services for the initial fee vary considerably from one operation to the next.

Most, but not all, preserves also service "walk-in" non-member clients at roughly twice or more the going rate for members. Walk-ins tend to be non-dog-owners who have a dog-owner friend, or the casual bird-dog owner who wants a pre-season warm-up. If you have members who are obviously going out of their way to bring guests and other paying clients to your doorstep, be sure to find some way to acknowledge their patronage and assistance in sustaining and growing your business.

Defining the Experience, Communicating the Impact of the Business.

Remember, as a preserve operator, you are marketing an environmental experience. For example, Michigan's hunting preserves are credited with preserving 72,032 acres of open space and farmland with high-quality wild game habitat (http://www.michiganhuntingpreserves.com/members/hunting-preserves). This is true of every state that has preserve operations and similar types of managed hunting ground. The natural and improved habitat not only provides food and cover for game birds, it is a valuable set-aside for all species of game and non-game wildlife.

Rick Ludt, president of the South Dakota Hunting Association recently pointed out that preserves are valuable supporters of the overall hunting industry and valuable components of any state's rural business agritourism mix. Ludt cites that more than $700,000 in preserve licenses were sold in South Dakota in 2008 (this does not include considerable revenue from nonresident small game permits and resident permits, valid on preserves, but sold by other vendors). No dollar amount for purchased birds was cited, but is estimated to have been well into the several millions of dollars. The economic carry-over to local economies could be several times more revenue.

When considering your business plan's mission statement, communications and promotions, or talking with local or state legislators, business leaders or the media, always keep in mind that you are an important contributing member of your state's rural-development, business and environmental communities.

Is it Right for You?

Take a minute to consider yourself as a preserve operator. Potts and Rourke, Nature-Based Tourism Enterprises, Guidelines for Success, Clemson University, 2000, suggest that before beginning an endeavor, one should ask oneself the following questions (parenthetical additions by the author of this article):

- Am I knowledgeable about the natural system (sport or sports) in which I plan to work?
- Do I like meeting and working with all types of people?
- Do I like to entertain strangers?
- Do I have in-depth (or the appropriate) outdoor skills?
- Am I skilled in the operation and maintenance of (the applicable) equipment?
- Am I willing to work long hours (or those necessary to: deal with the public, maintain birds and bird pens, provide clean rest-room and common areas, work with various suppliers) in difficult environments?
- Am I successful at managing and organizing expenses (undertake business planning and accounting)?

If so, then you may have what it takes to be successful in this business. If not, well, you can work on the weak points and have some fun doing it. Also, with respect to shooting-sport operations, larger or more active venues or events will require trustworthy employees who have knowledge of the sport, equipment, operational risk-management and emergency plans, and are trained to

work well and respectfully with clients. If you have people working for you, please take a minute to review liability and insurance issues. Resources can be found on the Internet at the Agricultural Marketing Resource Center (http://www.agmrc.org/commodities__products/agritourism/insurance_and_liability_issues_for_agritourism_operators.cfm).

The Business Concept

The game-bird shooting-preserve concept, where game to be hunted is reared in confinement and released for recreational hunting, originated in Europe and Great Britain and spread to this country after 1900. Interest in shooting preserves has steadily grown in recent years, largely because of the increased difficulty of gaining public access to private lands for hunting and because of increased interest in recreational hunting and shooting opportunities, particularly near urban areas. Some facilities also offer a place to participate in other recreational shooting sports, such as skeet, trap or sporting clays. In Midwestern and Plains states, preserves are often coupled with bed and breakfast lodges that form important local agritourism operations.

Bobwhite quail

Additionally, these regulated hunting situations have proven to be a viable adjunct to hunting on public lands and native habitats. Particularly in the Midwest, harsh winters and cold, wet springs may severely reduce wild game bird populations. Many studies have shown that certain game birds have an annual turnover of 70 to 80 percent, due to natural environmental conditions. These studies also demonstrate that game bird populations sustain enough reproductive capability to replace their losses if properly managed. Private bird production affords state game managers birds for release and birds for local reservoir populations.

As hunting preserves have increased, so have questions regarding the potential effects that the release of pen-reared birds could have on diseases, population genetics and other environmental concerns. Some individuals question the ethical value of hunting released species for recreation and food, and of hunting in general. In spite of these concerns, the USDA noted that 19,000 pounds of "other" poultry meat is marketed per year, usually for high-value gourmet markets.

As early as 1990, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Inventory (USDA 1990) documented that the United States was losing 4,000 to 5,500 acres of agricultural lands each day, the direct result of urban expansion. This development limits the available habitat for many wildlife species. Game farms producing birds for urban meat markets or as recreational shooting preserves assist in diversifying traditional farming operations. In some cases, they help to transform farmland into more sustainable wildlife-friendly habitat for both game- and non-game species and encourage agritourism through multi-use recreational development.

Bird farming can have other unanticipated impacts. For example, because habitat for wild quail

was diminished or destroyed by human development, hunting preserves became financially viable as a business that met the sporting needs of quail hunters and bird-dog field trial competitors. Excess quail from these operations helped to reestablish affordable and regular quail supplies for gourmet food markets. This, in turn, created a greater demand for farm-raised quail and pheasants. In turn, increased appreciation for these wildlife species spurred wild-lands protection and habitat restoration. Quail and pheasant conservation groups now contribute hundreds of millions of dollars each year to purchase land for habitat reclamation, which benefits all native species and contributes to the overall diversity of our agro-ecosystems. A situation that began with habitat loss has come full circle to habitat preservation.

With respect to economic opportunity, the U. S. Government Farm Bill Programs have allowed landowners to sign up large acreages of farmland to be planted in grass or trees under various Federal set-aside programs oriented toward habitat conservation (Conservation Reserve, Wetland and Forestry Reserve). In some areas, particularly the Plains region, game bird populations have significantly increased. This has resulted in increased hunter interest and expenditures to rural communities through direct purchases of licenses, shared federal and state tax revenue and the stimulation of related rural equipment or service ventures (electronic dog-training equipment, kennel systems, field clothing, guide services, local meat packaging and processing, meals and lodging).

Grilling outdoors

Some General Business-Development Thoughts

There are some universal business-development ideas that are expounded by successful entrepreneurs, business schools and top leadership teams. I've summarized and highly adapted a few of them based on a 2009 aquaculture publication, A Guide to Marketing Small-Scale Aquaculture Producers, from Purdue University; although it targets aquaculture, the concepts are applicable to game-bird preserves and many other agritourism ventures:

- The 4-Ps of Marketing: Product, Price, Place (distribution) and Promotion.
- Produce what you can market and grow the market. Traditionally, marketing has been viewed as selling what you have. This is backwards. Modern marketing focuses on producing what you can sell. Find where the market is, understand it and develop it.
- Your market is probably more competitive than you think. Quality service and quality product demonstrates that you care about your customers and win customer loyalty. A quality product sells itself. Your quality product is a quality experience.
- Little extras (recipes, personal contact, newsletters, putting the customer first) matter.
- See yourself as a marketer selling your operation. Assess the needs of potential "new buyers" and existing customers; communicate with them how and why you deliver a quality product that meets their needs. Do some market research; it can be as easy as asking a few questions of your clients.

- Think about making money from as many levels of the supply chain as you can. For a preserve business consider "levels" as all the steps from raising birds, guiding the hunt, cleaning birds for the customer, and then retailing a souvenir shirt, cap, locally-produced bottle of wine, sausage, or pre-packaged smoked game bird when they leave to go home.
- Have a marketing plan. This should be part of a comprehensive business plan. Neither need be elaborate, but should be road-map documents that change as your business changes.
- Do your best to develop the "slow times" of your season.
- Look for and develop the un-serviced or poorly serviced market (consider novel ways to reach your audience, or introduce your operation to potential clients who would not normally go out of their way to try it).
- If you realize that you have a niche, exploit it.
- Diversification is a great thing; however never lose sight of strengthening and ensuring the success of your core business. View "diversification" as a form of risk-management that can come in the form of changes in marketing, production, or income-generation.
- Increased scale does not mean larger profits. Profitability of a business depends on a number of factors. A smaller complimentary enterprise can be more sustainable and profitable than a huge stand-alone venture.
- Price yourself according to the value of the product that you deliver and your accessibility to the market. Attempt to deliver above-average to outstanding value-for-the dollar.
- Be sure to have a secure restrooms and changing areas where women and children can feel secure. After a long drive to your facility, it is no big deal for most men to "run back around the grain bin." It is a bit more of a hassle and quite a bit more emotionally and physically uncomfortable for women and children to do so. Also, it is great to have a place to change out of overly warm, dirty or cold, sweaty clothes. Encourage your clients to bring a comfortable change of clothes for the after-hunt visit to the local restaurant or the ride home.

Quality Habitat

Agriculture in almost every form is about the land and developing an appropriate crop on that land to ensure successful production. The same is true with a "preserve cropping system." In this case, it is all about the habitat. If you have a dull place for hunters to run dogs, the preserve will be viewed as a dull, artificial environment. If you have an interesting and challenging place to run dogs, the preserve will be viewed as a quality and fulfilling outdoor experience. One is about going thought the motions of a hunt; the other is about creating the setting for a quality hunt.

Good habitat means bird cover and food plots, as well as edge habitat that usually take the form of mowed paths. One of the best preserves that I have hunted has a grid of mowed paths through grass of different heights and varieties. Running across this grid and intersecting with one another are food plots of sorghum, millet or corn. These food plots not only provide food and additional cover, but like the mowed paths, create escape routes for birds not ready to fly, but more than willing to test dogs with evasive ground tactics.

I encourage potential clients shopping around for a preserve to take a day before the preserve season opens, call ahead, and visit with owners or managers of a few operations in their area to look over the cover. As the owner or manager of the preserve, this is your chance to put your best foot forward, have brochures on hand, get the clients contact information and make a note to return a follow-up call. If the potential client has decided on a different preserve, politely inquire as to what factors went into their decision and then encourage them to stop back to visit and consider your preserve in the future. Keep both active and potential-client mailing lists and think about how to use these as off-season marketing tools.

Some people are inundated with texts, e-mails and phone calls, while some still rely on land-line phones and paper snail mail. The degree of communication is always an interesting problem. Few preserves take the time to do even a simple newsletter, yet a quarterly e-mail, especially with a few nice photos, can be a very effective communications tool. Regular e-mails or social-media communications throughout the season can keep your operation on your client's radar. You know your clientele; take a few minutes to think about what could be the least costly and most effective communicates medium for you to regularly reach them. In this day and age, that is tending to be e-mail and social media.

Bird Quality and In-The-Field Bird Delivery

Finding "hard-flying" birds is always a potential problem for preserve operators. Attention to age of the bird and time in the flight pen is extremely important. Schooling helpers to make sure they select good strong birds, or do not overly dizzy birds when releasing them is especially important early in the operating season.

Dogs catch birds on the ground. It happens on preserves and occasionally with wild birds; however, if the client's dog catches half or more of the birds on the ground, it is a definitely a "lousy preserve day," and hardly an experience that anyone would wish to repeat.

Preserve habitat is about cover for birds and dogs. Hard-flying birds are great, but unless the birds are absolutely lousy, they are really only a small part of the total equation. Well-managed habitat that is a great challenge but not impossible to hunt, and services for dogs are what quality preserves deliver. That translates into exploiting your releases by using varied cover with ample edge habitat (mowed trails and food-plots) in which dogs can work their magic noses and birds can show off their escape and evasion skills.

The mechanics of how birds are released and the weather (rain, dew) can make a big difference on how birds fly. Just sticking them in cover may not do the trick. With pen-reared pheasants, the stronger and more mature the birds, the better; with quail and chucker partridge, how the birds are released into the habitat and attention to the day's weather can make a huge difference in the quality of the hunt experience. Sometimes chukars and quail just need habitat with some space in which to move. If you release these birds by burying them in heavy wet cover, there is a very good chance that they will not flush and fly when they would normally blast out of the cover. Having the releases adjacent to lanes, or within the rows of a food plot, will give the birds

Varied cover in blocks or strips that includes food plots is ideal for holding birds that carry over from previous hunts and providing birds with both holding and evasion options.

a chance to dry off, move from the release point and at least have an opportunity to escape a dog's nose that suddenly appears right over them.

If the fields are large and conditions are tough (warm early season, tall and thick grass); or if beginner hunters or young or inexperienced dogs are part of the mix, it is wise to discuss the logistics of release and tactics of the hunt with the hunting party. Feel free to suggest placing the birds in the central area of the field where they can be found, then flushed on to other habitat included in the hunting area. This is common with chukars and quail, but is not a bad plan with pheasants too when working a pup (and don't release too many birds) or a child (remember their limitations and choose the cover accordingly). You as the preserve operator are there to ensure that your client has a quality day afield. This is different for a child than for an adult. Talk with the parent about how they would like the child's hunt to progress. Later in the season, challenging releases of pairs and singles across the habitat will make for tired but happy and contented hunters and dogs.

Bird Species: Pheasants, Chuckars and Quail

The **Common Pheasant** (*Phasianus colchicus*) is native to Asia and has been widely introduced as a game bird. It is naturalized in Europe and most of North America. It is often known as the ring-neck pheasant; this includes the species as a whole in North America as well as a number of sub-specific color and size variants. Pheasants are highly evasive and will easily run through thick cover to avoid predators. The birds would rather evade a predator on the ground than fly (and risk attack by an avian predator). It is common for birds to run around in circles, weaving a complex scent trail to throw off a coyote or hunting dog. An experienced dog, after snuffling around in cover and realizing the tactic will loop out and around that patch of cover to find where the bird snuck out to backtrack around the threat. Due to these types of tactics and because the pheasant spends the greater part of its life on the ground, it makes an excellent preserve species and readily adapts to preserve life in rearing or flight pens. They are excellent table fare. Pheasants (hens and roosters) are priced higher than chukar partridge or quail.

There are over thirty species of pheasant, the most familiar of which is the Chinese Ringneck Pheasant, sometimes known as The Common Pheasant and The True Pheasant. Usually in the preserve business they are simply known as "pheasants." These beautiful birds originated in

China and were brought to America to the Willamette Valley of Oregon in 1881 and are now found across most of North America. They are highly adaptable birds. Wild pheasants do well in open or edge-type habitats, often nesting grassy fields, high banked creek beds, overgrown railroad tracks, waterways in corn fields or similar cover. Their food supply, which is derived mostly of scratch grains and small insects, is easily obtained in these areas as well.

Male "melanistic" (rooster) pheasants can come in several color variants from black to green to nearly white hens.

Most male common pheasants are brightly colored with red face patches and wattles, two short "horns" of feathers that are raised if the bird is alert or agitated at the back of the head, bright gold, white and grey-green body plumage, and very long, barred tail feathers. Mature pheasants are about 35 inches long (males) and can weigh several pounds. There are many exotic variants on the common pheasant and some of these are excellent choices for hunting preserves. The "green" and "black" melanistic color variants are forms with stunningly different, more "camouflaged" plumage. Some lines of these birds run somewhat larger in size. Their release can contribute to a novel and very memorable experience for preserve clients. Some related species like the Reeve's Pheasant have stunning plumage and very large size. Coupled with a very wild and aggressive temperament, they make a highly unusual and challenging preserve bird.

The **Chukar Partridge** or **Chukar** (*Alectoris chukar*) is a Eurasian upland game bird in the pheasant family. It has been considered to form a "super-species" complex along with three other closely related partridges. This partridge has well marked black and white bars on the flanks and a black band running from the forehead across the eye and running down the head to form a necklace that encloses a white throat. For hunting purposes, the species has been widely introduced around the world. Feral populations have established themselves in parts of North America and New Zealand and other locations.

Chukars are a highly-prized game bird in much of Europe and Asia, and the species is well respected as a long-established introduced and feral-population game bird in the western United States. Avian taxonomists haggle over the many sub-specific variants of the bird. The birds are native to dry and mountainous regions from Morocco and Portugal across the Mediterranean countries the Middle East and Persia well into Nepal and Western China.

Author with a chukar partridge.

The species is impossible to establish in areas with moist soils, due to a soil-transferred nematode and other diseases that can kill or seriously reduce the vitality of the bird. Rearing chukars can present some challenges. The birds need to raised and maintained off the ground on an artificial substrate (wire or slats) to prevent disease infection. Also, when startled or stressed, chicks have a tendency to mob into piles in the corners of pens, often suffocating one another. This can be prevented by fitting curved metal ramps, simply constructed from aluminum flashing or a similar material, into the corners of the confinement.

The birds are a highly-prized preserve species and wild game bird in arid regions of the American West. Midway in size between a pheasant and a diminutive quail, the chukar is a robust, hard flying bird with the ability to be both highly evasive on the ground in cover, the propensity to flush at times and in odd directions. Chukars may fly tight to the ground, or go almost perfectly vertical for ten or more yards on take-off before heading off in some lateral direction. It is not unusual for shooters to contort around or do an abrupt about-face to get a sight line on the now rapidly diminishing target. They are excellent table fare. In most preserve situations, chukars are priced less than a pheasant, but more highly than quail.

In wild open-country situations, the birds, like quail, will covey (assemble in groups). This makes for exciting hunts where "pinning" the covey (the birds tend to run), usually in steep rocky terrain, is highly demanding of man and dog. Once the covey is "busted," flushed and the birds dispersed, the "singles," single birds, are individually hunted. Eventually, the surviving birds will call to one another and reform the covey. In preserve situations birds can be released in groups, although most preserves do not have the extensive acreage to make chasing busted covey chukars a viable option. Individually released birds constitute a highly challenging, hard-to-pinpoint prize with a high probability of evasion and escape either on the ground or in the air. Again, the surviving birds will call to one another and form a covey, and can be recovered with a Johnny-house or similar recovery system.

The **Northern Bobwhite**, **Virginia Quail** or (in its home range) **Bobwhite Quail** (*Colinus virginianus*) is taxonomically a "New World" quail native to much of North America. The name "bobwhite" derives from the bird's call. There are many native wild quail species hunted in North America, but the bobwhite, due to its association with the gentlemanly southern plantation hunting of the last century, has the most distinct cultural history. The bobwhite is well-respected native game bird. Despite its secretive nature, the northern bobwhite is one of the most familiar

quails in eastern North America because it is frequently the only quail in its range. There are 22 subspecies of northern bobwhite, and many of the birds are hunted extensively as game birds.

The **Common Quail** (*Coturnix coturnix*) is very similar bird, taxonomically in the old-world pheasant family. Both *Coturnix coturnix* and *Colinus virginianus* have rich cultural heritages as well-respected table fare.

Quail are the most inexpensive and cost-effective training bird for dog handlers, so are widely reared for use in the preserve industry. Both *Coturnix coturnix* and *Colinus virginianus* and *Coturnix coturnix* / *Colinus virginianus* hybrid quail can be found in preserve bird lines. There are many subspecies and hybrid rearing lines, some of which are far better respected for their use as preserve birds than others. *Coturnix coturnix* and *Coturnix japonica* have a long history as docile easy-to-rear domestically-produced table birds. Acceptable for early-season puppy and other dog training, they are otherwise unsuitable for release compared to "hard-flying" *Colinus virginianus* lines. University researchers and game bird breeders have developed special bobwhite subspecies and lines for meat production, egg production, and hunting; these include the Tennessee Red Bobwhite (especially favored for hunting on shooting preserves), Tuxedo bobwhite, Silver bobwhite, White bobwhite, and Blonde bobwhite quail.

From a flight standpoint, individually released birds are somewhat less challenging than chukars or pheasants; they are, however, a very small target. Picking targets within a flushed covey is highly challenging. In a group, they are easier to pin-to-point than chukars, but the flush is often a whirring roar of confusion as a high number of birds simultaneously take to the air. Some preserve operators shy away from covey quail hunts in areas where the hunters may not be aware of the safety challenges associated with a rising covey. In covey situations it is extremely important that firearm safety, particularly attention to safe fields of fire and what lies beyond the target, is followed. Safety briefings and limiting the number of hunters in groups hunting conveys is highly advisable.

A quail in a flight pen. Quail offer cost-effective training for young dogs and very challenging targets for hunters wishing to finesse the hunt with "sub gauge" (small bore) shotguns.

Like chukars, the surviving birds will call to one another and form or reform a covey, and can be recovered with a Johnny-house or similar recovery system. Also like chukars, when startled or stressed, chicks have a tendency to mob into

piles in the corners of pens, often suffocating one another. This can be prevented by fitting curved metal ramps, simply constructed from aluminum flashing or a similar material, into the corners of the confinement.

Rearing Game Birds

Not all preserve operators choose to rear their own game birds. Rearing game birds, like all livestock operations constitutes an enhanced profit center if properly handled. Many operators, especially smaller preserve operators will not want the added overhead, infrastructure, hassle and risk posed by bird rearing. Other operators "rear-out" or "grow-out" birds from two-day old chicks purchased from a supplier. Others simply have flight pens and purchase flight-ready or nearly flight-ready birds from suppliers. In states where the department of natural resources and/or landowners with hunting operations constitute a sustained demand for birds, rearing can be profitable if one can match or come in under the price-per-bird of major suppliers.

In 2011, a mild winter across the nation resulted in almost all preserves, hunting ranches and state game departments run out of stock midway through the season. Little risk-management can be employed to prevent this type of shortfall. The preserve operator walks a fine line between having stock on hand and being stuck with excess stock at the end of the season. For example, hen pheasants can be held over, but one will have to feed them through the off-season. Roosters constitute a special problem in that as soon as spring breeding conditions develop, they get extremely territorial and violent, enough so that they cannot be housed with one another. In many states preserve game birds are not inspected as or considered 'poultry,' so the infrastructure for commercial meat processing is not an option for cost-effectively dealing with excess stock.

If you decide to rear your own birds with your own reproductive adults, egg incubation, etc., please consult as many resources as possible when getting set up to do so. Representative of bird species, each has its own world of specialized information. Rearing is somewhat outside the scope of this publication so will not be covered here. Various guides and enterprise budgets are available on the Internet, from university extension services or can be ordered from specialty supply outlets.

With respect to growing and maintaining birds there are number of things to consider. For feeding adults and chicks, nutritional needs change as the bird matures. For example, chicks are immediately started on a game bird chick starter. This is very different from domestic chicken starters. This is in the form of starter pellets. Chicks are attracted to green, so green paper or paper plates are helpful in getting the chicks to feed and can be collected and then discarded or burned for sanitation purposes.

After the chicks are one week old they can be started on a game bird "grower diet." With respect to pheasants, if the formulation is correct, this diet may be satisfactory up to the bird's maturity at 16 weeks. Per bird, each pheasant will require somewhere between ½ to 1 pound of starter per week; and about 10 pounds of grower, a 15-week supply, to reach maturity (4.75 pounds for hens and 5.5 pounds for roosters). Adult pheasants will require about 5.5 pounds of feed per

month to maintain condition. Throughout the grow-out period, grit to aid digestion should be sprinkled on the feed every four days, until the birds are placed in flight pens.

Flight pens are all that is required for the preserve operator planning to purchase adult release-ready birds. The best flight-pens are those with some access to shelter during the worst of winter or spring weather. Adult pheasants are relatively hardy game birds and can withstand cold temperatures if well fed and protected from the wind. Pheasant chicks, quail and chukars are less hardy and need to be housed in some type of building until flight-ready. One commonly seen rule-of-thumb is that maturing pheasant chicks require 4 to 5 square feet of space per bird. Chicken brooder houses or coops will work well for young pheasants; old hog-runs also make excellent "lean-to" shelters for mature and later-stage maturing game birds.

Flight pens should be a minimum of 6 to 7 feet high and 15 to 20 feet wide with nylon netting over the top. Some publications state that chicken wire with 1-inch spacing is satisfactory for the sidewalls. I disagree, and prefer hardware cloth or a similar mesh size for the simple reason that at the least, chicks younger than 10 days old can squeeze through the 1-inch chicken wire, and so can the smallest weasel species and small rats. The bottom of any wire barrier should be buried at least 1 foot underground to prevent it from being accidentally breached, and to prevent predators from burrowing under the wire.

Two rooster pheasants in a flight pen wearing plastic "bird blinders." Blinders are necessary to prevent tail-feather pecking where the birds cannibalistically attack high-protein tail-feather sheaths. Note the heavy cover in the pen. This operator is well known for highly elusive and hard-flying birds.

Predators are a serious, potentially catastrophic problem. The best risk-management for predators is to have birds in several grow-out or flight confinements so if one is breached, that event does not result in a total loss of stock. In the author's conversations with preserve operators, many predator problems have been discussed. The worst offenders are raccoons, opossums, rats, weasels, mink and farm cats. All can climb above wire barriers to exploit gaps in sidewall structures or, in the case of weasels and mink, to find a point where they can squeeze through the smallest of openings to get to the birds.

Various countermeasures can be employed against predators. The most extreme include trapping, shooting or poison baits (check with your state game-management professionals to determine what options are available to you; also poison baits are undesirable around high-value hunting dogs). Even if you employ these countermeasures, they may do little to prevent an initial and perhaps catastrophic onslaught by a predator. A well maintained and predator-tight structure is the ultimate deterrent. Particular attention should be given to where the top netting meets the side walls. Protection against the smaller, more nimble climbers like weasels, mink, rats and cats can be enhanced by running an electrified hot wire around the perimeter and slightly set-off from the side of the structure. Barrier protection along with live traps or kill-type traps placed in wood boxes or wood raceways that prevent access from non-target animals can constitute an effective control system.

With a well-constructed enclosure, owls and other avian predators can be more of a harassment problem than a direct physical threat. Due to their protected status, birds-of-prey constitute a problem best addressed by a state conservation officer. Rats can be a serious problem on chicks and young birds. Properly constructed enclosures, poison baits and traps can be an effective control strategy. Feeder and pen sanitation goes a long way prevent rat problems.

Quail holding pen created from a converted hog run. Upgrading this pen to exclude climbing predators presented several challenges that eventually were overcome through trial, error and lost birds.

At five to six weeks the young birds are usually moved to flight pens. Flight pens should also provide adequate cover to allow the birds "hiding" places. The more cover in the flyways the better. As long as feeding and watering of the birds is possible, load the pens with cover. Some operators use brush, others grow out hybrid corn to the parent lines producing a rabble of intertwined stalks.

Cover is useful for many reasons. If the birds have enough cover to hide or get away from other birds, there will be less cannibalistic injury during those crucial stages when the birds are developing protein-rich flight feathers. Also, for this reason, bird-blinders are useful with maturing pheasants. Good cover means that the birds will panic less when disturbed. Most operators with good cover in their pens have the most “wild-acting” stock for release. Cover also provides some shade and protection from sun, rain and hail. All grow-out and fight pens should provide some shade. Shade and hard-cover is best provided by some sort of walled lean-to structure that is part of the pen. Sun-shade material that is part of the roof netting or affixed to it is fine too, but alone has its protective limitations. Any sun-shade material should be secured to the flyway roof so it does not flap and frighten the birds.

Example of a great flight pen with outstanding bird cover. In the background is a building from a former large-animal livestock operation that offers the birds northern-exposure cover and shelter from hail, ice and snow. Note the well-overlapped, well-anchored and reinforced predator-exclusion wire below the flight netting.

Diseases that infect game birds include coccidiosis, fowl typhoid, erysipelas, fowl cholera, navel ill, avian tuberculosis, botulism and Newcastle disease. Coccidiosis is the most common disease of domestic pheasants. Evidence of infection can be blood-tinged bird droppings; death can result if the disease is not promptly treated. Sulfa drugs are an effective treatment. Mostly due to disease screening, annually updated permits are necessary if you plan to raise your own birds from eggs or ship them across state lines. Diseases most seriously impact young birds. Feeder and waterer sanitation is critical to preventing and managing diseases.

Pricing Preserve Birds

The pricing of preserve birds cannot be dependent upon how you may want to increase your ROI (Return On Investment). A preserve operation needs to price their birds and membership fees so that they are competitive with other preserves in the area. The exception to this rule are those

preserves and hunt clubs that cater to a specific niche clientele, offer lodging packages or other high-end amenities, e.g., have a golf course, luxury spa, etc.

With respect to getting a decent ROI and covering your expenditures, consider membership packages that reflect your costs and a decent return on your birds, as well as a price-break to your members rather than a higher bird price charged to "walk-in" non-member clients. The higher walk-in prices promote membership. Pre-season membership sales are where you will get much of your operating revenue for the upcoming season.

Bird prices vary geographically and by how member, non-member, group or individual packages are designed. At the writing of this document, in 2013, in Iowa, the average walk-in client retail price range for preserve birds was:

- Pheasant: $18.00 to $24.00
- Chukar: $9.00 to $16.00
- Quail: $7.00 to $9.00

Know your Client

I've found that there tend to be two types of preserve operators: bird-hunting enthusiasts who manage preserves for investor-owners (who also may farm), and farm families who have developed a preserve operation, but are not necessarily into the "bird-dog thing." The latter tends to approach a preserve business and the product they deliver (which they tend to see as birds) as yet another crop they produce, only in this case crazy people with money from town come out to pick it themselves. This is a dangerously misleading attitude to have since it completely misses the big idea: This business is predominantly centered around dog freaks and their dogs.

I am a preserve client. I like hunting preserves and have a family membership for the exact same reason that most people have one: I love working my dog. Don't get me wrong, I live for wild bird hunting, but in many states, there simply is not the length-of-season or number of birds to properly introduce beginning dogs or hunters to upland field craft. I also believed that a regular "touch up" to the dog-handler skill set is never a bad investment, and preserves allow my dog and me to extend our field season and share it with family and friends.

As a bird hunter who came to dog ownership later in life, I never saw myself as a potential preserve client; but when I sent off the deposit check for our German wirehaired pointer puppy in the face of Iowa's disappearing bird habitat and dwindling pheasant population, I knew a preserve membership would be a necessary part of the training kit. I wanted my pup to see birds, a lot of birds. He would be a tad over five-months old about the time the September-first opening of the Iowa preserve season rolled around, and it would be time for him to sniff a few feathers and for me to gauge the fruits of the countless hours of training and encouragement.

Here are a few things to think about why your client comes to you and what constitutes a quality experience. Preserves are great for working gundogs. They constitute an extended hunting season and a dog that sees a longer season, works more birds, and has more points and retrieves

is a far better dog. People who do not have dogs usually are left out of the preserve equation. This is a huge gaping hole in the preserve's potential client base. I encourage people who do not have dogs, but like to hunt and perhaps do not have ready access to good hunting land, to consider splitting a preserve membership with a friend who has one. This should be a marketing tactic when preserves promote themselves to local outdoor groups, at outdoor shows and to similar audiences.

I tell my friends, that if they are considering a preserve, to call around to their friends who actively work dogs and ask them about the preserves in the area; then consider what they like and dislike about the operations. Usually when they say they are thinking of joining a preserve, an invitation to be a guest on a friend's membership usually follows. Again, there is an opportunity here for the preserve to expand their member-with-guest traffic, which of course results in far more overall business activity.

If the preserve develops a promotion for members, for example, a punch card, computer file, etc. where each non-member visitor is recorded, and when a given number of visitors have been tallied the member is credited with a few free birds "in special thanks for spreading the word about our great operation." This and similar promotions result in the preserve seeing new faces, and the member is thanked for his time playing host and client wrangler. Introducing people to the experience also goes a long way toward dispelling negative preconceptions about preserve hunting.

If you talk to hunters in general about preserves, you frequently get the "those preserve birds are too easy," and "where's the fun in that, heck, it's like shootin' fish in a barrel" opinions. Let's face it. Most of these folks are far too cheap to spend a day at a preserve and are not dog owners or serious dog owners. If you actively hunt behind a great pointer or flushing dog, you will have easy birds and difficult birds; some birds the dog will catch on the ground. There are times when this will happen on a private farm or ranch, public hunting area, or preserve. My toughest and most enjoyable day with my dog was a solo early-season pheasant hunt on a preserve; my easiest and least fulfilling was along an amazingly productive road ditch during the regular season when two of us limited-out in about fifteen minutes behind a badly handled flushing dog. Every day afield, preserve or otherwise, is a unique outing. Like all outdoor experiences it will have its ups and downs, perfect days and less-than perfect days.

However, one thing is certain; when a client arrives at a preserve and his or her party is warmly received as welcome guests and given an exclusively secure area of prime habitat in which to work dogs, in this day and age, that constitutes immediate and considerable value.

Special Early-Season Considerations

You have a limited season for your business. It is important to try to get clients to your business when the weather is less-than optimal. Usually in the Midwest, September, the first month of preserve operation, may have the same or less than the attendance of the final week of the season at the end of March. An important consideration for any preserve-hunting business model

should be to enhance the preserve experience for the least-popular times of the season. This means increasing client activity, when clients are most hesitant to hunt.

During September and early October, the main reasons folks don't come out to play are: (1) fear for the dog's safety when the weather is hot and (2) heavy, green, scent-killing cover. An option would be to offer early season specials and similar promotions, but a far more effective strategy is to simply concentrate on delivering a quality experience. That translates into creating a safe and quality situation in which to work dogs.

Preserves open well before the regular season when the weather is warm and the grass is very green. These factors can make early-season preserve hunting challenging and problematic. They are the reasons why many casual handlers in the northern and eastern states never hunt their dogs in early-season situations. Heavy, green cover, especially if it is wet from rain or morning dew, masks bird scent; even the best dog needs to be right on top of a bird to pin it down and must have excellent tracking ability to unravel a runner's convoluted scent trail. Hot weather quickly drains a well-conditioned dog and absolutely obliterates the fat canine couch potato.

Two of the better preserves I've hunted make a point to send e-mails to their clients reminding them that they are open for the season and that some fields are "managed for early-season training." This is best underscored by a reassurance that these training fields have cover appropriate for working pups. These operators also have remote-controlled spring-operated bird-thrower (launcher) units for quail or pigeons on hand for use at no extra charge for clients training puppies to hold point and be steady-to-wing-and-shot (where the dog holds steady at the flush), and note this in early-season communications.

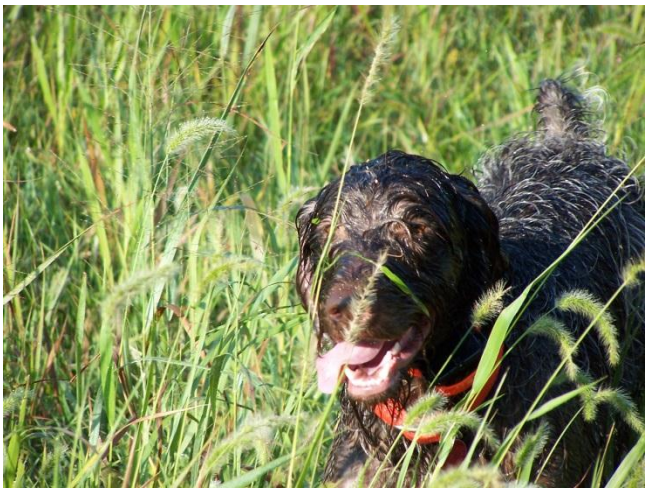
All conscientious handlers carry plenty of water for their animals or plan hunts around returning at intervals to the vehicle for water and a little down time to rest or rotate dogs. A good preserve gives the client a safety briefing and will have water, a lot of water, especially during hot weather, in the form of wading pools, or five-gallon jugs and pans placed around the field. Dogs like to cool by immersing themselves in water and then evaporative cool as their coats dry.

Black-plastic 24" x 34" concrete-mixing pans, large enough for dogs to immerse themselves, are available at most hardware retailers. They are an inexpensive, durable and an extremely effective option.

Black-plastic concrete-mixing pans, large enough for dogs to immerse themselves, are available at most hardware retailers. Aside from being a great amenity for early-season hot-weather training sessions and hunts, they can be a life-saver for an out-of-shape overheated animal.

I know one preserve operator who drives out halfway through the hunt on an ATV with a cooler of non-alcoholic beverages and chilled dog water. The hunters and dogs are encouraged to take a break. The operator also collects harvested birds so that the hunters can lighten their game bags. If it is warm, the birds immediately go on ice in his ATV's cooler. It is a nice touch. Due to service like this, this owner-operator seldom advertises for new clients and has all the loyal members he wants to run his operation at a comfortably efficient and financially-viable level.

Another excellent preserve, at which I have held a membership, makes a point to provide fresh centrally-located water resources in each field before the day's hunt, and to make sure that clients know exactly where these are located. If you have heavy cover, marking them with a flag would not be a bad idea.



On a warm humid day, lush early season cover can be stiflingly hot down at the level where dogs work. There is no nice cool breeze down in the grass and the foliage tends to retain heat and humidity.

A good rule-of-thumb is that for every five to ten acres there should be a water source. In the average-size field, I like to see water in the middle and at either end of it. Preserve operators who really know bird dogs often will tactfully mention to clients the importance of keeping dogs hydrated, then show the client where an emergency reserve of rubbing alcohol is located, and finish by providing a handout with maps of the hunting area and to the nearest vet's office. Ideally, information packets will include both canine and human-related emergency numbers. It is always a good idea to have additional posted signage with the same information and additional emergency numbers in or near the office or clubhouse building.

The alcohol is an old veterinarian and hot-weather bird-handler's trick. If a dog is in serious danger of hyperthermia (elevated body temperature due to failed thermoregulation when the body produces or absorbs more heat than it can dissipate) the result can be acute heat stroke, then death. The solution is quick and simple. The handler rolls the animal over and pours alcohol on its belly and the insides of the rear legs (where there is less coat and more exposed skin), taking care not to get the alcohol in contact with the genitalia (alcohol stings tender tissue, cuts and abrasions). The radical evaporative cooling of the vaporizing alcohol immediately lowers the dog's temperature. If a dog is clearly unresponsive or exhibits other signs that it is in serious trouble, it needs to be rushed to a vet to be iced-down and immediately rehydrated with electrolyte-balanced intravenous fluid.

Thick early season cover: heat and humidity, and the challenge of finding invisible birds.

I absolutely love early-season preserve work because of the challenges it presents. I don't always collect the number of birds I release, but my pointer can hone that magic nose and tracking and intercept ability under the toughest conditions. If I know there is a released bird in the cover, I will work and rework the cover to try to find it. The dog learns that he needs to be thorough. He learns to anticipate the evasive tricks posed by running roosters and how to untangle the deceptive scent fields they weave. The dog also gets used to me directing him to likely coverts and develops trust in me as I understand more of his behavioral nuances. As fall progresses and the grass dies back, each hunt gets better and easier for him. By the opening of the regular season he is coffin-nail tough and sharp as a tack. He anticipates my whims, works off my little whistles and hand signals. At a glance, I know what he's thinking. After this kind of tune-up, either a preserve trip or wild-bird outing is usually a fantastic day afield for the two of us and our guests.

Some hunters who have tried preserves may have had early-season birds that did not fly because it was hot and the morning grass was wet with dew. Chukars and quail are notorious for not flying when released in wet grass. They are reluctant to flush and tend to run rather than fly. This is disappointing for pointing-dog owners. For this reason, on hot and heavy-dew or rainy days, I talk with the preserve manager and ask for a field with shorter cover, and if wet or heavy cover is the only option, I'll skip the chukars or quail and release pheasants, then give them some time to recover and acclimate before I begin to work the dog.

Don't feel bad about suggesting alternative release strategies to the client. You are there to increase the quality of their experience, not keep your mouth shut and ensure their failure. This can be best summed up by a few simple practices:

- Discuss with the dog handler how difficult they want the hunt to be (dispersion of birds including the setting of doubles or coveys, height and penetrability cover).
- Make sure there is abundant available water for dogs (and perhaps hunters).
- Gauge the difficulty of the habitat and accordingly plan the bird release (need to be on top of this, weather [dew] can make a big difference on how those birds fly).
- Make sure that the birds are "strong fliers."
- Ask if there are any special "needs" in the group. (Children or beginning hunters should not be assigned the most challenging cover; young children should have a non-gun handling adult as their personal safety officer. Call that person their "guide.")

- Keep groups small, unless it is a driven shoot or the group has a preserve guide to ensure safe large-group staging. If possible, split large groups and stage them in different fields or at different times.

Northern Cold-Weather Issues

Like any conventional farming operation, preserve operators are at the mercy of the weather. There will be times when extreme cold or heavy snow will impact the business, perhaps for weeks. This is where promotion and targeted e-mail communication may generate some traffic. Snow may be dealt with by using an ATV to break some trails, creating a lot of small blocks of cover. A warming house or clubhouse is a great respite from the weather, helps to make up for hardship in the field, and can add to the ambience of the outing. Of course, if it is dangerously cold or there has been a massive snowfall, operation obviously is out of the question.

Cold weather and heavy snow present unique challenges for hunters, dogs and preserve operators. Various aspects of winter operations, including prolonged shutdowns, should be considered as part of any business- or risk-management plan. A comfortable changing area, like the one here at Doc's Hunt Club, where the hunter can get out of sweaty cold clothing for the drive home or relax with friends can be a huge selling point with potential clients.

Check your average weather pattern and see when you should try to schedule use of some of your other assets for things other than serving your hunters. This may be a time of year when your clubhouse, full-service accommodations, food, corporate meeting area or overnight accommodations can help to pick up some of the income slack. How about groomed cross-country ski trails so that you can consider yourself a multi-use facility? Consider some kind of "hard-core" or "polar-bear" promotion, for example a snowshoe hunt or a one-hour challenge type of hunt competition where the releases are localized in the same area for each team.

Some Notes on Flushers and Pointers

Dog owners have their opinions and preferences. Each owner, in their opinion, has the best breed and individual dog in the world. The truth is that a preserve operator sees a wide spectrum of capabilities between individual dogs, breeds and handlers. In general, any experienced well–trained dog and handler will be successful. The person who rarely gets their out-of-shape house-dog afield may have a very different experience.

This is where a good preserve operator takes a minute to ascertain the capabilities of his client and the client's dog, and confers with the client so that the client can get the most out of how the birds are released. For example, many flushing breeds, since they do not 'pin" the bird with a hard point, if they work too far from the handler, can "wild-flush" or "bust" birds out of gun range, resulting in a lost bird. This is hardly the fault of the preserve operator. For example, flushing dogs are far more effective if worked into the wind, so how the hunter approaches the cover or how the cover is broken up into smaller units to hold birds may help to minimize runners and wild flushes.

High-performance pointers may tend to range out and cover a lot of ground, this may result in them missing birds especially if the handler aggressively works the dog and fails to adequately allow the dog time to work out the challenges posed by evasive birds. Again, this is hardly the fault of the preserve operator. If this handler returned to the preserve office, disappointed by not finding his or her birds, there may not be much the operator can do to convince the client that the birds were there. It helps to stress that this is hunting, not simply shooting a target. Preserve birds in good cover, like wild birds, under conditions favorable to the bird, can be a highly challenging and evasive quarry.

Risk Management

Standard operating procedure throughout the industry is to offer a safety briefing and require some orange clothing and a signature on an activity waiver. PLEASE NOTE: Waivers are presented in this document in Part Four, Appendix 1, Appendix 2, and Appendix 3. These examples are available at the Agricultural Marketing Resource Center (AgMRC) on-line at:

- http://www.agmrc.org/media/cms/indemnityexample1_13D5B50B19104.pdf
- http://www.agmrc.org/media/cms/indemnityexample2_66A0CC4776380.pdf.

The waiver and either a small-game license or single-day preserve license is necessary for operations in most states.

Statistics show that hunting preserves and clay-target shooting venues are extremely safe operations. They usually are attended by seasoned shooters who consider safe gun handling the hallmark of a true sportsperson. The average shooter is well versed in range-safety procedures and will routinely correct others if any unsafe behavior is observed. Of course, nothing should be left to chance. PLEASE NOTE: All employees should be well versed in firearm safety through a certified state hunter-safety course or national firearms training program. These programs are usually available from local instructors, as well as through on-line resources. Regular training and refresher courses should be part of an operation's risk-management planning.

With respect to risk management, it is important to consider all safety and liability issues and plan for them with a written risk management plan that has been reviewed by your insurance provider and your attorney. There are many insurance providers who handle the specialized insurance needs and risk-management planning associated with shooting venues and hunting preserves. They can be found on-line and through printed directories. Of note are The National

Shooting Sports Federation (NSSF) and The National Skeet Shooting Association (NSSA) and similar industry advocacy groups who have associated insurance providers who work with their affiliate-members at reasonable rates. These include The North American Gamebird Association (NAGA). Established in 1931, NAGA is the non-profit professional industry organization. For more than 76 years, members have led the way in improving methods of game bird production and hunting preserve management. Information is available on their website.

Indemnification release forms should be backed up with highly-visual prominently displayed temporary (event) or posted (permanent venue) signage. For example, verbiage should include:

- Eye protection required, and hearing-protection also required on clay-target ranges.
- Firearms should always be pointed in a safe direction.
- When transitioning between hunting zones, clearing any obstacles or when around vehicles or loitering parties, all firearms should be unloaded with the actions open so that they can be visually checked as "safe." All guns will remain open and void of cartridges at all times, except when the shooter is actively working birds.
- Encourage clients to have the gun out-of-the hands and unloaded when taking a retrieved bird from a dog.
- Continually reaffirm that the gun's safety is engaged in the ON position while moving within the field.
- Finger off the trigger and alongside the trigger guard until the bird is flushed.
- Any client who acts in an unsafe or discourteous manner as so deemed by preserve staff or fellow hunters, or is observed using drugs or alcohol, may be asked to leave the preserve, potentially forfeiting fees.
- Responsible post-hunt alcohol use for non-drivers permitted in designated areas after all firearms have been unloaded, cased and stored for transit.

Additional risk-management safety planning should include perimeter "no trespassing, shooting range" and "licensed shooting preserve" signage, and employee training should include emergency equipment and procedures. Fire-suppression equipment and first aid kits should be visible and readily available with the nearby posted emergency and non-emergency numbers for local emergency services and law enforcement.

Accidents big and small happen with every business operation. All training should include first-aid and CPR training. Please note: Shooting accidents are highly unlikely; however, with our aging and predominantly out-of-shape population heart-attack and stroke are all too common, as is dehydration and heat-stroke at during hot-weather activities. For these reasons, any agritourism venture of any type should have risk-management plans that include first-aid and CPR training for managers, operators and field staff. Do not approach this training from a "what-if" it happens possibility; consider it a "when" it happens likelihood.

Finally, the Little Things

A few details can help you cover a few bases to turn a bad day for your client into the reason that client will be a repeat customer:

- Communicate that you value your client.
- Have ammunition in several gauges and loads available for those who forgot their ammo at home, as well as have some extra "loaner" safety-orange vests on hand.
- Have simple on-site handouts for the hunt and quality printed brochures about your business for clients to pass on to friends.
- Have an area for hunters to relax after the hunt, bird-cleaning facilities, and changing rooms.
- Many preserves host dog trials and training workshops. Discounts on these events usually are extended to all clients on the operation's mailing list.
- Warm beverages or soup, free or for a reasonable price are great for a little post-hunt relaxation.
- Have cool stuff to sell, yours and from other local businesses. You are part of the buy-local scene; support businesses you like and encourage their staff to support you.
- Consider a thank-you event, post-season communication, or a thank-you drawing for a gift where each visit by the member or client counts as an entry into the contest. Some preserve operators have events like a pre-season summer client-appreciation grill-out and clays shoot; or a spring open house, perhaps with a speaker, food or similar "pull" to bring in clients to mix and talk. Well done, this can be a solid incentive for your clients to renew memberships.
- Some preserves offer hunter-safety classes, Becoming an Outdoor Woman programs, off-season outdoor-education workshops, and host clay-target shoots and tournaments. Consider partnering with Pheasants or Quail Forever, Safari Club International and similar organizations that have funding for educational outreach. Local hunter-safety instructors are another underserved group. Many preserves offer off-season member access for dog training and summer pond fishing. These are all great ways to generate interest in the business and provide additional value to your clients.
- Put in a good word for the little local eatery, and be sure to have your clients mention that the preserve recommended the restaurant. Restaurants are great places to start and magnify positive local word-of-mouth buzz about your business.

I like preserves for accelerating the learning curve when new canine or human hunters are introduced to the sport. A private environment where there is game, and the client can concentrate on developing the charges in his or her care, is well worth a monetary investment compared to slogging miles of public ground before finding the first and perhaps only bird of the day. Often overlooked by preserve operators is the fact that their businesses usually help to make mediocre dog handlers into far better handlers who become more enthusiastic about participating in the sport.

This is an important selling point for any preserve operation. If clients are aggravated by a particularly serious dog-training problem, you can offer them a list of contacts and services provided by local professionals. If a handler is willing to ask for and be open to advice, the preserve is a great place to meet new friends, learn about training clubs, and get a lot of free and very useful handling tips.

This also is true for preserve operators. Experienced guns and handlers like to talk about what they know. They share their thoughts because they honestly want you to enjoy the experience at the level they have devoted much of their lives and a good portion of their income to attain. Listen to them and consider what has worked for them on your preserve, what they like, and seriously consider any problems or inconveniences they experienced.

As a preserve operator, these handlers are your specialist "field salesmen." They sell your operation by word-of-mouth at their local gun clubs, place of business, or when they bump into a friend at the local hardware store. If they are active in Pheasants or Quail Forever, are hunter-safety instructors, or prefer certain breeds of dogs, these are all things you should note in your records. If the person is a gun or gundog-writer for national or regional magazines, works in the agritourism industry or state rural-development, is an officer with one of the conservation advocacy organizations, works for a major local or regional sporting goods store, or is one of the hot-shot trainers or clays shooters in the area, this is really your person. For example, active clays shooters are especially poised to sell your operation. They are present at one or more venues every week for most of the non-hunting year, they talk shooting and hunting every day, and usually have a wide range of friends who know them and respect their judgment.

Your very own specialist "field salesmen" are members of organizations like Pheasants Forever, Quail Forever and the local hunting dog groups who sell your operation by word-of-mouth at their local gun clubs, place of business, or when out with friends. In this photograph, noted national sporting writer Larry Brown hefts a nice preserve rooster. This hunt with the author ended up being mentioned in two national magazine articles.

Your client field salespersons, just like managers in the seed, veterinary-pharmaceutical or implement business do a lot for your business. Consider gifting your active and enthusiastic members with a thank-you card and a shirt or hat embroidered with your logo. Logo clothing generates conversations and interest in your preserve. This sets up your active "salesperson" member to sell your operation by telling a good story about a memorable hunt or dispelling misconceptions about preserve hunts. Keep good records of what you do for promotions, and be sure to check with your accountant to see what expenses you can legitimately claim at tax time.

There are few things as fulfilling as operating a safe, sustainable, profitable business that gets people outside and enjoying life. The more we learn, the more deeply we appreciate the dogs,

birds and every other wonderful aspect of upland-game hunting. After all, any upland experience is not really about birds, it is about spending precious moments with friends and family and enjoying the outstanding performance of a great-working gundog; something a great preserve-operator never forgets.

Game-Bird Preserve Business Development Guide

Part Three: Profiles of Successful Preserves

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Baker's Wildwing and Angling Adventures

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Often a business venture is a second career, purely something in which a person enjoys being immersed on a daily basis. This is definitely the case with Denny Baker, who has created two businesses or as he calls them, "post-retirement hobbies," that singly would be more than enough of an adventure for most entrepreneurs; one, a natural-reproduction aquaculture operation that produces several species of fish for stocking programs; the other, a unique seasonal preserve-hunting business.

Denny Baker grew up on a farm in Iowa and attended Iowa State University where he graduated with a degree in Animal Science. He then joined the U.S. Air Force where he served as a T-38 jet instructor pilot. After he completed his military commitment, he returned to Iowa to be involved with the family farm. Denny retired from Kent Feeds, Muscatine, Iowa, in 2003 after serving as District Sales Manager and Consumer Products Sales Manager. Nineteen years ago, Denny purchased the property where the hatchery is operated. The quail- and pheasant-hunting-preserve operation began seven years ago and is operated seasonally according to Iowa Department of Natural Resources Regulations from September 1 through March 30.

Quail and Covey Quail Hunting

Denny Baker spent a great deal of time in Texas while in the armed forces. In Texas, he found quail and dove hunting a relaxing and highly enjoyable way to spend time in the outdoors and around pointing dogs. Many years later, after returning to his home state, this would eventually lead to a covey-quail-based member-driven hunting-preserve operation on his property in central Iowa.

Early in the evolution of the business, the Bakers raised their own bobwhite quail (*Colinus virginianus L*). The

quail-production operation began as the Baker's son's 4- H project. As Denny said, "My son needed a 4-H project and it seemed like every kid was doing the usual sheep and cow thing, so I said, hey, how about quail?" Soon Denny's son's project became an interesting hobby for Dad too. His son's well-developed quail-rearing system soon became a hobby business that over time became Dad's quail business.

In time, the game-bird-production side of the quail business was sold to Malloy Game Birds, Marty Malloy, State Center, Iowa, who continues to operate it as a side business and has increased annual production to over 18,000 bobwhites. The Bakers and other hunt club operators in Iowa continue to regularly and in some cases exclusively use these hard-flying birds for their preserve-hunting operations.

It was twenty years later that the quail project took on more of a life of its own. The avenue to explore was to develop managed habitat that would be optimal for released birds that also would be challenging cover for hunters, and thinking about models for a hunting-preserve operation. Rather than raise his own birds for release, Denny purchases adult quail from the same proven flock of hard-flying birds that he and his son started 27 years ago. The game preserve continued to evolve as a complementary use for land entered into the USDA Conservation Reserve Program.

As she moves in on her pointer locked on a hidden quail, this female client negotiates the challenging bird-holding areas of Baker's intense mixed-habitat combination of inter-planted food-plots filled-in with different seasonal grasses and dotted with brush piles.

The preserve harvests only male "ring-neck" pheasants if customers are interested in pheasants or trying for a mixed-bag during their outing. Denny Baker's pheasants are wild and pen-reared stock. That said, the covey-quail hunt is the primary emphasis of the preserve and represents a unique niche marketing opportunity in the "pheasant country" of Iowa and the numbers reflect this; hunters harvest approximately 250 pheasants and 3,500 quail per year at Baker's Wildwing Adventures.

Providing first-class hunting experiences is Denny Baker's most important goal for his business. The preserve has 590 acres of land that can be utilized for hunting. However, 95 percent of the

hunting is done on approximately 60 acres of intensively mixed food plots (field corn, popcorn, milo) and warm- and cool-season grasses that provide good cover for birds and safe and exciting hunting for hunters and their dogs. Denny allows only one group with a maximum of four guns in the preserve at any time. All hunters must participate in a safety briefing before heading to the field. Denny checks on the hunters every hour and a half or so and brings fresh water and snacks for both hunters and dogs.

Baker's Wildwing is primarily a membership-oriented hunting preserve. The hunt club will have approximately 35 "named" members (including corporate members) who can bring up to three guests for half-day or full-day hunts during the fall 2008 winter 2009 hunting season. More than 200 people hunt on the preserve each year. The average harvest rate for released birds is 50 to 60 percent, although it might range from a low of 25 percent to a high of 100 percent depending on the marksmanship of the client, the performance of the client's dogs if they are used, weather conditions and other factors. Most hunters bring their own dogs, but guides with dogs are available if sufficient time is allowed ahead of time to make the necessary arrangements.

Denny Baker also has his own dogs that he will provide to some parties by prior arrangement. The Bakers have Vizslas and a Belgian Wirehaired Griffon. The Vizsla is classified as an AKC Sporting Group Gun Dog; they are natural hunters endowed with an excellent nose. The breed originated in Hungary with ancient breeds that included the Transylvanian hound and the now extinct Turkish yellow dog, and modern breeds that include the German Shorthaired Pointer, Spanish Pointer and English Pointer. In Hungarian, the name "Vizsla" means "pointer." The Vizsla is a fine pointer and retriever and for many of the Baker's clients, the opportunity to hunt behind a brace of these lively, gentle-mannered companions is yet another fine aspect of the Wildwing Adventures experience. The Griffon is a huge-hearted lovable mop of a dog, and an excellent pointer that is slow, methodic and works close to the handler. This breed is a great choice for working with children, beginners, older clients or those with mobility problems, rather than a high-energy Vizsla.

The "covey" quail hunt is the primary emphasis of Baker's preserve and represents a unique niche marketing opportunity in the "pheasant country" of Iowa.

Any hunting preserve operation is at the mercy of many factors. The ice storms during the winter of 2007 into 2008 and the wet spring record rains of 2008 was a nasty one-two punch from Mother Nature. The statewide index of pheasant numbers for 2008 is 31.6 percent lower than 2007 counts and 37 percent lower than the ten-year average; and the second lowest statewide

pheasant count since the bird survey was standardized in 1962. It could be concluded that these low natural bird numbers would result in increased interest in preserve hunting, but this is not necessarily the case.

Most hunters who visit preserves are members who are dog owners, who do it to have access to birds and habitat in which to work their dogs. The other hunters tend to guests of these hunters. Fluctuations in natural bird populations do not tend to influence preserve hunts but do influence out-of-state travel to neighboring states.

Economics, however, does impact preserve hunting. The national/international financial crisis of fall 2008 caused most people from all walks of life to carefully consider their recreational-dollar expenditures. Within Iowa this is being noticed by some of the preserve operators. However, for many clients, these types of factors reinforce the "bang-for-the-buck" that a good preserve delivers in time and money savings compared to out-of-state travel or spending a lot of time chasing wild birds in habitat where they simply do not exist. Almost all of Baker's advertising and marketing is through word-of-mouth referrals from satisfied customers.

Denny has always attempted to give his friends and clients the perfect outdoor experience. One of the ponds on the property has a beautiful family-friendly retreat area that consists of a picnic area with sand beach, shelters, grills, restroom facilities and a fish/game cleaning station. All preserve members have access to this facility for a once-a-year family or business event. In 2011 and 2012, Baker began to see requests from preserve clients to contract for the use of this beautiful natural setting for rural weddings.

Bensink Farms Hunting Preserve

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Operation

Bensink Farms Game Preserve is located 30 miles south of Des Moines in Pleasantville, Iowa. The preserve is a working row-crop farm and presents one of the most natural settings for a "typical" Midwestern bird hunt. The farm has gently rolling landscape of fields, ample timber and five ponds spread over 520 acres. Bensink's preserve has yearly memberships and is also open to the public with purchase of day or half-day use membership. The upland game bird-hunt experience my include quail, pheasant, chukar or combination of these species. This operation runs the first of September until the last day in March.

Bensink Farms prides itself on quality habitat and the open-country feel of a large working farm. Clients have the option of different types of habitat and terrain with varying levels of difficulty, as well as off-season training ponds and training fields.

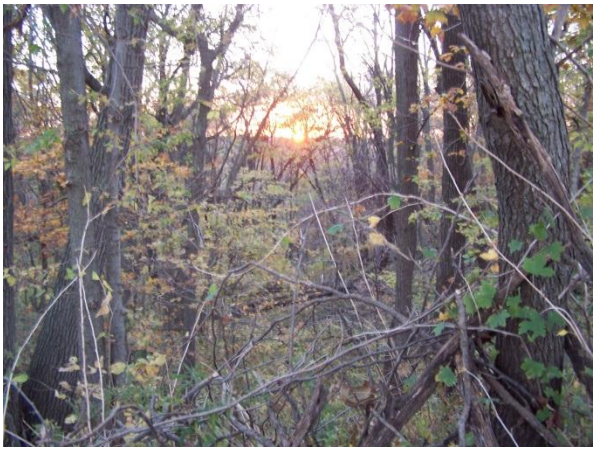
Jack and his father Henry got out of hog-production agriculture about 10 years ago. They realized that it was time to do something else after losing money for several years and not getting the enjoyment out of farming that they once experienced. Jack had raised birds for a long time prior to starting the preserve. Additionally, he wanted to start something that his stepson would also enjoy. The preserve was a good fit for three generations and a lifestyle that all could enjoy. Jack, his father Henry and chief guide Ryan are all well-versed hunters and have great people skills. This strongly carries over into the success of the operation.

The preserve services include half or whole day hunts, for walk-in clients and those with sustaining memberships. Dog and guide services, bird cleaning and catered-in meals are available by request. Clay-bird shooting is an option for individuals and groups. Dog-training fields and ponds are available year-round. Members have access to the clays fields, can scratch hunt (hunt for birds left by other hunters), can bring up to three friends, fish the ponds and train dogs. As is the case with most preserves, most clients are dog owners who want to work their dogs or old dog owners wanting to hunt with a dog who then take advantage of guiding services.

The operation is beginning to look into challenge hunts and similar activities that foster competition and group camaraderie. These are popular at some preserves and hunt clubs, and are popular with a small but enthusiastic segment of the membership.

The farm is on a flyway leaving a large federal reservoir. In 2010 and 2011 Jack and his employees began construction of a large, very deep pond in the center of farm. This pond has a dock and will have waterfowl-hunting blinds for first-come first-reserve use by members as an added member benefit and membership incentive. All waterfowl hunting on state, federal or private land is federally regulated and members need to have the proper licenses and stamps; and it is dependent upon federally established daily opening and closing times. The land surrounding the pond has been landscaped in food plots and forages attractive to ducks and geese. Jack's concept is to have "surf and turf" hunts where hunters can hunt wild waterfowl in the early hours, utilizing their dog's retrieving skills, then finish up with some pointed or flushed dry-ground preserve birds. Additionally, the pond's considerable depth and structure will make it a great fishing pond for lunker bass and big crappies in the non-hunting months.

Jack Bensink is extremely active in youth-education and community-service outreach projects. Throughout the year, the preserve hosts youth hunts, has hosted local hunter-safety classes, events for Pheasant Forever, the Iowa DNR and hosted alternative-agriculture field days that focus on game birds and small-scale on-farm alternative energy for 4-H, youth, and church groups. Recently, Jack and the team developed a handicapped-access vehicle modification for taking a wheel-chair handicapped hunter into the field behind pointing dogs.



Heavy creek-bed cover offsets quality habitat and contributes to the challenge of hunting the farm. "Wild" tangles of almost impenetrable cover crisscross the property providing bird-holding sanctuary habitat for quail coveys and released non-harvested birds. Like many preserves, clients can harvest other "scratch" birds they encounter as a no-cost benefit. These areas of cover also are a haven for deer, birds-of prey, songbirds and other wildlife.

Business Development

When Jack and Henry transitioned from pigs to birds they had to develop adequate habitat for the birds. Initially this was the existing grassy waterway system in the crop fields. Soon this evolved into conservation set-aside acres dedicated to bird hunting and dog training. This then transitioned into more fields with complex food plots. Currently the operation uses waterways and terraces, once the crops are harvested, and multiple fields set up with different types of cover. Thickly wooded creek beds cut across the gently rolling farmland, together with large areas of grass and buffer strips there is ample bird-holding and escape cover. The quality of the habitat coupled with the very wild nature of Jack's birds results in demanding hunts were 100% success is seldom the norm.

Jack and Henry Bensink. Note the bird holding box on Jack's vehicle.

Predator control is a continual challenge. As with most preserves, the yard and bird pens are a predator magnet. The operation continually works to ensure that all grow-out and flight pens have wire and netting systems that exclude predators. This includes the use of electric-fence "hot"

wires to deter predators from climbing pens to exploit soft netting and the use of live traps to remove particularly determined problem animals.

The 2011-2012 season was problematic for all preserve operators. The mild winter meant that Jack easily sold a regular season's worth of birds by mid-season. His operation then purchased birds before the stocks of local and regional suppliers were exhausted. All-in-all this meant that it was a banner year for the business; but it also mean that the preserve had to turn away member-clients mid-way through the season. This type of problem may have no solution. The alternative of over-producing birds is not viable for several reasons. Having to hold, feed and then either release males or try to hold the hens over through the summer months is economically not worthwhile. Also, male birds get extremely territorial and aggressive in the spring. When confined together in flight pens they will destroy one another.

The Bensink's currently are erecting a new 150-foot by 100-foot building for raising chukar partridges. The floor is going to be slatted to help prevent coccidiosis. Jack has alternative energy for his farm. There are large solar panels, a wind generator and a collection system for the rain. He also has regularly worked with the Leopold Center and Extension and assists as well 4H and Pheasants Forever. Although initially Bensink Farms preserve was primarily for the dog-enthusiast and hunters wanting a "farm-experience" type hunt, in recent years the business has seen a sharp rise in corporate memberships and special group hunts for businesses, politicians and other wishing to host visitors at a quality and unique outdoor experience. Much of this activity has resulted from the word-of-mouth recommendations of satisfied members.

Doc's Hunt Club

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Operation

Doc's Hunt Club, Adel, Iowa, is a bird-hunting club that has private memberships and is open to the public by reservation. The club also has a clay target range and offers trap, occasional sporting clays, and "5-stand" shotgun-sport opportunities. The game bird hunting experience may include pheasant, quail or chukar partridge, or combinations of these species. The hunting operation runs from September 1 through March 31. Clay target shooting, corporate- and nature-retreat activities are available year-around by reservation.

Business Development

The hunting operation is primarily oriented to the needs of individuals who purchase sustaining yearly memberships. Many members are competitive pointing-dog field-trial competitors, breeders or handlers, and corporate clients from nearby Des Moines, who pay the yearly membership fee to work their dogs over live birds.

Several different one-half or full-day packages are available to non-members. Although there is no set bag limit, usually a given number of birds are planted per hunter several hours before the hunt to ensure a bird presence within that group's active area of the club's grounds. Additional birds can be planted or harvested at a set rate. For individuals or hunting parties who do not have their own dog, the services of several professional handlers and their dogs are available by arrangement. Bird cleaning and packaging is available for a small fee.

The habitat holds a large number of released birds from previous hunts and prior seasons, as well as natural-reproduction wild pheasants and quail. From a sporting perspective, although this is a private preserve, the hunting experience differs little from the "early-season" bird hunting typical of most of the Midwestern Plains States, where "young of the year" roosters are most likely to be taken in the first week or so of the regular hunting season. Encounters with "wild-flushing" "experienced" birds, well-versed in escape and evasion, is as common a part of the experience as is hunting in most regular-season field situations.

The 450 acres of rolling short-grass and tall-grass prairie immediately adjacent to Iowa's Raccoon River is professionally managed to provide near perfect upland bird-hunting habitat. Native prairie is interspersed with food plots of various grain species. This habitat holds a variety of game- and non-game birds and other wildlife and offers ample opportunities to see deer, hawks, any number of different song bird species and the occasional osprey or eagle.

The office and clubhouse building has restrooms and changing facilities as well as an area to meet and to relax. A full-service lodge is available for overnight guests, business meetings, family or group gatherings. The lodge has four private bedrooms, fireplace, TV, kitchen and a large private deck for grilling and entertaining. It is well suited to overnight parties of eight individuals and to day-use conference and dining groups of up to sixteen individuals.

The author's late wife Terri after her very first bird hunt guided by master field-trial dog trainer Collin Allen with his champion German shorthairs. This was a life-changing experience for the client that directly resulted from Doc's management's constant focus on customer service and satisfaction.

Corporate entertaining and similar arranged outings are available. These hunts or outings are tailored for businesses or individuals wishing to sponsor a pleasurable outing or team-building activity for customers, employees or friends. For example, a day's activities could involve a morning sporting clays shoot, a noon barbeque, an afternoon pheasant hunt or non-hunting nature outing, and finally dinner and an overnight stay in the lodge. The staff can arrange off-site connections to area golf courses, tours of the scenic and historic covered-bridges of Madison County, Iowa, as well as trips to baseball games, a casino and race track, high-quality local restaurants and nightclubs. A toll-free number is available for booking corporate and special-event shoots.

The sporting clays course at Doc's Hunt Club was designed by European Singles Sporting Clay Champion and British Olympic Shooting Team member John Woolley. John Woolley is considered one of the world's premier course designers. The course winds its way around a pond and through massive oak trees. The design provides a very scenic, private and challenging sporting clay experience. All target throwers on the course are controlled using state-of-the-art radio-remote units. There are 12 unique shooting stations that range from ground-bounce targets to those thrown from 40-foot target towers to stations where targets are engaged over water. These include the "teal" and "rabbit" stations enjoyed by most avid clay shooters. Beginner, intermediate, advanced or master level courses can be configured by arrangement. Organized league and open-registration public shooting events are regularly scheduled.

At one time, the Doc's Hunt Club business was known as Doc's Kennels. The Doc's Kennels breeding and training program was one of the most famous and respected in North America. Shorthair and wirehair pointers were regularly featured in Gun Dog Magazine, The Pointing Dog Journal and in several nationally syndicated TV programs. Doc's is no longer in the dog business; however, Doc's Hunt Club is affiliated with the Boone Valley Kennel (German Shorthair pointing dogs), New Virginia, Iowa; Red Baron Wirehairs (German Wirehair pointing dogs), Adel, Iowa; and several other highly respected dog breeders and handlers.

History, Ethics and Outlook

During the early part of the last century, for-fee hunting operations evolved as a convenient outlet for wealthier individuals interested in a day in the "sporting field" but not willing to invest the time and expense to train and maintain hunting dogs, gain access to private land, etc. Over time, this changed to where the operations were primarily oriented to the needs of individuals, usually men having yearly memberships, who were competitive pointing-dog field-trial competitors, breeders or handlers.

Today, hunt clubs serve a role to alleviate the strain of population pressure on public hunting grounds, by offering extended seasons and days in the field where no other hunting parties will be encountered. These operations also are playing an important role in the transitioning of young and first-timer hunters, increasingly women, in a somewhat more controlled environment. In many states, hunting clubs are regular centers for Youth in the Outdoors, Becoming an Outdoor Woman and similar outdoor-education and outdoor-experience programs.

Nice collection of roosters from Doc's. The club has diverse habitats from forested river bottoms to grass fields interspersed with cover and food plot strips to training fields where the cover is mowed with intersecting lanes.

The American hunting tradition traces its roots to the historic "long-hunter" explorer frontiersman. Americans, born and bred in the last century with traditional open-access to most public and private lands, associate a wild "freedom" with a day in the field. Although the thought of hunting on a "preserve" or a "game farm" is anathema to many, particularly working-class hunters, who are traditionally unwilling to pay for access to land, this attitude is changing. Private land is increasingly difficult to access, and public land is increasingly congested due to burgeoning urban encroachment and rural housing development.

Unlike North America, Europe and most of the rest of the world has always had some sort of managed hunting and it is a respected part of their cultural traditions. For centuries, only available to the elite, hunting was on private estates where game managers policed the grounds, managed habitat, and supplemented game populations with reared animals. Hunts were (and still are) conducted under the control of a ghillie, JaegerMeister "hunt-master," or similar professional manager or guide. In most parts of the world, access by individuals for hunting (or fishing) is available only on private property for a fee and by arrangement.

In my conversation with Russ Brown, manager of Doc's Hunt Club, the reality that America was progressing toward the European model, because of habitat loss and urban encroachment due to population pressure, was underscored. Russ stressed that hunting is an American tradition for many families, and a resurgent interest among young people and older women is opening increasing opportunities for hunt clubs to transition from offering a hunting experience to an outdoor experience. Most clubs now offer hunting as one aspect of their operation. Most are some combination of bed & breakfast, lodge or retreat, small sporting goods retailer, game-bird farm for flight-ready birds (for release) or specialty meat production, and shotgun-sport center for sporting clays, 5-stand, trap or skeet shooting.

Doc's Hunt Club is the second permutation of this business. The original operation, Doc's Kennels, was owned and operated by a local medical doctor. This individual focused his attention primarily on dog breeding and training programs, and although it became one of the most famous and respected in North America, this business focus ultimately led to the failure of the operation. For the last several years, the business has been successfully and profitably owned by three partners who emphasize a quality outdoor experience, whether hunting, clay-target competition or a corporate retreat.

For a farmer interested in diversifying his or her agricultural operation to incorporate a game-farm or hunt-club type of operation, it is important to consider several things. First of all, develop a realistic business plan that outlines the phased development of the new venture. This would outline realistic goals for the operation at 1-year, 2-years, 5-years, etc. An integral component of any outdoor-oriented tourism business plan is to develop comprehensive habitat and client management plans. It is extremely important to concentrate on developing a quality experience for participants; this must include procedures for dealing with clients, client relations, and any necessary employee training. This type of business also requires a thorough understanding of all applicable permit, lease, insurance and liability law requirements and issues.

Hunts Point Sportsman's Club

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Operation

Hunts Point Sportsman's Club is located about 20 miles north of Brainerd, Minnesota, in the picturesque Brainerd Lakes area. The club has food, lodging and a small but exclusive real-estate development. The operation has sustaining yearly memberships and also is open to the public by reservation and the purchase of a day-use membership. The club has a clay-target sporting clays range for shotgun-sport enthusiasts; a wetland for waterfowl hunting is being created, and a limited number of housing estates is being developed on parcels adjacent to and overlooking the wetland. Facilities and activities include the clay-target shooting areas and a 50-

target sporting clays course, a corporate retreat center and dog-training activities are available year-around. The upland-game-bird hunting experience may include pheasant, quail or chukar partridge or combinations of these species. In-season hunting for wild grouse and migratory waterfowl is available by arrangement. The upland-game-bird hunting operation runs from September 1 through March 30.

Hunts Point Sportsman's Club was opened by owners-managers Jim and Peggy Wills in 2001. The main goal of the operation is to providing guests with a true hunting experience and exciting, unique shooting opportunities. Hunts Point has more than 600 acres of mixed habitat. Instead of releasing pheasants in a small field for hunters, the managers developed a "small farm" concept with large fields and meadows, more consistent with traditional Midwestern bird hunts.

Centered on the property is a challenging sporting clays course and a grove of trees used for European Tower Shoots. European Tower Shoots are a unique clay-target shooting experience, and one in which many shotgun sports enthusiasts have never participated. Most shooters who try it find it highly enjoyable and want to return to try their hand at it again in the future. Part of the Wills' goal of providing an exciting and unique outdoor experience incorporates their passion for the Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever. These diminutive, very lovable dogs are a rare and unusual breed. The Wills wanted their club to offer the finest facilities for dog training and field events, and somewhat inadvertently it has become a destination for sporting writers, videographers and bird-hunting and dog enthusiasts interested in a chance to profile or hunt behind this unique little retriever.

For-fee Hunting Operations: A Short History

During the early part of the last century, for-fee hunting operations evolved as a convenient outlet for wealthier individuals interested in a private day in the "sporting field" but not willing to invest the time and expense to train and maintain hunting dogs, gain access to private land, etc. Over time, this changed to where the operations were primarily oriented to the needs of individuals, usually men having yearly memberships, who were competitive pointing-dog field-trial competitors, breeders or handlers.

Today, the hunt club serves the role of alleviating the strain of population pressure on public hunting grounds by offering extended seasons and days in the field where no other hunting parties will be encountered. These operations also are playing an important role in the transitioning of young and first-timer hunters, increasingly women, in a somewhat more controlled environment than would be present on public land during the regular hunting season. In many states, hunting clubs are regular centers for Youth in the Outdoors, Becoming an Outdoor Woman, American Wilderness Leadership School programs for grade-school teachers and similar outdoor-education and outdoor-experience programs.

Business Development

Hunts Point Sportsman's Club is well represented on their website. A particularly thoughtful feature of the site is a page that includes a map and detailed driving instructions to find the operation. The Wills promote an inclusive attitude toward clients and visitors, and on their website, openly invite people to visit their operation and consider the sporting experience.

When Jim and Peggy Wills started the business in 2000, one of their immediate objectives was to renovate an old barn into the clubhouse and lodge where most of the guests could stay. This was a massive construction project and involved pouring new concrete floors, making major structural improvements, designing guest rooms and creating a spacious downstairs area. This area is used for banquets, regularly scheduled dog-training classes and other functions. There also is an additional guest suite in a nearby farmhouse.

With respect to bird hunting, the club offers several pricing options and special packages. These include a number of options:

- One option is a "European Shoot." In this package, the price varies depending on type and number of birds released. Usually, 10 to 25 birds are released per gun, dogs and handlers are provided, as is lunch, bird cleaning, and an afternoon "scratch hunt" to pick any birds missed in the morning. The birds typically released are pheasants and chukars.
- A "Bird Hunt Special" package is based on a per-person price but requires a group of four individuals. This includes two half-day bird hunts with ten birds (6 chukars, 4 pheasants), bird cleaning, one night's lodging and includes the daily membership fee for non-members.
- A "Weekday Bird Hunt Special" is a per-person option and is limited to Monday through Friday hunts only. This package includes five birds per person (3 chukars, 2 pheasants), and the daily membership fee is required for non-members 17 and older.
- A "Weekend Bird Hunt Special" is a per-person hunt option and is limited to Saturdays and Sundays. This includes five birds per person (3 chukars, 2 pheasants), and the daily membership fee is required for non-members 17 years of age and older. In those months when state fish and game regulations close upland-game-bird species to hunting, pigeons can be released, an attractive option to dog trainers wishing to extend their training season.

A 24-hour notice is required for reservations. For individuals or hunting parties who do not have their own dog, the services of professional handlers and their dogs are available by arrangement. An interesting aspect of the operation is its resident kennel of Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retrievers. This is a rare, small-statured and very friendly hunting dog. The perhaps once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to hunt behind one is, in itself, a unique and special experience for many clients.

An ongoing project is the ecological conversion of close to 200 acres of club property into wetland. This project adds to the club's natural-resource diversity as well as creates some potential new options for clients. Most hunt clubs focus only on upland birds; wet-land waterfowling is a very different proposition since it involves federally managed migratory waterfowl, and the available hunting season is rather limited. The Wills recognize this but see the wetland as a means by which to develop other hunting- or dog-related and lifestyle-option profit centers for their business.

One of these is an associated real-estate project. This project resulted out of the immediate need to circumvent a highly obtrusive project planned by a developer on adjoining land. Hunts Point purchased the property and created a new project. Directed toward wildlife and nature enthusiasts, Hunts Point Wildlife Estates is a planned "common-interest community" with hidden streets, walking trails and a commitment to share in appreciation of the habitat and wildlife. The three- to ten-acre lots ($44,900-$93,900) include beautiful views overlooking the wetlands, and hidden approaches and home sites within a climax-growth large oak and maple forest. Carefully drafted covenants are in place to preserve personal privacy and the natural environment. Included in any purchase is a five-year membership to Hunt's Point Sportsman's Club, which is immediately accessible by private cart path.

Another aspect of the wetland portion of the business model is support for the Marsh and Meadows Hunting Retriever Club. This operation is geared toward waterfowl hunters, their retrievers, and retriever training and is associated with the North American Natural Hunting Retriever Club (HRC). At weekly training sessions, members work their dogs out of duck blinds and field blinds in realistic hunting conditions. Training sessions help to perfect the dog's natural retrieving ability and is a pleasurable outdoor experience for dog owners, friends and family. The club's motto is "Our hunting season never ends; this is where you and your dog can hunt all year long." Of course, this aspect of the business fits in perfectly with Jim and Peggy's love for Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retrievers.

Many club members enjoy competing in nationally recognized retriever tests. Hosted by the club, these tests offer members the opportunity to test and officially score their dog's abilities. HRC testing differs from standard field trials: dogs are judged against written performance standards rather than against one another. Dogs accumulate points toward various titles, which describe their ability; this can be extremely important to breeders and enthusiasts working with specific blood lines or who are active field trial competitors. However, there is an important difference between these field trial events and those of other associations. By judging the dogs against defined standards rather than one another, it means that there are many dogs that "win" at each of the specific events. This decreases the intensity of competition among handlers and promotes a friendly, social atmosphere that results in an activity enjoyed by a wide range of participants. This of course has a very positive impact on the perception of the club as a center for social and family recreation; additionally, it showcases the facilities, resources and personnel of the hunt club. Related events include hosting the Northern Minnesota Springer Spaniel Field Trials and similar trial events for other flushing-retrieving and pointing-dog breeds.

The varied bird habitat of the club holds a large number of released birds from previous hunts

and prior seasons, as well as natural-reproduction wild pheasants, grouse and waterfowl. From a sporting perspective, although this is a private preserve, the upland-bird-hunting experience differs little from the wild bird hunting typical of most of the Midwestern plains states, particularly those states that augment their wild populations with pen-reared flight-ready birds prior to the opening of the regular hunting season. Encounters with "wild flushing, experienced birds," well-versed in escape and evasion, is as common a part of the experience as is hunting in most regular-season field situations. On especially warm or windy days, the experience can be every bit as challenging as those encountered on any wild bird hunt.

Hunts Point Sportsman's Club is committed to providing their members with outstanding facilities and hunting experiences. Within the past two years, the club has added an additional 155 acres to their hunting areas. Management of this land for optimal habitat resulted in an $85,000 pond, tree establishment and prairie restoration contract to a noted prairie-restoration company. The Wills' commitment to continually improve the habitat for pheasants and other wildlife, through plant succession and similar ecological design, has necessitated a dynamic and evolving habitat-management plan that is an integral component of their business plan.

Another profit center encompasses the various dog-related obedience classes and advance dog-work master-class workshops. These are frequently conducted by nationally recognized professionals. Prices range from $100 or so for one-day per week, six-week obedience classes, to around $1,000 for specialty "live-in," continuous four-day master classes. Hunts Point's regular instructors include: Audrey Peterson, ranked 7th in 2006, in AKC Top Dogs Obedience Competition for all AKC-recognized breeds; and George Hickox, George Hickox Bird Dogs, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, one of the nation's top pointer and retriever trainers and well-known outdoor writer. Hunt's Point has its own resident expert in co-owner Peggy Wills, who regularly runs affordable and regularly scheduled classes and coordinates other training and special events.

Barriers to Success and Unexpected Problems

Hunts Point Sportsman's Club is a second career choice for Jim Wills, the co-owner-manager of the operation. Wills, a corporate attorney from Minneapolis, decided to develop a business that was enjoyable for him and his wife and was something that could be a source of enjoyment for the public as well. When asked about the "biggest hassle" during the development of the Hunts Point Sportsman's Club business, Jim's answer was immediate and straightforward: permits. These included conditional use permits for everything from aspects of the hunting operation to the building renovations. The amount of time and frustration involved in finding out about required permits, contacting local and state agencies, and applying for and processing the applications were absolutely necessary but very little fun.

As it turned out, all of these hassles and hurdles were negotiated in due time, but the overall process resulted in no small amount of head scratching. Jim suggests that someone else developing this sort of business may not have the advantage of his prior experience. "I had the advantage of being an attorney with 35 years of experience in dealing with planning and zoning. It is just a matter of knowing ahead of time what the governmental agency with jurisdiction over your area will expect."

A second source of frustration involved the typical challenges posed by renovating old farm buildings into modern lodging and meeting facilities for the operation's over-night guests and visitors. Whether attempted by a homeowner or a business start-up, the situation is similar. It can involve any number of meetings with designers, architects and contractors; various permit applications and inspections; and numerous cost overruns and schedule delays. Jim suggests that this can best be handled by careful prior planning. "To deal with the renovations, you need to sit down and plan what you hope to create from your renovations. You also need to plan the steps on how you are going to get there. More importantly, you must have someone to help and support you through the project. One person would have a hard time keeping up their enthusiasm through the many times the end seems impossible or too far away."

What about partnering with other groups and organizations? Is that something of value; are there problems with donations? "We regularly donate items to Ducks Unlimited, Pheasant Forever and Ruffed Grouse Society. We had some bad experiences when we donated pheasant hunts to different causes; we found that not everyone appreciated what they had received. Some folks were rude and not particularly good sportsmen while hunting at our club. As a result, we now usually donate rounds of sporting clays to worthy causes. We also have youth events here for the local chapters of Ducks Unlimited and the Minnesota Deer hunter's Association."

A very successful recent business promotion involved Hunts Point hosting the first-ever Governor's Deer Hunting Opener, November 6 to 8, 2006. (Minnesota counted about 500,000 licensed deer hunters in 2006). Governor Tim Pawlenty, Secretary of State Mary Kiffmeyer and more than 100 media and special guests took part in the event, which was intended to highlight deer hunting's very positive impact on the state's economy, its role in Minnesota's heritage and its traditional emphasis on the values of conservation, stewardship and camaraderie. The event was entirely funded by sponsors. The two-day event began at a nearby cooperating business, Cragun's Conference and Golf Resort's Big Buck Community Dinner. The next day, the governor hunted on nearby private land, while about 100 members of the media and special guests participated in hands-on activities at Hunts Point Sportsman's Club. These activities included presentations by Department of Natural Resources officials, air rifle and bow ranges, a black-powder shooting display and demonstration, tree-stand safety talks and a habitat management tour.

In summary, for farmers or ranchers interested in diversifying their agricultural operation to incorporate a game-farm or hunt-club type of operation, it is important to consider several things. First of all, develop a realistic business plan that outlines the phased development of the new venture. This would outline realistic goals for the operation at one year, two years, five years, etc. An integral component of any outdoor-oriented tourism business plan is to develop a comprehensive habitat management plan. It is extremely important to concentrate on developing a quality experience for participants; this must include procedures for dealing with clients, client relations and any necessary employee training. This type of business also requires a thorough understanding of all applicable permit, lease, insurance and liability law requirements and issues.

Three Hills Hunting Preserve

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Green-phase melanistic rooster pheasant. These large, aggressive and highly evasive birds are a specialty of Three Hills Hunting Preserve.

Operation:

Three Hills Hunting Preserve located in Bernard, Iowa and is open-access to the public, but does offer a cooperate rate based on the purchase of 100 birds. This operation is a second-career retirement business of a married couple. The preserve has a nice building for bird cleaning, three dogs, guide services provided by the operator, and in- and out-of-state license sales. The game bird hunting experience is through mixed heavy-grass cover and food plots over strongly rolling hills and picturesque limestone ridges interspersed with creeks and woodland. Birds available for release include pheasants, quail and chukar partridge. The operators handle all rearing of their birds from eggs through mature release-ready birds. The hunting operation runs from September 1 through March 31.

TOP: Ron Schwedinger (forefront) with two satisfied clients washing up after cleaning birds. The preserve has a spotless new building dedicated to off-season incubation and hunting-season bird cleaning.

BOTTOM: One of five large hoop-style flight pens at Three Hills. Note the relative lack of vegetative bird cover. Some structural cover is present for younger birds and for foul-weather protection.

The Schwedingers purchased the property in 1995. The decision to enter into the business was based on the local decline of natural-reproduction pheasants, coupled with the demise of a game-bird business that was run by a family member. After close examination of the economics of the business and learning from the mistakes made by the family member, they decided to start their own operation. Both being retired and taking great pleasure from wildlife and outdoor experiences, the preserve allows the operators to share their enjoyment others. It is particularly important for them to extend the experience to their grandchildren.

Breeding and hatching birds for the preserve along with ducks used in retriever trials are important non-hunting season activities. The preserve has been used for some pointing-dog trials, but has been told that cover is too heavy for field-trialing. The owners have opted to keep as much heavy cover as possible for hunting-season clients rather than develop areas for field trials. Ponds are available for occasional retriever trials.

Business Development

For the operators, the preserve was a tremendous financial layout to create. When asked for advice for perspective preserve owners the answer was, “Have a huge pocket book.” This preserve has a large investment in new buildings and state-of-the art hoop-style

flight pens, hatching and brood pen facilities, and all of the related feeding and watering systems. The overall brooding and acclimatizing area alone is approximately 30 by 128 feet in three sections of a dedicated building.

Currently the Three Hills Preserve has five hoop-style flight pens which are a hoop structure design. The netting-covered flight pens are approximately 300 by 50 feet. Their flight pens have relatively little vegetative cover compared to other preserve operators, but can be configured for birds at different stages of maturation.

The Schwedingers consider the business a 24/7 operation. Winters are especially challenging even if they are mild. The operators cite a major concern is keeping bird waterers unfrozen. If the birds don't have water they peck at one another to get blood for moisture and protein. This can get severe enough that some birds will be disfigured and eventually killed.

Since this is a production operation, bird blood-testing also is required. The operator is certified to blood test his own birds for Salmonella Pullorum Typhoid (P-T). P-T is a bacterial disease which can produce significant mortalities in chicken, turkey and game bird flocks. Transmission occurs primarily through the egg but also occurs via direct or indirect contact with infected birds, as well as by other means. The vast majority of P-T infected chicks die. Chicks that survive become carriers and can infect chicks that they produce. The most common reasons to test are when one wishes to publicly exhibit poultry at shows or fairs and for NPIP (National Poultry Inspection Process) certification for out-of-state shipment.

The author's German wirehaired pointer "Archie" locked up on a large rooster green-phase melanistic pheasant on a ridge at Three Hills Preserve. The bird was only a foot in front of his nose. Can you see the bird? Habitat of this quality ensures great late-season hunts and great client experiences.

The operators learned several things from their family member's problems. One was the importance of having good neighborly relations. Adversarial relations with adjoining landowners can create a plethora of headaches. Three Hills goes to great lengths to keep open and warm communication channels with neighbors. The neighbors also appreciate hunting and wildlife and value having the preserve as a rich game- and non-game species habitat.

Several other problems the family member had with his operation resulted from trying to be too many things to every client. For example, that operator also ran a bed & breakfast operation and restaurant in association with the preserve business. To cover additional labor and amenities, hunting package and bird

prices were raised, eventually contributing to the downfall of the operation. The Schwendingers decided early on to stick to the basic delivery of quality birds in quality habitat and keeping prices competitive and affordable for their clients.

The preserve had a terrible fire on August 2, 2011 which destroyed 3,200 birds and a lot of equipment. Although many birds were lost, 4,000 birds survived. The loss did create an income gap that impacted replace birds and lost rearing-facility equipment. Insurance paid for replacement of a building and underscored the need to consider specialty riders and umbrellas for insurance coverage, and development of a comprehensive risk-management plan.

Game-Bird Preserve Business Development Guide

Part Four: Enterprise Budgets and Additional Information

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Bird-Hunting Preserve Enterprise Budgets

Introduction

Enterprise budgets are simple economic models that are generated by including the most-up-to-date or regionally appropriate costs for the resources needed to deliver the product and/or service, against the prices charged for the product and/or service. Where possible, one should include any and all small or hidden costs, e.g., taxes, fuel, promotional expenditures. These models help to answer several questions. The most important is, within the confines of the model, "Is this enterprise profitable?" If so, one can identify the strongest profit-centers of the business. Conversely, if not profitable, one can identify areas of low return or where inefficiencies drag down the operation.

Good enterprise budgets estimate the out-of-pocket cash needed to run the enterprise, including not only direct costs, e.g., feed prices, fuel requirements, netting; but indirect cash costs, principle and interest payments on loans, insurance and taxes. The models help answer the big question, "Can I meet my operating obligations to keep this business afloat?" but also, with some experimentation and creative thinking, can suggest ways to increase profitability, ways to develop the business over time, and ways to enter into the business and become profitable with less overhead and up-front expense.

If you are interested in rearing game birds there are many enterprise budgets available on the Internet by state university wildlife extension specialists and private enthusiasts; for example Penn State University has simple but great starting budgets for game birds and mammals, http://pubs.cas.psu.edu/FreePubs/pdfs/ua263.pdf; Cumberland Game Farm & Hatchery (http://www.lakecumberlandgamebirds.com/Ringneck%20Pheasant_5.htm) has an excellent one on raising pheasants for meat or resale.

CAUTION: No one enterprise budget will fit your operation. The two that follow are simple budgets that reflect the start-up and operating costs for operations that evolved from working farms. They are presented to suggest ball-park estimates so that you can create your own template from which to construct a feasibility study and comprehensive business plan that best reflects your operation.

CAUTION: Because there are many publicly available enterprise budgets, many of them may be decades old. The costs of goods, services and fees may not reflect current realities. Any enterprise budget should be carefully reviewed and used as a starting point for your own research. The following two enterprise budgets were developed in good faith from interviews with two preserve operators previously profiled in this report.

PLEASE NOTE: Some operators use "Johnny house" pens that recover released quail. These units protect the birds from predators in the evening and in some cases can be set to open again in the morning allowing the birds to disperse. They also are employed by conservationists wishing to restock wild quail populations. Plans for the do-it-yourselfer are available in bird- and hunting-supply catalogs for $5.00 to $6.95 or so. Complete units can be constructed for under $100.00; commercially available wire pens run from $40.00 to $80.00. Adding electronic

call and door-release equipment can considerably increase the cost. Neither operator profiled for the following example used Johnny houses, but one did use recall units to hold quail in the release field to keep them out of a heavily wooded creek bottom. Electronic recall units are available from mail-order suppliers for $90.00 to $150.00 depending upon features and manufacturer.

Some operators and conservationists wishing to restock wild bird populations employ a unit called a "surrogator." These home-made or commercially available units (The Surrogator, http://wildlifemanagementtechnologies.com) house chicks from just after hatching through maturation to release. Surrogator-type units allow the birds to be tended without ever seeing humans. Also, the birds imprint on the location of the unit as "home" and tend to stay near the release point. This is extremely important with species like the common pheasant, well known to have "happy feet" and widely range from release sites. Commercial ready-to-run units range from $1,600.00 to $3,200.00 depending upon capacity and features. These units are most applicable to individual landowners and small hunt clubs and less applicable to high-volume preserve use. They are, however, useful in maintaining a population of resident "wild" birds that may help hold released carry-over birds on the property.

Neither operator in the following preserve budgets purchased commercially-available flight pens. CAUTION: Flight pens can be an incredible expense and should be considered in all risk-management planning. All operations should have extra bird netting and mounting hardware on hand, should ice, snow or some other weather or predator-related calamity ensue. The best insurance against catastrophic loss is to have multiple smaller pens rather than one or two large ones. A single large pen with all of your flight-ready stock is a recipe for disaster—ask any experienced preserve operator. Flight pens can take on a myriad of designs. For pictorial tour, type <FLIGHT PEN PHEASANT> into any Internet browser and consider the image results. Commercial hoop-type buildings can be purchased for a range of prices. Netting, fencing and other supplies are available from most farm-supply retailers. Want to do it yourself? Visit other operators with flight pens and discuss their cost to build them, and the pros and cons of their designs. Several examples are available on-line including, "How to Build a Flight Pen" from the Game Bird Forum:
http://gamebirdforum.com/FortheGameFarm/BuildaFlightPen/tabid/284/Default.aspx.

Preserve Enterprise Budget 1.

This operation is a sole proprietorship. The preserve opened September 1, 2002 with 430 acres available to hunt. The land is a combination of owned and leased property. Forty acres of warm and cool season grasses were planted in a very unique layout to give the preserve the special habitat that birds and hunters both appreciate. Fifty brush piles were placed strategically in the area to provide additional cover and protection for game birds.

The operation is a public preserve, but it primarily membership oriented, with annual turnover very limited. The preserve also is somewhat unique in that they only ever have one group of hunters in the field at a time. The negative associated by only having one group is that it significantly limits income potential and bottom line. The positive is that it allows the

owner/manager to direct 100% of his attention to the needs of the clients using the preserve during that scheduled period. Scheduled hunts usually are split between either a morning or afternoon hunt.

Gross income for the 2011/2012 season: $30,000.00.

Advertising and Promotion: "Word of mouth" based on the reputation (quality of service; quality of product) of the operator is the most effective advertising for the business. The operation had a simple website that was recently improved.

- Signage: The business use portable metal signage placed it at the entrance of the headquarters building when clients are expected; since the business does not encourage "walk-in" traffic, the business does not advertise the fact that it is there. The sign has a bird dog and several bobwhite quail on it as well as the day's date. The sign also frequently is used for photographs of the hunters with harvested birds after the hunt. Photographs are provided to the member/s and/or guests and added to a collection on display on panels in the headquarters building. Cost of sign - $200.00. Annual cost of film and processing ~$175.00.
- Print (cards, brochures): – none.

Hunting & non-hunting member promotional benefits: Members can reserve a day during the summer to have a family outing at the "fun pond," a 10-acre body of water that is stocked with largemouth and small-mouth bass, crappies, bluegills, hybrid bluegills, yellow perch, and walleyes. There is a screened 16' by 24' shelter, with electricity, tables, chairs, and grill for cooking. Also available are two flat bottom boats, a paddle boat, two docks, a lighted horse shoe court, and restroom facilities. Miscellaneous items:

- Popcorn: $20.00.
- Beverages and snacks for hunters: $275.00.
- Ziploc freezer bags and plastic trash bags: $200.00.
- Paper towels: $55.00.
- Promotional clothing: New members receive a complementary hunter orange cap with the name of the preserve and business telephone number printed on it. Caps are also available for purchase. Cost of cap: $8.00.

Production and Rearing: This operation releases approximately 2,500 to 3,500 Bobwhite quail and 250 to 350 Chinese Ringneck pheasants each year. The owner's policy is to never harvest a hen pheasant even though the DNR allows it on licensed hunting preserves. The owner's policy extends to releasing adult pheasant hens in the hope of having a positive impact on depleted local populations that have undergone several years of severe natural hardship.

This business began as a quail production program in 1980 (prior to becoming a hunting preserve) and hatched approximately 10,000 quail a year, providing several-thousand flight-ready birds to other hunting preserves within the state. The quail flock was sold to a friend in 1990 and continues as a thriving business providing birds to dog trainers and preserves. The preserve business currently purchases flight-ready quail from the same flock that they initiated in 1980.

By purchasing flight ready quail and pheasants, this operation does not have a need for incubators, hatchers, or heaters, nor does it have the expenses related to rearing and "grow-out" facilities. Since they no longer have a laying flock for fertile eggs for hatching, they do not have any expenses related to blood-testing the birds or similar expenses.

Feeders and waters for adult birds: This operator found an individual who raised chickens and no longer had a need for outdated, but usable feeders and watering units in his inventory. The operator was not charged for simply hauling away the old equipment. It was essentially obtained for no charge.

Winter water heaters: This operation requires two units, one for each flight pen (one for quail; one for the pheasants) ~$20/flight pen; $40.00 total. Electricity for the water heaters during the winter months is included in the building lease expense (see below).

Cost of birds: Total cost for quail and pheasants purchased for the 2011/2012 hunting season: $11,885.00.

Bird facility: The operator leased an old pole barn in 2002 that is one mile from the preserve headquarters, and installed flight netting as a ceiling in the pole barn.

- Lumber: Mostly used recycled lumber and some new material ~$50.00.
- Hardware: Netting rings and clamping tool ~$20.00.
- Netting: ~$300.00.
- Construction labor: Not applicable. (The operator did all of the work himself and did not estimate his time or the value of his time.)
- Electrical (switches, lights, receptacles): Mostly recycled used equipment ~$20.00. (The operator did all of the work himself and did not estimate his time or the value of his time.)
- Annual lease for the building: ~$100.00. (This includes electricity for the water heaters during the winter months.)

Birds on hand: Quail: The operator keeps from 100 to 200 quail on hand throughout the hunting season and relies on the supplier to carry birds over the winter for the operation at his production facility. The operator picks up birds at the supplier's farm as needed. Birds picked up late in the season cost more than earlier in the season since the supplier has feed and other expenses associated with maintaining the stock. Pheasants: The operator can house up to 100 birds at a time. His goal is to have used all pheasants by January 1st of the season.

Production and Rearing:

- Feed costs for the 2011/2012 season: ~$750. This operator purchases a 27% protein supplement and mixes it with cracked corn. The ration is suitable for both quail and pheasants. PLEASE NOTE: In this example, the feed costs are relatively low. This is because the operator maintains only the minimum number of birds on hand for a month or two of operation. Feed cost is significantly less than if the operation were feeding all of the birds required for a full seven-month hunting season.
- Bedding: Wood shavings: ~$65.00

- Blinders for maturing pheasants: All birds have blinders when the operator takes delivery.

Dogs: This operator likes to have at least three or four dogs. He does not lease dogs to hunters; his dogs only are handled by him acting as guide. He has two Viszlas and one Wire Haired Pointing Griffon. He raised the Viszlas and purchased the griffon. The operator has over 30-years of experience training pointing dogs.

- Pups: There was income from the sale of pups that covered the cost of the Vizslas and the griffon was $250.00.
- Electronic training collars and related accessories: ~$1000.00
- Average annual veterinary/medications per dog: ~$200.00 to $300.00.
- Average annual feed/treats per dog: ~$300.00.

Dog shelters: The two walk-in dog houses were constructed from material gleaned from old buildings.

- Concrete for the runs and dog doors: $250.00.
- Construction labor. Not applicable. (The operator did all of the work himself and did not estimate his time or the value of his time.)
- Waterers/feeders: $100.00
- Professional-grade thermostatic heater units: $76.00 per dog enclosure; $228 total.
- Fencing: $800.00 (The operator did all of the work himself and did not estimate his time or the value of his time.)

Johnny House: This operator does not use a quail recovery pens.
Quail "surrogator": This operator does not use quail field-release pens.
Electronic recall units: 2 units @ $200.00; $400.00 total.

Office:

- Computer: $200.00 annually
- Phone: $400.00 annually
- Internet: $300.00 annually
- Furniture: No charge
- Custom printing: $50.00 annually

Utilities:

- Water: Not considered an expense.
- Sewage: Not considered an expense.
- Annual electricity: $300.00.
- Annual preserve headquarters building/shop heating (Propane, wood, and wood pellets) costs: $500.00.
- Annual refrigerator/freezer expenses: $300.00.

Vehicles & Related Equipment:

- Vehicle: Operator uses personal 1999 Chevy Silverado 4X4 ½ ton pickup.
- License fee for pickup: $55.00

- 2008 John Deere Gator (new-vehicle one-time purchase): $14,000.00.
- Bird transport boxes: 4 quail boxes and 4 pheasant boxes constructed by operator; cost of materials: $50.00.
- Tractor/lawnmower: New John Deere 724 All wheel Steer with 54 inch deck (new one-time purchase): $10,000.00.
- Tractor/lawnmower maintenance (annual trade with local dealer on the deck and power unit): ~$750.00.
- John Deere 50 inch tiller (new one-time purchase): $3,000.00.
- Planter/fertilizer spreader for food plots (new one-time purchase): $200.00.
- Fuel for annual habitat-related management: ~$750.00.

Food plots:
- Annual fertilizer, chemicals, and application costs for food plots: ~$1,320.00.
- Hybrid corn seed for 6 acres of food plots (operator procures at no-cost surplus seed corn from area row-crop farmers following spring planting.): $0.00.
- Grain sorghum/milo seed for 6 acres of food plots: $100.00.

Parking:
- Snow removal: 48 inch John Deere snow blower (new one-time purchase): ~$3,000.00.

Non-fuel habitat maintenance (annual)***:*** ~$700.00.

Accountant/attorney (annual)***:*** ~$200.00.

Insurance:
- Property/business (annual): $1,200.00.
- Special liability (annual): $1,000.00.

Taxes: Expenses were greater than income for the 2011 tax year.
- State: $0.00
- Federal: $0.00

Iowa 2011 DNR Hunting Preserve Permit: $200.00.

Land lease: Annual lease for the hunting rights on 510 acres: $1,300.00.

Client hunting license & tag expenses:
- Electronic Licensing System (ELS) (one-time expense): $200.
- Bird tags for quail and pheasants: $140.00.

Wages:
- Salaries: (Not applicable; sole proprietorship.)
- Bonuses: (Not applicable; sole proprietorship.)
- Employee benefits: (Not applicable; sole proprietorship.)

Preserve Enterprise Budget 2

This operation is an L.L.C. that is part of the parent farm operation. The preserve opened in 2003 with 400 acres. It has now grown to 520 acres with 103 acres permanently removed from row-crop production and dedicated to the bird-hunting operation. The land is all owned by parent farming operation, there is no leased land. The farm is a combination of set-aside conservation land, ponds, and production crop land with terraces and waterways that can be hunted once the crop is harvested.

This operator is a former large-animal livestock farmer and now greatly enjoys rearing birds. At first a challenge, the preserve began raising about 500 birds for its first year of operation, but now annually raises in its rearing facilities over 5000 birds from purchased day-old chicks. The preserve has always supplemented its birds with purchased flight-ready pheasants through an early year set-price contract with another game-bird breeder. In the last couple of years, the operation has run out of its bird with two months remaining in the season and relied on flight-ready purchased birds.

The operation is a public preserve, but it is primarily membership oriented.

Gross income for the 2011/2012 season: ~$40,000.00.

Advertising and Promotion: "Word of mouth" based on the reputation (quality of service; quality of product) of the operator is the most effective advertising for the business. The operation also has a simple website.

- Website: $1,000.00.
- Signage (The business has permanent fixed entrance signage.): ~$500.00.
- Print (cards, brochures and listing in Black's Wing & Clay): $600.00

Hunting & non-hunting member promotional benefits:

- Community-service clothing promotions: This operator does considerable community-service work for youth and handicapped individuals. He regularly hosts Pheasants Forever, Boy Scout, 4-H and local high-school groups and fund-raising events. He has caps that are regularly given away to new members, but the majority of promotional items are T-shirts, sweatshirts and caps for the youth events. Annual cost: ~$1,000.00.
- Miscellaneous promotional items (pens, coolers, magnets, etc.) over a several-year period: ~$2,000.

Production, Rearing and Cost of birds: This operation raised approximately 4,000 birds in the 2011-2012 season. The total cost for 2-day old quail, chucker and pheasants chicks purchased for the 2011/2012 hunting season is estimated to have been about $1,200.00. Bird numbers were increased to 5000 birds for the 2012-2013 season; consisting of 1,000 bobwhite quail and 2,000 chukar and 2,000 ring-neck pheasants. These birds were purchased as 2-day-old chicks at $0.65, $0.96 and $1.10 per bird, respectively. Each year this operator also contracts for 300 or so flight-ready pheasants from a local producer at $15.50 per bird. Rearing and associated costs include:

- Feed cost: $3.00/pheasant from chick to maturity. Feed cost is less for chukar partridge and quail. PLEASE NOTE: This operation produces its own ground feed mix from on-farm corn and bean production.
- Nutritional and pharmaceutical supplements: ~$200.00.
- Incubators: $900.00.
- Heaters: $600.00.
- Feeders: $1,600.00.
- Waterers: $600.00.
- Medication: $100.00.
- Blood Testing: (Not applicable; no birds were resold or left the site to cross state lines).
- Bedding: $100.00.
- Blinders for maturing pheasants: $250.00.
- Electricity: $800.00.

Bird facility: (The operator did all of the work himself and did not estimate his time or the value of his time. Labor cost noted below was for additional help.)

- Lumber: Mostly used recycled lumber and some new material. ~$300.00.
- Hardware: Netting rings and clamping tool. ~$300.00.
- Netting: ~$850.00.
- Construction labor (part-time assistance): $500.00.
- Electrical: Switches, lights, and receptacles. Not estimated. These services were installed in a series of small facility expansions using mostly recycled used equipment and on-farm labor; however, some outside electrical contracting was required.

Dogs: This operator likes to have at least three or four dogs. Between the owner and the assistant manager there usually are at least two, if not three dogs, available for use with clients. This operation does not lease dogs to hunters; dogs are handled only by the operator or his assistant-manager who usually guides.

- Pups: $400.00 to $800.00+.
- Electronic training collars and related accessories: ~$300 to $850.00.
- Average annual veterinary/medications per dog: ~$300.00 to $600.00.
- Average annual feed/treats per dog: ~$300.00 to $500.00.

Dog shelters: Several walk-in dog houses were constructed from material gleaned from old hog- and calf-shelter buildings.

- Concrete for the runs and dog doors: Not applicable. (This operator used existing pads. Commercial plastic kennel-decking is an option that costs ~$130.00 to $250.00.)
- Construction labor. Not applicable. (The operator did all of the work himself and did not estimate his time or the value of his time.)
- Home-made heaters or professional-grade thermostatic heater units per dog enclosure: $76.00 to $140.00.
- Waterers/feeders: $80.00.
- Fencing: Not applicable (on-farm recycled material.)
- Veterinary support (maintenance/non-emergency): $300.00 to $600.00.
- Food: $300.00 to $500.00.

- Estimated maintenance cost of a medium to exceptional hunting dog, exclusive of training time: $850.00 to $2,500.00.

Office:

- Computer: $1,000.00
- Phone: $1,440.00
- Internet: $600.00
- Furniture: $300.00
- Custom printing: $600.00

Utilities:

- Water: Not considered an expense.
- Sewage: Not considered an expense.
- Annual electricity: $500.00. (This operator is taking himself off the grid with a solar array and a wind-turbine generator.)
- Annual preserve headquarters building/shop heating (propane, wood, and wood pellets) costs: Not applicable: Non-heated area in corner of a metal farm building for meeting clients. Office space in home is farm-operations office.
- Annual refrigerator/freezer expenses: $250.00.
- Grain Bins: $5000.00

Vehicles & Related Equipment:

- Vehicle: Difficult to estimate. Operator uses several on-farm vehicles.
- 4-wheeler ATV: 2 vehicles @ $8000.00 per vehicle; $1600.00 total.
- Bird transport boxes: 2 constructed by operator. ~$600.00
- Tractor/lawnmower leased for special applications: ~$150.00/hour.
- Brush and path mower: $3000.00.
- Tiller for food plots and habitat maintenance (new one-time purchase): $2,000.00
- Tiller leased for food plots and habitat maintenance: $150.00/hour.
- Planter for food plots: $250.00.
- Planter for food plots: Free service from local Pheasants Forever habitat-management group.
- Fuel for 4-wheeler ATV: ~$400.00

Parking:

- Snow removal: ~$150.00.

Accountant/attorney (annual): ~$400.00.

Attorney (annual): ~$400.00.

Insurance:

- Property/business (annual): $800.00.
- Special liability (annual): $1,100.00.

Taxes: Since the hunting L.L.C is part of the greater farming operation, expenses are greater than income most tax years.

Iowa 2011 DNR Hunting Preserve Permit: $200.00.

Client hunting license & tag expenses:

- Electronic Licensing System (ELS) (one-time expense): $450.00.
- Bird tags for quail and pheasants: $200.00.

Additional Resources

Select Internet Resources and Additional Reading

- Agritourism (AgMRC) Agritourism (AgMRC) http://www.agmrc.org/commodities__products/agritourism/index.cfm Agricultural Marketing Resource Center (AMRC) background paper on agritourism. Agritourism describes the act of visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural or agribusiness operation to enjoy, be educated or be involved in activities.
- American Pheasant and Waterfowl Society American Pheasant and Waterfowl Society http://www3.upatsix.com/apws/welcome.htm Organization to promote the rights and interest of the members to keep and rear pheasants, waterfowl, and other upland aquatic and ornamental birds. The group also collects and distributes pertinent and scientific data and information relating to keeping and rearing of pheasants, waterfowl and other upland aquatic and ornamental birds by means of its magazine.
- Avian Influenza Avian Influenza http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentidonly=true&contentid=avian_influenza.html USDA - Provides fact sheets, news releases, links and guidelines.
- Agricultural Alternatives: Pheasant Production Pheasant Production http://pubs.cas.psu.edu/FreePubs/pdfs/ua263.pdf Penn State University, 2004 - This free downloadable or for-purchase print publication covers the economics, problems and considerations inherent in full and part-time pheasant farming. The six-page publication covers pheasant marketing, getting started, hatching and rearing young birds, and disease problems, and includes sample budgets and references for more information.
- Baker's Wildwing and Angling Adventures, Baker's Wildwing and Angling Adventures, Clemons, Iowa - Denny Baker has created two businesses or as he calls them, "post-retirement hobbies:" one, a natural-reproduction aquaculture operation that produces several species of fish for stocking programs and the other, a unique seasonal preserve-hunting business.
- Becoming an Outdoor Woman (BOW) Program, Becoming an Outdoor Woman (BOW) Program, http://www.safariclubfoundation.org
  Safari Club International (SCI) along with the Archery Trade Assoc., Bass Pro Shops, Browning, Cabela's, Ducks Unlimited. Federal Cartridge Co., Leupold, National Shooting Sports Foundation, National Wildlife Federation, National Rifle Association, Pope & Young Club, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Safari Club International, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, UWSP College of Natural Resources sponsor the BOW

program across the United States. Links to various educational weekends at participating hunting clubs and related outdoor educational retreats. Safari Club International; Education Department of SCIF, 4800 West Gates Pass Road, Tucson, Arizona 85745-9490; dhudson@safariclub.org; 520- 620-1220 ext. 231.

- Bobwhite Quail Production Bobwhite Quail Production, Agricultural Alternatives, Penn State University, 2002 - Includes two sample budgets that summarize costs and returns for producing quail to sell for flight birds and for meat birds.
- Bobwhite Quail for Commercial Use Bobwhite Quail Rearing http://www.poultry.msstate.edu/extension/pdf/raising_quail.pdf Mississippi State University Extension, 2001 - This publication is on production, management, with some marketing information included for those wishing to raise game birds for hunting preserves, the restaurant market or for wildlife release.
- Brush Dale Farm Brush Dale Farm http://www.brushdale.com Example of an integrated agritourism operation hunting preserve. More than 200 acres of prairie restoration with nesting pheasant, quail and wild turkey. Other recreation includes swimming and pond fishing, lodging is available. Operation publishes and e-newsletter for clients and interested individuals.
- Cannonball Company Article http://community.seattletimes.nwsource.com/archive/?date=20071026&slug=pheasant26 The Seattle Times, 2007 Cannonball Company Describes the Cannonball Company formed by a group of farmers in North Dakota who are using managed pheasant hunting as a way to increase their farm revenue and protect their property.
- Doc's Hunt Club Doc's Hunt Club http://www.docshuntclub.com Adel, Iowa - A bird-hunting club that has private memberships and is open to the public by reservation. The club also has a clay target range and offers trap, sporting-clays and "5-stand" shotgun-sport opportunities. The game bird hunting experience may include pheasant, quail or chukar partridge, or combinations of these species. The hunting operation runs from September 1 through March 31.
- DuPont Model for ROI DuPont Model for ROI (Return on Investment) for a Pheasant Operation http://cdp.wisc.edu/Management.htm McFarland Pheasants Workshop, University of Wisconsin at Madison. Prepared by Kevin Bernhardt, UW-Platteville, Center for Dairy Profitability, March 2010.
- Feeding Game Birds Feeding Game Birds http://msucares.com/poultry/feeds/bwqfeed.html Mississippi State University Extension Service, 2003 - Explains how game birds raised for meat production are fed differently than birds saved for egg production or breeding.
- Flight Pen (How to Build) How to Build a Flight Pen from The Game Bird Forum http://gamebirdforum.com/FortheGameFarm/BuildaFlightPen/tabid/284/Default.aspx.
- Game Birds (AgMRC) Game Birds (AgMRC) http://www.agmrc.org/commodities__products/livestock/poultry/game_birds.cfm Agricultural Marketing Resource Center (AMRC) background paper profile on game birds. Game birds are those birds that have traditionally been wild or hunted, but have been raised commercially for release in hunting reserves, for meat or for egg production. Commonly raised game birds include pheasants, partridges, guinea fowl, quail or squab (a young pigeon), wild turkeys, swans, pigeons and doves, peacocks, and some ducks,

such as mallards or wood ducks. Game birds are also raised for exhibit or for hobby purposes.

- Gamebirds (OMAFRA) Gamebirds (OMAFRA) http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/livestock/alternat/gamebird.htm Canadian Government agriculture search engine that lists various gamebird enterprise budget models and resources. OMAFRA, Ontario, Canada, 2007.
- The Game Bird and Conservationist's Gazette Game Bird and Conservationist's Gazette http://www.gamebird.com/ Magazine that covers the rearing of a wide range of species, as well as the marketing of game birds and eggs.
- http://www.sdstate.edu/ars/animaliss/hunting.html James E. Miller, National Program Leader, Fish and Wildlife, USDA/CSREES/NRE; Washington, DC 20250-2210
- Game Bird Raising and Hunting Enterprise Budget, http://www.agmrc.org/media/cms/Gamebirdrelhunting_55D329FF16ECB.pdf Kansas Rural Center, Sustainable Agriculture Management Guide, 2003.
- High Plains Game Ranch High Plains Game Ranch http://www.highplainsgameranch.com Nisland, South Dakota - In the mid-1980s, this cattle business diversified by adding commercial pheasant hunting.
- How to Begin and Survive a Commercial Gamebird Farm How to Begin and Survive a Gamebird Farm http://www.lelandhayes.com/pubs/begin_farm.pdf Article by Leland Hayes. Very informative and includes sample cost-budget worksheets and examples.
- Hunting Leases (AgMRC) Hunting Leases (AgMRC) http://www.agmrc.org/commodities__products/agritourism/hunting_leases.cfm Agricultural Marketing Resource Center (AMRC) background paper on the issues related to leasing private land for hunting and outdoor activities.
- Hunts Point Sportsman's Club: Hunts Point http://www.huntspointclub.com Pequot Lakes, Minnesota - The main goal of this operation is to provide guests with a true hunting experience and exciting, unique shooting opportunities.
- (Hunts Point) For Whom the Dog Tolls, Gun Dog magazine, October/November 2007 - About Jim and Peggy Wills' Hunts Point Sportsman's Club and the Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever. Intermedia Outdoors Inc., contact publisher: 570-374-5757; back-issue ordering: 800-767-4868.
- Lake Cumberland Game Bird Farm & Hatchery Lake Cumberland http://www.lakecumberlandgamebirds.com/ Example of a major operation providing packaged meat, gifts, flight-ready birds and brood stock. This site has enterprise budgets for rearing pheasants and other gamebirds for meat production.
- Lion Country Supply Lion Country Supply http://www.lcsupply.com/ The Lion Country Supply catalog is an example of a supplier who carries dog-handling equipment, and a wide range of supplies and equipment for handling game birds. Plans for quail and chukar recall houses and pens are available, as well as finished units. Many books and DVDs on the market regarding game-bird rearing and dog training are available.
- MacFarlane Pheasants, Inc., MacFarlane Pheasants http://www.pheasant.com/ Janesville, Wisconsin - A company that offers pheasant meat products, along with a variety of specialty products, such as rabbit, wild boar, ostrich, buffalo and quail. The business has an online store and provides resource information on the product line.
- Marketing Strategies for Farmers and Ranchers, Marketing Strategies for Farmers and Ranchers http://www.sare.org/Learning-Center/Bulletins/Marketing-Strategies-for-

Farmers-and-Ranchers SARE, USDA, 2006 - This tip sheet offers a variety of methods to consider indirect marketing, niche marketing or value-added processing.

- NAGA North American Gamebird Association – NAGA North American Game Bird Association https://www.mynaga.org/ On-line forums and state-by-state directories related to gamebird suppliers, buyers, production, marketing and related industry products.
- National Poultry Improvement Plan, NPIP Regulations and Information Interstate Gamebird Shipment http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/animal_dis_spec/poultry Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA - Regulations and information on the interstate shipment of gamebirds, pullorum-typhoid monitoring, etc.
- Nature-based Tourism and Agri-tourism Trends: Unlimited Opportunities, Nature-Based Tourism and Agri-tourism Trends http://www.kerrcenter.com/publications/2002_proceedings/agritourism.pdf NRCS, USDA - This site gives an overview of agri-tourism and a listing of possible enterprises.
- Oakwood Game Farm, Oakwood Game Farm http://www.oakwoodgamefarm.com/ Princeton, Minnesota - In 1967, the operation started raising pheasants with 50 chicks. In 2003, they produced more than a half million live and processed pheasants.
- Pheasant Hunting Pumps New Life into Farming Community, North Dakota Rural Development Pheasants Forever Pheasants Forever http://www.pheasantsforever.org/ The organization works for the habitat preservation and reestablishment of wild pheasant populations; and cooperates with game bird breeders and preserve operators for community education and promotional events.
- Quail Forever Quail Forever http://www.quailforever.org/ Associated with Pheasants Forever, this organization works for the habitat preservation and reestablishment of wild quail populations. Both organizations cooperate with game bird breeders and preserve operators for community education and promotional events.
- Raising Game Birds, Raising Game Birds http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu/pdf/8155.pdf University of California, Davis, 2007. Comprehensive overview for anyone interested in raising or holding pheasants in flight pens.
- Sporting Clays Magazine Sporting Clays Magazine http://www.sportingclays.net Official publication of NSCA offers directories for facilities and tournaments and shoots, shotgun enthusiast expert advice, industry updates, product previews, test reports, tips, conservation and legislation trends, and results. Sporting Clays magazine, National Sporting Clays Association, 5931 Roft Rd., San Antonio, TX 78253-9261; 800-877-5338, 210-688-3371.
- Surrogator The Surrogator http://wildlifemanagementtechnologies.com Example of a commercially available unit for rearing groups of site-imprinted game birds for population establishment or augmentation.
- Toubl Game Bird Farms,Toubl Game Bird Farms http://www.toubl.com Beloit, Wisconsin - This family-run operation produces pheasants, wild turkeys and partridges for hunting, gourmet meats and dog trainers; for wildlife restoration projects; and for the taxidermy market.
- That Quail Place That Quail Place http://www.thatquailplace.com/ A Web site created for individuals interested in raising quail and game birds. There is information regarding the general care, breeding, incubating, brooding and raising of various species. An area

also is provided for those interested in purchasing supplies, including equipment used for raising and breeding quail, live birds, hatching eggs and literature.

- Upland Journal Upland Journal http://www.uplandjournal.com/ Online magazine where bird hunters can share knowledge and gain information.
- Viking Valley Hunt Club, Viking Valley Hunt Club http://renewingthecountryside.org/index.php?option=&mode=category&task=view&category=3&limit=1&limitstart=22&Itemid=43 Ashby, Minnesota - Les and Bette Bensch have turned a marginal farm into a hunting and shooting business they say earns five times the revenue of a conventional farm.
- Women Hunters Women Hunters http://womenhunters.com/ Kershaw, South Carolina - A tax-exempt group that promotes the active participation of women in all outdoor and hunting sports. While other organizations do promote women in outdoor and hunting sports, WomenHunters fills its own unique niche with its Internet presence, WomenHunters Club, Bulletin Board and other features. The site lists hunt-club and outdoor educational events for women.

Indemnification Agreements

Appendix 1. Release of Liability Between Client and Operator
The following is an example of an Indemnification Agreement between a Midwestern bird-hunting hunt club and its clients. Each client is given a safety briefing and then asked to respond to the following document. It is provided here as a sample for your review and as an educational tool. (Use at your own risk; all agreements should be reviewed by your attorney.):

INDEMNIFICATION AGREEMENT

Release of Liability:
I the undersigned, agree to hold <name of business> Hunt Club and it's owners, management, employees, agents and guides completely harmless and waive all claims of liability for any injury, accident or death resulting from any cause, whether natural or man-made.

In the event that I cause, or am alleged to have caused any injury, accident or death to another person or damages to another person's property, then I agree to indemnify and hold harmless from any claim against <name of business> Hunt Club and it's owners, management, employees, agents and guides.

I have read and fully understand the above release/waiver and fully understand that I have given up substantial rights by voluntarily signing this document.

Signature_____ Date:_____
Signature of Parent or Guardian if under 18 years of age_____
Name (first, middle, last)_____
Address (street, city, state, zip code)_____

Home telephone number_____ Mobile phone number_____

E-mail address_____

Appendix 2. Independent Contractor Indemnity Provision

This is a far more involved agreement, more applicable to where subcontractors will be running the operati0n for the owner. The following is an example of The California Commission Agreement for Independent Contractor with Indemnity Provision; created by Eugene Kinsey of The Kinsey Law Offices, 323 Main Street, 2nd Floor, Seal Beach, California, 90740; that is publically available on the internet at http://www.ilrg.com/forms/commission-indem/us/ca It is provided here as a sample for your review and as an educational tool.
(Use at your own risk; all agreements should be reviewed by your attorney.):

COMMISSION AGREEMENT WITH
INDEMNITY PROVISION

This Commission Agreement with Indemnity Provision ("Agreement") is between _____ ("Company") and _____("Agent").

In consideration of the mutual agreements and covenants herein contained, the parties hereto agree as follows:

1. AGENCY: The Company appoints the Agent as its _____ exclusive agent or _____ non-exclusive agent for the following purposes:
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR: This Agreement shall not render the Agent an employee, partner, or joint venturer with the Company for any purpose. The Agent is and will remain an independent contractor in his or her relationship to the Company. The Company shall not be responsible for withholding taxes with respect to the Agent's compensation hereunder. The Agent shall have no claim against the Company hereunder or otherwise for vacation pay, sick leave, retirement benefits, social security, worker's compensation, health or disability benefits, unemployment insurance benefits, or employee benefits of any kind.

3. DUTIES: The following duties shall be required of Agent:
_____
_____
_____
_____

Agent shall lack authority to bind Company to any agreement or contract until Agent obtains written consent from _____ [Name of Individual] of the Company.

4. INSURANCE: The Agent will carry liability insurance (including malpractice insurance, if warranted) relative to any service that he or she performs for the Company.
5. COMMISSION: For the Agent's services, the Company shall pay the Agent the following commission percentage: _____ % of the Agent's total sales.

_____
_____
_____
_____
[Provide additional details if necessary.]

6. EXPENSES: _____ Not applicable or _____ As part of the compensation to the Agent, the Agent shall also be reimbursed for the following expenses:

_____
_____
_____
_____
[Describe all expenses for which the Agent may be reimbursed.]
The Company shall not be obligated to reimburse the Agent for any additional expenses incurred in the performance of services pursuant to this Agreement unless agreed in writing by the Company in advance.

7. TERM: Unless renewed, this Agreement expires at midnight on _____ [date].

8. RENEWAL: _____ Not applicable or _____ This Agreement shall automatically renew for increments of _____ days or _____ one month or _____ one year, unless either party gives _____ days written notice to the other party of his or her intent not to renew. Notice shall be deemed sufficiently given or served if sent by United States certified mail, return receipt requested, addressed as follows:
If to the Company to:

_____
[Typed or Printed Name of Company Representative]

_____
[Company Representative's Address]
If to the Agent to:

_____
[Typed or Printed Name of Agent]

_____
[Agent's Address]

The parties shall each have the right from time to time to change the place notice is to be

given under this paragraph by written notice thereof to the other party.

9. EXCLUSIONS: _____ Not applicable or _____ Excluded from this Agreement are all existing written agreements in place at the time of the execution of this Agreement with other agents.

10. INDEMNIFICATION: In fulfilling Agent's duties pursuant to this Agreement, the Agent agrees to indemnify and to hold harmless the Company, its affiliates, and their respective officers, directors, agents and employees, against any and all losses, claims, damages and expenses, including reasonable and necessary attorney's fees, to the extent any such losses, claims, damages and expenses are due to the acts or omissions of the Agent, its officers, directors, agents and employees. The Agent, in its sole discretion, shall select counsel to defend any action pursuant to this indemnity. The Company hereby covenants not to settle or compromise any claim or cause of action for which indemnification is sought from Agent without the written permission of Agent. The obligation of Agent to so indemnify the Company is expressly contingent upon the Company's notifying the Agent, in writing, within seven (7) calendar days after Company knows, or reasonably should have known, of any claim, complaint, potential cause of action or proceeding. Failure by the Company to timely notify Agent shall relieve Agent of its obligation to so indemnify the Company to the extent any such delay materially prejudices the substantive rights and defenses available to Agent, or otherwise increases the damages, settlement costs, or costs of defense. Agent shall have no obligation to indemnify the Company should any such losses, claims, damages and expenses result, in whole or in part, from acts, omissions, willful misconduct or gross negligence of the Company, its affiliates, officers, directors, agents and employees. This indemnity obligation shall terminate four (4) years following the expiration of this Agreement. The Agent shall require any third party that enters into an agreement with the Agent (for the purposes of Agent's fulfilling its duties pursuant to this Agreement) to execute the Indemnity Agreement attached hereto as Exhibit A.

11. MODIFICATION: This Agreement may not be modified except by amendment reduced to writing and signed by both Company and Agent. No waiver of this Agreement shall be construed as a continuing waiver or consent to any subsequent breach thereof.

12. ENTIRE AGREEMENT: This Agreement sets forth the entire agreement and understanding between the parties relating to the subject matter herein and supersedes all prior discussions between the parties. No modification of or amendment to this Agreement, nor any waiver of any rights under this Agreement, will be effective unless in writing signed by the party to be charged. Any subsequent change or changes in the Agent's duties or commission will not affect the validity or scope of this Agreement.

13. GOVERNING LAW; CONSENT TO PERSONAL JURISDICTION: THIS AGREEMENT WILL BE GOVERNED BY THE LAWS OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA WITHOUT REGARD FOR CONFLICTS OF LAWS PRINCIPLES. AGENT HEREBY EXPRESSLY CONSENTS TO THE PERSONAL JURISDICTION OF THE STATE AND FEDERAL COURTS LOCATED IN THE STATE OF

CALIFORNIA FOR ANY LAWSUIT FILED THERE AGAINST THE AGENT BY THE COMPANY ARISING FROM OR RELATING TO THIS AGREEMENT.

14. SEVERABILITY: If one or more of the provisions in this Agreement are deemed void by law, then the remaining provisions will continue in full force and effect.

15. HEADINGS: Section headings are not to be considered a part of this Agreement and are not intended to be a full and accurate description of the contents hereof.

16. ATTORNEY FEES: In the event that this Agreement becomes subject to litigation between the parties hereto, the parties agree that the prevailing party shall be entitled to an award of attorney's fees, costs, and the prevailing statutory interest from the other party.

17. ADDITIONAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: Both parties acknowledge and agree that: (a) the parties are executing this Agreement voluntarily and without any duress or undue influence; (b) the parties have carefully read this Agreement and have asked any questions needed to understand the terms, consequences, and binding effect of this Agreement and fully understand them; and (c) the parties have sought the advice of an attorney of their respective choice if so desired prior to signing this Agreement.

18. FURTHER DOCUMENT: If any other provisions or agreements are necessary to enforce the intent of this document, both parties agree to execute such provisions or agreements upon request.

This Agreement, consisting of _____ pages, including this page, is entered into this the ____ day of _____, 20____.

Company:

_____

[Signature of Company Representative]

_____

[Typed or Printed Name of Company Representative]

Agent:

_____

[Signature of Agent]

_____

[Typed or Printed Name of Agent]

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

STATE OF CALIFORNIA

COUNTY OF _____

PERSONALLY came and appeared before me, the undersigned authority, on this day appeared _____ [Name of Company Representative] and _____ [Name of Agent], known to me to be the persons whose names are subscribed to the foregoing instrument, and acknowledged to me that they executed the instrument for the purposes and

consideration expressed in the instrument.
GIVEN under my hand and seal of office on this the _____ day of _____, 20__.

_____
NOTARY PUBLIC
My Commission Expires:

_____

(Exhibit A)

Appendix 3. Independent Contractor Indemnity Provision

This is another example of and indemnity agreement applicable to a separate manager or subcontractor who will be overseeing operations. As was the case of the previous example, this was created by Eugene Kinsey of The Kinsey Law Offices, 323 Main Street, 2nd Floor, Seal Beach, California, 90740; that is publically available on the internet at http://www.ilrg.com/forms/commission-indem/us/ca It is provided here as a sample for your review and as an educational tool.
(Use at your own risk; all agreements should be reviewed by your attorney.):

INDEMNITY AGREEMENT

RECITATION:
COMPANY: _____
AGENT: _____ and
its employees, agents, and/or business invitees.
SUB-AGENT: _____
The Sub-Agent hereby agrees that in all matters relating to [describe the service/product that the Sub-Agent will provide to the Agent, or reference the separate agreement/contract, if any, between the Sub-Agent and the Agent:]

_____
_____ ("Product"),
Sub-Agent will look solely to the Agent; that the Sub-Agent will not look to the Company for any purpose whatsoever in connection with the Sub-Agent's agreement with the Agent.

The Sub-Agent does hereby indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the Company, its officers, directors, employees, representatives, partners, subsidiaries, affiliates, as well as all other agents that are not party to this Indemnity Agreement (collectively the "Company Group"), from and against any and all claims, causes of action, losses, damages, suits and liabilities of every kind whatsoever, including all expenses of litigation, court costs and attorneys' fees (including, but not limited to, all expenses of litigation and reasonable attorneys' fees incurred by the Company Group in enforcing the provisions of this Indemnity Agreement), arising out of or from, incident to, or resulting from, the Product or any transaction related thereto.

The Sub-Agent hereby acknowledges and agrees that this Indemnity Agreement shall remain in full force and effect even if Agent's relationship with the Company is terminated or canceled.

Moreover, the Sub-Agent agrees hereby to look solely to Agent, and never to the Company, for any such misunderstanding, conflict or other problem or problems that may arise between the Agent and Sub-Agent; and this indemnity shall continue in full force and effect, so long as there are any dealings, or courses of action, between the Agent and Sub-Agent or other parties involved with the Product, and for any period of limitations thereafter.

Dated this _____ day of _____, 20___.

_____

(Sub-Agent)

_____

(Sub-Agent)

-----END. (FINAL PAGE OF DOCUMENT).