



PICKING UP THE LITTER

Alabama's biggest chicken litter hauler relies on Trinity trailers to get the job done.

Other guys in the area might take a load of chicken litter down the road. But if you've got tons of chicken waste, dropped feed, feathers and other byproducts of the poultry trade that need hauling across Alabama, there's one guy to call: Dewayne Oaks, owner of Dewayne Oaks Chicken Poultry Management.

Alabama chicken farms are massive. Those farms need to be cleaned — quickly — in the short window between when one brood is harvested and the next is hatched. Other companies might be able to take 10 trailer loads of chicken litter out of a farm. But for the big jobs — 80 or 100 trailer loads — Oaks and his fleet of trailers, including Trinity's self-unloading belt trailers, is the only game in town.

"Some people do what I do, but not on the same scale," Oaks says. "If you've got a big job, I'm the man for managing chicken litter in Alabama."



Oaks' business is almost unrecognizable compared to when he opened up shop 30 years ago. It was a simple operation then, but in 2001 the chicken litter game changed.

The Environmental Protection Agency began observing high phosphate counts in the water and demanded the state find ways to fix the problem. Chicken farms, which had grown bigger and bigger due to consolidation, were identified as a contributor because chicken litter leached phosphates into the water. That left a single solution: cleaning up all of the chicken litter and trucking it away.

Oaks' first challenge was being able to clean and haul off dozens of loads of litter quickly enough. But with more farms having their litter hauled, the second challenge became finding a farm to take it that didn't already have litter fertilizing its fields.

THE FACTS

COMPANY: Dewayne Oaks Poultry
Waste Management

INDUSTRY: Poultry Waste Management

LOCATION: Eva, Alabama

That meant investing in trailers.

“First, we had to haul the litter 20 miles, then 30, then 40,” Oaks said. “Now, it’s 100. The operation had to get bigger because we had to cover all this area with all of this litter.”

Oaks initially resisted buying trailers, but did so after realizing he’d soon be out of business if he didn’t adapt to the changing times.

“When I’d drive those spreaders on the backroads all day, I didn’t worry about the law, the Department of Transportation, about nothing,” he says. “I went from that to putting a big rig on the road. I did it kicking and screaming, but it was the only way to make a living. I grabbed that bull by the horns and went with it.”

He later switched to Trinity trailers because they are easier to fix than other models.

“With Trinity, you don’t have to take a panel off to work on it,” Oaks says. “I don’t have to take them to a shop, even if I have to pull the chain out. I can have it back and ready to go by the next morning.”

Oaks’ old trailer was also aluminum, which was inflexible and would pop rivets when strained.



The stainless steel Trinity trailers are designed to flex, which comes in handy on the back roads of Alabama.

“The trailer can flex 16 degrees in each direction,” Oaks says. “We can go off the road, across some of these rough grounds, and we don’t even worry about it.”

Unlike the old aluminum trailer, the Trinity trailer doesn’t corrode when exposed to chicken litter. The old rig was also more than a ton heavier than his Trinity trailers. Oaks says his Trinity trailers also get a half-mile better fuel efficiency than the other model.

Today, four of his six trailers are Trinity belt trailers. He bought two more this summer and plans to buy more in the future. He works with a partner who hauls three trailers, including one more Trinity self-unloading belt trailer.

Oaks regrets that his first trailer wasn’t Trinity.

“Myself, I go for practicality,” Oaks says. “The reason I went with Trinity was it’s lightweight, flexible, all stainless, and for the ease of working on them. I don’t have to crawl under that trailer for much. I like that.”



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