

# CHIPS & CHICKS: A GOOD MATCH



In a three state area of Arkansas, Oklahoma and Missouri, there are more chickens and turkeys raised than in the rest of North America and possibly the world in any concentrated area. If you like your chicken fresh, deboned, neatly packaged and smartly arranged in the supermarket, it probably comes from this wonderfully productive area of the US. And, the chickens grow up in huge homes, typically 40 feet by 400 – 600 feet long. With specialized lighting, regimented feeding schedules, and careful attention to their living environment, they grow up quick and healthy. This includes changing their litter. With the huge population of chickens, somebody has to provide the bedding material. And that's where this story begins.

## ETW ENTERPRISES HAULS

"Edwin started in the business of poultry bedding while he was still in high school with two Bobtrucks," says Melanie Wells, of ETW Enterprises, Good Wood, Wood Waste Recycling.

"When he started, Edwin was physically shoveling new bedding throughout the houses," notes Wells. "The farmers in charge of the houses would remove the litter after each batch was grown and the Wells company would come in with fresh bedding before the next batch of baby chicks."

ETW Enterprises now does this same bedding change on a much bigger scale today with bedding delivered in a total of six states and with much more mechanized equipment for loading and spreading the material.

## A PREMATURE SALE

"We had built a good business by 1999," notes Wells, "with 45 employees and we were servicing about 800 poultry houses. An opportunity came for the family to sell, and they became semi-retired for a few years. However, one huge problem surfaced: They were never fully funded from the sale."

In 2004, "We decided to start over again," notes Wells. "I think poultry bedding and trucking run through my husband's blood and he does it better than anyone I know."

They had sold all of their equipment but and retained their physical property. So, they started at almost ground zero.

## MARKET CHANGES AND NEW STRATEGIES

Rising fuel costs and a tightening of money that poultry companies and growers could spend on bedding created a dilemma that the company had to navigate. Back hauls became increasingly important to cut their costs as did storage facilities for rice hulls and shavings in strategic areas. They now either own or lease 22 buildings for product storage and keep loaders at each of those sites. Those buildings, 100 tractor trucks, about 80 chip vans and 75 walking floor trailers help ensure that when their clients call, they have the product readily available. This is why the dependability of their

Kawasaki-KCM's with the Tink buckets are so important in the day to day operations. This arrangement allows drivers to load their own trucks. "It's a valuable piece of equipment in our operation" says Wells.

Because a large portion of their customer base is in Northwest Arkansas, Oklahoma and Missouri, Edwin Wells built a new operation in Rogers, Arkansas called Good Wood to produce quality kiln dried shavings for poultry house bedding.

The company purchases Pine Logs to produce those shavings. Additionally, a grinder is on location to grind municipal wood waste and pallets. Recycling is important to the company and opportunities became available to turn that wood waste into custom landscape mulches that they also color.

Melanie Wells also owns a WBENC certified company in Louisiana called Chip Haulers LLC. Her company also utilizes the Kawasaki-KCM loaders. This company bids and obtains contracts to load and haul wood chips to area paper mills.



*Melanie Wells, Chip Haulers along with Ross Roden, Salesman for Van Keppel Equipment.*

*All of the company's wheel Kawasaki-KCM loaders are 70Z7 models with Tink, high roll, high volume buckets for easy loading of light material over the 13' 6" sides of their high-bulk walking floor trailers.*



## WE APPRECIATE KAWASAKI-KCM AND VAN KEPPEL

"Our first loader in the 2004 operation was an auction buy. Funny...I still remember it was a CAT and cost \$13,000.00. Edwin had sent me to a Blackmon auction and I was nervous. I guess being a woman played in my favor in that man's world...got a great deal". Ultimately, they grew to own 30 loaders and equipped most with high tip buckets that allow them to load their 13'6 trailers from the ground.

"We were buying the new loaders from another equipment company and started having issues with the regen...it was bad. We lost one almost new loader to a fire and another caught on fire, but luckily a driver caught it and extinguished that one. And what was worse is that neither the manufacturer nor the dealer who had sold us a considerable number of new loaders over the years could provide a satisfactory solution. The problem just grew. This is where Kawasaki-KCM and their dealer, Van Keppel stepped up to the plate. I don't know how

much was the dealer and how much was the Kawasaki-KCM organization, but together, they provided a solution. The end result has been that we're happy and more productive with our new Kawasaki-KCM loaders."

"It's no secret that we tried to get some sort of remedy with our previous loader manufacturer and their dealer, and it didn't happen," note Wells. But the remedy that was provided by Kawasaki-KCM and our local dealer, Van Keppel, is what sold us on their product line. We have purchased a considerable amount of equipment through the years and I can say wholeheartedly that we have not ever seen a company that seems to care as much about their customers. They go above and beyond and we have been impressed.

And bottom line, I think only the Kawasaki-KCM model 70 is the clean-running machine with no high-heat regen and no DPF that works best with wood chips, mulches, rice hulls and shavings. So, we've been very happy to continue adding to what is currently, our total package of 6 Kawasaki-KCM 70Z7 machines."

