



Seventeen-day-old chickens at the Vandertuin farm on Townsend Concession 13.

Chicken farm tour

Fourteen PROBUS members and guests toured **Tom Vandertuin's** chicken farm on Sept. 5. Tom retired after 25 years as an electrical inspector with Ontario Hydro. He grew up on a chicken farm. He and his wife bought their farm on Townsend Concession 13 in 1993.

The Vandertuins get newborn chicks from a hatchery just down the road in Townsend. They raise between 30,000 and 35,000 birds at a time on two floors of a modern, automated barn. It takes just 38 days to bring the chickens to their full size of 2.2 kilograms, perfect for KFC and Swiss Chalet. The Vandertuins grow chickens in six cycles a year. That's an annual total of 180,000 chickens.



Food, water and temperature are regulated automatically. An alarm system notifies if the barn has problems.

The chicks are a mixture of males and females. When chicks arrive at the barn, the heat is set at 90 degrees. As the chicks grow, the temperature is gradually reduced into the 70s.

On the day of our visit, the chicks were 17 days old, or nearly halfway through their growing cycle.

Chicken farms operate under a marketing board system which assigns quota to farmers. The Vandertuins sell their chickens to Maple Lodge Farms near Brampton. Maple Lodge Farms



Wilma Lichach (from left), Helen Uren, Paul Lichach, Dick Pearson and Murray Uren hear about chickens from Tom Vandertuin.

processes them for supply to KFC and Swiss Chalet.

Between crops, manure is cleaned from the barn. The barn is pressure washed and fumigated once a year.

When is the biggest demand for the Vandertuins' chickens? At Mother's Day when families give moms a break from cooking.

When is the least demand? At Christmas when everyone eats turkey.

Thanks, Tom, for an interesting and educational tour.



The automated barn holds up to 35,000 chickens.