



Aviagen

At home in Pikeville

Aviagen is building for the future

Story by LISA SAVAGE



Kasey Wilson, left, manager of the Pikeville feed processing facility, meets with Richard Obermeyer, director of feed production for Aviagen North America.

Photo by Mark Gilliland

The addition of Aviagen's Pikeville feed processing facility earlier this year to the poultry-breeding company's other area operations will have a tremendous impact on the state's economy — to the tune of a \$35 million investment.

That's big news for Bledsoe and surrounding counties.

Aviagen worked with Pikeville Mayor Philip Cagle, Bledsoe County Mayor Gregg Ridley and other economic development leaders to bring the feed processing facility to fruition. "We are excited that Aviagen chose Bledsoe County as the location of this strategic investment, which will benefit our citizens and our state," Cagle says.

It's a perfect fit for Bledsoe County. "As an agricultural community, we share Aviagen's commitment to provide a sustainable and affordable food source for our local families and people around the world," Ridley says. "We look forward to a long and mutually beneficial relationship for many years to come."

The Pikeville location is Aviagen's third feed processing facility in the United States, and it's now the country's most advanced feed mill, says Richard Obermeyer, director of feed production for Aviagen North America. Pikeville's physical location played a vital role in the decision to build the new facility here — both the isolation and job opportunities for the local workforce were attractive. "We talked to the local mayors and learned that 80% of the work force leaves the county for jobs," Obermeyer says. "We wanted to have a secure location for the plant while providing a location right here in the county that could offer jobs now and in the future."

Kasey Wilson manages the local facility, and about 15 employees work there with additional jobs anticipated in the next few years. "We built this facility with room to grow," Obermeyer says.

A WIN-WIN FOR TENNESSEE AND AVIAGEN

The facility will benefit the state's economy and local farmers, eventually bringing 260 new jobs to the area, including up to 36 positions at the feed mill itself. Aviagen's goal is to use local sources as much as possible to make the grain at the mill. Obermeyer estimates a need for between 1 and 1.5 million bushels of grain in the first year alone.



Photos contributed by Aviagen



Aviagen's presence in Tennessee brings \$35 million to the state's economy.

Aviagen's current veterinary laboratory, hatchery, office, vehicle maintenance facility and a number of pedigree farms are located in Crossville, about 25 miles north of Pikeville. The \$35.3 million investment in the feed mill is part of a broader development project for the Pikeville and Crossville areas that will include the expansion of production farms and the Pikeville hatchery.

ABOUT AVIAGEN

Since 1923, Aviagen has been a preferred global poultry breeding company that supplies day-old chicks to be used as parent stock for the production of commercial broiler chickens.

Headquartered in Huntsville, Alabama, the company's mission is to give its customers — the world's chicken meat producers — everything they need to successfully provide their growing communities with a sustainable, affordable and nutritious source of protein.

Aviagen's feed processing facilities provide nutritious, biosecure feed that is specially formulated for the unique dietary needs of Aviagen flocks in all phases of growth. The Pikeville facility produces about 3,000 tons of feed per week, and 156,000 tons annually.

Food safety and security are a top commitment, and the new facility is one of the most secure feed mills in the country. It uses the latest technology to achieve full pathogen elimination and comprehensive biosecurity. "Protecting the health and welfare of our birds and keeping pathogens out of the food chain are our foremost priorities," Obermeyer says. "This all begins with biosecure, high-quality feed."

The facility meets stringent regulations set by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the state of Tennessee. Aviagen

was the first poultry-breeding company in the country to design and build its own feed processing facilities to eliminate contamination and ensure high levels of biosecurity. Pikeville joins Aviagen locations in Sallisaw, Oklahoma, and Athens, Alabama, as a high-capacity, state-of-the-art feed processing facility.

USING TECHNOLOGY

"To secure the supply to our customers worldwide and keep harmful pathogens out of the food chain, we implement strict biosecurity practices," Obermeyer says. Adding to the company's extensive biosecurity measures in and around the facility, the location in Pikeville was chosen for its physical isolation, and access is restricted to authorized personnel only.

BTC Fiber internet service connects the location to the corporate office. All the systems within the Pikeville facility use advanced technology, monitoring each piece of equipment and generating reports and vital information that affect production. All reports go to the main office in Huntsville where the data is monitored. "Access to fiber internet is vital for production," Obermeyer says. "We have a fiber optic network throughout our building for fast access to all our control systems."

One of Aviagen's goals is involvement in the community, and the company supports local schools' activities. It also donates to various local nonprofits, including fire departments, food banks and similar organizations. "We have been welcomed into the Pikeville community, and we've developed a fantastic relationship with the whole area," Obermeyer says. "We look forward to many more years working with the people of this community."

A virtual tour of the Pikeville facility is available by searching Aviagen Pikeville on YouTube. [📺](#)