

Sunny side up at Ward Lumber in Jay Poultry Night a real coup

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JAY — Ward Lumber usually closes around 5 p.m. on weekdays. But at 6:30 on Tuesday March 30, the store was packed with more than 60 people for Poultry Night, a free lecture for anyone interested in raising their own poultry.

Rows of fold-out chairs filled the center of the store as guests shuffled around, already chatting about their own poultry ventures and grabbing slices of complimentary pizza.

As people took their seats, guest speaker Terry Cushing, an animal nutrition specialist for Vermont-based Poulin Grain Feed Company, picked up a remote control, pointed it toward a projector across the room and began a poultry PowerPoint presentation.

"Now, we're here to have fun tonight," Cushing said. He wore a Harley Davidson

hat, and paced back and forth behind a table filled with chicken feed and watering trays. "We're here to learn, but we're also here to have fun."

Cushing grew up on a farm with nine brothers and sisters. When he was just a boy he helped care for more than 1,000 "meat birds" and 400 egg layers annually.

"I can't even tell you how many eggs I've washed in my day," Cushing said.

He gives talks all over the Northeast at public forums and universities to educate people about caring for their own poultry in a healthy and cost effective way.

Topics of the night included raising your own meat and eggs from chicken, ducks, turkeys and game birds.

"Who knows what will happen in years to come," Cushing said. "But I'll tell you — it may be pretty viable to be able to raise your own



ERIC VOORHIS/LAKE PLACID NEWS
Jay Ward holds a bag of chicken feed during Poultry Night at Ward Lumber, Tuesday, March 30

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POULTRY NIGHT: A 'FARM-RELATED' INFO SESSION

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food."

Ward Lumber brings the poultry

The event was organized by Sidney "Jay" Ward III, president of Ward Lumber, who saw a growing need in the area.

"It was mostly from talking to people around town," Ward said. "We started selling feed a while ago, when I realized how big a need there was in the area."

Ward Lumber, primarily a supplier of building materials with locations in Jay and Malone, offers free deliveries of poultry feed throughout the North Country. But Jay Ward has taken the business a step further and now sells all species of poultry, including chickens for meat and eggs, ducks, turkeys, and game birds such as grouse and pheasant for private farmers and hobbyists.

"We do it through a hatchery in Ohio," Ward said. "We haven't yet gotten a huge response, and we're new at this, but we're hoping for a good reaction."

During the talk, Cushing stressed the importance of being self-sufficient, assuring the audience that raising poultry isn't so hard and that it's worth tapping into a readily available supply of food — eggs.

The production of eggs was a hot topic of the night, drawing a lot of questions from the crowd: How often do you turn the eggs? How warm should the coop be? Does the amount of light matter?

The audience was alert and seemed thankful as Cushing bounced around the room giving quick answers. "Turn your eggs often ... keep the chicken house warm but well ventilated ... and give them about 14 hours of light a



ERIC VOORHIS/LAKE PLACID NEWS
A crowd of more than 60 people gathered at Ward Lumber on Tuesday for Poultry Night, a free lecture for anyone interested in raising poultry. At the front of the room, Terry Cushing leads the discussion.

day." Perhaps the most important message of the night — and the biggest problem Cushing faces in his business — is making sure chickens, turkeys, ducks and game birds survive their infancy.

"That's why I do these talks, really. To educate people just starting out," Cushing said. "Do you know how many people call me up after a day and say, 'half of my chicks are dead?'"

According to Cushing, chicks need plenty of attention when they are first born or transported to a new place. The most important thing, he said, is to make sure they are nice and dry.

Another topic that came up was the issue of free range vs. conventional poultry.

"Do you know what the USDA requirement is to call a chicken free range?" Cushing said. The audience chimed in with mixed answers.

"There needs to be a door,"

Cushing said, "and it needs to be open 45 minutes a day — that's it."

Before moving on, Cushing urged the audience to buy local food instead of high-priced store bought.

"Buy local folks ... at the end of the day, buy local. If you do that, you know exactly who is raising your food and how they're doing it," he said.

Cushing flipped to the next slide about raising ducks, pheasant and grouse, but paused to tell a joke: "So a chicken and an egg are lying next to each other in bed. The chicken, with a satisfied look on its face, turns to the frowning egg and says 'Well, guess that answers that question.'"

Half the audience burst in laughter, while others looked puzzled. Children, who had lost interest in the lecture long ago, played in the aisles of the hardware store somewhere between the pipe wrenches and garden supplies.

Among those in the audience was Chipp Marshall, who owns a large piece of land in Keene. He said he had recently placed an order with Ward Lumber for a variety of chickens and was looking forward to the new project.

"The eggs are so much better than what you can buy in the store," Marshall said. "Plus, our grandchildren are really looking forward to it."

As the night wound down and Cushing began packing up his things, Jay Ward spoke fondly of keeping his own hens in past years. With recent development in his business, Ward said he was looking into raising some turkeys.

"It's springtime," Ward said. "I don't know what it is — maybe because I grew up on a farm — but when spring rolls around I just have this urge to raise something."

For more information, call 946-2110 or visit www.wardlumber.com.