

TAKING CENTER STAGE



A WEBSTER CITY BRAND AMBASSADOR FOR OVER 105 YEARS

Did you know that McMurray Hatchery is one of the longest standing Webster City Chamber members? For over 105 years, Murray McMurray's belief that small business is the backbone of all communities has led them to be a strong community supporter.

With their customers being so widespread, the McMurray Hatchery is one of Webster City's strongest brand ambassadors. They frequently hear many stories from their customers about connections to Webster City. In fact, recently, they heard about a couple going on vacation to New England and their friend's neighbor having received chicks they bought from Webster City.

Murray McMurray officially started his chicken business in 1917. He had always been interested in poultry as a young man and particularly enjoyed showing birds at the local and state fairs. He was in the banking business at this time and sold baby chicks through the bank to area farmers and hobbyists. During the early stages of the depression his bank went broke. It was then he decided to go into the hatchery and mail order baby chick business full time.

A clause in the mail code makes shipping day-old chicks a required service of the post office. By regulation, chicks must arrive within 72 hours, but the majority arrive within 48 hours. Chicks are hatched on Sundays and then on Mondays the baby chicks are prepared for being mailed out in batches of 25. The baby chicks are then transported to Minneapolis, MN, to be sent out to customers who reside anywhere that has a US zip code, including the Virgin Islands and Guam.

For 74 years, the McMurray Hatchery operated at 609 Ohio Street (currently the site of the Bowman Funeral Home) in Webster City. In 1991, a state-of-the-art 26,000 sq ft building was constructed on the south side of Webster City and is where they are located today. In 2001, Bud Wood bought into the business and in 2012 the McMurray family sold their portion of the family business to Wood. His son-in-law, Tom Watkins, also operates the business in partnership with Wood.

McMurray Hatchery's focus has always been on providing the healthiest and highest quality baby chicks to small farm flocks and hobbyists. Their current primary customers are those that live in the sunbelt and that are driven by organic production. Most of them have urban flocks of 3-5 hens. "We are moving to being more and more in the pet business," said Wood. "We still sell to small acreage owners, but the average order is smaller. People buy chicks for pets with the added perk of producing eggs." Their number one seller is broilers or "meat" birds with brown egg layers a close second.

The McMurray Hatchery currently employs a team of 40 that manage their over 100 different breeds. Since the early 2000s, most orders have come through the internet with a steady increase over the years of online sales versus catalog orders. When most of their competitors are phasing out phone rooms and dropping mail-order catalogs altogether, Murray McMurray Hatchery sees relationships build due to their excellent customer services. "The level of customer service the phone room operators give keeps customers coming back and keeping the phones up and running," said Wood. Operators are very knowledgeable and can help guide purchases. In fact, online customers tend to move towards preferring one-on-one conversations with customer service reps for tailored advice on how to choose their flock. Their mail-order catalog has grown into a guide on how to select breeds complete with flock supplies and a line of Murray McMurray Hatchery merchandise, which speaks to the brand value the company has worked hard to create.

Keeping in line with McMurray's belief in supporting local, the business continues to be a sponsor of various events including JunqueFest, the Postcard Project, the Hamilton County Fair and 4-H, as well as the current daycare initiatives through the Enhance Hamilton County Foundation.

For more information on McMurray Hatchery, please visit their website at mcmurrayhatchery.com or follow Murray McMurray Hatchery on Facebook. Their Webster City facility is located at 191 Closz Drive, Webster City and open Monday - Friday 8:30 AM - 4 PM.

