

SADDLES FOR PET CHICKENS: YES, THIS IS A THING!

An Oregon woman creates an unusual product with almost \$0 in manufacturing costs. Don't cry fowl just because you didn't think of it first.

NAME
JILL BONG

LOCATION
MEDFORD, OREGON

STARTUP COSTS
MINIMAL

INCOME
\$900/MONTH

WEBSITE
CHICKENARMOR.COM

Have you ever had a beloved pet? Jill Bong from Oregon had one, but it wasn't a dog or cat . . . it was a chicken named Speck. Speck the chicken greatly enriched the lives of Jill and her family, until one sad day when Speck the chicken went on a long walk. Okay, let's just tell it like it is: Speck the chicken *passed away*, leaving the family in mourning.

The cause of death was a molting injury. Huh? Yes, this is a thing . . . just like the product that Jill eventually made. Many domestic chicken deaths are caused by such injuries, but they can usually be prevented with a special kind of "saddle" or "vest" that is worn by the chicken.

In memory of Speck, and to protect the lives of other chickens, Jill decided to develop a new form of chicken saddle. The existing chicken saddles on the market all had a fatal flaw: they had to be laundered on a regular basis. Because of the difficulty, most chicken owners don't use saddles, which means their hens are susceptible to the kinds of injuries that caused Speck to die. Jill's innovative design used vinyl material, meaning that the vests didn't need to be laundered. They could just be hosed down or wiped clean.*

After a year's worth of testing on her eighty-chicken flock, Jill's Chicken Armor debuted for sale wherever chicken saddles are sold . . . which means mostly on her website. The mission statement of Chicken Armor is to help chicken keepers save time and money with that special design that makes the saddles easy to use. In addition to the troubling laundry requirement, other saddles had to be hand-sewn, which takes a lot of time. The Chicken Armor advancements allowed Jill to price her product lower than all the other saddles on the market.

FUN FACT As strange as it sounds, chicken saddles (also known as chicken "vests") have been around for a while. When Jill went to patent her version, she discovered that someone had patented a different kind—way back in 1910!

* Another benefit: No more expensive chicken vest dry-cleaning bills!



Operating costs are also very low. All Jill pays for is the cheap vinyl material, and then the packing and shipping charges when someone places an order.

Most people who keep chickens don't keep just one. They tend to have a whole flock, or at least half a dozen. A single chicken saddle costs just \$2.50, and Jill sells a pack of one hundred for \$75. By selling in bulk, Chicken Armor brings in a profit of between \$500 and \$3,000 each month, depending on the season or if they've had major media exposure. Since launching the hustle, Jill has shipped saddles to proud chicken owners in all fifty states and to four continents. She's been featured in numerous media outlets including the Associated Press, the *New York Times*, and *ABC News* . . . and, of course, *Side Hustle School*.

No doubt there will be a rush on chicken saddles once this book is out in the world—Jill, I hope you've stocked up—and for everyone out there who needs to saddle up their chickens, now you know where to go.

Or if you're ready to fly the coop yourself, maybe you need a project of your own.

“We're happy to keep Chicken Armor small, but are open to licensing deals. In the meantime, I'll continue to write and publish books on self-sufficiency.” —Jill



CRITICAL FACTOR

Other chicken saddles had serious flaws. Jill was truly “first to market” with a new design, helping chicken keepers (and the chickens too) across the country and beyond.