



The University of Georgia

Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development

College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences

Rabbit Meat Market Analysis - Georgia Meat Rabbit Cooperative

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Market Analysis

The Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development (CAED) was asked to conduct an in-depth market analysis for rabbit meat in Georgia. To accomplish this the CAED interviewed wide variety of people involved in the exotic meat industry. The Georgia Meat Rabbit Cooperative, Inc. provided the CAED with a list of meat brokers as well as a meat purchaser with the Kroger Corporation, Inc. The CAED called these individuals to investigate the rabbit meat market.

After contacting everyone on the list of brokers, as well as additional contacts identified by the CAED, it appears that rabbit meat is a niche market (see Appendix for a list of contacts). According to Mr. Bill Burel (Atlanta regional meat buyer with The Kroger Company) they would **not** consider purchasing fresh rabbit meat due to the lack of consumer demand. The same sentiment was echoed by Bi-Lo food stores. Their meat purchasing representative would not supply exact figures, but indicated that frozen rabbit meat was a very slow moving product and that they would not consider purchasing a fresh product due to spoilage. Food Lion indicated they would take a similar stance toward fresh rabbit meat.

Mr. Burel indicated that Kroger's sells approximately 100 cases of frozen rabbit a year (Table 1A). This is significant because Kroger has roughly 150 stores that operate out of Mr. Burel's region. In addition, Kroger's controls about 25% of Georgia's retail grocery market. Therefore, there does not appear to be a large market for frozen rabbit meat.

The outlook improves somewhat with the broker market segment. After talking with various people in the broker segment, there does appear to be a larger market for fresh rabbit meat. A representative with Buckhead Meats in Atlanta indicated that they sell roughly 105-135 cases of fresh and frozen rabbit meat weekly. Fresh meat sales average 100-125 cases/week and dominate the frozen sales of 5-10 cases/week, about 10 to 1. There are additional cuts that have significantly less volume (Table 1A). Table 1B contains prices and product movement data from the in-depth survey.

Table 1A. Rabbit Meat Sales			
Organization	Type Sold	Packaging	Product Movement
Kroger Co.	Frozen Only	3 lb. Box	Frozen 2 Cases/week (Each case contains 6 rabbits)
Buckhead Beef	Fresh and Frozen	Whole Roaster - 2.0-2.5 lbs. Fresh & Frozen Eye of Loin 1 oz. Boneless Saddle 9 oz. Boneless Leg - 4 oz. Bone in Leg - 8 oz.	Whole Roaster <i>Fresh</i> 100-125 cases/week <i>Frozen</i> 5- 10 cases/week Eye of Loin 2-4 cases/week Saddle 2 cases/week Boneless Leg 3-4 cases/week Bone in leg 3 cases/week

Table 1B. Identified Rabbit Meat Cuts	
Rabbit Cuts	Case Composition
Whole Roaster	12 - 2.0 to 2.5 pound rabbits per case
Eye of Loin	27 -1oz. eye of loins to a tray and 6 trays to a case
Boneless Saddle	3-9oz. Pieces to a tray, 10 trays to a case
Boneless Leg	6 -4oz. legs to a tray, 10 trays per case
Bone in Leg	6 - 8. legs to a tray, 10 trays per case

Mr. John Albano, International Food Concepts, expressed interest in purchasing rabbit meat from a facility located in Georgia. The company is currently having to purchase the 535 pounds of rabbit they sell per week from a company located in Mississippi.

The information presented in Tables 1A and 1B suggests there is a small viable market for rabbit meat that is currently being serviced. The people contacted by the CAED were unaware of a Georgia USDA inspected rabbit meat processing facility but were interested in speaking with its operators.

Major Obstacle

According to Mr. Burel and others, the problem facing the traditional retail meat rabbit market is the lack of consumer knowledge and awareness of the product. This pertains to the health benefits of eating rabbit meat as well as product availability. Consumers do not consider rabbit meat when they are shopping and there is a lack of in-store product promotion. As a result, consumers do not consider purchasing rabbit meat and are not prompted to purchase the product from in-store promotion.

Retail Market Plan of Attack

1. Develop in-store marketing material to “attract” consumers’ attention. According to supermarket representatives, the vast majority of people are not aware the store carries rabbit meat and have to rely on store employees to direct them to the product. In-store signage would provide the needed material to attract consumers attention and alert them to the various rabbit packages.
2. Try to establish a working relationship with a supermarket chain. Bill Burel appears to be willing to talk and work with Tony Graham and possibly try a test marketing campaign where the cooperative would supply fresh and frozen rabbit meat and support marketing material to determine its impact on rabbit meat sales. Study results in the fresh produce department indicate that in-store displays and promotions are the most effective way to promote products. Utilizing these results, creating in-store promotional material may

stimulate consumer demand and spark additional rabbit consumption. Positive results would be of interest to the supermarket's meat purchasers. This would play into the meat buyers perceptions that rabbit meat needs promotional support to move the product.

Brokers and Specialty Meat Businesses

1. Target the identified brokers that carry rabbit meat products. Packaging is very important as current buyers are accustomed to purchasing their products in a particular package. The CAED suggest ordering various cuts from different brokers to see how their products are currently being packaged. There appears to be approximately 5 cuts that the brokers are familiar with and would expect to receive. Table 2 provides a written description of various product packaging and cuts, but it would be worthwhile to purchase products from potential customers to see how their products are packaged. Then the cooperative could provide samples in packaging which the buyers are comfortable with.
2. There may be additional niche markets in the country club or exclusive restaurant markets. According to Sea Breeze Foods, country clubs order rabbit meat for "wild game night."

Market Analysis Conclusion

Given the information that the CAED was able to obtain through conversations with food brokers, exotic meat businesses and major supermarkets, it does appear that there is currently a small ready-made market for rabbit meat. The retail food market appears to be very small compared to the larger exotic meat and meat broker market.

The retail rabbit meat market (supermarkets and grocery stores) is underdeveloped and as a result, consumers are unaware of the health benefits associated with eating this low-fat meat and are unaware that supermarkets carry these products. Similarly, exotic meat and food brokers are unaware of the existing facility operating in Georgia and a marketing campaign will be essential to penetrate this market.

Given the relatively low level of established demand for rabbit products, the CAED recommends that the Georgia Meat Rabbit Cooperative, Inc. utilize the processing facility currently located in Adel, Georgia. This would allow resources to be diverted from a processing facility to a much needed marketing and promotion program. It is important to remember that it is easier to sell something that people want than it is to sell something that is easy to produce. Given this statement, CAED feels that there needs to be significant market development before the Georgia Meat Rabbit Cooperative, Inc. invests money in a processing facility. This especially holds true given that there is a processing facility in the area that has excess capacity and is willing to co-process for the cooperative.

The first step to creating a successful retail rabbit meat market will be informing consumers about the health benefits of eating rabbit as well as increasing consumer awareness about product availability. The cooperative should spend time and effort to develop a brand name. All promotional material, company culture, and products should emphasize the image the Georgia Meat Rabbit Cooperative, Inc. would like to convey. More about creating a successful brand can be found in the section below. In addition to educating the consumer, the cooperative needs to establish guidelines and a grading system for their rabbit meat. Only the highest quality meat should carry the cooperative name. This ensures that the consumers associate quality with the brand name and loyalty can be established.

The next section of the report provides information on creating a brand name, trademark and using the UPC information. This information is the beginning in the development of a marketing plan and should be seen as a resource.

Creating a Brand

What is a Brand?

A brand can be thought of as a collection of intangible, consumer-perceived product and organizational attributes and characteristics. More simply put, a brand is a product's personality. A brand cannot be created over night as it is a summation of consumers' interactions and experiences with a product, and with the product's the parent company. Each time consumers have an interaction with a product (i.e., purchasing, being exposed to advertising and media coverage or through word of mouth) an impression is created and retained. Over time, these impressions and experiences form consumers' perceptions of a product, thus creating its brand. The image associated with a product's brand is the principle source of its competitive market advantage and is a valuable asset.

How to Develop a Brand

Conveying a consistent, clear, memorable and positive message consumers is critical to creating a successful brand. It is very important that interaction between a product and its consumers or potential consumers have a consistent theme or message. This consistency must be present in the name, logo, slogan, advertising and promotional campaigns, product packaging, organizational culture, company actions and every other point of contact with consumers. If a mixed or inconsistent message is delivered, consumers may have difficulty in creating an positive and memorable impression. An inconsistent message detracts from creating a successful brand. If a company desires a brand associated with quality, they have to ensure they offer a quality product, their marketing mix delivers a message of quality and any consumer interaction with the product or parent company (i.e., customer service department) leaves them with the impression of a quality organization. It may be easy to develop a memorable marketing mix stressing a quality product, but if the product is inconsistent or the customer service department is not responsive, the marketing strategy will most likely fail.

A company's actions are as important as more traditional marketing tools in creating a brand. For example, when a faulty product enters the market, a company may react by quickly recalling the defective or unsafe product. This action, conveys an image to consumers that the company puts its consumers' health and safety above corporate profits. The company's actions will have a significantly larger impact on consumer perceptions than a multi-million-dollar advertising campaign directed at telling consumers the company is health and safety conscious.

Overall, a brand may be summed up as the one word or phrase consumers use to describe a product or company. Companies like Coca-Cola®, NIKE® and Xerox® have been very successful in branding their products. NIKE® invokes the image of athleticism while Xerox® is synonymous for photo copying. The NIKE® swish often appears alone in NIKE® advertising with no mention of the NIKE® name. The incredible branding of these products was not an accident and did not occur without significant planning.

Reasons for Creating a Brand

Branding a product provides a point of differentiation from competing products. Products are continually competing on price, quality and service. Over time, trying to differentiate a product based on one of these characteristics alone is very difficult. Branding on the other hand, is a viable means of maintaining product differentiation over time. For example, *Sunkist*®. The name exudes confidence and trust as people rely on the consistent quality of the product. There may be a cheaper orange, but consumers have come to associate *Sunkist*® with quality and they trust that the brand will consistently meet or exceed consumer expectations. Consumers then ask themselves, it is worth taking a risk purchasing a cheaper orange when they know nothing about it or its company?

Branding has been shown to have a significant influence on consumer purchasing behavior. This is why branding is such a powerful marketing tool. Through effective advertising, a company is able to make consumers aware that they have a "need," whether real or perceived, for a product. Evoking the "need" in consumers is the first step in the purchasing decision process.

Effective branding can also impact the information search step in the consumer purchasing process. Because consumers are familiar with a brand, they trust the brand and know it stands for values. The brand alleviates their need to seek information on the product or company. If consumers are not familiar with a product's name, they are not sure if they are going to get a quality product and have to search for additional information about the product. A successful brand alleviates the need for consumers to investigate alternative brands or products. Branding also impacts consumers need to evaluate competing products, i.e., consumers are familiar with a brand's attributes while they know little about the competitors attributes. Therefore, the brand has a significant impact on the purchase decision because consumers are more likely to buy products they are familiar with and trust.

Branding is an important ingredient in developing consumer loyalty. Brand loyalty can be thought of as a consumer's conscious or unconscious decision, expressed through intention or behavior, to continually repurchase a brand. A consumer repeatedly purchases a “brand” because they perceive it as being priced right and having the desired product features, image and level of quality they demand. Consumers are creatures of habit and become comfortable with things that are familiar and safe and a level of trust is developed. To entice consumers to break their habits, a company marketing a new product or marketing to new consumers has to convince them that their product offers greater value, encourage them to initially purchase it and convenience them to repurchase. Once a strong brand is created, competitors will have to entice loyal consumers to switch brands which is not easy to accomplish.

A loyal consumer has fewer incentives to engage in an extended information search among competing products. Purchase decisions can even be simplified or even become habitual as brand loyalty increases. This is attributed to the level of satisfaction and perceived value consumers associate with the brand.

In addition, branding¹:

- reduces marketing costs because of high brand awareness and loyalty among consumers.
- provides leverage with distributors and retailers because consumers expect them to carry the brand. New brands are typically given a few months to prove themselves in the marketplace.
- offers the opportunity to charge a higher price because of the product's perceived quality and value.
- allows line extensions (introducing new products under the brand name) because new products using the brand name reflect the same level of quality and value that is associated with initial products.
- provides some protection against price competition. There is a perceived value associated with a brand and therefore cheaper products may be perceived as being cheaper in quality and less of a value.

Consideration for Creating a Brand Name

The first step in creating a brand is name selection. A name ultimately becomes synonymous with the brand is the cornerstone for creating a strong brand. A product's name is often the first line of communication with consumers and triggers product recognition and recall (i.e., product attributes) creating an image in the consumer's mind. Therefore, name selection is extremely important in creating a brand. There are a number of considerations that should be evaluated before deciding on a “name.”

¹ Myron, Monique R. Brand Identify, Crucial to Sold Product Image, The Denver Business Journal, July 23, 1999.

The following provides some food for thought when selecting a product's name.²

1. Verbally describe the product. Include the product's strengths (competitive advantages), key characteristics and other unique qualities associated with the product.
2. Determine the image the name should convey. Brain storm to see how, or if, various names are easily associated with key features and/or attributes or desired images. The name should clearly describe the product to consumers. It is easier to promote a product that readily conjures a description of a product in consumers minds than it is to promote a product whose name is not easily associated with its use. A name that does not allow consumers to associate it with a product will require additional advertising dollars to educate consumers on what the name means and what product it represents.
3. Make sure you have researched the product's target market. The product's name should be appealing to the target market. Ensure that the name evokes product features and/or attributes and images that are aligned with the market's perceptions.
4. The name should test the stand of time because packaging, slogans and advertising campaigns may change over time but the name has to remain the same or all brand equity may be lost.

Names may be derived from real-world places, events or phenomena. The advantage of using real-world names is that they are generally descriptive and conjure specific images in consumers' minds. One problem associated with using a real-world name, is that in many cases these names have been previously trademarked. Using the name of an individual person or place may be limiting in the future, i.e., the person for whom the name was created, retires or is no longer associated with the business.

Another naming option is using acronyms. IBM® (International Business Machines) is a good example of an acronym name. When using an acronym, be careful that the name does not represent jumble. It is easy to develop acronyms that may make sense to you, but have no meaning to consumers or are not easily related to your business.

Understanding and Obtaining a Universal Product Code

Given competitive pressures to reduce cost and to increase efficiency, food retailers are relying more on Universal Product Codes or UPCs to track inventory and collect accurate information on variable weight items like value-added fresh produce. Analyzing sales data provides food retailers with valuable information on product movement and product shrinkage.

² A brief Checklist for DO-IT-YOURSELF" Name Development.
<http://www.namestormers.com/namingguide.htm>

Without a UPC code, food retailers have to rely on cashiers to key in product information which can lead to problems such as inaccurate or incorrect product information being entered into the system. As a result, many food retailers are requiring their suppliers to label their products with a UPC.

When a cashier scans a consumer product with a UPC code, the UPC scanner reads the bar code which is then recorded. The computer automatically displays the product's price and sums all the purchases to determine the shoppers total bill. As a product is sold, information is relayed to the inventory system and the product's stock level is recalculated. When inventories are depleted to a specified level, it alerts the retailer to reorder the item. In addition, collecting product movement data allows retailers too more easily determine which products are moving quickly, estimate shrinkage and evaluate promotional effectiveness.

UPC codes are issued by the Uniform Code Council or UCC which is a non-governmental entity. To obtain a UPC, a company must become a member of the UCC and is required to pay a one-time membership fee which is based on the company's domestic sales. The membership fee currently ranges from \$500 for companies less than \$2 million annual sales to \$15,000 for companies more than \$500 million annual sales. A registration fee of \$300 is required. The membership application can be obtained by calling (937) 435-3870 or visiting the UCC's web site, <http://www.uc-council.org>. The web site also provides detailed information on the UCC and UPCs.

Once a company number is obtained, it is possible for a company to generate its own product labels by utilizing commercial bar code software. For example, a company could purchase a Advanced Computers & Electronics software package "The Bar Tender for Windows," (<http://www.scanlite.com/bartend.html>) and generate their own product labels.

A UPC code consists of 12 digit numbers with a corresponding machine readable bar code. The UCC is responsible for generating and issuing unique product UPCs to ensure that each code is unique. The digits or bar codes can be broken down into four different components with each component having a different function.

- The first digit represents the products Number System Character (NSC) which specifies which "category" a product will be classified. For example, a two in the first digit space would indicate that the product is a random weight product like meat a fresh produce. The NSC codes are as follows:
 - 0 assigned to all items except as follows:
 - 2 assigned to random weight items such as meat and poultry,
 - 3 assigned to companies identifying their NDC number as their UPC,
 - 4 assigned for retailer use only,
 - 5 assigned to coupons,
 - 6 and 7 assigned to industrial applications and retailer applications

- The second through the fifth digits represent the manufacturer's number which is assigned by the UCC.
- The sixth through the eleventh digits represent the item code number which is assigned and controlled by the member company. The five digit item code number should be unique for each consumer package and/or shipping container. For example, peanut butter comes in a number of container sizes as well as textures, crunchy or smooth and each of these products would have a different item code number. The five digit number allows a company to assign up to 100,000 unique item numbers to their assigned UPC. It is important to keep track of which code is assigned to each product and relay this information to your trading partners.
- The twelfth or last digit represents the Check digit. The scanner uses the first 11 digits of the UPC number to instantly verify the accurate data translation of the symbol as it is scanned.

The UCC will phase out the UPC coding by the year 2005 and adopt the European Article Number or EAN which is utilized by the rest of the world. It is necessary to switch from the UPC to EAN because the 12 digit UPC will exhaust all available numbers. The EAN incorporates 13 digits into its code thus providing more codes.

For an application and additional information on obtaining a bar code or UPC contact:

Uniform Code Council, Inc.
 1009 Lenox Drive, Suite 202
 Lawrenceville, NJ 08648-2313, USA
 Phone 609.620.0200 Fax 609.620.1200
 7887 Washington Village Drive, Suite 300
 Dayton, Ohio, 45459-8605, USA
 Phone 937.435.3870 Fax 937.435.7317

Patents & Trademarks

In many instances, discussions of new products, ideas, recipes and enterprises generally include discussions of patents and trademarks. In most cases, trying to protect a food recipe is a lost cause. Most food scientists can duplicate a recipe with supreme accuracy by making small changes to justify a different product. However, protecting a product name or label design should be considered. In the early stages of a product's life, you don't know the future success it might experience. A trademark can help decrease the chances of a competitor marketing a product with your logo or name. A trademark can protect the name or logo and prevent the use of the identical or similar name or logo by another company. A brief description of patents and trademarks is

provided here. However, specific questions and concerns toward patents and trademarks should be addressed to the U.S. Department of Commerce, Patent & Trademark Office at 1-800-786-9199. Patents, copyrights, and trademarks are often confused. Although there may be some resemblance by the rights of these three kinds of intellectual property, they are different and serve different purposes.

What is a Patent?

A patent is a property right granted by the Government to an inventor. The patent is issued through the Patent and Trademark Office and protects the inventor from others making, using or selling the invention. A patent does not grant the right to make or sell an invention, it prevents others from doing so. Most patented ideas have a term of 20 years from the date on which the application for the patent was filed. The right provided by the patent is **only** valid in the United States and its territories.

Only the inventor may apply for a patent, with certain exceptions. If a person who is not the inventor should apply for a patent, the patent, if it were obtained, would be invalid. A person applying for a patent who falsely states that he/she is the inventor is subject to criminal penalties. If the inventor is dead, the application may be made by legal representatives, that is, the administrator or executor of the estate. If an inventor refuses to apply for a patent or cannot be found, a joint inventor or a person having a proprietary interest in the invention may apply on behalf of the non-signing inventor. If two or more persons are jointly responsible for an invention, they apply for a patent as joint inventors. A person who makes a financial contribution is not a joint inventor and cannot be included in the application as an inventor. It is possible to correct an innocent mistake in erroneously omitting an inventor or in erroneously naming a person as an inventor. The patent law specifies the general field of subject matter that can be patented and the conditions under which a patent may be obtained. In the language of the statute, any person who “invents or discovers any new and useful process, machine, manufacture or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement thereof, may obtain a patent,” subject to the conditions and requirements of the law. The word “process” is defined by law as a process, act or method, and primarily includes industrial or technical processes. The term “manufacture” refers to articles which are made, and includes all manufactured articles. The term “composition of matter” relates to chemical compositions and may include mixtures of ingredients as well as new chemical compounds. These classes of subject matter taken together include practically everything which is made by man and the processes for making the products.

A preliminary search can be performed through The Scientific and Technical Information Center of the Patent and Trademark Office to determine if the invention or a similar invention has been included in prior patent (<http://www.uspto.gov/web/menu/search.html>). A patent attorney or agent may be hired to perform the preliminary search. It is important to remember that these are preliminary searches and the search may not be as complete as the search conducted by the Patent and Trademark Office during the examination. It is not uncommon for a patent examiner to reject a claim on the basis of prior patents or publications that were not revealed in the preliminary search.

What is a Copyright?

A copyright protects the writings of an author against others copying the work. Works protected by a copyright may be literary, dramatic, musical and artistic creations. A copyright provides the author protection for the expression of the work rather than of the subject matter. A description of a machine could be copyrighted as a writing, but the copyright would not prevent others from writing another description or from making and using the machine. Copyrights are technically granted to works automatically. A copyright can be claimed when a work is created and a copyright notice is included on the item. A copyright notice should be placed anywhere on the item that it can be readily seen and should include one of the approved copyright symbols, the year of first publication and the name of the copyright owner. Registration of a copyright is not required but can be done through the Copyright Office in the Library of Congress. Information concerning copyrights may be obtained from the Register of Copyrights, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20559. (Telephone 202-707-3000). Copyrights are generally good for 50 years after the author's death.

What is a Trademark?

A TRADEMARK can be a word, phrase, symbol, design or combination thereof which identifies and distinguishes a product or item from others. A service mark is the same as a trademark except that it identifies and distinguishes a service rather than a product. Normally, a trademark appears on the product or on its packaging, while a service mark appears in advertising for the services. Marks are used to indicate the source or origin of the items they protect. Marks protect against others using a confusingly similar mark but not to prevent others from making the same goods or from selling them under a non-confusing mark. There are separate procedures for federal and state trademark registration. The procedure relating to the federal registration of trademarks and some general information concerning trademarks is given in a separate pamphlet entitled "*Basic Facts About Trademarks*" available from the Patent & Trademark Office in Washington D.C.

Federal Patent & Trademark Office - A complete list of fees levied by the Federal Patent & Trademark Office can be obtained from the office at <http://www.uspto.gov/web/offices/ac/qs/ope/fees.html>, 1-800- 786-9199 or (703) 557-3158. As of October 1, 200, the basic filing fee for a patent was \$790 for Utility applications, \$320 for Design applications or \$490 for plant applications. The application for registering a federal trademark is \$750 or \$325 for a small entity (independent inventor, small business or non-profit organization).

Federal trademark rights can exist indefinitely if the mark is used on its products or services. A Federal Trademark lasts for 10 years and can be renewed every ten years. There is one catch, between the fifth and sixth year after the mark was initially registered, an affidavit must be filed containing certain information to keep the registration alive. Failure to file the affidavit will result in the cancellation of the trademark registration. More detailed information of federal trademarks may be obtained at

http://www.uspto.gov/web/offices/tac/doc/basic/basic_facts.html.

A federal trademark entitles the owner to use the mark nationwide. To search pending and registered trademarks visit <http://www.uspto.gov/main/trademarks.htm> and follow the instructions.

State Trademark Registration - Information concerning state Trademark registration can be obtained from the Secretary of State Office. For more information on Trademarking and Service Marking in Georgia, visit the following web site:

<http://www.sos.state.ga.us/corporations/tmfaq.htm> or call at (404) 656-2861 or FAX (404) 657-6380.

Georgia's designated Patent and Trademark Depository Library can be found at The Price Gilbert Memorial Library at the Georgia Institute of Technology. A state trademark registration only ensures against the same mark being registered in the state. There is \$15.00 fee to register a trademark in Georgia and has to be renewed every ten years. The state and federal trademark offices do not communicate registrations. Therefore, for the best protection, a trademark should be registered with the state and federal offices. To search Georgia's Trademark and Service Mark database visit the following web site: <http://www.sos.state.ga.us/corporations/marksearch.htm>.

The Center for Agribusiness & Economic Development



The Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development is a unit of the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences of the University of Georgia, combining the missions of research and extension. The Center has among its objectives:

To provide feasibility and other short term studies for current or potential Georgia agribusiness firms and/or emerging food and fiber industries.

To provide agricultural, natural resource, and demographic data for private and public decision makers.

To find out more, visit our Web site at: <http://www.caed.uga.edu>

Or contact:

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