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MINNESOTA CERTIFIED QUALITY EGG PROGRAM

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Consumer dissatisfaction with product quality often results in a complaint to the distributor of the food product. According to a speaker at a recent Midwest poultry convention, letters to company headquarters about shell eggs come close to leading the list of consumer complaints. But these complaints are being reduced in Minnesota as more Certified Grade AA eggs are produced and marketed.

In fact, the purpose of the Certified Quality Egg Program as stated in the official regulations adopted in July 1959 is to "produce a more uniform quality egg in Minnesota, to encourage better consumer acceptance, to retain and improve markets for Minnesota quality eggs, and secure better results in candling and grading." Significant progress in these areas has been made over the past 6 years as the program developed. The program is administered by the Division of Poultry Industries, Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

Participation

The Certified Quality Egg Program provides two types of flock participation:

1. Independent Flockowners--Owners of poultry flocks who produce, process, and market eggs of their own production only.

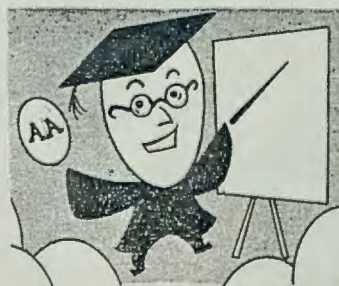
2. Affiliated Flockowners--Producers who market their eggs through a dealer cooperating in the program. The dealer in turn processes the eggs for consumer outlets.

While growth of the program from the standpoint of numbers has not been spectacular it has been steady, as indicated in the table below.

Preliminary figures for 1965-66 indicate that there will be almost 1 million birds--nearly 10 percent of all of the laying hens in Minnesota--in participating flocks.

Identification

Eggs produced by qualified participants in the program may be identified by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture emblem of quality reproduced above.



Basic Requirements for Flocks Producing Certified Eggs

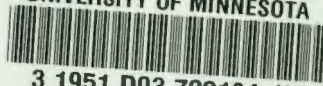
To qualify for the production of Certified Grade AA eggs, a flock must meet certain specific requirements with respect to care and

management. The basic husbandry practices which must be followed are:

1. All birds must be confined to a laying house the year around.

Participation In Minnesota Certified Quality Egg Program

Participation	1959-60	1961-62	1963-64	1964-65
Flocks affiliated with participating dealers	113	163	167	153
Birds in affiliated flocks	140,000	467,000	598,017	787,271
Independent flocks	26	16	21	21
Birds in independent flocks	208,000	94,000	90,499	87,910
Total birds in participating flocks	348,000	561,000	688,516	875,181



2. Birds must be on a balanced ration that will produce a uniform, acceptable yolk color.

3. Eggs must be gathered at least three times each day on a floor plan, and twice each day for a cage plan.

4. All eggs must be cooled by the producer with facilities that maintain a temperature between 50° and 60° F. and no less than 70 percent relative humidity.

5. Birds must be less than 20 months of age from date of hatch.

Experience over the past 6 years clearly indicate that producers following these practices can consistently produce eggs which qualify for the Certified Grade AA label.

Standards for Certified Grade AA Eggs

In addition to meeting the above requirements from a flock standpoint, the eggs produced by these flocks must meet specific "broken-out" standards based on the "Haugh Unit" score. In conducting this test for quality a randomly selected sample of eggs from each flock is used. Each egg is weighed, then broken out. The albumen height is measured with a micrometer and the quality expressed in terms of Haugh Units, which give the relationship of egg weight to albumen height. Eggs from the flock must maintain a monthly average score of at least 74 Haugh Units through the year if the flock is to continue on the program.

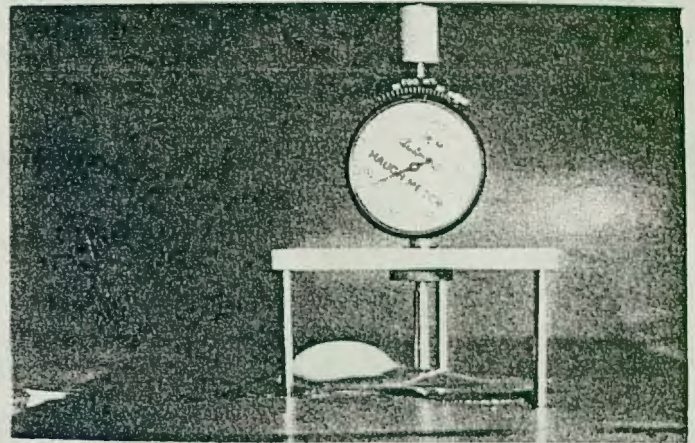
Marketing

Minnesota Certified Grade AA eggs are primarily marketed in Minnesota, although they are also marketed to some extent in North Dakota, Wisconsin, and Michigan. In the area of promotion the Department's In-Store Egg Breakfasts are tied to promoting Minnesota Certified Grade AA Eggs.



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Interior quality is measured with a micrometer that reads in Haugh Units

Consumer demand for these exceptionally high quality eggs is increasing. Eggs of this quality will likely be the minimum acceptable for all table eggs in the near future.

Additional information regarding the program may be obtained from the Division of Poultry Industries, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Room 430, State Office Building, St. Paul, Minnesota 55101.

Producers frequently have questions about egg grading and marketing programs. This issue of Poultry Patter has been devoted to an explanation of the Minnesota Certified Quality Egg Program. The next issue will feature an article by the Consumer and Marketing Service on the USDA Shell Egg Grading Program.

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