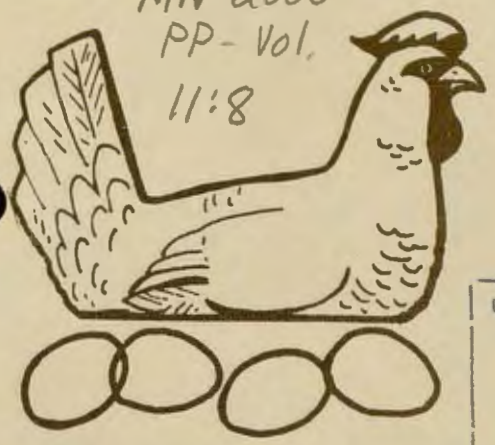

AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE, UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Poultry Patter

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ITEMS OF INTEREST TO MINNESOTA'S EGG INDUSTRY

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Culling Laying Hens

Culling has become a lost art in most instances with the all-in, all-out cage housing system of management. Some producers have revived the old art of removing nonlayers from their cage units as a result of the increases in feed and other production costs.

Culling reduces the dollar drain from feed eaten by nonlayers. With between 1/5 and 1/4 pound of feed consumed per bird per day, each boarder is costing more than 30 cents per month in feed alone. There is also economic gain to be achieved by selling poorly performing birds before they drop dead. The critical examination that you make of your flock during culling may also pinpoint other weaknesses in your operation that can result in savings.

In a recent article, Dan Andrews, extension poultry scientist, Washington State, recommends a culling program that may fit practices of many Minnesota producers. He recommends sight-culling the flock, handling only the birds in question. Starting with new pullets you should be able to eliminate the small percentage who either fail to start production or give up in a very short period of time. Culling the flock at 32 to 36 weeks of age should eliminate pullets that have failed to mature, pseudomales, precocious females already in a pause or other nonlayers. There will not be a large number culled, but each one removed represents a savings of $2.50 to $4 in feed plus her current meat value.

The second best time to cull a flock and the one which generally has the most effect on flock financial performance is removal of all nonlayers, molting birds, and nondescript problem birds 8 weeks before the flock is sold. The 8-week period is chosen because during this interval it is impossible for a bird to regain production and produce a profit. This means a savings of between 60 and 80 cents feed cost per bird removed. The third time to cull and one of particular value to the 2-year forced molting program is the removal of all nonproducers as soon as the lights are dropped from 16 to 8 hours to recondition the birds after the molt. Nonlayers removed at 8 months of lay save 16 months of feed (16 x $.30 = $4.80 to $6) less the few eggs they may lay after their forced rest. Those removed at 16 months of lay save between $2.40 and $3 each.

Once a month culling can also be a general practice throughout the year. This can be a most profitable practice to adopt but one which takes more skill and time. Each producer has to take into account his own labor situation and the marketability of birds culled from the flock. Arrangements have to be made with a processor to accept the birds culled in relatively small lots. This may not be practical in some areas at certain times.

A Pennsylvania study recently evaluated some characteristics for culling laying hens and their relation to production potential. Their study found that birds laying less than 50 percent production laid a much higher percent of poor shelled eggs so that culling poor layers may also reduce the number of poor shelled eggs from the flock. The condition of the comb and vent as well as the pigment in the beak and shanks are the most useful tools in culling poor layers or nonlayers. General condition of the bird, abdomen, and body size were not very reliable characteristics on which to base culling decisions. In the flock studied, the number of primary wing feathers molted had very little influence on the number of eggs laid.

Although there is considerable judgment involved in culling, a reasonable degree of accuracy can be achieved by the producer who evaluates production characteristics. A periodic culling program may be one of the steps your operation can use to reduce costs during this period of costly feed. Look over your birds and check your marketing alternatives for birds you might cull. The savings might improve the financial picture of your current poultry flock. A periodic culling program as outlined by Andrews might fit your management schedule and improve your profit picture.

Egg Marketing Seminar

The 5th Annual Minnesota-Iowa Egg Marketing Seminar will be October 4 and 5, 1973 at the Sheraton Motor Inn, Mason City, Iowa. Many Minnesota egg processors and egg handlers have attended these educational sessions. The program will follow the format of former years with an evening session on Thursday followed by morning and afternoon sessions on Friday. For golf enthusiasts there will be a Thursday afternoon golf tournament prior to the start of the seminar. Registration materials and program details will be mailed to the egg marketing and handling segment of the industry in early September. Others interested in the seminar can get program and registration information from the extension poultry specialist, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minnesota 55101.

Poultry Serviceman's Short Course

A Poultry Serviceman's Short Course for egg industry personnel is scheduled on the University of Minnesota St. Paul campus September 21, 1973 in Peters Hall auditorium from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Topics include poultry nutrition, egg quality, and poultry health problems. On the program will be George M. Speers of the Department of Animal Science, Extension Poultry Specialist Mel Hamre, and Dr. Ben Pom-

eroy of the Department of Microbiology and Public Health of the College of Veterinary Medicine. Allied industry personnel in the hatchery, feed, and marketing aspects of the egg industry as well as others interested in these topics may be interested in attending.

Poultry Industry Hearings

Notice has been given by Jon Wefald, Minnesota commissioner of agriculture, of three public hearings involving poultry industry regulations. The first is on proposed amendments of the rules of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture relating to the candling and grading of eggs at 9:30 a.m., September 12, 1973. The proposed rule changes are designed to update regulations to conform to the amendments to the law adopted by the Minnesota State Legislature in 1973 and to make the regulations compatible with the Federal Egg Productions Inspection Act of 1970.

A hearing relating to proposed amendments of the rules of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture relating to the Minnesota Certified Quality Egg Program is at 1 p.m., September 12. The proposed rule changes are designed to update the program according to quality production and marketing developed in recent years. It is also necessary to consider changes in the participation fees due to increased supervision costs.

A hearing on the rules of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture pertaining to the National Poultry Improvement Plan and the National Turkey Improvement Plan is at 2 p.m., September 12. The proposed rule changes are designed to update the program and be compatible with the USDA National Poultry Improvement Plan rules and to eliminate rules pertaining to classifications no longer recognized. Also the regulations relating to the National Turkey Improvement Plan will be deleted since breeding classifications are no longer recognized as a phase of this program.

All hearings are in Room B, Veterans Service Building, Capitol complex, St. Paul. Copies of the proposed rule changes may be obtained by writing to: Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Division of Poultry Industries, 430 State Office Building, St. Paul, Minnesota 55155. Telephone (612)-296-2861.

Newcastle Situation

On June 15 the quarantine area in California was reduced to approximately 200 square miles, according to the Riverside County Agricultural Extension Newcastle News. Approximately 50 percent of the manpower of the Task Force is now involved with the dead bird pickup program and associated laboratory support. This program will continue for at at least 9 more months. Cooperating poultrymen are asked to provide a typical sample of their dead birds at each pickup, according to Donald Bell, farm adviser.

The experience in June was the most encouraging period of time since the start of the Virulent Velogenic Newcastle disease problem in November 1971. This was the lowest incidence of new cases experienced for any similar period. At the time of the report the last isolation of VVND from a chicken flock was May 14. The Task Force feels that control has been accomplished but eradication must wait the test of time. Fortunately the hot summer months are best for the natural control of the disease.

Minnesota producers should continue to work with their flock servicemen and disease control personnel to maintain the vaccination and sanitation programs in force during this period of concern about the Newcastle problem. One of the benefits to the industry from the outbreaks that have occurred in other areas is probably the increased emphasis on disease prevention and security of premises that has been brought about by attempts to control Newcastle.

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