



# Poultry Patter

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## EGG RESEARCH AND PROMOTION REFERENDUM

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The U.S. Department of Agriculture has announced that egg producers will vote November 3-28 to determine whether a nationwide research and promotion order should be issued for eggs, egg products, and spent fowl. The Egg Research and Promotion Order to be voted on in this referendum was developed under the Egg Research and Consumer Information Act. The Order enables egg producers to establish, finance, and carry out a coordinated program of research, consumer and producer education, and promotion and advertising to improve, maintain, and develop domestic and foreign markets for eggs, egg products, and spent fowl. Public hearings to establish a factual record on which the Order is based have been completed, and interested persons have had the opportunity to submit views and comments on the Order. Eligible producers will vote on the referendum in November to decide whether the Order will be put into effect.

Background information on the Order, referendum instructions, a registration-ballot-certification sheet, and a return envelope have been mailed to all known eligible egg producers by the Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA. An eligible egg producer who has not received these materials by November 3 can obtain them from the local county Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service Office or by writing to the Director, Poultry Division, Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250.

In order for the Egg Research and Promotion Order to become effective it must be approved by (a) at least two-thirds of the producers voting in the referendum or (b) at least a majority of the producers voting if they produced, during the period June 1, 1975 through August 31, 1975, at least two-thirds of the eggs of all those voting. The complete text of the Order is available from the Agricultural Marketing Service.

Those eligible to vote in the referendum are flock owners in all states except Hawaii and Alaska who had, between June 1 and August 31, 1975, more than 3000 laying hens producing

eggs for commercial use and who are engaged in the production of eggs at the time of balloting. Flock owners whose eggs are used primarily for hatching are not eligible to vote in the referendum. Voters will be the ones required to pay assessments if the program is approved in the referendum. Producers not wishing to support the national program may request refunds from the egg board. If the program is approved, an assessment of 5 cents per 30-dozen case of eggs will be collected by the first handler of the eggs in commerce and forwarded to the egg board. The egg board will be made up of 18 egg producers or producer representatives with a regional distribution from nominations submitted to the secretary of agriculture.

Should the Egg Research and Promotion Order be approved, collection of fees will not begin until after the egg board is organized and procedures developed for administration of the Order. It is anticipated that the earliest collections will not be made until spring 1976. Projections indicate that an assessment level of 5 cents per case will provide approximately 7 million dollars annually for research, promotion, and education programs of the egg board. The board is authorized to contract with any state, regional, or national organization or agency for specific projects and programs.

The referendum has been termed one of the most important events in the recent history of the egg industry. The future of the egg industry will be markedly influenced by its outcome. The proposed Order will provide funds to permit much greater advertising and promotion, market development and merchandising, research, and coordination of existing programs. More than 50 state, regional, and national egg and poultry organizations have testified in support of the proposed Order. The referendum provides an opportunity for every eligible producer to have a say. If you are eligible to vote in the referendum, be sure your ballot reaches the referendum agent by the November 28 deadline.

### Filling Out the Form

The form may seem somewhat complex to the single flock owner, but complex patterns of ownership and multiple flocks must be detailed to determine that ballots are cast by those eligible to vote on the Order. Since approval of the Order can be determined by either two-thirds of the producers voting or by a majority of the voters if they own two-thirds of the production of those voting, it is essential that the number of laying hens and the number of cases produced be indicated. Be sure to follow the referendum instructions provided along with the registration-ballot-certification form so that your flock information can be properly recorded and your vote counted on this issue. Remember, your ballot must be received by the referendum agent by November 28, 1975.



### Further Background Information

Members of the egg board will be selected by the secretary of agriculture from nominations submitted by eligible organizations, associations, or cooperatives or by producers themselves in each of 6 geographic areas of the United States. The west north central states (Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas) will be represented by two members on the 18-member egg board. The members of the board (and their alternates while acting for them) serve without pay but will be allowed reasonable and necessary expenses.

The egg board will develop and submit to the secretary of agriculture for approval programs or projects for advertising, sales promotion, and consumer education with respect to the use of eggs, egg products, spent fowl, and products of spent fowl. However, no advertising or promotion programs shall use false or unwarranted claims, make any reference to private brand names, or use unfair or deceptive practices with respect to quality, value, or use of any competing product. No funds collected by the board shall be used for the purpose of influencing governmental policy or action.

Producers with egg production flocks (except hatching eggs) of 3000 or more hens will be required to pay the assessment at the rate of 5 cents per 30-dozen case of eggs produced. Handlers responsible for collecting the assessment will be the first person to whom eggs are sold, consigned, or delivered by producers and who grade, carton, break, or otherwise perform a function of a handler. A producer may be his own handler if he grades, cartons, breaks, or otherwise performs this function for the eggs he produces. When the board is organized, the rules and regulations will be established for collecting the assessments and authorizing handlers to make collections.

Producers not in favor of supporting the programs administered by the egg board may receive refunds of their assessments upon submitting proof that the assessments were paid. Handlers and producers will be required to maintain and make available to the board appropriate records necessary to determine compliance with the Order.

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