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KEEPING AND USING FLOCK RECORDS

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Today's poultryman must be willing to keep and analyze flock records as well as practice good husbandry. A good record system can help detect weak points in a poultry operation and set goals to be achieved during the production cycle.

Some suppliers of birds or feed provide a laying flock record program as an integral part of their service package or as an optional service to their producers. These programs may involve computers to calculate and depict the production data of individual laying flocks and provide comparisons with other producers or established goals for their programs. Production performance information and cost and income summaries by period and accumulated data for the life of the flock provide tools which can be important to the producer in aiding management decisions. Producers should take advantage of these flock record programs since they provide a systematic means of calculating production and financial data for the individual flock as well as providing uniformity in collection and analyzing data to make many comparisons possible. If such programs are not available, producers can outline a record keeping program of their own which can do the same job with a minimum amount of effort if data is collected in a systematic and timely manner.

Most poultry breeders have developed a production curve for their strain. When using one of these charts be sure you understand what the curve represents. The production curve frequently represents a goal rather than an actual production measure. The production curve may also be represented as a range within which production should fall rather than a line representing a numerical average or goal.

It is important too, to be sure the egg production measure is correctly defined. Some charts show production on a hen-day basis and others on a hen-housed basis. Either can be used if the differences are understood and the calculations made correctly. Hen-day production is calculated by averaging the number of birds surviving in the flock on each day during a period of time. Then the total egg production for that period is divided by the average number of birds. Hen-housed production is figured by taking the total egg production during a period of time and dividing it by the number of layers originally housed. A typical flock production curve is shown on the other side of this sheet. Under most management systems a flock will peak in production between 30 to

36 weeks of age. After peaking, production drops off gradually and the producer's concern should be to keep it from falling too rapidly. Comparisons from flock to flock and to the goals established for a strain provide the producer with an indication of his current flock performance in relation to other flocks. Good records will tell you if your efforts to manage your flock for a high rate of production have been successful.

It is not necessary to count individual eggs produced. Many producers find it more convenient to count cases or filler flats than individual eggs. You must be consistent when comparing one flock with another. Generally records are kept on a weekly basis starting on the day of the week the birds are 22 to 24 weeks old. A counting period of 28 days (4 weeks) is usually used to provide a uniform number of days during periods for comparison.

Keeping track of mortality and making a graph of livability is another common practice. By comparing death losses with expected mortality rates the producer can determine if his losses are out of line.

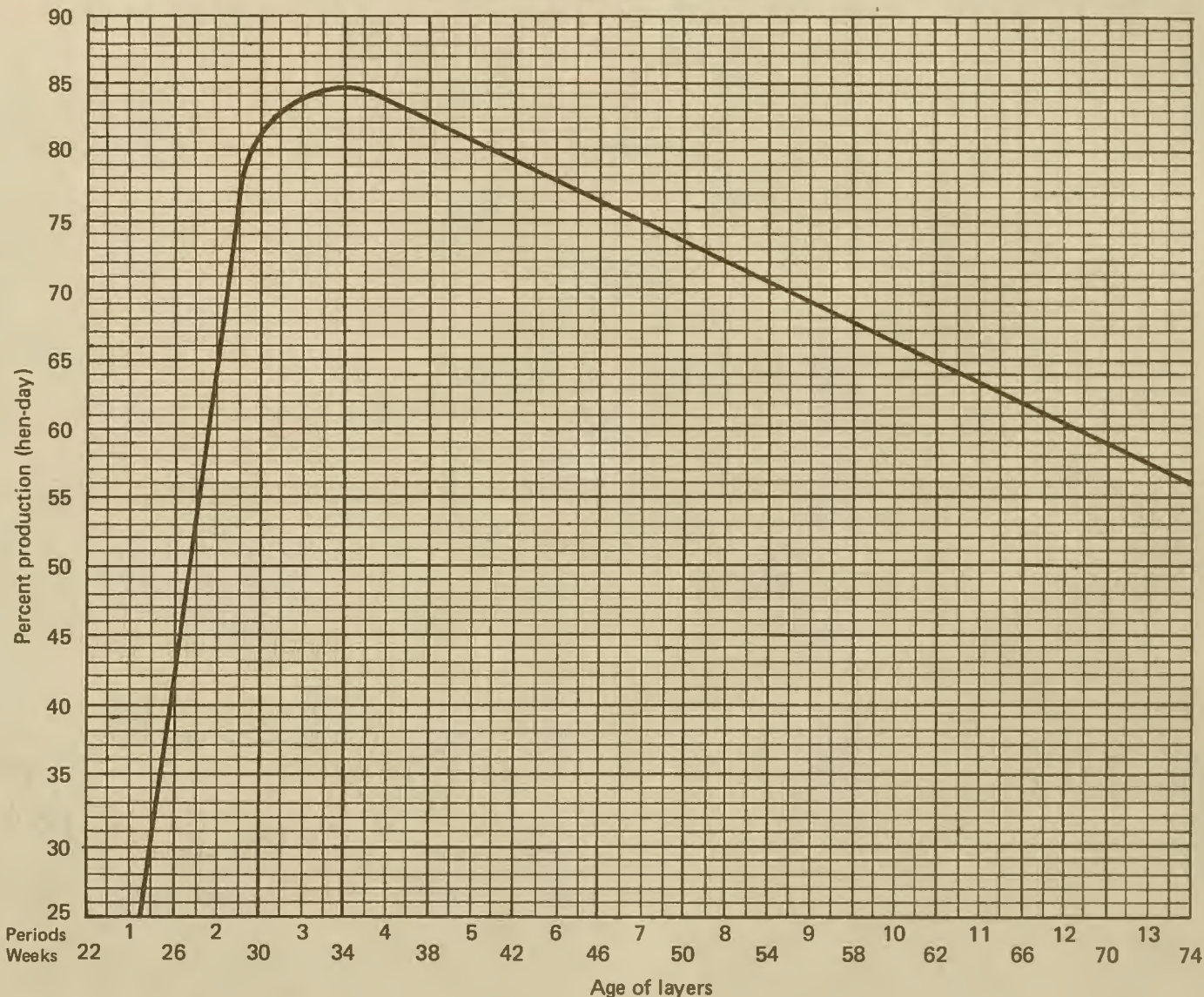
Producers should have a fairly accurate measure of feed consumption. The ration can be more adequately tailored to the needs of the birds if attention is paid to feed consumption. By watching consumption figures closely the producer can also determine if something is wrong with management if consumption changes markedly during a short period of time. With feed consumption and production data feed conversion can be calculated and compared with other flocks.

Financial records should include a sales record sheet listing egg sales by grades and sizes for comparison purposes. All costs should be recorded on an expense sheet. By having a systematic record system, expenses of a miscellaneous nature that might be overlooked are more apt to be recorded. This is particularly true of items such as medication, hauling, supplies, and other miscellaneous expenses. A depreciation schedule or inventory should also be a part of the record to allocate fixed expenses for buildings and equipment that will be charged to the flock.

It is useless to keep a lot of records unless you are going to use them. Decide what records will be useful to you in your situation and take the necessary steps to collect the information accurately and analyze it periodically. Financial and production records can be important keys to success in the poultry industry. Without a good system of keeping accurate records the producer is lacking one of the tools to make many of his financial and management decisions.

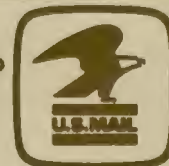
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Hen-day average egg production chart



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