

Poultry Patter



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ITEMS OF INTEREST TO MINNESOTA'S EGG INDUSTRY

Melvin L Hamre

Melvin L. Hamre, Professor and Extension Poultry Specialist

Egg Outlook

Egg production has been about 2 percent above 1977 this past summer but is expected to slip to near 1977 levels this fall. The following production and price information appeared in the September issue of USDA's Poultry and Egg Situation.

Layer numbers on August 1 were 1 percent above 1977 with rate of lay up 1½ percent. Output per hen will likely continue above 1977 during the rest of 1978. However, the margin of increase is expected to narrow this fall because the rate of lay was up almost 2 percent in fall 1977. Layer numbers in coming months will depend on producers cullings of old hens.

The hatch of egg-type chicks and placement of broiler-type pullets in hatchery supply flocks indicate there will be fewer replacement pullets than in 1977, through October 1978 before a small increase in November-December 1978. However, the fewer replacement pullets in coming months could be offset by reduced slaughter of old hens. The slaughter of old birds was up in June-July, but weekly reports indicate August's slaughter has again dropped below 1977 levels.

Layer numbers in early 1979 will depend not only on producers cullings of old birds in coming months but also in 1979. The number of pullets in the laying flock in the first quarter of 1979 will likely show a small increase from 1978, due mainly to more broiler-type pullets going into hatchery supply flocks. The slaughter of hens through federally inspected plants was well above 1977 in January-March 1978. If slaughter in early 1979 is below 1978 levels, the laying flock will likely be above first quarter 1978. Output per hen in early 1979 is expected to be above 1978 levels, but an older flock will likely keep the increase well below the 2 percent gain in the first quarter of 1978.

In coming months, egg prices are expected to rise seasonally and average above 1977 in fall 1978. Cartoned egg prices in New York during July-September 1978 are expected to average in the low 60's compared with 61.5 cents a dozen in the third quarter of 1977. Egg prices in October-December 1978 are expected to average in the mid-60-cents-a-dozen range, well above the 59-cent average of fall 1977. Early 1979 egg prices will likely continue above a year earlier.

Per capita consumption of shell eggs and the shell equivalent of egg products totaled 136.1 eggs in January-June 1978, 2.7 eggs per person or 2 percent above 1977. Egg production in January-June 1978 was 3½ percent above those months in 1977, and 1978 military purchases and shipments to American territories were below 1977 levels. However, smaller imports, sharply higher exports, increased hatching use, and a larger population resulted in per capita egg consumption showing a smaller increase than production. Hatching egg use in 1978 is running above 1977, primarily because of the expansion in the broiler industry. Hatching use in January-June 1978 totaled around

231 million dozen or 8.4 percent of total egg production. Hatching use in the first half of 1977 was smaller but accounted for the same percentage of total production. During January-June 1978, egg-type hatch was down 5 percent but the much larger broiler-type hatch was up 6 percent. Hatching egg use will continue above a year earlier during the remainder of 1978 as the broiler industry continues to expand.

There were 345 million dozen eggs broken under federal inspection in January-June 1978. This was 2 percent above 1977. However, most of the gain came early in the year and second quarter breakings were down slightly from 1977. In addition, weekly reports indicate commercial breakings in July and early August were below 1977 levels. Cold storage stocks of frozen egg products continue to run below 1977. Breakers will likely have to operate near 1977 levels in coming months to meet current demand.

New Avian Health Specialist

Dr. David Halvorson joined the staff of the College of Veterinary Medicine September 1. He will be working in avian health with time divided between the Agricultural Extension Service and the Agricultural Experiment Station. This new staff support is financed with funds from both the 1977 Minnesota Legislature and the poultry industry.

Dr. Halvorson is a native Minnesotan with B.S. and D.V.M. degrees from the University of Minnesota. Immediately after graduation he was a poultry pathologist for a major feed company, providing laboratory and field services to poultrymen to reduce production costs through good management and disease control programs. Since 1971 he has been manager of technical services with a world-wide commercial poultry organization. He was responsible for the company's disease and management research as well as its diagnostic laboratory and field services. He is already actively working with colleagues in extension and in research programs with the Minnesota poultry industry. Poultry Patter welcomes Dr. Halvorson and looks forward to his contributions to future issues.

Fall Management Tips

As the fall weather cools, attention needs to be paid to the ventilation system in most poultry houses. Be sure louvers and other ventilation openings close properly so they don't let in excessive cold air. Some ventilation systems have openings that should be closed during the cooler portions of the year to properly maintain house temperatures and to keep winter snows from blowing into the building. Keep in mind that you must have enough air exchange to provide a good environment for the birds, but that excessive cooling means increased feed consumption by the birds to maintain body heat.

Rats and mice can waste considerable feed, as well as cause disease and parasite problems and damage equipment and insulation. Before long, many rodents will be looking for comfortable winter housing. Eliminate sources of entry for these pests. If entry to the house can be controlled, populations can be kept in check with a good baiting program.

Mechanical feeding systems should be checked periodically for necessary repairs and replacement of worn out parts. Because spilled feed often falls into the manure pit or is scattered, it is easy to overlook or minimize the importance of reducing this waste. Carelessness on the part of workers can result in spills at bins and in cart feeding. Filling troughs too full adds to feed wastage, especially with poorly debeaked flocks. Be sure workers are aware of the potential losses from wasted feed.

Most poultry houses require little maintenance during the first few years of life. If a building has aged, check it for minor prevention repairs that would be more costly outlays later. Were there any signs of a leaky roof during recent heavy rains? This may mean major repairs are needed or just an inspection to replace a few nails or loose flashings. Proper building maintenance is an overall part of good flock management.

Fall harvest of grains or other crops on many farms results in less time in the poultry house. This may mean increased egg breakage due to less frequent egg gathering or other management problems associated with checking feed, water, or removal of dead birds. Is there local part-time help available to assist in the poultry operation during busy times? With a minimal amount of training and expense, part-time help can take over some of the routine chores and ease the work load. This trained help then might be available should illness or other emergency arise or just to let you get away for that hunting trip or vacation.

Egg Washing

The amount of shell damage to eggs during washing is influenced by many factors—shell thickness, age of flock, strain of bird, egg weight, the washer itself, washer temperature, equip-

ment maintenance, and molting of the hens. A number of field studies on egg washing have been conducted and summarized by University of California personnel. Breakage ranged from 0 to 7.8 percent in more than 100 washers tested under field conditions. Average breakage during this survey was 1.2 percent of all sound eggs in the tests (1.10 percent from nonmolted flocks). Of the eggs already checked 8.3 percent were turned into loss eggs in the washer. Less than 1.5 percent breakage occurred in 75 percent of the washers. Poor equipment maintenance and adjustment or other factors related to shell quality contributed to higher levels of breakage in the remaining 25 percent of the machines. The California studies suggest that the techniques used can be effective as a quality control program within egg producing and processing firms as a method of reducing breakage during various phases of handling.

Egg shell thickness had a significant effect on the amount of breakage during washing. From the data collected it is possible to predict more reliably the actual percentage of shell damage that will occur from specific flocks producing eggs of known shell thickness. Eggs with shells less than 0.014 inches thick have a significantly higher risk of breakage. Other factors previously mentioned, however, contribute to breakage and must be considered in an overall analysis of reducing egg shell breakage in any particular plant. Much of the damage can be eliminated by good equipment maintenance procedures and routine removal of cracks prior to washing. Any reduction in breakage experienced in a plant can mean considerable savings over time. Routine trouble-shooting and maintenance programs can be economically justified in savings made through increased output of salable sound-shelled eggs.

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