

Egg Production Lowest Since '42

The number of eggs produced by Pennsylvania laying flocks during March totaled 279 million, up seasonably from February, but 2 percent below March 1962, according to the Pennsylvania Crop Reporting Service.

This is the 4th consecutive year that March production has shown a decline from the previous year and is the lowest March egg output since 1942. Normally (7 out of the last 10 years) egg production during March is higher than any other month of the year.

Although production per layer was slightly below a year ago the principal reason for the reduction from last year and for the 21-year low was the continued downward trend in layers. The average number of layers in the Commonwealth's flocks during the month at 15.0 million, was the lowest for March since 1941.

The average rate of lay for March was 18.60 eggs per layer compared with 18.69 eggs per layer in March 1962 and was the lowest for the month since 1958. However, the rate was still above the 10-year (1952-61) average of 18.38 and above any March prior to 1957.

Egg prices held steady from February to March at 41.0 cents per dozen. This compares with a price of 38 cents in mid-March, 1962 and a 10-year (1952-61) March average of 43 cents. With egg prices unchanged and poultry feed prices lower the egg-feed ratio showed an increase to 10.9. This is higher than last year (the higher the ratio the more

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Mowing Machines

(Continued from Page 1) in the last 100 years, because they have done a good job of cutting our average hay crops. Horne suggested that a farmer considering buying a new mower should wait a year or so if possible since several companies are planning to introduce this type of mower next year.

He said the mowers with the modified or so called "cut away" guards are doing a good job in heavy crops, but they require more adjustment of the pressure plates on top of the sickle bar. He said some farmers are adding extra pressure plates to the cutter bar to prevent excessive wear and hold the sickle bar more solidly against the guard ledger plates.

The double sickle bar machines require more adjustment than conventional machines, he said.

Hay drying with fans or fans and heat can return from \$3.00 to \$5.00 per ton if it is done properly, he said.

Here again it is a matter of proper operation. Hay should be cured to at least 45 per cent moisture in the field or there

is danger of overworking the hay drying machinery and leaving the hay moldy or musty.

Unless the hay is thoroughly cured and the heat blown out of it before it is stored, it will draw moisture from the atmosphere and spoil. He said a good way to determine if the hay is thoroughly dry is to turn the fan off for several hours and then turn it on again. If heat comes from the hay, it needs further drying.

Hay drying may not be for everyone, he cautioned. If a farmer makes less than 50 tons of hay a year, he probably can not afford the investment for a hay drying set up. For a farmer with between 50 and 100 tons a year, Horne advises a natural air system which can be installed for \$800 to \$1,000.

The most practical system for 100 to 200 tons is a platform drying shed. These systems will cost in the neighborhood of \$3,000 to \$5,000 to handle that much hay, but another big expense is the extra handling of the bales onto and off the platform.

I would take over 200 tons a year to justify the outlay of cash needed to install a wagon drying system, Horne felt. Big

advantage of the wagon system, however, is the shorter time involved in the drying (14 to 16 hours compared to 30 to 36 hours for the platform and 7 to 14 days for a natural air system.) and a somewhat lower cost per ton for operating expenses.

Actual operating costs range from about \$1.00 to \$1.25 per ton for the natural air system, \$3.50 to \$5.00 for the platform, and \$2.50 to \$4.50 for the wagons.

The extra expense in the platform system comes from the extra handling involved. "You add about \$1.25 per ton every time you move the hay," he said.

To make the investment in a wagon system profitable, the equipment should be used for drying other materials out of the normal hay season, he said. He suggested using the wagons for drying grain or corn fodder. He cited an example of one farmer who dried shredded corn fodder and found, "his

He said it is advisable to make as few changes in direction of the air flow as possible. If it is at all possible he said, the fan and heater on a wagon drying system should be located overhead.

In handling small bales in the random stacking method, the conventional flat topped duct must be replaced by a "A" shaped frame to prevent air pockets from forming. Otherwise, the drying method is identical with standard sized bale handling.

As one last precaution, Horne urged farmers to remove some of the wedges from the bale chamber to avoid baling too tight when handling hay with 45 per cent moisture. This high moisture packs much tighter than dry hay, and the possibility of molding goes up if it is baled too tight, he said.

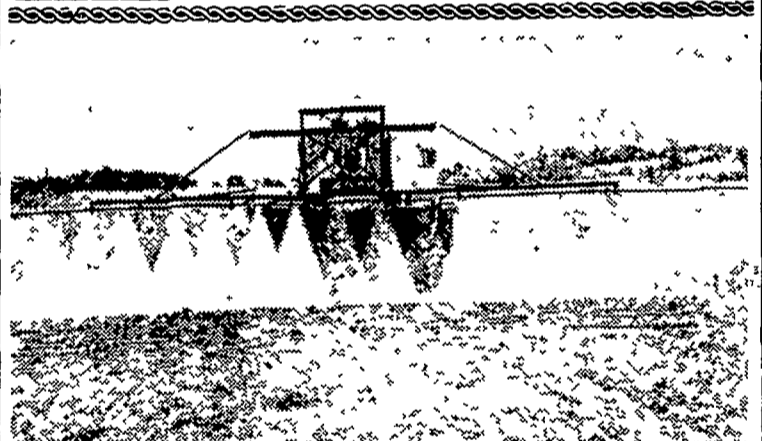
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