

Larger Flocks Cause Changes In Egg-Bird Trends

Year to year changes in the size of the laying flock result from changes in the rate of culling hens and/or the number of pullets grown and housed for laying flock replacements. Changes in the rate of culling affect the number of hens carried over into the next year and the proportion of hens in laying flocks.

Through June of 1964 the number of chicks hatched for laying flock replacements was about the same in the United States as a year earlier. The Pennsylvania hatch was down about 10 per cent. The number of eggs in incubators to hatch laying flock replacements on July 1 was 10 per cent more than a year earlier.

The trend toward a higher July-December hatch of layer replacements is expected to continue. This shift in hatchings is expected to result in less month to month price variation among the different sizes of eggs.

For the United States, in each of the past four years there was an increase in the hatch for laying flock replacements in the last half of the year. In Pennsylvania there was an increase in only two of these years.

Although the number of chicks hatched for laying flock replacements in Pennsylvania increased in each of the past three years, the estimated number of layers on farms has continued to decline. This reflects some of the changes taking place in the egg business. There has been more emphasis placed on all pullet flocks. As fewer layers are kept for the second year, it takes more chicks each year to maintain the size of the laying flock.

Changes taking place also point to less variation from year to year in production and prices. But, with an ever increasing proportion of the layers being in commercial flocks, adjustments to unfavorable price situations may be slower. In the past when flocks were small and the investment per layer was low, sufficient producers discontinued or reduced production to bring about price adjustments.

The number of chickens raised on Pennsylvania farms — excluding commercial broilers — this year is expected

to be 7 per cent below a year ago according to Pennsylvania Crop Reporting Service. The number of chickens raised throughout the nation is expected to be 1 per cent more than a year ago.

The South Central area had the largest increase, number of chicks hatched in the first half of the year as compared with a year earlier, about 36 million chicks. The second largest increase was in the East North Central area, nearly 22 million chicks. Change in any one state often is obscured by change in an area.

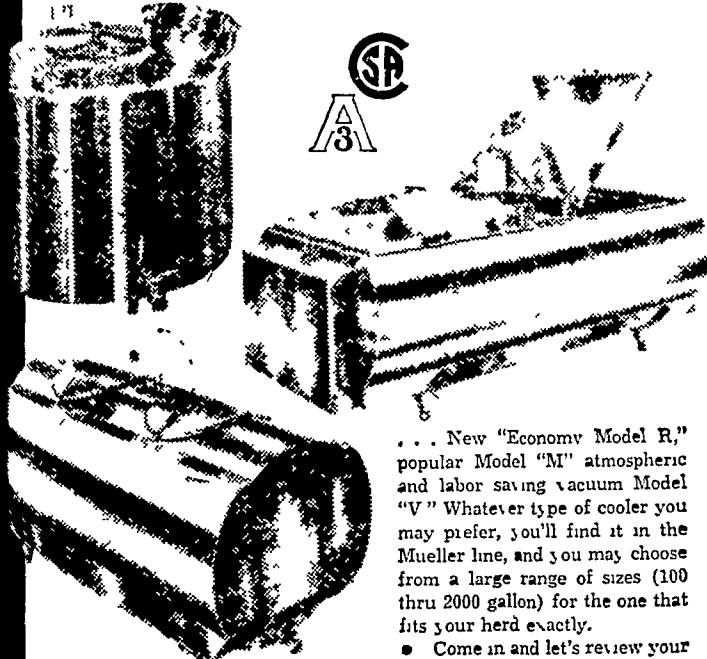
Fewer chicks were hatched for laying flock replacements in the North Atlantic and the West North Central states — nearly 5 and 25 million respectively. These two areas

include Pennsylvania and Iowa. Hatchings decreased in all states in these areas except New York, Kansas and Missouri. The decreases in the above areas were offset by increases in the rest of the United States.

If culling is at a normal rate it appears that the nation's laying flock will be about the same size this fall as a year ago. Chicks hatched the rest of the year will be beginning to lay next year.

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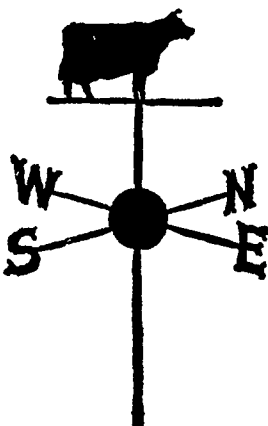
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