

# Lancaster Farming

## SECOND SECTION

### Barn Fires Can Be Prevented

by H. D. Bruhn and R. G. Koegel  
Farm Safety Review

It is rather shocking to learn that one farm out of each 125 may be the scene of a serious barn fire within the next year. Yet that is what Wisconsin records indicate will probably happen.

An analysis of the State Fire Marshall's records shows that 1,864 barns were damaged by fire during the 1966-67 two-year period. Damage totalled 9.2 million dollars.

The Wisconsin Statistical reporting service listed 118,000 farms in 1967, and with the continually decreasing number of farms, this loss by fire will aver-

age out to about one fire per year for each 125 farms.

The appalling 9.2 million dollar damage caused by barn fires over the two year period represents only a portion of the total loss. A fire may wipe out the better part of a year's stored feed supply, and the purchase of the equivalent of a barn-full of good hay may be much more expensive than the value placed on hay initially in the barn. Many barn fires have wiped out a lifetime of work in breeding up a high producing dairy herd, one which may be impossible to replace. Rebuilding a barn on short notice is not only expensive but can throw a whole farm operation into chaos during a

planting or harvesting season, therefore, the actual loss, even if partially covered by insurance, may be far in excess of the reported damage.

An analysis of barn fire damage divided into categories will serve to better the direction of preventive efforts

The pie-shaped chart indicates that the largest category represents fires of unknown origin. More than 31 per cent of the total loss results from these fires. The causes of these fires cannot be determined for the barns frequently are totally destroyed. This is substantiated by the fact that the average damage resulting from this group is in excess of \$9,000 per fire. How-

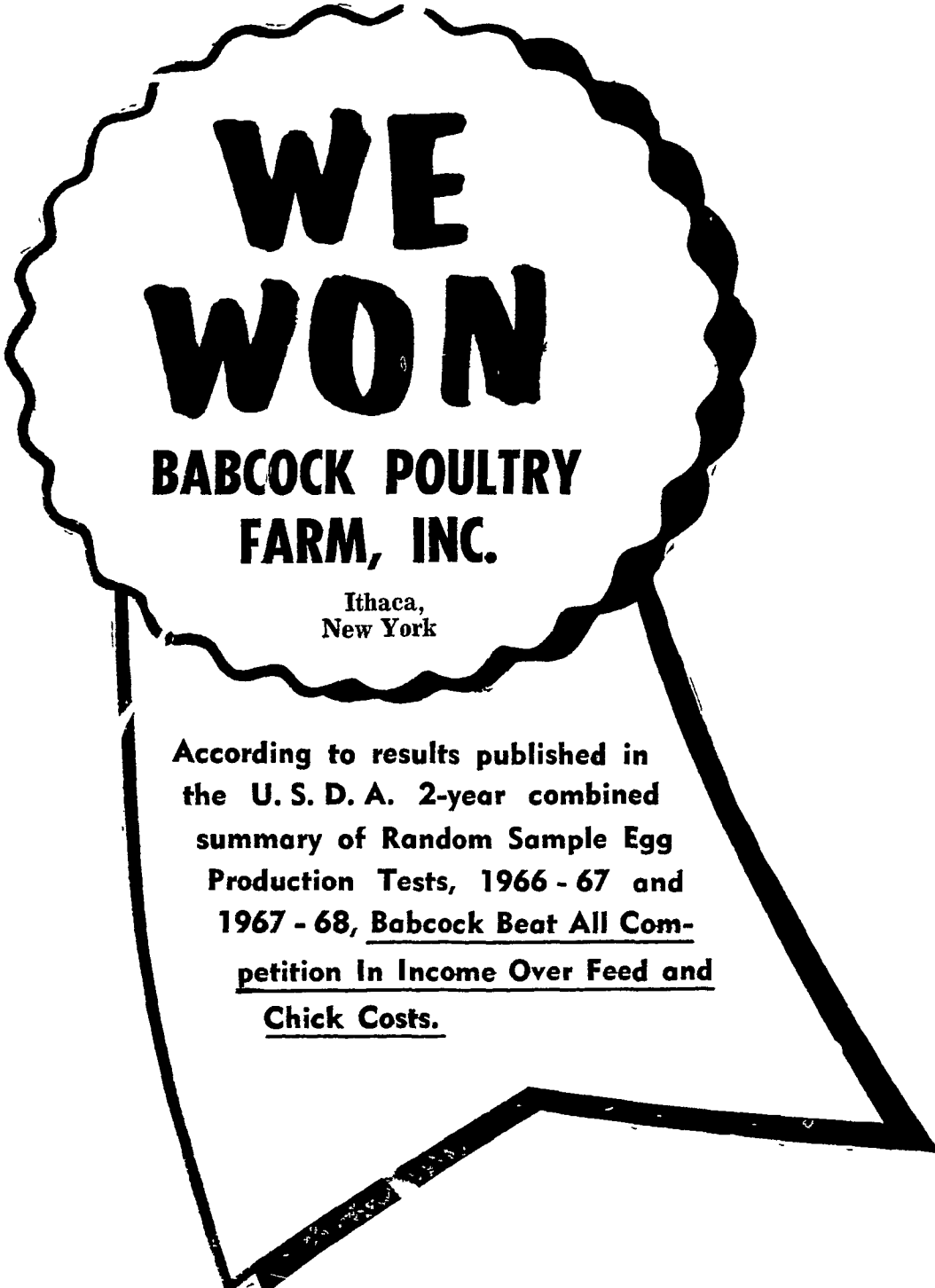
ever, if the fires resulting from known causes are reduced, there is a good possibility that the fires resulting from unknown causes will also be reduced. If barn fires are to be reduced, the three categories of spontaneous ignition lighting, and defective wiring appear to offer the most possibility of effective action

Or these three categories, lightning fires are by far the most numerous. However, the average loss per fire (in the \$1000 range) is rather low so the total loss represents only 11.7 per cent of the loss from all barn fires. This seems to indicate that farmers have done a pretty good job of providing lightning rods and grounding sheet metal roofs, and have taken various other steps to reduce lightning damage. Without considerable research there

probably isn't much advice that can be given other than to intensify the same program and stress maintenance of lightning protective equipment.

While defective wiring has been blamed for so many fires that jokes about it have grown up, it does represent a sufficiently large enough percentage of the total damage to justify considerable effort in any program to reduce fire losses.

Much work has already been done in the field of adequate wiring, new materials, codes, etc., relative to reducing the hazards of electric wiring in barns. This is far too large a field to cover here. However, in passing it may be pointed (Continued on Page 24)



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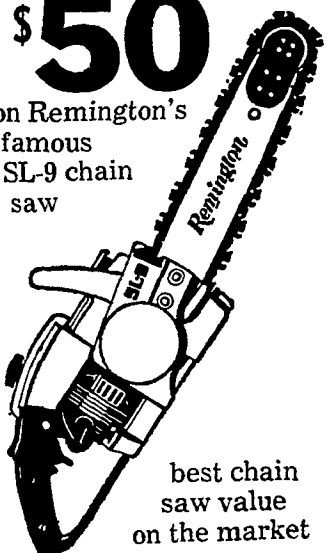
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