

What Size Laying Flock?

By Kermit Birth,
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How many layers will there be in the nation's laying flock this fall and winter (1969-70)? What will be the supply of eggs available to consumers then?

In the past six months number of chicks hatched for laying flock replacements had increased 15.4 percent above a year earlier. This represents about 15.3 million more pullet chicks. On the first of March this year there were 3 percent fewer eggs in incubators than a year earlier. Still, there will be more laying pullets to house this year than a year earlier. Some pullets will be needed to replace the higher proportion of hens now on farms. In the past year, reduced culling and marketing of hens offset a major portion of the reduction in pullets started for laying flock replacements. One unanswered question is how many hens will be kept in production for longer intervals and will be forced molted this fall and next year. Has a trend to more second-year layers and forced molting started?

Another consideration is the proportion of egg production this fall and winter that will be available for civilian table egg use. Will there be a repeat of the situation which occurred in the fall and winter of 1966-67? Prices the spring of 1966 were too high to encourage the production of liquid and frozen eggs. As a result, supplies of these eggs the last quarter of 1966 were inadequate to meet immediate needs for frozen eggs. Thus, more eggs were diverted from the table egg market to the breaker market. This in turn increased prices and stimulated further expansion in the numbers of pullet chicks hatched for laying flock replacements.

Keep abreast of the quantity of liquid and frozen eggs produced this spring and early summer. If prices discourage breaker activity, delayed purchases of eggs for breaking could strengthen fall and winter prices. Because fewer pounds of frozen and liquid eggs were available in the fall and winter of 1966-67, liquid and frozen egg production increased sharply from September through March strengthening the table egg market. Monthly increases ranged from 4 to 83 percent above the corresponding month a year earlier. Prices for large white eggs, as reported by Market News Service, averaged 47.3, 43.4, and 35.4 cents for March, April, and May 1966 respectively. Breaker activity will depend on both current prices and anticipated fall and winter prices. Delays in breaker activity may slow the impact of larger flock size and subsequent increase in production on table egg prices. This in turn might encourage additional expansion which could further weaken prices.

Use of eggs for purposes other than table eggs help sta-

bilize prices but should not be confused with an increase in consumer demand for eggs. Demand of consumers for eggs is not likely to change. However, there may be changes in demand for non-table eggs. Breaker demand was discussed previously. Another factor is hatching egg demand. If expansion in hatch of pullet chicks continues, demand for hatching eggs will be stronger than a year earlier. Hatchings for broiler chicks may also be slightly higher adding to the demand for hatching eggs.

Military purchases will probably continue about the same as a year earlier. Storage stocks of shell eggs on February 1 were less than a year ago.

Industry plans must consider changing relationships among

conditions influencing egg prices. Adjustments to these conditions must be based on a number of factors. Not any one factor is all inclusive, but some are more important than others. Certain factors will have a greater impact on prices at various times of the year than at other times.

Is the reduction in the number of eggs in incubators on March 1 (3%) an indication of the tempering of adjustments to high prices or does it reflect a change in seasonality of flock replacement programs?

It is not easy to appraise adjustments made by the industry. Numerous factors and conditions must be considered. Remember a small change in supply brings about a much larger change in price.

Wild Flowers Featured At Honey And Fruit Annual Meeting

The vivid rain-bow colors of Pennsylvania's many and varied wild flowers came to life on the screen Monday night when George Slesman, Entomologist from the State Department of Agriculture showed his picture slides at the Farm and Home Center. The presentation was

featured at the combined Annual Meeting of the Lancaster County fruit growers and honey producers.

About 100 persons attended the dinner. No formal business meeting or election of directors was held.

If a person weighs 100 pounds on earth, he would weigh 20 pounds on the moon, 102 on Venus, and 317 on Jupiter.

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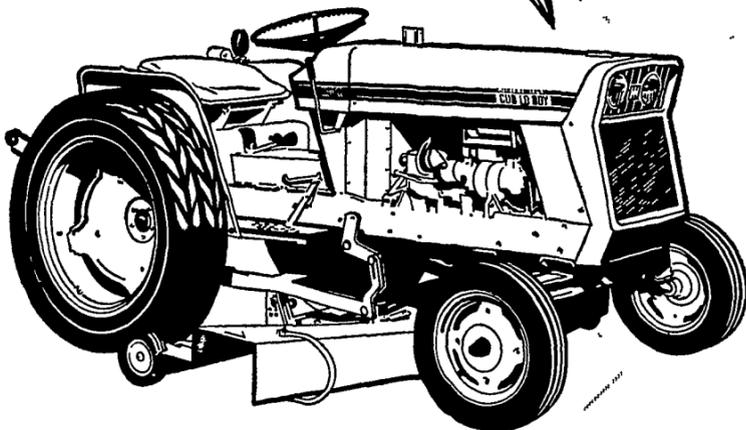
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