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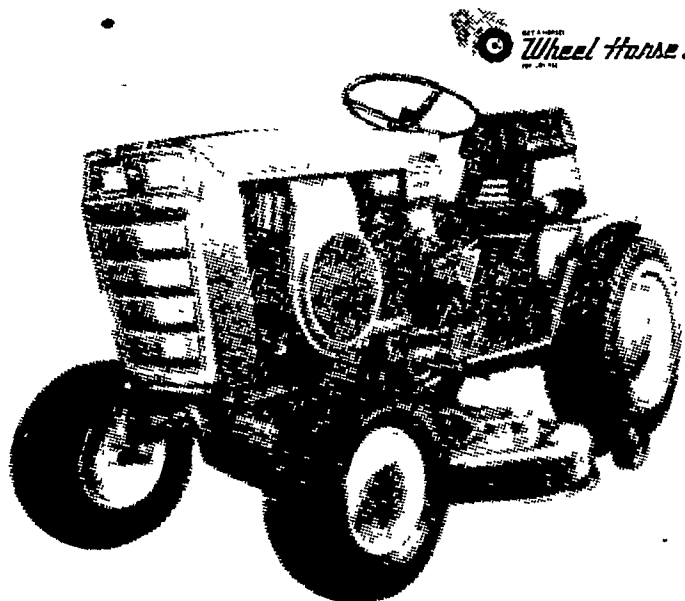


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Forced Molting Is Egg Supply Factor

The following report has been released by Kermit Birth, Penn State marketing specialist, through Max Smith, Lancaster County agricultural agent:

Although the number of the eggs available for the table egg market at a given time can be influenced by quantity of eggs for hatching of chicks, exports, imports, changes in storage holdings, military use, and other factors, the chief determinant of supply is current egg production

Monthly egg production, according to crop reporting estimates, has averaged above year-earlier levels since May of 1969. Through 1970 there were about two to three per cent more layers on farms each month than a year earlier. But

eggs per layer averaged one to two per cent below a year earlier for the first seven months of 1970 with the exception of January, thus keeping production closer to year-earlier levels than the number of hens on farms would indicate

Why the lower rate of lay? Because of a shortage of pullets and relatively high egg prices, hens were kept in production for longer periods of lay in 1970 than for the previous year. Thus, a substantially higher proportion of hens in the nation's laying flock, plus more forced molt layers, resulted in a reduced output per layer. This year the situation was reversed. A sharp increase in the quantity of pullets grown for flock replacements resulted in a substantially lower proportion of

hens in the nation's laying flock. An increase in the monthly rate of lay began in December, 1970. Rate of lay in March was about 16 per cent above a year earlier as compared to a two per cent decrease in March 1970. Also, Marek's vaccine may have played a role in rate of lay

Slaughter of light-type hens under Federal inspection this year through the week ending April 14, 1971 increased about 16 per cent — 66 million layers — thus aiding in keeping the number of hens in the nation's laying flock within one per cent of a year earlier on April 1

Number of pullet chicks hatched is an indication of the potential number of layers on farms five to six months later in the year. However, a decreased supply of pullets can be offset by reduced slaughter of hens

One of the difficulties in estimating the potential number of layers on farms in the future is the number of forced molt layers and the number of times hens are molted. Increases in the number of forced molt layers reduces the number of pullets needed to maintain a given number of hens on farms, whereas decreases in the number of forced molt layers increases the number of pullets needed.

Data giving the proportions of forced molt layers on farms for 17 states are being made available to the industry. In April 1971 about 97 per cent of the layers on farms had been through a forced molt as opposed to 10.4 per cent a year earlier.

There is, however, considerable variation among states in the proportion of the flock which has been through a forced molt. It ranged from a high of 28 per cent in California to a low of 15 per cent in Iowa. On April 1 this year about 55 per cent of the layers on farms in Pennsylvania had been through a forced molt

Thus, one must keep abreast of quantities of forced molt layers to assist in appraising potential for egg production. As the proportion of forced molt layers increases and pullets decreases, rate of lay for the nation's laying flock is likely to decrease. Also, increases in the length of time hens are kept in production can offset reduction in the number of pullets.

An unanswered question is how many of the pullets now in the laying house will be forced molted? What proportion of the nation's laying flock consists of forced molt layers as a normal continuous management program and how much will be done to adjust for a shortage or surplus of pullets?

At present this is pretty much a value judgement, one which is not easy to ascertain. But a higher proportion of hens in the nation's laying flock this fall and winter can be anticipated if the current rate of reduced hatch of chicks for laying flock replacements continues.

Egg Shells

(Continued from Page 1)

shell quality and these factors will be discussed in detail by the panelists

It was also emphasized that while the poultry industry's major disease, Marek's, now appears to have been largely overcome, poultrymen cannot afford to relax in their efforts to put out a quality product

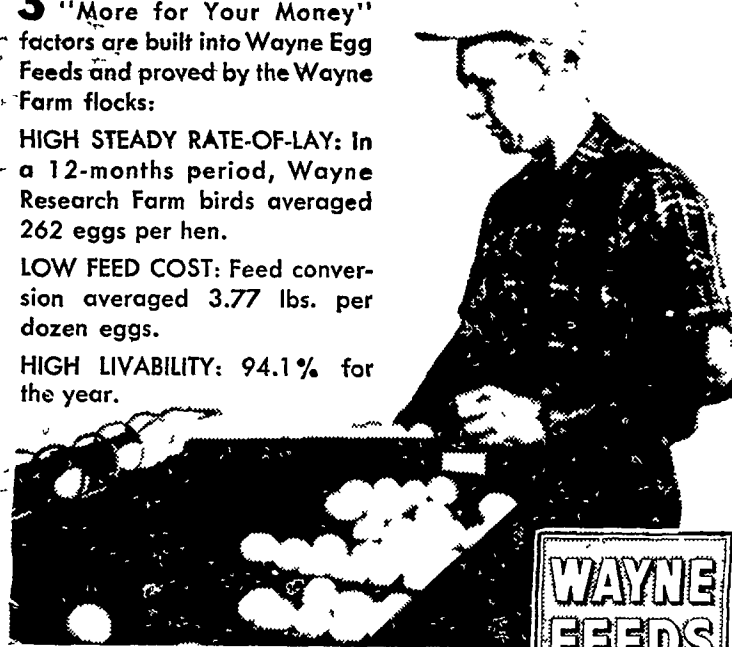
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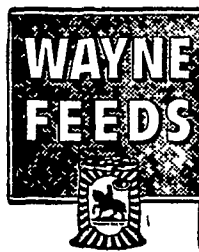
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