

U.S. Corn Projection

Farmers intend to reduce corn plantings by four per cent this year following a record crop of 5.5 billion bushels harvested in 1971, according to a special survey announced recently by the

U.S. Agriculture Department.

The indicated planted acreage of corn in Pennsylvania is 1,447,000 acres, a one per cent decrease from 1971.

Wengers Convert Pullets to Cages

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By spreading overhead costs over a lot larger number of birds, cost per bird is also down. Labor costs per bird are also lower. There's more manure to handle, but Wenger's automated scraping system reduces this labor to a minimum.

Wenger originally considered putting up a new building in order to convert to cages but the three dollars per bird cost discouraged him.

Hess emphasized that "every lab test we have had (from Wenger's past four flocks) have been MG - MS negative." This means the birds are free of CRD or PPLO organisms. These organisms or chronic respiratory disease move slowly through a flock and cut down on thriftiness. The result for the egg producer is a flock which is less efficient and produces inferior quality eggs. By keeping these respiratory diseases out of his flock, Wenger assures buyers of his pullets better results.

Hess stated, "Wenger's (MG - MS) negative tests show he's paying close attention to management." Hess thinks moving the manure every two weeks is important in stopping the formation of ammonia and other gases which are detrimental to the health of the birds, as well as in breaking the fly reproduction cycle.

Under his new system, Wenger grows the birds from day old to 20 weeks in 24 by 36 inch cages, 23 birds per cage. The only time the birds are handled is when they're debeaked at up to three weeks of age and when they're finally moved out.

While many producers are feeding 15 to 16 pounds of feed to get 20 week old birds, Wenger expects about 13 pounds on a full feed program.

The cage system allows catching and loading 24 hours a day, while the floor system limits moving the birds to night time.

All in all, results with the first cage flock indicate a good thing has been made a little better.



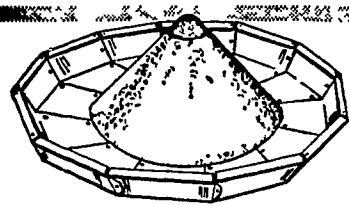
Claude Hess, manager of the Plain and Fancy Egg Ranch egg production, admires a typical pullet at the Daniel Wenger farm. Hess likes the flock's uniform size and thrifty appearance.

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