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**Newcastle Indemnity
Rate Is Increased**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has announced an immediate increase of up to 25 percent in the rate of indemnities to be paid poultrymen whose egg laying flocks may have to be destroyed in the future because of exotic Newcastle disease.

This increase in the indemnity rate is being made to reflect the increasing value of laying hens, as a result of a jump in egg prices in recent weeks, according to Dr. R.E. Omohundro, Director of the State-Federal Newcastle Eradication Task Force headquartered at Riverside, Calif.

"We are instructing Task Force appraisers to immediately begin applying the higher indemnity rate in their valuations of egg laying flocks that must be destroyed," Dr. Omohundro said. "As has been done since the start of the program, the actual indemnity per bird will be based largely upon its age at the time of destruction. The higher indemnification rate will not be applied retroactively."

Officials of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) explained that the current drive to eradicate exotic Newcastle—a virus infection which affects poultry and other birds—has been underway since last March. They emphasized that the infection cannot be transmitted to humans through eggs or other poultry products.

When poultry flocks or other birds become exposed or infected, it is necessary to destroy them in order to stop the spread and eventually eradicate the disease. Owners of destroyed

birds are paid an indemnity based upon the fair market value of each bird. To date, the indemnity rate for laying hens has averaged about \$1.54 per bird since July 1.

APHIS officials noted that egg prices began to increase noticeably in early September, and are expected to stay above current levels for several months. This increase in current egg prices, coupled with an improved economic outlook in the egg industry over the next several months, necessitates an increase in the indemnity rate to reflect the added value of laying hens, they explained.

USDA emphasized that market conditions will continue to be monitored so that adjustments can be made in the indemnity rate in light of significant economic trends in the egg industry.

Dr. Omohundro said that current efforts to eradicate exotic Newcastle will continue, including the detection of infected flocks by the placement of "sentinel birds"—ones which are raised free of specific diseases and therefore highly susceptible to them. He noted that use of these sentinel birds has been recommended by USDA's scientific advisory group, which met recently and commended USDA for the progress being made to eradicate the disease.

He emphasized that the incidence of the disease has dropped dramatically since the State-Federal quarantine was imposed upon eight southern California counties in March. Task Force officials are in-

creasingly optimistic about eradicating the disease.

"This is a program which required the full cooperation of a large number of affected people," Dr. Omohundro said. "We have had excellent support, not only from the Southern California poultry industry, but from many others who have been directly or indirectly affected by the quarantine program. It is an unfortunate fact that many of these people suffer severe losses when a disease such as this hits, and quarantines and eradication efforts become necessary. This action is an effort to reduce those losses as much as possible."

**USDA to Study
Low-income Coops**

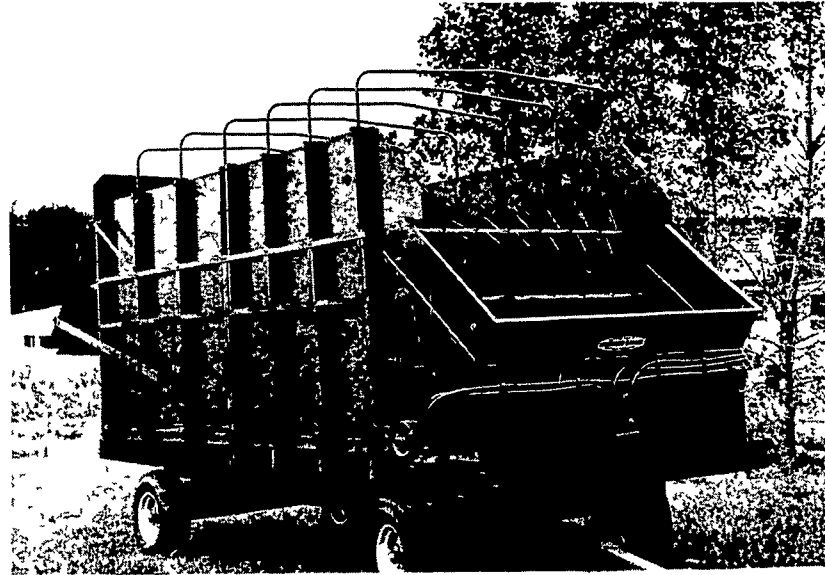
South Carolina State College at Orangeburg County, South Carolina was granted \$100,639 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Cooperative State Research Service.

Funds will be used for research on the economic feasibility of organizing marketing and supply cooperatives by low-income farmers. Specific objectives of the 5-year study will include analysis of membership, patronage, and performance of existing cooperatives of low income farmers, and characteristics and attitudes of the farmers. Researchers will also attempt to gauge the potential for organizing such cooperatives in South Carolina.

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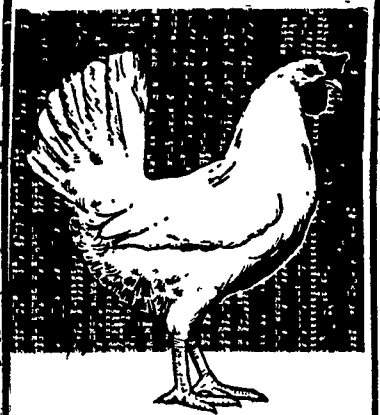
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