

Farm Commentary

Egg Prices — Trying to Bring Order to Chaos

What is a producer's best management strategy for the months ahead should he expand his laying flock in anticipation of higher prices for eggs or should he cut back orders for replacement layers because prices are likely to drop?

In the current period of sharp egg price and cost fluctuations, what egg producer wouldn't like to know the answers to these questions? However, there is a way he can get an inkling of what lies ahead by a careful reading of two monthly USDA reports, Eggs, Chickens, and Turkeys and Agricultural Prices published by the Statistical Reporting Service.

Egg supplies are the prime part of the egg price equation since demand the other part usually shows little change from year to year.

As a result, changes in supply have tended to dominate the price picture, and any change in production usually is accompanied by a much larger change in the opposite direction in egg prices.

The starting point for just about all estimates of egg supplies, be they government or private forecasts, is SRS' Eggs, Chickens, and Turkeys report.

Included in this report are the key data for short-term estimates of egg supplies: the number of layers on hand the preceding month, eggs laid per 100 hens, and total eggs produced.

However, producers who want to take a longer look at possible egg supplies, those in 5 or 6 months' time, can get a clue to what's coming up from another set of data in the report the number of egg-type chicks hatched during the preceding months.

Roughly half of these chicks can be assumed to be pullets and consequently are likely to become part of the Nation's laying flock within half a year's time.

The look ahead can be stretched to nearly a year though the view is bound to be a little less clear at that distance if a producer notes what's happening to placements of pullet chicks in the egg-type hatchery supply flock.

These chicks will, in 5 or 6 months' time, become the parents of the pullet chicks that in another 5 or 6 months' time will enter the laying flock.

Of course, along with watching the poultry scene, producers have to keep track of developments in the feed economy, too.

Egg-feed price ratios, as reported in SRS' Agricultural Prices report, have a lot to do with the management strategies producers are likely to follow in upcoming months how long they'll keep their layers in production, how heavily they'll cull their flocks,

how many eggs they'll save back for breeding flocks, how many birds they'll force molt. These are all key factors in figuring future egg supplies.

The current USDA reading of SRS' data regarding developments in the egg and feed economies indicate restricted egg supplies for the remainder of 1974.

Earlier prospects for egg production to exceed 1973 levels during the rest of the year have just about vanished, in the opinion of USDA forecasters.

It had been expected that last year's increased hatch of egg-type chicks would result in layer numbers matching year-earlier levels in early 1974. However, this was more than offset by a heavier slaughter of hens.

Egg-type hatchings in late 1973 pointed to June 1974 as the last month that a large number of pullets would reach laying age. January-May 1974's egg-type hatch was 225 million, 7 percent below the same period the year before. In addition, eggs in incubators on June 1 were down 1 percent.

These numbers point to fewer replacement pullets reaching laying age during July-December.

With pullet replacement numbers down, whether producers decide to cull or force molt their old layers will be crucial in determining the level of second half egg production.

Through the first half of the year, producers were opting for culling. Through May almost 5 million more mature hens had moved through Federally inspected slaughter plants than the year before.

Undoubtedly, producers were responding to the poor egg-feed price ratios which had persisted through the first half. On June 15, the ratio was down to where 58 pounds of laying feed were equal in value to a dozen eggs, the lowest ratio since this series was begun in 1963.

However, the possibility of easing feed prices later in the year and the likelihood of increased profitability as egg prices start to increase seasonally coupled with the low prices farmers are receiving for their old hens could serve to reduce culling rates in the second half and increase the number of force moltings. These factors would help offset some of the decline in layer numbers.

Egg prices are expected to increase seasonally through the summer and fall although they're not likely to reach the high levels set in second half 1973.

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

I have just received a notice that my subscription to your paper is running out. Because of the fact that next year I am attending college, I do not wish to resubscribe, but I felt I should write a letter of thanks.

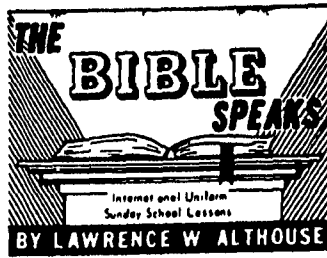
As a member of the Owen J. Roberts chapter of FFA, my name appeared in your

paper many times, for everything from our Banquet, Keystone Farmer, to County and State project book contests. Your paper has been a source of inspiration, information, and just plain news for myself and our whole FFA. You have printed every article our reporter has sent, without change. You have

faithfully represented all the FFA's in the area, and you really deserve a note of thanks.

Thank you for your coverage of area and State FFA functions, but most of all, thank you for having the most informative and finest farm paper in the area.

Sincerely,
Ruth Friedhofer



PRAYER FOR TOUGH TIMES

Lesson for August 4, 1974

Background Scripture: Colossians 1:1-14; 2:1-7; 4:7-18.

Devotional Reading: Matthew 5:13-20.

A well-known corporation lawyer was overheard one night on a train from his Pullman berth: "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep . . ."

There is nothing wrong with that prayer, except that it would seem that a Christian might be expected to grow beyond its simple requests. One is not surprised if a child is self-centered and simplistic in his prayers. We would anticipate, however, that an adult would have learned a more mature approach to prayer.

Always Thanksgiving

In Colossians Paul is writing to a church that is in danger of some kind. Its situation is precarious. The first chapter of this epistle is a good illustration of how a Christian can pray in times of deep concern and stress.

For one thing, Paul prays thankfully. In fact, thanksgiving is the one contest element in his prayers, regardless of how dark the situation may be. "We always thank God . . . when we pray for you" (1:3). Even when Paul is concerned about the dangers confronting the Colossians, Paul continues to pray thankfully.

This is the secret of Paul's effective prayer life: he always finds something for which to be thankful and by concentrating on his gratitude he opens up the channels through which God's grace will flow. Anyone can thank God when things are going well, but if we learn to thank him in tough times, we will find our prayers much more effective in the long run. God works best in thankful hearts and lives.

A prayer for understanding

One would expect, perhaps that from thanksgiving, Paul would settle down in his prayer to ask for HELP! But Paul sees another petition as more important: "that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding" (2:9). Why would he pray for understanding God's will?

The answer is that very often, unless we understand God's will, we do not recognize the help he sends us. God always answers our prayers, but sometimes those answers come in forms that we may not recognize.

Paul makes a further petition "to lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work . . ." (3:10). Once again, Paul puts something else before sheer rescue. He asks that in the midst of this danger, the Colossians may conduct themselves in such a way that God is glorified in the sight of men. This was the example of Christ on the cross.

NOW IS THE TIME . . .



Max Smith
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To Prepare Silos

Some upright silos may need some attention before the new corn crop is ensiled. After several years, the interior surface may become rough and pitted; this will allow small air pockets and molding. The re-pointing or plastering of the inside of the silo will permit a smooth surface and less air pickets. Some producers will do this work as the silo is emptied during the feeding period. With the increased value of silage crops, it is good management to do everything possible to reduce the amount of spoilage; a silo in good condition should produce top quality silage.

To Seed Alfalfa

Summer seedings of alfalfa made by the middle of August have a much better chance of survival than seedings made later in the fall. Local growers are urged to get this job done soon in order to have stronger plants when freezing weather arrives. Lime and fertilizer should be worked into the soil according to a complete soil test and the band seeding method is giving some of the very best stands. Weed control should be attained by spraying before the weeds are more than 1 to 2 inches high. A careful job of planning and seeding the alfalfa will give more valuable alfalfa hay or silage next summer.

To Graze Legumes Carefully

Many livestock and dairy producers will graze the later cutting of alfalfa or clover. This is a good practice providing there is close management of the herd. Wet legumes are very dangerous from the standpoint of bloating. Livestock should be allowed to graze these areas only when the forage is dry and then after they have had a feeding of other dry matter such as silage or hay. Even the morning dew on legumes makes them dangerous from a bloat standpoint. Milking cows grazing these areas should be removed from the legume pasture at least 3 to 4 hours before the next milking period.

To Mulch Shrubs And Trees

The month of August is a very difficult time for newly planted trees or shrubs. In most cases the rainfall is not sufficient to get moisture down into the root zone. Owners of these plants should soak the root area thoroughly every 10 days until fall rains and cooler weather arrives. Many folks will depend upon the rainfall to keep the roots moist only to learn that the rain did not soak down deep enough into the soil. As a result, the leaves will begin to turn brown, die, and drop off. Mulching around the tree or shrub will also help to hold the moisture. Don't be stingy with the water and allow new shrubbery to die.

Farm Calendar

Saturday, August 3
Mini Tractor at Kinzer, 7:00 p.m. Also Dune Buggy Demonstration

Monday, August 5
Manheim Young Farmers regular meeting at Penn State Research Lab, Follow-up of Soybean Seminar.

Monday, August 5 to Saturday, August 10
Dallastown Fair in York County

Tuesday, August 6
Pennsylvania Farmers Association Farm Tour, Cumberland County

Lancaster County Poultry Association Tour at the Merck Lab and General Motors Plants in Wilmington.

Wednesday, August 6
Lancaster County Ag Teacher's Meeting and family picnic at Kerr's Picnic Grounds

Thursday, August 8
Elizabethtown Adult Farmers selection of officers meeting.

Saturday, August 10
Ephrata Area Young Farmer's Family Ice Cream Social at Harry Bicker Farm.

Farm Youth Calendar

Saturday, August 3
Tennessee Square Dancers at the Farm and Home Center 8:00 p.m.

Friday August 9
Solanco Community Club meeting and Swim Party.

COURTHOUSE SQUARES

IF YOU THINK MARRIAGE IS A 50-50 PROPOSITION YOU MAY KNOW ONLY HALF OF IT



Finally, Paul asks, "May you be strengthened with all power . . ." (3:11). If we are not to escape the danger around us, it is more important that we find the strength from God to see it through and emerge as victors rather than victims.