

# Lancaster Farming

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Paul Hess, Sr., one of the founders of the Plain & Fancy Egg Ranch, is shown here with part of his collection of eggs from around the world.

## Promotion, Efficiency Spur Egg Co. Growth

"The only way to survive as an independent in today's egg market is to do everything yourself," Paul Hess, Sr. told Lancaster Farming this week. "That's why we grow our own pullets, process our own eggs and handle our own distribution."

This philosophy of self-sufficiency has worked well for Plain and Fancy Egg Ranch, the Elizabethtown R3 firm which Hess founded with two partners in 1966. That year, they began operations with 15,000 layers. Today, Plain & Fancy is marketing the production of some 450,000 pullets being reared to join the flock.

The other two founding partners are John Snader and Claude Hess. Two years ago, Paul Herr, Jr. joined the firm as marketing manager.

Pullets are grown for the company by four local

farmers. Day-old chicks arrive on the farms and are fed until they're 20 weeks old. "We like to control the growing of our own pullets," Hess pointed out. "That way, we know what goes into each bird and we know what we can expect to get out of her."

Plain & Fancy produces about two-thirds of their own eggs with company-owned birds in company-owned houses. The other third comes from local farmer-contractors. John Snader, the partner who's in charge of production, said that he likes to see 75-percent average production in the hen house. "If we can get 75-percent rate of lay instead of 70-percent, we'll see a 60 to 75-cent difference in the income per bird during the laying cycle," Snader said. "And we get that without any increase in the cost of production. Sometimes that extra income is the difference between a profitable cycle and one that loses money."

Snader noted that they generally add a new batch of chickens to the flock every five weeks. That means that the laying cycles of the flock are staggered, so that there's a fairly steady flow of all sizes of eggs.

One of the production innovations Snader is most pleased about is the cart for transporting eggs which Plain & Fancy pioneered in this area a few years ago. "All the eggs from our contract producers used to

go into cases. Now they go onto carts that hold 450 dozen eggs on flats. The producer no longer has to worry about cases, he just puts the eggs on the cart and rolls it out of the way until our driver comes to pick it up. The driver just rolls the cart onto

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## W. McCoy Reelected President

William G. McCoy, president of the livestock commission firm of the McCoy Cattle Company was recently re-elected to his third term as president of the Lancaster Stockyards, Inc.

James C. Dunlap president of Walter M. Dunlap and Sons and Robert Heilbron, a partner in S.L. Heilbron and Sons elected as vice presidents. Serving as secretary - treasurer will be Robert Stauffer.

In a report of the livestock facilities, McCoy noted that the feeder pig division has been expanding to handle up to 3000 head of animals. Salable receipts have increased at the facility by 16 percent in the last year.

It was also noted that the stockyards ranked fourth in percentage increase of salable receipts among the 25 major livestock markets in the United States.

## Excellent Cattle Prices Here Seen Continuing

Eastern cattle have been enjoying excellent markets in the past few weeks, and William McCoy, president of the Lancaster Stockyards, thinks the market might continue strong through the summer.

"I hate to make leading statements," McCoy said on Friday morning, "because the market has a way of doing things we don't expect. But I am encouraged by the market now, and I think our feeders here in the East can look forward to a good summer."

McCoy said most of the producers selling on the current market are making money with feeders they purchased last fall. "They're coming in at good weights, and they're bringing good prices," he said. "Their memories aren't short. A lot of them remember two years ago when the market went to 60-cents and everybody was holding out for 85-cents. Their cattle got too heavy, feeder prices went through the roof, they couldn't afford to buy replacements, and the market fell apart."

There's no similar disaster in sight. McCoy feels, barring government intervention or a serious dry spell that could force a lot of range fed animals onto the market.

Local feeders are benefiting from the fact that many West Coast packers have been forced to reach into the Midwest for their supplies because of a shortage in their home states.

If the nation's farmers pull in a normal corn crop this

year, McCoy expects to see feed prices dip, another plus sign in the cattle feeder's future.

The wide spread between high choice and lower grades is something McCoy expects to continue, along with a strong demand for good cattle.

This could change, though, if the government's proposed change in beef cattle grading goes through. That change would redefine the grading criteria, making lower quality animals eligible for the choice stamp.

"If the change is made,"

McCoy said, "we'll suddenly have a lot of so-called 'choice' animals on the market. Although many of them would have been graded good under our present regulations. That, naturally, could tear down the price for choice animals."

There's been no final decision on whether or not the change in beef grading will be made, but the decision is due in late June. At the moment, according to McCoy, the industry throughout the nation seems

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## Garden Spot Student Will Head County FFA Officers

by: Melissa Piper

As the newly elected president of the Lancaster County FFA, LaVern Martin will have a great deal of responsibility within the coming months. The young man has been well prepared for the task however, having been active in FFA for the past three years.

A member of the Grassland FFA Chapter at Garden Spot High School, LaVern has been assistant treasurer and on several committees over the past few years and has served as president of the chapter for this school year.

For his project work, LaVern has taken dairy, corn, hog fattening and alfalfa production.

Along with his leadership duties, LaVern has also been

involved in many FFA activities. He has been a member of the chapter's meat judging team and has attended FFA Days at Penn State on the dairy judging team for which he received recognition for being in the top twenty individual placings.

A member of the Grassland Parliamentary Procedure team, LaVern served as chaplain helping to place the team third in regional competition.

Along with FFA activities, LaVern has also been active in 4-H. As a member of the Lancaster County Holstein Dairy Club, the young man has shown his dairy animals at the County round-up and regional shows.

He is also a member of the Weaverland Mennonite

Church youth group and will be attending the PAFCC coop conference in Shippensburg this summer for placing high individually in the coops exam contest.

As president of the County FFA, LaVern will be responsible for presiding over the meetings as well as assisting in the county-wide activities and committees.

The young man has some definite ideas on what he would like to do as president and shared them with Lancaster Farming this past week.

"Hopefully, through my presidency, I can help other members to get involved in FFA work, I'd like to encourage more members to join."

When asked if there would

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LaVern Martin, son of Mr. and Mrs. Clyde W. Martin, East Earl R1, was recently elected president of the Lancaster County FFA.