

Turkey growers leave disastrous 1981 behind them

BY GINGER SECRIST MYERS
Staff Correspondent

GETTYSBURG — Pennsylvania's turkey industry suffered its worst losses in six years during 1981.

Some birds were marketed for as much as 10 cents per pound below production costs. According to growers, the prices started down in August, with the greatest losses occurring in the final quarter.

Fred Jaindl, Jaindl Turkey Farm, Allentown, Pa. blamed higher feed costs and Swift & Company.

"This was the first year since 1930 that we've lost money," said Jaindl. "We took a real bath. What happened was that feed costs got higher and Swift & Company didn't report their storage supplies properly. When Swift discovered their storage problems, they took all the school lunch program contracts and left the other large processors without those markets. These processors had to lower their prices to move their turkeys and then the price really went down. We all were affected."

With these facts fresh in mind, there was no blarney at the Pennsylvania Turkey Conference held St. Patrick's Day at the Sheraton

Inn, Gettysburg.

The meeting focused on the factors affecting the competitive position of Northeastern turkey growers, plus feed qualities, diseases, and housing innovations.

A. Kermit Birth, Professor of Agricultural Economics Extension, opened the morning session reviewing and projecting the turkey marketing situation of the eastern seaboard representation to turkey growers, breeders, and processors.

He pointed out similar disaster years occurred in 1961, 1967, and 1974 and attributed the poor years to over optimism by major companies.

But despite early predictions that turkeys were in the best shape of any of the poultry commodities in 1981, the market fell victim to high interest rates, cheaper beef, pork, and broiler prices, projected high storage inventories, and the weather.

Birth explained the danger signals were there but went unheeded. His figures revealed a 7 percent increase in tonnage for each quarter with a 4 percent increase in numbers last year, even though prices fell.

Also, for the past four con-

secutive years there has been an increase in the deviation from the intentions to produce and that actually produced. Storage turkey numbers reached a record high with some sources estimating as much as 525 million pounds. One bright spot, he said, is that storage is now back down following a good movement of birds after the price broke.

He noted a reduction in the number of pullets hatched since September. But the reduction is not significant when computed on the same basis as the average weight of last year's turkeys. Storage of heavy turkeys, however, is not the concern that it was earlier, Birth reported.

When projecting prices and market trends, Birth listed producer reaction as the most difficult variable to predict in the marketing equation. Producers no longer react in set patterns as they once did by Birth's observations.

Factors Birth considers important when looking ahead are lower total red meat supplies in 1982, possibly as much as 5 percent and an increase in per capita consumption of poultry. A shift away from the traditional marketing season of October

through December to more birds being sold during the second and third quarters will have to be considered as consumer buying patterns change.

A major factor Birth noted was that since 1960 the per capita consumption of pork has risen from 60.3 pounds annually to 68.3 pounds, the largest increase in consumption of any of the protein sources.

He cautioned the turkey producers to keep their eyes open.

"What we're overlooking is that the hog industry is going through tremendous expansion changes just like the broilers and egg business did. Much of this expansion has not even been picked up in the statistics yet. Pork gets 70 percent cuts from live weight and a great deal of capital has been poured into their industry," Birth said.

"Our competitive position lies in the abilities of the industry to combine inputs in the right combinations to maximize profits, not to come up with least costs," he added. "We must consider what is the best alternatives from our own records and then look at why we're not making a profit. Those who are going to make it are those who

maximize profits in both production and processing."

Highlighting the afternoon session was a presentation on flex housing for turkeys with insulated curtains. A slide show featuring a working model was presented by Gerald Baughman, Department of Biological and Agriculture Engineering at North Carolina State University. Baughman's research focused on evaluating the total energy required to produce a pound of turkey.

His working model was financed by a grant from the North Carolina State Energy Institute and private contributions. The new design utilizes the concept that heat rises and the design features a four foot continuous ridge opening in the roof, an insulated sidewall curtain with an R value of 5.5 a seven-inch slotted inlet at bird height, controllable light levels, and the flexibility of switching from natural to mechanical ventilation whenever necessary.

The use of the insulated curtain has been found to be advantageous since it can be raised or lowered to maximize the use of natural ventilation. Also, its insulation value and adaptability with natural lighting helps to save energy. Baughman's research

(Turn to Page A26)

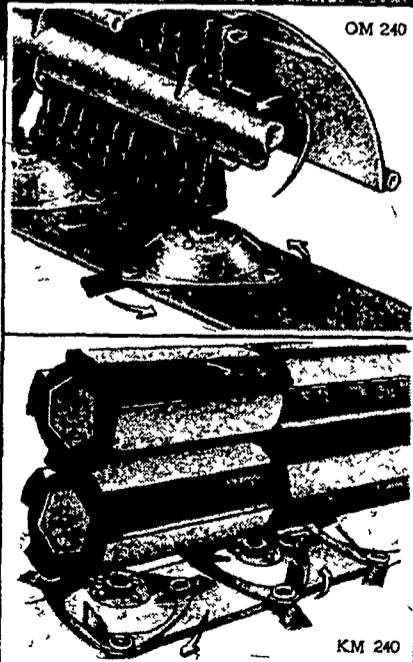


THE VICON PROMISE: FAST DRYING, NO PLUGGING.

Vicon mower/conditioners help you make hay whether the sun shines or not. Two hardworking models tackle the heaviest standing grass or wet, tangled forage without plugging... and cut faster than any mower on the market.

Vicon uses heavy duty triangular discs that rotate at 3000 rpm for a clean cut — even in marginal weather. Then the hay or grass is conditioned to help it dry fast and even throughout the swath.

Vicon gives you a choice. For coastal bermuda, fescue, rye and other southern grasses, use the Vicon OM-240. Durable nylon flails strip away the waxy grass stem coating. This ensures that both stem and leaf dry evenly. Results are less leaf loss when turning, tedding and picking up



For alfalfa, clover and other forage crops, use the Vicon KM-240. It features interlocking rubber rollers that crimp and bruise stems to speed evaporation and save valuable nutrients.

Each has adjustable swath doors for wide or narrow windrows. You can bail directly behind either and eliminate raking.

No chains, sprockets, belts or reel on either model means less maintenance and downtime.

For the grower who only needs a mower, get the fast cutting Vicon CM-165 or CM-240.

See your Vicon dealer today. He has the choice of mower/conditioners you need. Challenge him to make good on Vicon's Fast Drying, No Plugging Promise. The proof is cut and dried.



Vicon Farm Machinery, Inc.
P.O. Box 6313
Chesapeake, VA 23323
804/485-1600

OATS SEED CLEANING AND TREATING DONE ON YOUR FARM IN SOUTHEASTERN PA.

Send Postcard With The Following:

Name _____
Address _____
Phone _____
Number of Bu. _____
Directions _____

REIST SEED CO.

Box 155, Mt. Joy, PA 17552

We will not be sending cards this year, so please alert your neighbors. Send cleaning requests as early as possible.

EAR CORN

Paying Top Prices For
Good Quality Ear Corn

- Wet or Dry
- No Quantity too large or too small
- Fast Unloading - Dump on Pile & Go
- Easy access - 2.2 miles off 283 bypass-Manheim, Mt. Joy exit
- Daily Receiving 7:30 A.M. to 5 P.M. - unloading evenings & Saturdays by appt.
- Trucks available for pick up at your farm.

Call Anytime For Price
717-665-4785

JAMES E. NOLL GRAIN