

Computers & precision in Egg Basket operation

It's a long way

BY DICK ANGLESTEIN

MOUNT JOY — A laying complex of four 81,000-bird houses, complete with mini-computers to control and monitor the egg processing lines, is nearing final completion near Mount Joy.

The Egg Basket, owned by J. Richard Myer, of R7 Manheim, actually began operation with the opening of the first house three years ago. Now, with construction done in three more phases, the entire complex is nearing completion with an open house planned on August 10.

The Egg Basket has several operational innovations built into the complex.

Most apparent as you walk from the office and reception area into the large egg room are the Radio Shack TRS-80 mini-computers installed on the processing line.

The egg room is equipped with two Seymour processing machines, which are capable of handling 70 cases an hour. The computers, which were just installed last month, monitor and control the processing of the eggs.

Each egg is electronically weighed eight different times and an average is instantaneously computed and recorded. The different weights for the seven grades of eggs are punched into the computer and the processor directs the eggs into the proper channel according to the weight grade.

The computer screen continuously monitors and updates the number of eggs in each grade.

"The electronic weighing and the averaging of the eight readings that are taken are much more accurate," explains Larry Meyers, son-in-law who is married to Grace, one of the Myer daughters.

Another daughter Rachel, Myer and Meyers form a family operational partnership for the complex. The partnership suffered a tragic loss early last year when son, Joseph, was killed in an auto accident.

"We can take a daily readout of the eggs processed," Meyers explains.

"This can be compared to our feed consumption records and a continuing feed conversion rate per dozen of eggs can be quickly computed."



It's a long way from one end of an 81,000-bird chicken house to the other — more than 500 feet. Installation of

equipment is nearing completion on fourth house of Egg Basket at R2 Mount Joy.

The complex, when in full operation, with some 324,000 birds, will turn out some 20,000 dozen of eggs per day.

Most of the eggs are processed to R.W. Sauder, Inc., egg dealer, at Lititz.

Another newer innovation is one of the first large-scale installations of a watering system by a Lancaster County firm, which is not traditionally known for poultry equipment.

The watering system is designed and marketed by Val-Products, Inc., division of the Vallorbs Jewel Co., jewel bearing firm of Bird-in-Hand. The company traditionally has specialized in jewel bearings and other precision parts.

The watering system, according to Meyers, features all stainless steel valves and seats. As they wear, the valves should seat themselves better, much as in an automobile, he said.

"Since there are no rubber or plastic parts in the watering

system," Meyer said, "there should be less water going down into the manure pits."

The final two houses have the Val system and the first two are to be converted to the system. Favorite feeding equipment is in the first two houses and Diamond in the last two.

Following the opening of the first house at the R2 Mount Joy location in August of 1980, the second house went into operation in March of 1981. The third started up in May and the fourth will be filled following the August 10 open house.

A mix mill, with a capacity of 4 to 5 tons an hour, services the entire complex. Some 40,000 bushels of corn and 115 tons of soybean meal are binned at the site. Concentrate storage includes 32,000 lbs. per house, each more than 500 feet long. Limestone and oyster shells round out the ration.

The location is the former Joe Greiner farm, along Risser Mill Road. No grain is farmed and all of the feed is purchased for the operation.

Meyers, who hails from a dairy farm family in Franklin County, handles the day-to-day operation; while Rachel is in charge of the office.

Family partnership



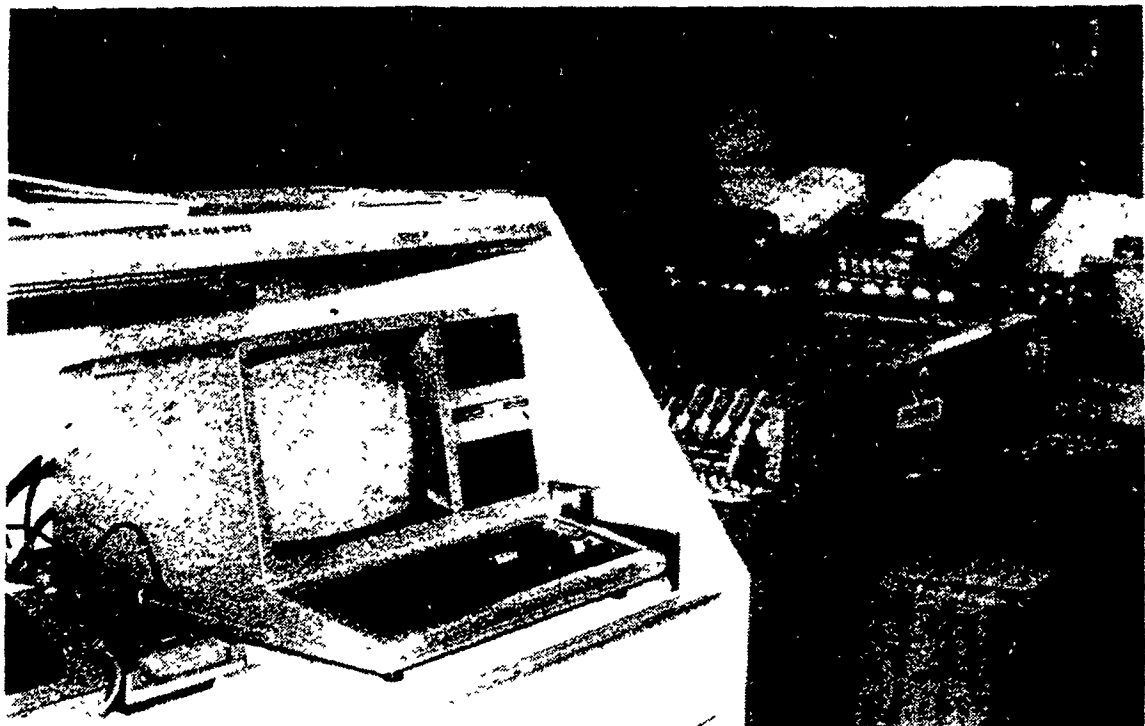
Involved in family partnership of Egg Basket are Rachel Myer and her brother-in-law Larry Meyers.

Packaging



Eggs are packaged for shipment to egg dealer R.W. Sauder, Inc. at Lititz.

Computer-controlled



Egg processing equipment at the Egg Basket, R2 Mount Joy, is equipped with computers, which monitor and control movement and weighing of eggs.