

British ag official looks at Northeast poultry

BY JACK HUBLEY

LANCASTER — Mike Midgley first learned of the benefits of intermittent lighting for poultry production four years ago during a visit to New York's Cornell University.

Returning home to his native England, the manager of a 1.5-million-bird layer flock decided to test the principle. Midgley soon found not only a decrease in feed and light bills, but an increase in egg size, as well.

Such savings are vital to Great Britain's egg producers, who, according to Midgley, pay the equivalent of \$202 per ton for feed.

According to Bill Markey, manager of the poultry division of Keystone Mills in Ephrata, decreasing the duration while at the same time increasing the

frequency of light periods in a layer house results in savings in a number of ways. Since birds eat less at a time, but more frequently, their digestive systems assimilate food more completely and efficiently. And since the total duration of darkness is increased, birds use less energy.

Midgley is currently a poultry husbandry advisory officer for the United Kingdom's Ministry of Agriculture, the agency presently conducting intermittent lighting research in Great Britain.

"We're currently running experiments looking at the Cornell program, against the Ralston Purina program (Bio-mittent lighting), against a conventional control," Midgley said, adding that partway through the experiments, the Ralston program seems to be

producing the best results.

Midgley's 12-day U.S. tour included visits to the University of New Hampshire and Cornell, as well as a number of New York State farm visits for a look at in-

termittent lighting systems in actual practice.

The tour ended in Lancaster County with Markey and Ken Miller, a Conestoga poultry and swine producer. Miller was the

nation's first farmer to employ Ralston Purina's Bio-mittent lighting system. His 50,000-bird layer operation was equipped with Bio-mittent lighting four years ago.



Pausing for a lunch break at Willow Valley Farms on August 17, are (left) Bill Markey of Keystone Mills, Mike Midgley of the United Kingdom's Ministry of Agriculture, and Conestoga-area poultry and swine producer Ken Miller.

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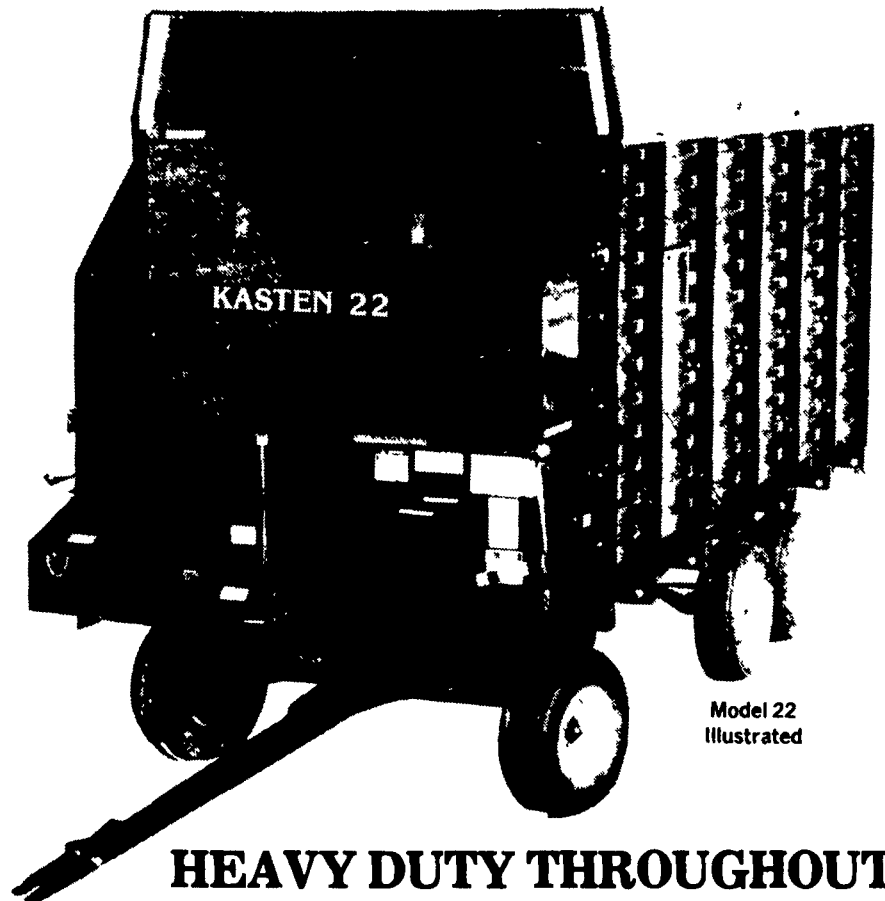


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