

House Approves Egg Refrigeration Law

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — State Rep. Jess Stairs last week announced that his legislation to establish standards of refrigeration for shell eggs which are sold or distributed commercially received House approval by a 194-2 vote and has been sent to the Senate Ag and Rural Affairs

Committee.

"House Bill 175 would require poultry owners who sell shell eggs to refrigerate those eggs at 55 degrees Fahrenheit within 24 hours of laying," Stairs said.

Once the eggs have been processed (washed and packed in containers for commercial use), the

bill would require the eggs be refrigerated at a temperature at or below 45 degrees Fahrenheit until consumed or prepared for consumption.

Stairs said this provision would apply to food handlers, groceries and restaurants.

"The bill was originally prompted by outbreaks of Salmonella at several New York restaurants last year. Salmonella is an organism which can cause severe food poisoning when ingested. Eggs are particularly accommodating to the organism when not properly refrigerated and cooked," Stairs explained.

Suspected eggs in the New York incidents were traced back to a Pennsylvania producer, but evidence of Salmonella contamination was inconclusive. Improper food handling and preparation violations implicated the restaurants' food service methods.

"Obviously, we must develop methods to guarantee that Pennsylvania eggs are handled properly from the moment of laying to the final destination in the home or in commercial food preparation in order to protect the public health and preserve the excellent reputation of Pennsylvania's egg producers and processors," Stairs said.

"It's high time for food preparers and egg distributors to do their part to prevent Salmonella food poisoning. Fresh eggs have been wholesome sources of protein and will remain so if egg refrigeration is properly used," he added.

HB 175 would require that all egg containers be marked with the words "keep refrigerated," and a printed code which would allow an egg processor to indicate the date the eggs were processed, and the flock of origin.

Egg processor would also be required to maintain records of the flock of origin and the date of lay for each egg container for six months, and to make such records available to the Agriculture Department or Department of Environmental Resources (DER) immediately upon request.

Stairs said small egg processors (persons who maintain a flock of no more than 3,200 laying hens) who sell or market their eggs within two days of the date of lay predominantly within a 100-mile radius of the processing facility would not be bound by the new temperature and packaging provisions.

However, all small egg processors would be required to clearly print the date of lay on all egg containers.

To Preserve Commodity Programs

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — State Rep. Kenneth J. Cole, D-Adams, last week blocked a move that would have destroyed agricultural commodity marketing programs in Pennsylvania.

Cole lead the charge against an amendment to maintain a two-thirds majority vote when reauthorizing commodity programs in Pennsylvania.

The amendment, which was defeated in the House, was offered to Cole's legislation designed to improve the Pennsylvania Agricultural Commodities Marketing Act of 1968.

Currently, to reauthorize a marketing program, each board must receive a two-thirds majority

vote of the membership.

Under Cole's legislation (House Bill 401), that was approved by the House, the number of votes required to reauthorize a marketing program will be a simple majority.

The bill is currently in the Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee.

"It is vital that we have this program for agricultural products grown in the commonwealth," said Cole. "The programs administered by producers represent some of the most successful promotion programs we have."

John Rice, of Rice Fruit Company in Gardners, said he is

delighted with the passage of HB 401.

"This is a very important piece of legislation. Not only does it reinforce the promotion of the apple industry, which is vital to Adams County, it also insures the survival of promotion programs for apples. I am grateful for the support of Rep. Cole," Rice said.

Last year, Rice served as president of the International Apple Institute.

"By defeating the amendment offered to this legislation, we have the ability to create and continue marketing programs that have been extremely successful in Pennsylvania."



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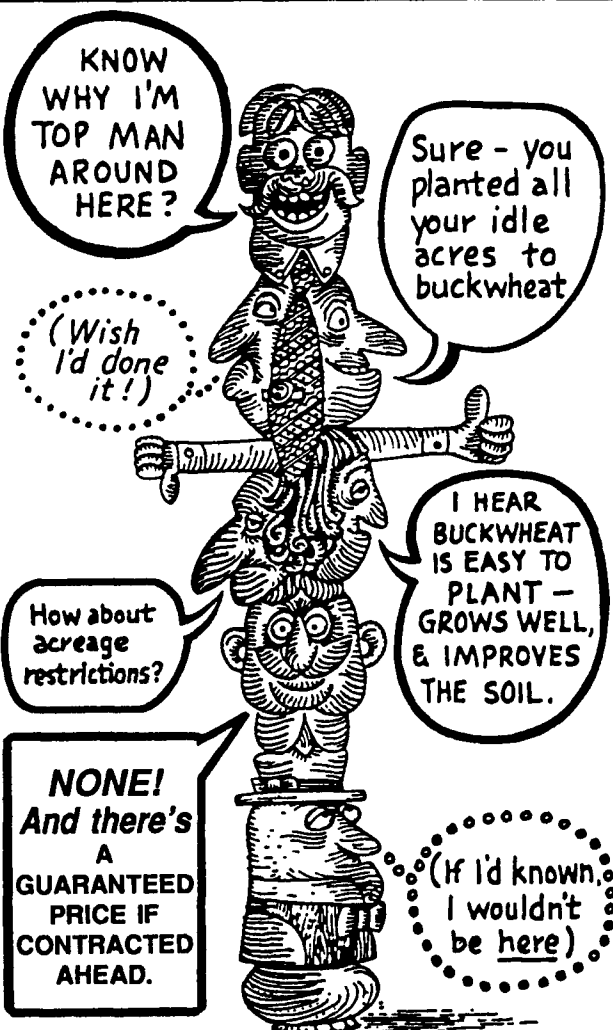
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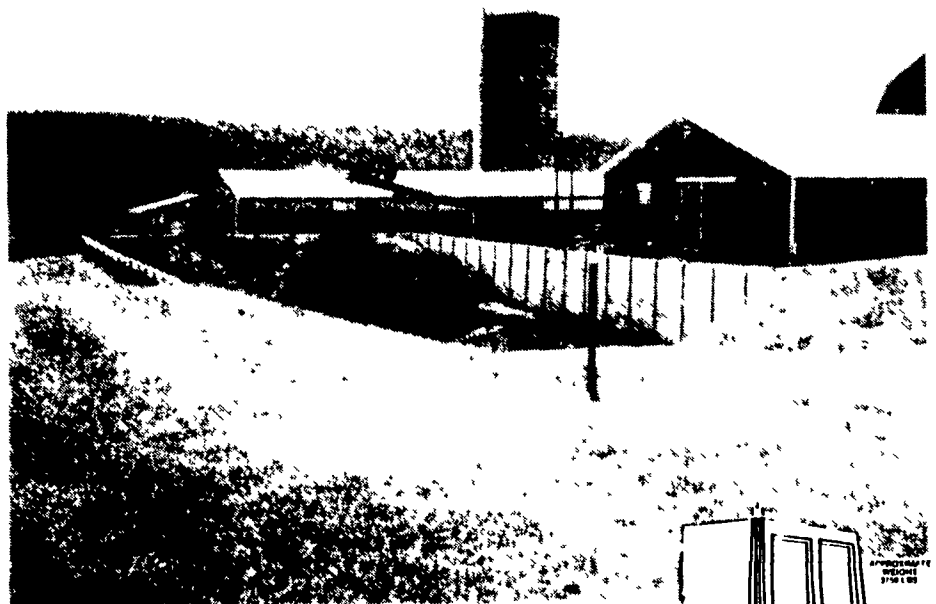
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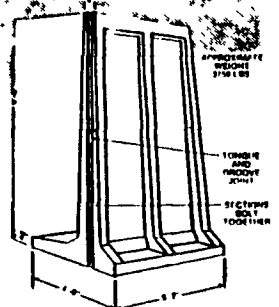
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