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SHELL EGGS VS. LIQUID EGGS

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Lancaster County
Extension Director

There is a battle being waged in the commercial egg industry. The outcome will have a major impact on egg producers.

The battle is being waged to determine if eggs will be retailed to consumers in the form of shell eggs or as liquid eggs and egg products. The outcome will depend on decisions egg producers will make over the next several years.

From 1990 to 1992, egg product use has grown from 21.5 percent to 25 percent of total egg consumption in the United States. This increase is because of concerns about food safety (Salmonella

enteriditis), new egg products, and other concerns.

The egg product industry is no longer a market for cracks. Today, they have total flocks under contract and are only breaking Grade A eggs. Some companies have built complexes with the breaker plant on site as part of in-line processing.

Today's consumer life-style is changing. They are eating more meals out, family members are eating meals at different times, there are longer commuting times, and people are very much concerned about health and nutrition and want a consistent and high quality

product. They also want natural foods without preservatives and additives.

To protect the shell egg market, egg producers need to educate the consumer on the value of shell eggs, produce a high quality product, and be willing to fight for market share.

Shell eggs have a lot of benefits, which must be communicated to the consumer. They taste good, are an all-natural food high in protein, vitamins and minerals, and are easy to use. Also, people know how to cook with shell eggs and recipes are written in shell egg units — not liquid eggs.

The next step is to produce a high quality and consistent product. This high quality egg must be produced in a clean environment, have the lowest bacteria level possible, contain no cracks, and be very fresh.

To develop market share, we need to consider brand marketing. By producing a high quality, clean egg with no cracks, you are in a position to differentiate your eggs from generically produced eggs. By brand marketing you will be able to develop market share.

We need to support advertising that extols the virtue of our product

and build market share. The success of your egg marketer to market eggs will depend on the steps you are willing to take on the farm.

Egg quality starts at the farm. Once the egg is produced, we cannot improve egg quality. We can only strive to maintain it.

To produce eggs low in bacteria, we need to produce a clean egg in a clean environment. All equipment needs to be cleaned on a daily basis, good air quality must be maintained in the house, and a minimum of crack and dirty eggs produced. Eggs need to refrigerated as soon as possible after they are laid.

The current field studies suggest

rodents play a major factor in the spread of Salmonella enteriditis. Every farmer needs to institute a rodent control program and be committed to it.

The battle lines are drawn. The choice is yours. Either we make sure we produce the best quality egg possible or we will lose market share to liquid eggs.

There are many resources available to help you improve your egg quality. Take time and talk with your service person, egg marketer, and university researchers and extension specialists.

By working together, we will be able to continue providing consumers with an all-natural, healthful food. It is your choice to either fight or quietly go out of business.

Club Donates To Relief Fund

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — The Penn State chapter of the Block and Bridle Club voted recently to donate \$250 to the Red Cross Somalia Relief Fund, following a recommendation from the National Block and Bridle Club.

As a result of an article entitled "Somalia Cries Out" in the September 21 issue of USA Today, the organization decided to aid hunger relief efforts in that third-world country.

Brenda Horgan, dairy and animal science major from Queens-

bury, N.Y., and publicity chairperson for Block and Bridle, said "The club feels that everyone is entitled to the bare necessities of food, water, and medicine to have a chance to live. Just because we tend to take these things for granted does not mean we should ignore others' pleas for help. This small donation is a first step for our club in becoming more involved in world agricultural concerns."

If you would like to make a donation, send it to the Red Cross Somalia Relief Fund, P.O. Box 37243, Washington, D.C. 20013.

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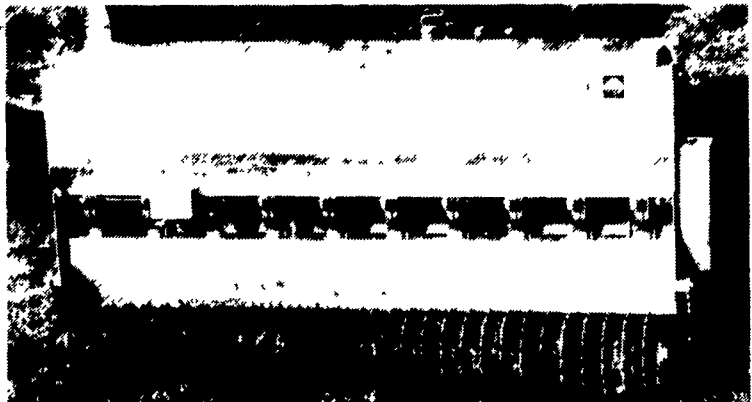
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