

Marketing Poultry and Eggs

This Article shows clearly that improvement can only be made in market conditions by farmers whole-heartedly adopting the principle of Co-operation

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During the past four months we have experienced some things in connection with poultry production and marketing that should be the means of bringing about a decided improvement in the dressed poultry and egg trade during the next year or two. Our farmers have gone into poultry production on a somewhat larger scale than in previous years only to find that when marketing time came along their product would not find a ready sale at profitable prices. This has been especially true in the dressed poultry trade. Thousands of chickens were marketed at nine and ten cents a pound during November and December, when at other seasons prices were three to five cents a pound higher. In turkeys a somewhat similar state of affairs prevailed. The reason for this state of affairs does not lie in over-production, as some people seem to think. In going thru Winnipeg wholesale houses, retail stores and butcher shops, I am convinced that it is not over-production at all that has lowered prices, but the fact that so much poultry was dumped on the market in a raw and unfinished condition. Fully ninety-five per cent. of the dressed poultry offered for sale this season was inferior in quality and finish. Good poultry properly fattened, killed and dressed brought profitable prices, whereas the raw, unfinished stuff simply glutted the market and had to be sold at a low price in order to get rid of it. Some of the dealers are voicing their sentiments pretty strongly about the way our farmers have been sending in their poultry this season. Scarcity of feed is, of course, given as the chief reason for the class of dressed poultry that is being marketed this year. This undoubtedly has more to do with it than anything else, but, even so, surely the majority of the farmers could have spared a few bushels of feed and fattened their poultry properly before it was marketed, and in this way helped the dressed poultry trade along instead of putting it back another five years. Another factor which has been effective in lowering prices a little is the money stringency. The people have not been buying quite as freely this year as other years, owing to the hard times. This has, however, not affected prices to a very great extent.

To Remedy the Depression

Probably it would be well to indicate just what our farmers should do to avoid a repetition of this year's conditions in the years to come, pointing out at the same time in detail the places where the mistakes were made this year and how to avoid them another year.

The question is often asked, "Would it be wise to cut down our production of farm poultry another year in order to avoid this year's depression in the dressed poultry trade?" To this we would say no, for just as surely as we cut down in meat production we are going to cut down the winter egg supply. This is the last thing we should do, for our egg supply is low enough as it is without cutting it down still lower. If we want winter eggs we must raise the chickens to produce them. We can roughly figure that one-half of the chickens raised on the farm every year are cockerels and one-half pullets—the former going on the market as roasters and the latter going for winter layers. Thus if we cut down our production, where are we going to land for winter egg producers? When strictly new laid eggs are selling at 65 to 75 cents per dozen in the winter time, and the people are just scrambling to get them, surely our farmers will not be so foolish as to cut down in production, and in this way still further decrease the supply, low

as it is under present conditions. Some farmers this season disposed of their pullets for the dressed poultry trade instead of keeping them as winter layers. One firm alone reports hundreds of pullets sent in to be slaughtered and sold as roasters. The effect of this was twofold. In the first place it cut off the source of supply of winter eggs and, secondly, increased the quantity of poultry marketed in the raw, unfinished condition. The disposal of these pullets from some farms was due to scarcity of feed. Would it not have been a paying proposition with the prevailing high prices for eggs to keep them over winter, and purchase feed if sufficient waste grain and so on was not available? Another point in connection with the condition of the dressed poultry product is the high percentage of crooked breast bones found in the turkeys. A few months ago I had occasion to see just what class of stuff was sent in from some of our farms. In one shipment of some twenty odd turkeys there was not a single straight breast bone. They were all badly twisted and bent in, and some were short and turned off at quite an angle. One turkey of fifteen pounds had a breast bone about four inches long. This turkey, however, was well finished on the back, but it had practically no breast meat at all. Others again, had the deformed breast bones and also lacked the finish. The same thing might be said of the dressed chickens.

Selecting strong, vigorous stock, having straight breast bones and avoiding inbreeding will do away with this

marketing over as long a period as possible. If this season's poultry crop had started to move the first of September instead of the middle of October, better average prices might have been realized. As it was, hardly anybody marketed chickens in September, only a few in October and then in November, when cold weather and snow came, everybody wanted to market right away. This caused the glut on the market. Had the marketing been

started earlier and distributed over a longer period of time, higher prices might have been maintained. The farmer will gain in the end if he markets earlier, for, as a rule, higher prices prevail, and he also gets rid of his stock before they get old and staggish. May-hatched chickens should be sold during September if economic production is the object. Chickens should be marketed at four and a half months or, at the most, five months old. At this age you will get the most weight per pound of food eaten. We hope that another year our farmers will

follow out a few of these suggestions and in that way help to improve the dressed poultry trade.

The Egg Market

In taking up the question of markets and their relation to the egg trade, we wish to point out a line of work which is going to develop to considerable proportions, as the poultry industry expands. We have here in the West as good a demand for really high-class eggs as can be found anywhere, and we also have as poor a class of eggs on the average as can be found

Alongside of such a stock of eggs, really good eggs would sell at almost any price. Herein lies the reason for guaranteed new-laid eggs selling at 65 and 75 cents, when others run at 25 to 50 cents. Practically all the eggs marketed in the winter are storage eggs and as such can never be classed as "new-laid," nor can they pass as high-class eggs. The guarantee going with such eggs can at best be of a flimsy nature, and the "just as good" will never materialize at the breakfast table. With age the eating qualities of any egg rapidly deteriorates and a storage egg, no matter how well kept, can never compare with a new-laid. Storage eggs are eggs produced on the farms during the spring and summer months, being shipped in mostly by country storekeepers and placed in cold storage for winter use. As soon as the supply of "fresh eggs" falls off the storage eggs begin to move. Naturally, during the winter season, when egg production is lowest, this class of eggs will find a ready sale.

Now, if our farmers could come along with a good supply of new-laid eggs at this time, high prices would be secured. The demand for such eggs is unlimited and with proper marketing facilities our farmers could be brought in touch with this market. A little education is, of course, necessary in order that our farmers may understand how to produce high-class eggs.

Requirements of a High-Class Trade

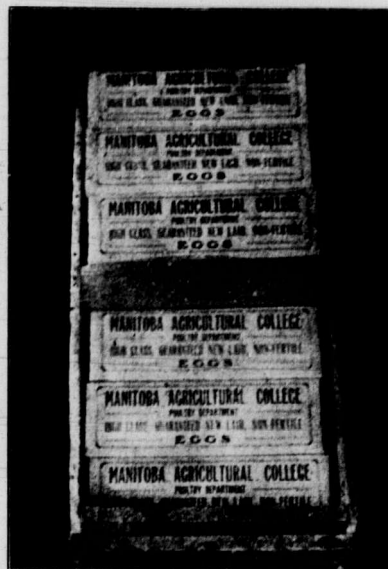
In catering to a high-class trade it is important that the product be put up in the most attractive way. This can be done most effectively by putting up the eggs in dozen cartons. These cartons should be properly labeled or printed in such a manner as to catch the eye of the prospective customer. Do not forget to let your customer know whose eggs he is eating! The cartons should have printed on them the class of eggs they contain and also the producer's name or the farm name. If there is anything special about the eggs, stress should be laid on that point. For example, the term "non-fertile" may be used for eggs that are produced by hens having the male birds removed. Such eggs are supposed to keep better and be superior in quality than fertile eggs. And so on in a hundred and one distinctive ways a producer might label up his own eggs. Each individual egg should bear your own stamp on the large end. In addition, the date the egg was laid might be stamped on it, altho this point is unnecessary where the eggs go out in dozen cartons and are guaranteed new-laid.

There are two kinds of cartons, one three by four and the other two by six. The latter is the best, because that size carton will fit nicely in a thirty-dozen case, as shown in the photograph. These cost about a cent apiece, and under most conditions, are worth it by bringing an increased price. By putting up the eggs in this way, they reach the consumer in your own special carton, and "Smith's eggs" will sell as "Smith's eggs," and only his eggs. If he produces or sends out a bad egg he is the one to suffer for it, whereas, under our present system of promiscuous marketing, nobody knows whose eggs they are, and the whole trade or everybody alike suffers for it. By marketing in dozen cartons a number of farmers could join together and produce high-class eggs, and then ship together to some grocer or other firm that is willing to handle them on a fair margin or commission.

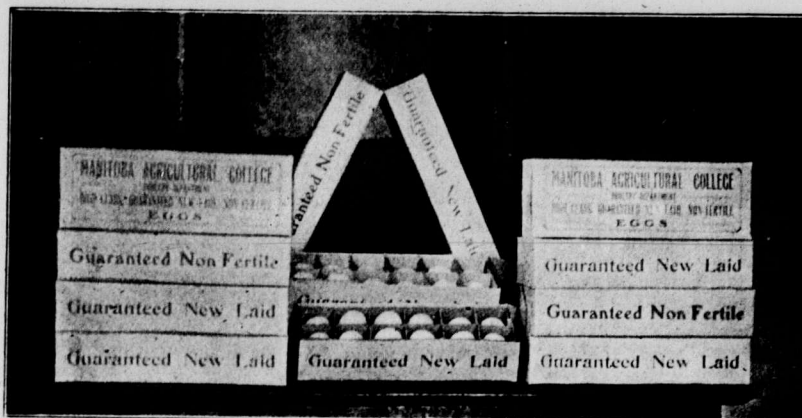
Co-operative Marketing

In connection with the marketing of poultry products we would like to see

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High class eggs put up in dozen cartons and packed in 30-dozen cases ready for shipping. These eggs retailed at 75 cents a dozen during January and 65 cents during February on Winnipeg market.



High Class Eggs. Neat Packages. Catering to High Class Trade

deformity to a large extent. Good, wide roosts will further help in avoiding it.

Market Earlier in the Season

Now if our producers want to have a better price for their poultry they certainly must turn out a better class of product than that marketed this season. In addition to this, we want to see some of the poultry marketed earlier in the season. Distribute the

anywhere. Probably this is the reason for such high prices being paid for strictly new-laid and guaranteed eggs. Almost anything is dumped on the market during the winter time as fresh eggs, and in price they run all the way from 25 cents a dozen up to 50 cents a dozen. Of course, there is no guarantee as to quality going along with these—you simply take what you get. Often three, four or five of these are bad and the rest the next thing to it.