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## Chicken manure gaining popularity

*'Our customers love it,' says enthused brown gold entrepreneur*

By JOCK HATFIELD  
Of the Emerald

Chickens have always been a big business in the Willamette Valley. But at the other end of this business a new field may be cropping up unnoticed: the manure industry.

Chicken manure has never been known as a big seller. Until recently it hasn't had much of a sales promotion. Yet Eugene area chickens are producing at a prodigious rate. Chicken farmers, having nothing better to do with the stuff, have put it on sale.

These pioneers in the manure market hope to create a demand for their commodity among area gardeners. Chicken manure, they point out, sells cheaper than a similar product put out by horses and cows, and has a higher nitrogen content.

Four area chicken manufacturers advertise their manure in the classifieds. These producers are reluctant to release exact figures on how much manure their chickens produce, perhaps because the market is still in its trial stages. But even rough calculations reveal an enormous profit potential.

The average chicken farm runs about 50,000 chickens. At six pounds of manure per chicken per 11 week period, each farm produces 150,000 pounds of manure a quarter or 750,000 pounds of manure a fiscal year. Multiply this figure by the number of chicken farms in the county and you have enough chicken manure to crush Eugene, if things got out of hand.

With this much manure sitting around, someone was bound to think of selling it.

The history books don't have much to say about chicken manure. The Greeks and Romans probably had it, and there may have been chicken manure in the

Renaissance, but it didn't impress anyone much. As far as historians know, chicken manure has always been free.

But over the last 10 years chicken manure has been a victim of digit inflation. It now sells for five dollars a truck. Farmers hope the manure market will eventually help ease their financial crunch at the other end of the chicken business.

Usually chicken farmers are little more than keepers of a poultry hotel. They contract with companies such as Willamette Poultry to raise the companies' chicks. The farmers give the chickens back to the company after they've grown to eating size, and for this receive a per-chicken recompense. The companies claim the chicks, but they don't claim the manure. They make a present of it. The manure offers the farmer a natural opportunity for financial dabbling.

Donald Johnson, owner of a 54,000 chicken farm between Eugene and Junction City, was an early pioneer in the manure game. Fifteen years ago he started selling the manure put out by his laying hens. He carried the enterprise over into his broiler business.

At \$5 a truckload, Johnson's manure brings in enough to pay for cleaning out his chicken barns, and laying out fresh sawdust. This cleaning must be done every 11 weeks for each new crop of chicken and can run up a high cost annually, about \$1,500 to \$2,000. A farmer who can cover this cost with manure profits is doing pretty well.

"We hopefully get enough to cover this cleaning, and set up the new chicks," says Johnson. "It's a good business."

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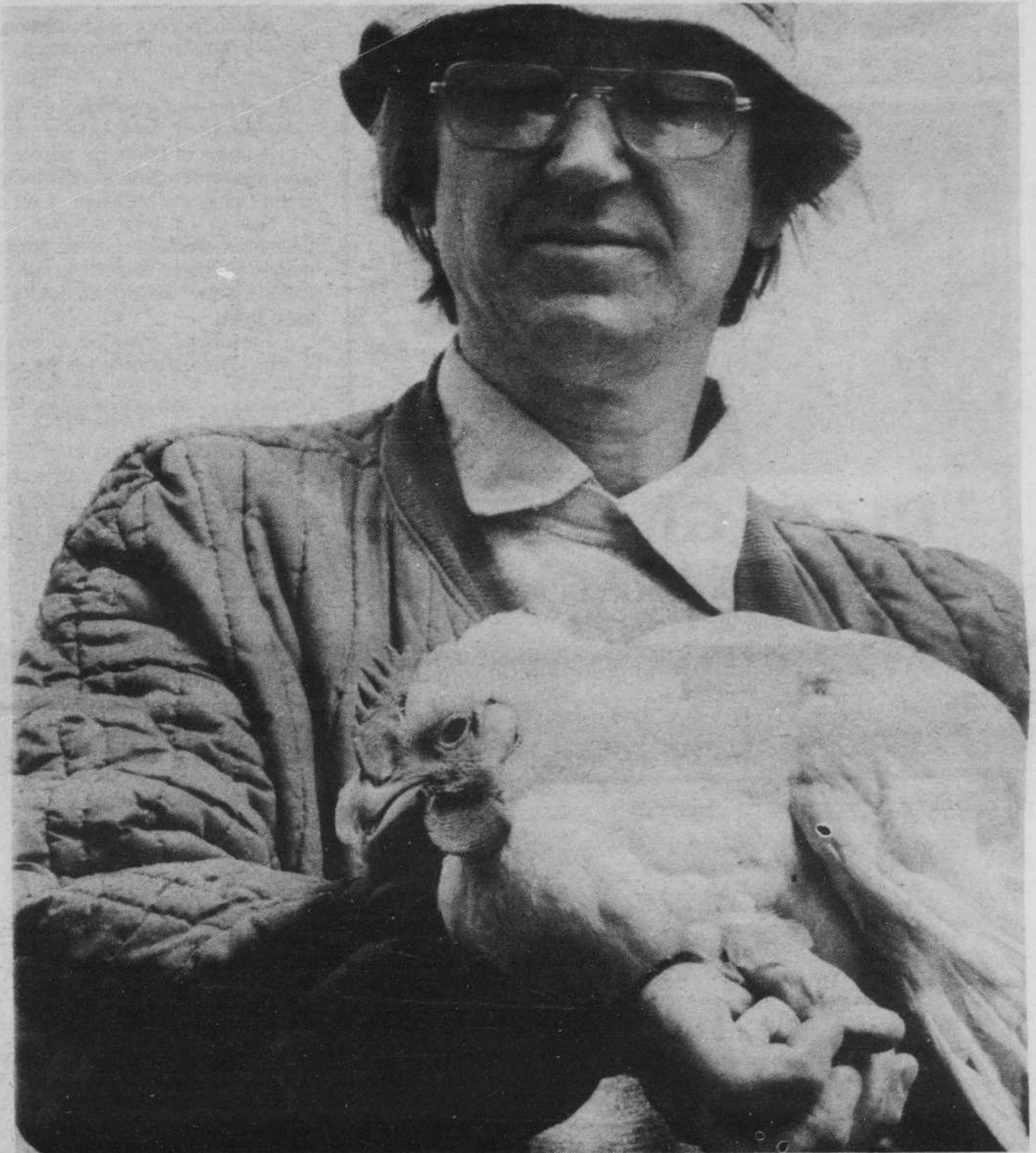


Photo by Patrick Sullivan

*This fine specimen of chickenhood is worth more to Dexter Farmer Bob Papannen than a good price on the poultry market. Papannen, along with other local farmers, is taking advantage of the growing use of chicken manure among home gardeners and in agribusiness.*

## Trojan workers exposed to high radiation

By KATHLEEN MONJE  
Of the Emerald

Two technicians working in the refueling process at the Trojan nuclear power plant were exposed Wednesday to three times the amount of annual exposure to radiation permitted by federal regulation.

The men weren't injured and were back to work Thursday, according to Portland General Electric (PGE) spokesman Steve Loy, although they were restricted from working in radiation areas. The refueling process was temporarily stopped by the accident.

The men received a radiation dosage of between 14 and 17 rems, company spokesmen said. Federal regulations require no more than five rems per year.

Company officials said the men were exposed to the radiation in an area between the reactor refueling cavity and the spent fuel pool in the fuel building.

Trojan Superintendent Bart Withers said the two workers were conducting a survey in the area next to the fuel transfer tube and were near a short, unshielded section of the transfer tube.

While standing near the unshielded tube section, a fuel assembly was moved through it, and they were exposed to the radioactive fuel for about a minute, Withers said.

"Both men were wearing two different types of radiation monitors and noticed that one set of monitors had gone off scale," Withers said. "They immediately left the area and notified their supervisors."

The amount of radiation to which the

men were exposed "is below the level where biological effects can be detected," according to Ron Kathren, PGE health physicist.

Don Brouhl, a nuclear plant technician at Trojan, said the exposure was "slightly more intense" than a patient would receive from an upper and lower gastro-intestinal tract examination by fluoroscope.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has safety levels for maximum lifetime accumulation of radiation, based on an age-involved formula, Brouhl said.

As an example, he said a 28-year-old person is permitted a maximum lifetime dosage of 50 rems under federal safety standards.

The formula is based on allowing five rems or less of radiation exposure per year past the age of 18.

The men won't be allowed to work in radiation areas "for some time," said Don Goddard, state Energy Department nuclear engineer.

At least 25 rems dosage is needed to cause some elevation of white blood cells, Goddard said. Radiation sickness is felt at 100 rems and above — a dosage of 500 rems is enough to kill half the people exposed to that high a radiation level.

Refueling was halted to allow additional radiation surveys, according to PGE spokesman Bruce Landrey. He said the company plans to resume the process today.

The men were exposed to the radioactive material before about 20 reporters and photographers arrived at the plant to view the refueling process Wednesday evening.