Poultry Report

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The poultry industry in Klamath County, like in many other areas in the United States, is becoming more and more concentrated on fewer farms where larger numbers of poultry and eggs are produced. This is because the margin of profit per bird has become smaller, and producers must increase the size of their flocks, divert to a side line or go out of business. Although there are a few laying hens and broilers produced on a majority of farms in the county, the number of commercial producers is decreasing each year. The trends towards intregation in the poultry industry is accelerating this trend. The margin of profit in producing eggs and broilers becomes narrower and this forces producers to increase the size of their operations to make it possible to return a profit sufficient to keep a poultry producer in business.

The number of laying hens kept in Klamath County over the past several years has remained rather constant but there still is a tendency for some producers to go in and out of the business in the reverse of the way in which prices rise and fall. In other words a number of producers still go out of the business when the eggs are low in price and go back in the business when prices are high. This means that by the time their flocks are in production the price of the product has dropped. The committee feels that anyone entering the poultry business should plan on continuing from year to year, otherwise such actions will be detrimental not only to themselves but to other poultry producers as well.

Poultry production in Klamath County in 1952 was 90,000 hens. This has fluctuated to as low as 85,000 hens and as high as 95,000 as of January 1 since 1952.

In early 1957 prices of eggs and broilers were at the lowest levels since 1940. After mid year prices picked up and by the end of September they were higher than a year earlier and they continued this way until the first of the year. Prospective egg production up to July 1, is for supplies to be smaller than the previous 12 months. The number of laying hens on January 1 in the United States is expected to be about five per cent below the previous year due to an 18 per cent cut in the number of chickens raised last spring.

This reduced number of laying hens is expected to hold production below a year ago and with it is expected that the price of eggs for the next four to six months will be around five cents per dozen higher than they were a year earlier.

The marketing of eggs presents more difficult problems than does the production of eggs. Klamath County is an egg importing area and the committee believes there is some room for expansion but it should remain that way since the cost of producing eggs in many other areas is considerably below that prevailing in this area. This situation also presents a problem brought about by outside and local dealers securing eggs of low quality in surplus producing areas and placing them on the market in Klamath County at prices considerably below the prevailing local market. These eggs as a whole have lost considerable quality during the time elapsed between laying and the time they reach the consumer. Some producers and dealers are advertising outside eggs as locally produced eggs and this practice has a tendency to lower the confidence of consumers in locally produced eggs.

The committee feels that poultrymen who are producing and selling only eggs of high quality should attempt to form some marketing system whereby consumers would be assured the eggs they purchased were locally produced and of the quality claimed on the containers. Consideration was given to registering a trade mark that strictly local producers of high quality eggs might use on their egg containers along with their name and address but the State Department of Agriculture stated that such a trade mark could not be used unless the group was set up in an incorporated organization. It was felt that further consideration should be given to this problem. One suggestion was that each local producer place a slip in his container explaining that his eggs were fresh and that they were locally produced and marketed immediately after laying and further guaranteeing the freshness of the eggs.

In order to obtain the most economical production the committee believes that the size of the poultry flock must increase as the margin of profit per hen decreases. It appears that a commercial flock should have at least 5,000 birds and the farm flock which is only a side line should consist of at least 1,000 birds and for families who wish to maintain enough hens to produce their own eggs should not keep more than two dozen birds

A few years ago there was a shift from light breeds of chickens to heavy breeds. Experience and the results of experiments have shown that the light breeds such as white leghorns are much more efficient in the production of eggs than are the heavier breeds. White leghorns require considerably less feed to produce a dozen eggs than do the heavier chicken. With a reduction in the price of broilers and cull chickens, the advantage of the heavy breeds for meat production have decreased. Those who wished to use breeds that are more satisfactory for meat production will find that a parmenter or other small breed of colored chicken will produce more eggs but as the advantage in meat production increases the efficiency in egg production decreases.

Broiler production has become extremely competitive. The broiler industry has been integrated to the point where broilers are now produced by individuals or firms that produce the chicks, supply the feed, do the breeding, and the marketing all under one ownership. This means that in order to enter the broiler business an amazingly large investment is necessary. Anyone going into the broiler business on a commercial scale should plan to have facilities sufficient to produce 25,000 broilers three or four times each year.

More capital is required to set up a poultry unit than most persons anticipate The committee estimates that it will cost around $5 to $8 per bird to build and equip a brooder house and a laying house necessary for an economical poultry unit. The amount of floor space alone for laying hens is very important. Hens raised on floors in open houses should have from two and one-half to three square feet of floor space. Where birds are kept in community cages, one and one-half square feet of floor space is sufficient for each bird. Where the laying hens are kept in cages, one square foot of space will be sufficient for each bird.

Poultrymen should be sure the chicks they secure are of good quality and come from reliable hatcheries. All the better strains of chicks are now available in Oregon and producers should consider securing chicks from hatcheries within the state. Chicks should come from sources that have developed their breeding stock so that they are either free from disease or have been bred to carry resistance to the diseases in which resistance can be developed. Chicks should be from grade "A" large eggs and preferably from 2-year-old hens.

The maximum number of chicks brooded in one group is recommended as 500. Car should be taken to avoid the spreading of diseases and parasites from old hens to the baby chicks. For permanent brooder houses, a wire porch is recommended. Fifty square feet of floor space in the brooder is recommended for each 100 birds up to three weeks of age. After this time additional space should be provided. Where no porch is provided, one square foot per bird is desirable. Chicks should be brooded on proper feeds and where possible green feed should be provided. Where pullets are reared on range, one acre of range should be provided for each 300 birds. Port-

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