SEASONAL EFFECTS ON EGG PRODUCTION RATES

Since the early 1960s we've seen the average hen-day rate of production for the U.S. improve at a steady rate of 0.42% a year for a total improvement of 8.4% during the past twenty years. Interestingly, this improvement came about during a period of an increased amount of flock recycling. Credit for this is difficult to assess, but we probably need to split it equally between our breeders for their improved stock and our production managers for their improved quality of management.

In addition, seasonal production differences have practically disappeared. In 1963-65, seasonal production varied from 55.8% in October to 63.6% in May—a difference of 7.8%. By 1983-85, this spread has shrunk to only 1.3%.

In the early sixties, the March through June hatch was 62% higher than the annual average. By 1983-85, the hatch during this period was only 16% higher than the annual average. This concentration of young layers six to twelve months later contributed to a very high spring rate of lay.

TABLE 1. U.S. SEASONAL RATE OF LAY (%) (1963-1985)

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University of California and the United States Department of Agriculture cooperating.
In February, 1986, a survey of six southern California supermarkets showed a 54-cent-per-dozen spread between farm and consumer large egg prices. In July, this spread had increased to 58 cents per dozen.

A recent visit to the same stores on February 13 revealed an 81-cent-per-dozen mark up -- a 50% increase. Large white eggs were priced at $1.33 to $1.41 per dozen compared to a farm price of $.58. This gave the farmer a 42% share of the consumers egg dollar compared to 50% a year earlier.

A SUMMARY OF PRODUCER EGG PRICES 1978-86

During the nine years beginning in 1978, the producer price for large eggs in southern California has changed 258 times -- an average of 29 changes per year or slightly more than twice per month. A summary of large medium and small prices with the date of change is available from the author.

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