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DOES THE FARM POULTRY FLOCK PAY?

Farm poultry flocks have returned substantial profits during each of the last four years. The figures in the table below indicate what the profits have been in two different areas of Minnesota. The average farm flock, altho usually a minor department of the farm business, makes a proportionately large and regular addition to the farm income.

Returns from Poultry Flocks 1921-1924 inclusive
(Data based on the flock as a unit)

	Steele County				Cottonwood-Jackson Counties			
	1921	1922	1923	1924	1921	1922	1923	1924
No. hens	122	105	142	134	105	127	130	153
Feed cost	24.00	32.76	94.38	135.18	32.37	54.85	90.25	157.89
Total costs	101.97	135.45	229.03	289.69	139.40	182.47	212.37	288.30
Receipts	216.46	291.92	352.71	367.14	210.06	272.36	339.64	387.01
Net profits	114.49	156.47	123.68	77.45	70.66	89.89	127.27	98.71
Eggs per hen	53	71	77	91	64	66	80	78

It should be noted that the profit is the value of the products in excess of all costs. Included in the costs are such items as labor, interest and other items which do not represent a cash outlay. The labor item alone for 1924 is charged at \$85 per flock in Steele and \$64 in Cottonwood-Jackson counties. This labor is largely supplied by the women and children, so the care of the flock does not interfere seriously with other operations on the farm. The total cash receipts from poultry amounted to \$251 and \$275 per farm in Steele and Cottonwood-Jackson counties respectively. In addition products valued at approximately \$50 per farm were used for household purposes in each case.

A farmer in Goodhue County who has kept careful records of his poultry flock since 1904 reports an average return over feed costs of \$1.33 per hen for the twenty-one years. At no time did the annual return fall below 63 cents per hen. The flock averaged 200 hens and laid 103 eggs per hen. This farmer's record shows that where well fed and handled the farm flock has been a sure and dependable source of profits for a good many years.

A part of the profit is made possible by the ability of the chickens to convert otherwise waste materials into marketable products. The chickens roam over the farm picking up waste grains, weed seeds, insects, etc., as part of their feed. Because farm flocks can pick up such a large part of their feed, they have an advantage in competition with the flocks of the commercial poultrymen which must be fed on marketable grains. While a greater portion of the feed must be hand fed as the flock increases in size, these figures indicate that in southern Minnesota a 200 hen flock can pick up as large a percentage of its living as a smaller sized one.

The farm flock is a profitable enterprise because (1) it provides a remunerative market for family labor, (2) it utilizes waste products as a large part of its feed, (3) it does not compete for labor with the more important crop and livestock operations, (4) it returns a net addition to the total farm income without a corresponding reduction in some other department of the farm business.

A.T. Hoverstad.

HOW CAN THE POULTRY PROFITS BE INCREASED?

Increase the Size of the Flock:

The accompanying table shows that the larger sized farm flocks give more profit per hen as well as per flock than the smaller ones.

Returns from Poultry
(Farms grouped according to number of hens)

	No. farms	No. hens per farm	Eggs per hen	Feed cost per hen	Profit per hen
Under 100	9	71	93	\$1.47	\$0.44
100 - 150	11	120	83	1.07	.54
150 - 200	8	184	63	.73	.51
200 and over	8	233	93	.97	1.08

The number of hens should be increased to the point where they will make the most advantageous use of waste products from the range. The feed cost per hen tends to increase when the flock gets much over 200 hens in size. If too many hens are utilizing the range, more feed must be given in the form of marketable grains, if production is to be maintained. As the amount of marketable feed given increases the margin of profit decreases. Since some feed must be hand fed regardless of the size of the flock, the number of hens should be increased only to the point where the amount of grain given per bird increases. In increasing his poultry flock the farmer should remember that he can increase his profits only in case housing facilities are ample to house the increase comfortably. If the poultry house is only large enough for the present flock it must be enlarged to accommodate any increase or overcrowding will reduce profits. These studies show that where flocks were increased from 30 to 50 per cent with no change in poultry quarters, the profits were actually less per bird. The size of the flock should not be allowed to overrun the capacity of the poultry house. Three to four square feet of floor should be allowed for each hen, depending on the breed raised.

Secure a High Production:

That large production is an important factor in profits is shown by the following figures: 12 farms that produced 58 eggs per hen had an average profit of \$34 per flock; 15 producing 82 eggs averaged \$97; while 9 that produced 114 eggs showed a net return of \$251. The feed cost per hen was 89 cents, \$1.09 and \$1.10 respectively. One farmer with 220 hens had a production of 128 eggs per hen. His feed cost was \$300 and his profit was \$450. Another farmer had 190 hens with a production of 57. The latter had a feed cost of \$175 and a profit of \$240. The amount received for poultry sold for meat was about the same in both instances. The greater success is due to the higher egg production secured thru culling, better feeding and management.

Have Products to Sell When Prices are High:

Egg prices are invariably higher during the fall and winter months. Egg production during these months means greater profits. One farmer who sold 36 per cent of his eggs during this high price period received an average price for the year of 27 cents per dozen. His neighbor sold only 5 per cent during the high price months and received an average price of only 22 cents per dozen. This extra five cents per dozen increased the profit of the first farmer 30 per cent over what it would have been had he marketed his eggs at the same time his neighbor did. To obtain winter production the chicks should be hatched early in the spring, the pullets should be fed out for production in November, the quarters should be comfortable and roomy and some attention given to insure proper methods of feeding. Oats and barley together, because of their tough hulls, should not comprise more than half the scratch feed given. Wheat and cracked corn are more palatable and nutritious. The most essential ingredient in a laying ration is some animal food, such as beef scraps, which is rich in egg forming material. Proper management of the flock thruout the year will assure winter production.

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WHAT IS THE OUTLOOK FOR EGG AND POULTRY PRICES?

The price of eggs in 1925 up to August 1 averaged five to six cents above that for the same months of 1924. The usual seasonal increase in August failed to materialize so that by September 1 the price was practically at the level of a year ago. Several factors tend to depress the market. Storage holdings of eggs on September 1 were 8.1 per cent higher than a year ago. Imports of eggs for the first seven months this year have been higher than for the same months of last year. The consumption of eggs for the first six months, as measured by apparent trade output at four principle markets, has been 6.8 per cent less than for the corresponding period of 1924. Altho numbers of poultry on farms in the United States decreased 9 per cent from January 1, 1924 to January 1, 1925, the egg receipts at the principal markets have been practically the same for the first seven months of this year as they were a year ago. Lower feed prices may induce some increase in production this year. The trend of egg prices the coming year depends largely on the number of pullets saved this fall and on industrial conditions. If flocks are not unduly increased and industrial activity is maintained at its present level, egg prices should continue at approximately the present level with the usual seasonal variations.

Poultry has been selling in 1925 at from 1 cent to $1\frac{1}{2}$ cents per pound above last year. However, the outlook for future poultry prices is hardly as bright as that for eggs. Storage stocks September 1, 1925 were 59.2 per cent above 1924 and 79.4 per cent above the five year average. Consumption for the first six months this year was 6.7 per cent below 1924. Poultry production in the United States increased 43 per cent from 1920 to 1924 whereas egg production increased less than 20 per cent during this period. Preliminary figures from one third of the counties in Minnesota indicate an increase of at least 20 per cent in the number of chickens on farms since 1920. In some counties the increase was from 40 to 50 per cent. If this increase is to continue without some decrease in ^{other} poultry producing sections, the Minnesota poultrymen may have to make some price concessions in order to induce the consumer to take these increased quantities of eggs and poultry. The one factor most encouraging to the poultryman just now is the increase in the price of all meats this year. The consumer will be more willing to pay high prices for eggs and poultry when competing foods are high.

Geo. A. P ond.