

Retail Price Freeze Changing Poultry Industry

An A&M poultry science professor said last week the President's 60-day national retail price freeze is bringing about some changes in the state's poultry industry that will mean shorter food supplies for consumers.

The poultry price-squeeze shows the flaw in the freeze, Dr. W. F. Krueger, professor and head of the Poultry Science Department, said.

"Agricultural commodities are effectively boxed in by retail price ceilings, although the farm commodities do not have ceilings imposed on them at the farm level," Krueger added.

The industry's output costs weren't frozen, but the wholesale selling price was. This has resulted in some poultry producers destroying chicks and eggs as the price freeze and costs ensure losses, Krueger explained.

"Over the past six months, ingredients for poultry feeds have risen more than 100 percent. Factors affecting these skyrocketing feed costs have been shortages of soybeans and grains, increased fuel and transportation costs, speculation and rising credit costs, the professor, whose field is poultry breeding and management, said.

Poultry industry leaders point out that the timing of the freeze

set the retail price level for chickens at its lowest point in 90 days in the week ending June 8, the base period of the freeze.

At the same time, the price of soybean meal feed shot up to about \$450 a ton from about \$110 a year earlier. Soybean meal is the main source of protein in the poultry ration.

"There's no question about it, poultry producers are in a dilemma and here's why," Krueger

said. "The cost of producing one pound of dressed broiler today—the total dock price—is 45.7 cents to the grower. This includes feed, chick, contract grower fees, service, processing and management costs. But he can receive only about 39 to 41 cents a pound for them at the processing dock. That's a loss of 5 to 6 cents a pound that must be absorbed. "Today's cost of producing one

pound of live turkey totals 42.8 cents. This includes the poul, feed, grower, service, transportation, insurance, fuel, depreciation and electricity costs. Turkey processors can pay no more than 36 cents a pound for the live birds.

"Production costs for a dozen eggs today average 53 cents, based on a hen producing 240 eggs per year. All poultrymen realize that many hens are under

this production level, thus increasing the cost. And one must consider the fact that not all eggs are large eggs—and that medium and small eggs are less valuable. Costs involved include feed, hen depreciation, grading and packaging, delivery, storage and interest on investment," Krueger explained.

Thus, producers are cutting back on their broiler output and turkey owners are having some of their breeding hens processed now, rather than waiting until the end of July, the normal slaughter time.

Egg farmers are also taking steps to cut operating costs, including culling of flocks and moving older, less productive hens to slaughter plants much sooner than usual.

Overall, it appears that the broiler cutback may be about 10 percent, Krueger, also jointly employed by the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station and Texas Agricultural Extension Service, said.

"Nevertheless, poultry and eggs—and all foods—have been and continue to be a bargain nutritionally and economically. Eggs, broilers and turkeys are some of our most economical sources of animal protein. Today's consumer spends only about 16 percent of his take home pay on food—lower than any other nation and lowest of any time in our history," Krueger said.

Federal Funds Received For Rehabilitation

Baylor College of Medicine, the Texas Institute for Rehabilitation and Research and Texas A&M University have jointly received federal support totaling \$298,805 for continuation of studies benefiting handicapped persons.

Funds for the second year of a proposed five-year program were provided by the Social and Rehabilitation Service of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

The program is conducted through the Rehabilitation Engineering Center headed by Dr. Paul H. Newell Jr. of A&M.

Newell, who also heads A&M's bioengineering program, said the center's initial work involves research on effects of pressure on tissue. Information gained through the project is being applied to direct skeletal attachment of prosthetic appliances—artificial limbs—and studies of skin metabolism.

Co-directors for the center are Dr. William A. Spencer, chairman of Baylor's Department of Rehabilitation and TIRR director, and Dr. Lewis A. Leavitt, chairman of the medical school's Department of Physical Medicine and TIRR's educational program director.

The center is designed to provide a multi-disciplinary approach to rehabilitation engineering. Mission-oriented teams of engineers, physicians, scientists and allied health professionals work together in the research, development and application of new techniques which can benefit handicapped people.

Administered by the Texas A&M Research Foundation, the project has received support totaling \$676,905 to date.

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