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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Wednesday - August 6, 1941

Subject: "Don't Spoil A Good Egg". Information from the U. S. Department of Agriculture

--ooOoo--

Some mighty good eggs get bad in warm weather - and it isn't their fault.

They need care and attention they don't get. The U. S. Department of Agriculture says about 5 percent of our egg crop is lost every year through careless handling - which means about 175 million dozen eggs - or a whale of a lot of eggs.

That's something for farm people especially to think about..... more than 2 billion eggs a year good for nothing and nobody People on farms are the ones to do something about it. Eggs in these days of National Defense mean money in the pocket and food on the table.

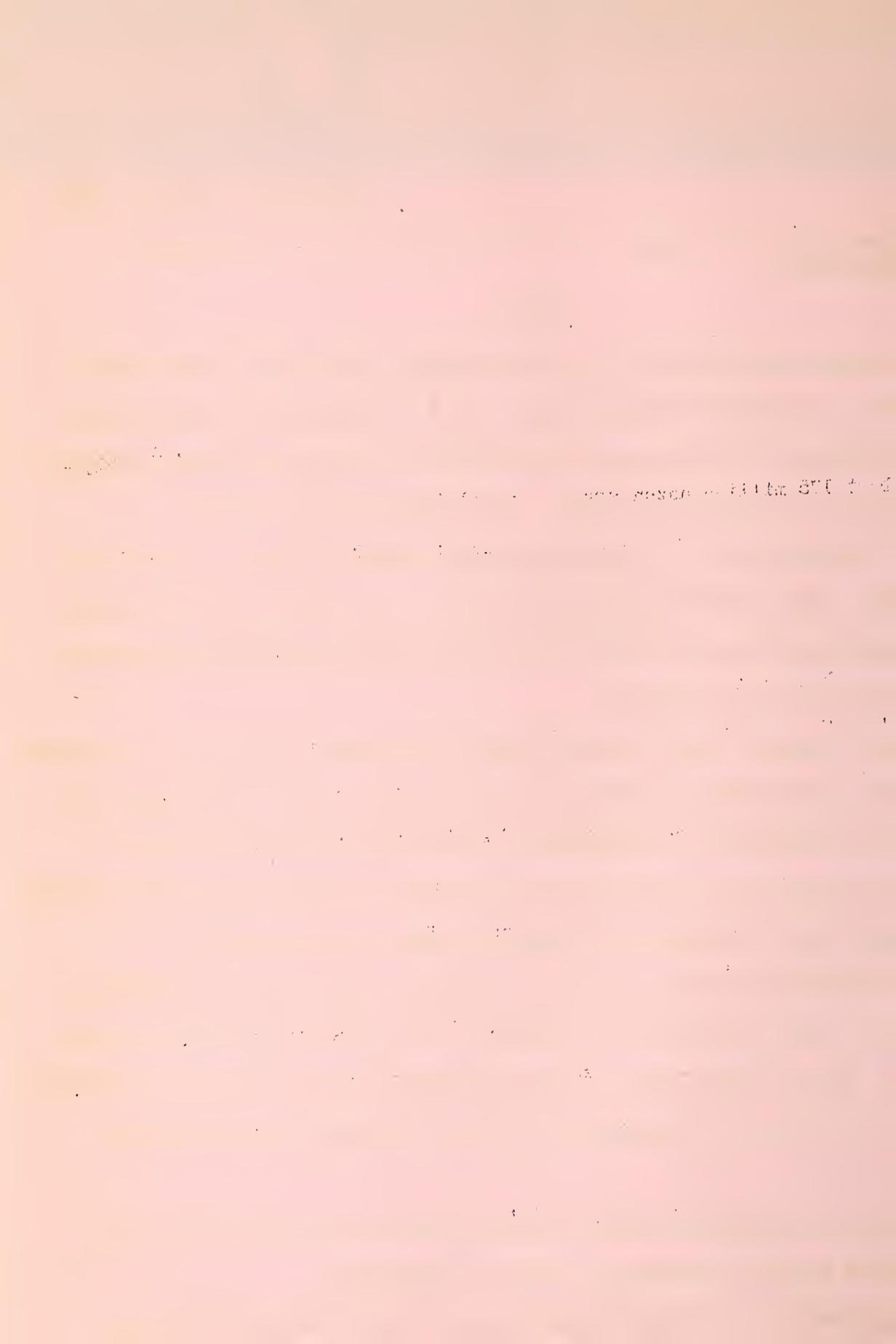
You can't afford to raise and feed hens and then throw away eggs. That would be like growing watermelons and dumping them in the creek - only a whole lot worse.

Poultry specialists of the Department of Agriculture say summer is the hardest time to care for eggs, and give us some hints on saving them in spite of the heat. They say "Cool them quick - and keep them cool" - is the secret.

Gather eggs several times a day in hot weather - maybe about 11 o'clock in the morning and 1 and 4 o'clock in the afternoon. If you've a lot of hens, gather even oftener. When an egg is laid, you see, it's warm from the body heat of the hen. So the sooner that heat is taken away, the better for the egg and for everybody concerned.

Also when you gather eggs often, you don't have as many soiled eggs, and clean eggs don't spoil or deteriorate as fast as dirty eggs.

In many families the youngsters who're out of school take an interest in gathering eggs.....and give plenty of help. They often make a game of it and have fun while they're helping.



Incidentally, if you've been used to gathering eggs in a tin bucket or syrup pail, better start using a wire basket or loosely woven splint basket that allows for ventilation. Closed tin buckets and other such containers hold the heat and keep the eggs too warm.

Then cool the eggs as soon as they're gathered. Cool them to as near 50 degrees as possible. Put them in a cool basement or spring house if you have one - if not, try a shady spot somewhere or a well-ventilated room in an insulated building. Spreading them out helps cool them off, too. Never leave eggs out in the sun, and don't keep them in the kitchen where the heat from the stove may start them on the downward path.

Another thing - don't put warm eggs in the cases. Some people like to empty the egg basket right into the egg case, but that's not a good idea - especially in summer. When warm eggs are packed into cases, they can't cool off as fast as they should - and they may even get stale before they get cool.

Take the eggs to market as often as you can. In winter, once or twice a week may be often enough but not in summer. Also, protect the eggs from the heat while they're on the way to market. If they or their containers are exposed to the hot sun, or heat from the car motor, they take a drop in quality. Besides, the grocer doesn't have any ready-fried eggs his customers want to do their own frying.

Now we have the eggs to market and that should settle the matter, but let's back up a little and discuss egg quality some more. Poultry specialists say, another point for hot weather is to produce infertile eggs - infertile eggs keep better..... and if eggs are soiled, clean them with a dull knife or some steel wool or sandpaper rather than wash them. Washing destroys the little protective covering on the outside of the shell and makes them more likely to spoil.

Good nests for your hens - and enough nests are important too. Sometimes two or three hens try to get on the same nest which may be either "sociability" or double claim to the nest-but often it's just lack of nests. And no self-respecting hen wants to lay under the barn or in a fence corner. She wants a good nest. Besides, a couple of hens on the same nest make each other uncomfortably warm and the eggs unsafely warm.

Have the nests in a clean, well ventilated poultry house, and have one nest for about every 5 to 7 hens. Make roomy nests that can be cleaned and disinfected easily - also that the hens can't roost in. A good idea is to attach a row of nests to the wall by leather straps or metal hinges. The wall of the house can serve as the back of the nests.

All you have to do to clean such nests is to pull them away from the wall and shake them a little. The nesting material and dirt will drop out the back and you can sweep it up. When you want to scrub or clean the whole hen house, simply pull the nails or pins out of the hinges and take the nests off the wall. It's easy then to take them outside to air and sun

Eggs belong on the list of important protective foods, so don't sell the eggs your family needs for best health. But surplus eggs are a very good source of profits on the farm. Many a flock of chickens has paid the winter bills - the groceries that couldn't be produced at home, the warm coats and overshoes for the family, and the medical and dental care. Chicken money comes home to roost they say.

If you are running into difficulty with feeding or caring for hens this summer, you can see your County Extension Agent or Farm Security supervisor - either will be glad to help you. Or write to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. for publications on the subject.

Just remember that it's both profitable and patriotic this year to increase egg production - and to take care of those eggs after they're produced.

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