

MINNESOTA FARM MANAGEMENT SERVICE NOTES

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Returns from Poultry

On most farms in Minnesota poultry is considered as a minor enterprise, but nevertheless the average flock does make quite a sizable addition to the farm income. Table I shows what the returns have been from the farms on the two statistical routes in Minnesota since 1921. During every year there has been a net return.

TABLE I
 Poultry Data Per Flock

	Steele County			Cottonwood-Jackson Counties		
	1921	1922	1923	1921	1922	1923
Number of hens	112	105	142	105	127	130
Total feed cost	24.00	32.76	94.38	32.37	54.85	90.25
Total costs	101.97	135.45	229.03	139.40	182.47	212.37
Total credits	216.46	291.92	352.71	210.06	272.36	339.64
Net return	114.49	156.47	123.68	70.66	89.89	127.27
Eggs per hen	53	71	77	64	66	80

Table I is on the "per flock" basis, while Table II which lists the individual items of receipts and expenses for 1923 is reduced to a "per 100 hens" basis so that the figures may be compared directly. Because of the relatively large income which poultry brings it deserves more attention than it usually receives.

In using these figures it must be remembered that the net return is the excess receipts over all costs. Labor, interest, overhead, etc., are included as costs. The labor is usually done by women or children so that the enterprise provides a market for this labor which it would not otherwise have. Chickens show a high income owing to the fact that they can range over the farmstead for a large part of the year picking up insects, weed seeds and waste grains, thereby cutting down the feed cost. A farm flock of ordinary size does not compete with other enterprises for labor nor does it require much feed. For these reasons the income from poultry is not gained by a corresponding loss in some other enterprise, but it is income which would not otherwise be had.

The farms in Steele County during the last year received 24.3 cents per dozen for eggs sold while the farms on the other route received 23.9 cents. If the net expense of the enterprise is divided between eggs and poultry in the same proportion as the receipts, the cost of eggs per dozen would be 15.6 cents and 13.9 cents respectively.

TABLE II
Poultry Data Per 100 Hens 1923

	Steele County	Cottonwood-Jackson Counties
Feed - Grain - home grown	4181	5327
Grain - purchased	230	52
Skimmilk	1498	1636
Labor - Man hours	265	227
Horse hours	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	15
Costs - Feed	\$66.46	\$69.42
Labor	56.36	49.06
Interest	7.24	7.84
Decrease in inventory	2.55	-
Miscellaneous cash	11.28	10.24
Shelter & equipment	13.98	22.65
Overhead	3.41	4.15
Total Costs	161.28	163.36
Receipts - Eggs sold	135.34	128.01
Eggs used on farm	22.57	22.84
Poultry sold	64.37	76.11
Poultry used on farm	16.52	16.03
Increase in inventory	-	10.59
Manure credit	9.58	5.60
Other credits	-	2.08
Total Receipts	248.38	261.26
Net return	87.10	97.90
Number of eggs per hen	77	80

It should be possible to receive even more money from poultry than is now the case. Better care and management should mean greater production. The feeding of the flock should be done more carefully. Eggs should be collected twice a day and marketed while they are fresh. If all farmers would practice using more poultry products the consumption would be raised so that less would be marketed. This would result in higher prices for the portion sold. Do not overlook the fact, if using the figures in the tables for reorganization purposes, that poultry makes an income because of the fact that it consumes otherwise waste products. If the size of the flock is greatly increased do not expect the returns to increase proportionately. Avoid any increase which would necessitate crowding the poultry house. Any increase large enough to require heavy grain feeding will greatly increase the cost ^{per hen} which must be accompanied by an increase in the number of eggs or the increase in returns will not be proportionate to the increase in cost. Chickens should get most of their feed while ranging. For these reasons, any large increase in the size of the farm flock must be made with some degree of caution and the increase of income can not be expected to increase in the same ratio as size of the flock.

A.T.H.

The Place of Poultry in the Farm Business

Poultry as a farm enterprise finds its greatest development in regions that have an abundant supply of cheap feed. Thus in Minnesota according to the U.S. Census of 1920 the average number of chickens per farm in the counties of southwest Minnesota ranged from 100 to 130. At the other extreme were counties in northeast Minnesota with an average of 19 to 50 chickens per farm. The following figures show the chickens per farm in representative counties in various sections of the state.

	<u>Southwest</u>			<u>Southeast</u>	
Rock		123	Fillmore		90
Watonwan		112	Goodhue		85
Renville		104	LeSueur		84
	<u>Northwest</u>			<u>Northeast</u>	
Clay		66	St. Louis		19
Polk		59	Carlton		31
Kittson		51	Crow Wing		40

There has been a decided increase in poultry in all section of the state since 1920, but it is not likely that the relative importance of poultry in the different sections of the state has changed. The farm poultry flock furnishes almost impossible competition for the specialized poultry plant except where the specialized plant has a combination of a special market and unusual success in getting high production per hen. Furthermore, the farmer in portions of northeast Minnesota where the price of feed is determined by the Minneapolis or Duluth market plus freight and handling charges finds it difficult to compete with the corn and grain belt farmer except as he has a special market or as he keeps a small flock that can be partly supported by what it picks up about the farmstead. Where a farm has only five to twenty acres of grain the feed to be picked up about the buildings is a small item compared to the farm that raises 100 to 200 acres of corn and small grain.

While the farm flocks have shown good profits, poultry specialists point out that on the average farm there are opportunities for a decided increase in poultry ^{income} thru attention to better feeding of hens in both winter and summer, more skill in rearing chicks and in better sanitation and ventilation of houses so as to decrease losses from tuberculosis, roup and other diseases. Among the common faults in feeding are (1) Letting the farm flock depend too exclusively on picked-up feed; (2) Feeding too little meat scrap, tankage or skim milk to provide the necessary protein; (3) Making oats too large a part of the ration. Oats are too bulky a feed to form a large part of the ration for laying hens. Cracked corn and wheat are much better.

The cost records on individual farms keeping up to 300 hens have shown highly satisfactory results on the per hen basis. Farmers who live in regions where grain prices are determined by the Chicago or Minneapolis market less freight, who have available family labor with which to do the work, and who have a good degree of skill in management and care may find a flock two or three times the size of the usual farm flock an excellent method of increasing the size of the farm business. However, present indications are that high feed prices without a corresponding advance in eggs prices will decrease poultry profits in the immediate future below those of 1921, 1922 and 1923. The commercial poultryman in regions of high priced feed will be the first to feel the pinch.