

1-1949

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Goble, J. W., "EC1314 Marketing Eggs on Grade" (1949). *Historical Materials from University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension*. 2493.
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Nebr. Agr. Expt. Sta. 3/31/41 1314
Jan. 1949

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MARKETING EGGS ON GRADE



Photograph -- Courtesy of U. S. Egg and Poultry
Magazine

Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics
University of Nebraska College of Agriculture, and the United States
Department of Agriculture cooperating, H. G. Gould, Acting Director,
Lincoln.

Marketing Eggs on Grade

J. W. Goble

Selling good eggs by grade is a method of marketing whereby the producer may receive higher returns as compensation for maintaining quality through good care and management.

Grading Standard

Grading may be defined as a process of sorting a particular commodity such as eggs according to quality and/or size.

A uniform grading standard for eggs was promulgated by the federal government through authority vested in the Secretary of Agriculture by Congress. This action resulted in enactment of the Official United States Standard for Individual Shell Eggs. The most recent standard took effect as of December 1, 1946. This superseded all previous standards for eggs that had been in effect, the first of which was enacted February 16, 1934. The use of the federal standard is optional, although if used, certain requirements must be observed.

United States Standards for Quality

The United States Standards for Quality of individual Shell Eggs recognizes four criteria for judging quality. These factors are shell, air cell, white, and yolk. Four classifications are designated for individual eggs with clean, unbroken shells. These classes and the description of each are as follows:

AA Quality - The shell must be clean, unbroken and practically normal. The air cell must not exceed $1/8$ inch in depth and must be practically regular. The white must be clear and firm so the yolk appears well centered and its outline only slightly defined when the egg is twirled before the candling light. The yolk must be free from apparent defects.

A Quality - The shell must be clean, unbroken, and practically normal. The air cell must not exceed $2/8$ inch in depth and must be practically regular. The white must be clear and at least reasonably firm so that the yolk appears at least fairly well centered and its outline only fairly well defined when the egg is twirled before the candling light. The yolk must be practically free from apparent defects.

B Quality - The shell must be clean, unbroken, and may be slightly abnormal. The air cell must not exceed $3/8$ inch in depth and may show total movement not in excess of $3/8$ inch. However, an air cell not over $2/8$ inch in depth may be free. The white must be clear but may be slightly weak so that the yolk may appear off center with its outline well defined when the egg is twirled before the candling light. The yolk may appear slightly enlarged and slightly flattened and may show other definite but not serious defects.

C Quality - The shell must be clean, unbroken, and may be abnormal. The cell may be over $3/8$ inch in depth and may be bubbly or free. The white may be weak or watery so that the yolk may appear off center and its outline plainly visible when the egg is twirled before the candling light. The yolk may appear dark, enlarged and flattened and may show clearly visible germ development but no blood due to such development. It may show other serious defects that do not render the egg inedible. Small blood clots or spots may be present.

Advantages of Selling on Grade

Selling on a graded basis is advantageous only to the producers that have good eggs. The low grade eggs may bring less than if sold on a current receipt¹ basis. If all eggs are sold on a case count basis then the producer of inferior products receives the same price as the persons using good management practices.

¹Current receipt-Eggs bought without grading.

Such a buying system causes the better producers to be penalized because of the poor ones.

When dealers buy eggs on a current receipt basis, they incur some risk since the quality is not known. The price is generally sufficiently low to make allowance for the low quality eggs that might be in a given lot.

By selling according to grades, the good producer avoids the penalty due to poor eggs produced by careless or indifferent producers.

The advantage in price which a producer of good eggs has by selling on grades is illustrated in Table 1. Lot 1 which was an average of several producers returned 6.5 cents per dozen over the current receipt price. Lot 3 indicates a return of less than one cent per dozen over the current receipt price. This may be attributed to low quality since over three-fourths of the lots were in grade B. The information in the table clearly shows that good eggs bring more by selling on grade whereas those that are of low quality may return less than if sold without grading at one price. The higher price received from selling good eggs by grades will more than compensate for the extra care required to maintain the necessary quality.

Graded eggs will stimulate consumption because of the improvement in quality of those offered for sale. This will tend to expand the market for eggs which is advantageous to the poultry producer.

A Fresh Egg May Be Inedible

If a farmer sells on grade, when he receives his candling ticket, there may be some eggs recorded in the inedible column. This may be resented if the eggs were fresh. The person candling the eggs is then blamed for an error. The producer must realize that blood spots, or a condition where blood is diffused throughout the contents, may occur in some fresh eggs. Large meat spots may also be present. When such a condition is

Table 1.

Typical Returns From Selling Eggs on Grade

Percent by Grade

Lot	Number of Eggs	Large A	Med. A	B	Under ¹ Grade	Inedi- ble	Current Receipt Price	Ave. Graded Price	Gain
(June)							(cents)	(cents)	(cents)
1	2434	80.1	9.0	5.6	5.1	.4	36	42.5	6.5
2	2328	52.0	4.3	31.1	12.2	.17	36	39.1	3.1
3	1450	12.0	1.5	76.1	10.2	--	36	36.7	.7
(July)									
4	5174	71.9	6.9	10.3	10.6	.3	35	40.4	5.4
5	1982	54.8	3.4	31.2	10.2	.1	35	39.5	4.5
6	3701	37.8	2.6	41.0	18.4	.1	35	37.9	2.9

1. Under Grade includes all other edible eggs such as grade C, dirties, and checks.

