CARE AND MARKETING OF EGGS.

By C. C. LAMB.

The systems of marketing eggs in the past have been very detrimental to the poultry industry.

Farmers and producers are responsible in a large measure for a loss of several millions of dollars annually. It is within their power to check this loss considerably and increase accordingly their income from eggs and poultry.

The consumption of eggs and the consequent demand for them would be doubled in Oregon if eggs were handled as carefully as milk and cream, and marketed in as direct a line to the consumer as possible. A stimulus would be given the industry which would probably result in from $2,000,000 to $4,000,000 more being spent in Oregon for eggs each year.

The old method of selling eggs, case-count to the local store, offers no incentive to the farmer to practice careful handling, but rather puts a premium on careless methods.

Too few people handling eggs understand their physical and chemical characteristics, causing large losses from various causes which are passed on down to the producer in low prices.

Eggs should be marketed on a quality basis only.

Large losses result from improper handling of fertile eggs during warm weather. A fertile egg is as good as an infertile one if it is properly handled. A temperature of 85° to 90° for a few hours will start a fertile egg on the way to decomposition, while an infertile egg would keep several weeks under the same conditions.

Seventeen per cent ($50,000,000) of the value of all the eggs produced in the United States is lost through poor methods of handling. The farmers are largely responsible for this loss and can stop it to a large degree by using methods which will prevent from being sent to market dirty eggs, broken eggs, stale or shrunked eggs, chick-developed eggs, rotten eggs and mouldy and bad-flavored eggs.

An effort should be made to ship good well-graded fresh eggs as directly as possible to the consumer. Better prices would then be received by the farmer and the consumer should get better eggs at a price as low as he pays the city retailer for eggs of poorer quality.

The express and parcel post services are now improved and can be used to good advantage for making small weekly shipments to individual customers in the city. Special containers for shipping eggs and other farm produce are now being manufactured by several different concerns and can be purchased at reasonable prices from seed companies in Portland.

It should be understood that to establish and hold a high class trade by parcel post or express, the eggs must be first class in every respect.

The bulletins of the Oregon Agricultural College are sent free to all residents of Oregon who request them.
While it will be necessary for the producer to exercise care in handling, selecting, and packing his eggs, it will pay him a higher profit on his eggs and ultimately mean greater satisfaction to him in putting out a first-class product which will induce more people to realize the value of choice poultry products, and advance the industry in Oregon.

Eggs that are packed in the containers should be fairly uniform in shape and color. The eggs should average 24 ounces a dozen (1½ pounds), no egg less than 1 5/6 ounces, no large or double-yolk eggs. They should have naturally clean, smooth, strong, and preferably unwashed shells. If both white and brown eggs are produced, the two colors should be packed separately. If enough smaller eggs are produced a second grade should be made to average 20 ounces (1¼ pounds) a dozen, with no eggs weighing less than 1½ ounces. For these, a lower price should be charged.

The eggs should not be more than three or four days old before shipping, and should be gathered promptly once a day and kept in a cool, dry place, free from odors. The seller should be absolutely sure of the age of every egg that goes into the boxes.

When the right kind of eggs are properly packed in neat cartons they will always find a ready high class market.

Owing to the present cost of containers and transportation, the producer should strive to ship in packages of not less than five dozen each in order to make a desirable profit. When eggs are shipped in five dozen or larger packages and the containers are returned at the producer's expense and used for three or four shipments, the total cost of marketing each dozen will be from 3 to 4 cents.

The producer can charge a premium above the highest wholesale quotations on the best eggs in Portland. This should probably be mutually arranged so as to allow the producer a desirable net premium consumer to get the eggs at about the same price he would pay at the retailers, for eggs of the same quality, if such could be secured. The producer must always bear in mind that it will be necessary to furnish his customers first class eggs at a price as low as they can, buy candled eggs for in the city.

The price of the eggs will have to be arranged according to quantity ordered and plan used. In case the consumer owns the containers and pays the postage on the empty ones, the producer will charge less for the eggs than in cases where he owns the boxes and pays for transportation both ways. Until such time that the producer can be justified in laying in a quantity of the containers it might be advisable for the consumers to purchase a few in the city and use them in having eggs shipped to them.

There will probably be those consumers with small families who will want to buy in one, two, or three dozen shipments. In such cases they must expect to pay a little more for their eggs than when ordered in larger packages. This can be mutually arranged.