

Bankers' Conversation Increases Hens Egg Production—Perhaps!

While it is more or less of a scientific fact that certain cows have been known to give extra milk to the tune of "When Irish Eyes Are Smilin'" or "Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree"—I was nevertheless inclined to wonder about this man over in McDowell County who talks his hens into higher egg production.

Then I ran into Carl Whiteside one day, and he was giving me the straight stuff. He's assistant farm agent for the State College Extension service over there, and knows all about such things.

"Do you mean he actually has words with them," I ask Carl, picturing the farmer as he rakes the lazy birds over the coals in a daily pep talk.

"Well, you see, Cousin," he tells me, "it's like this. It all started when some baby chicks were purchased from C. M. Harris, one of the state's good poultry breeders over at Valdese."

"And then what happened,"

I says, anxious to get on with it. "They were brooded and grown out by one of McDowell's best farmers who let them range on Ladino clover till the twentieth of August, last year."

"Is this the man who talked to them?" I asked.

"Not that I know of," my informant replied. "It's the man who has them now that carries on a conversation with them."

My patience was beginning to wear around the edges, and I pressed Mr. Whiteside for more details. As the story unfolded, I learned that the man who now has the five Rhode Island Red hens is cashier in Marion, a western community where most of the scenery is vertical.

Being a methodical fellow, this banker kept a close record on the individual performance of each bird.

And they did right well, too; notwithstanding an occasional lecture on "Basic Ingredients of Chicken Pot Pie." In twenty days short of a year, with the threat of death hanging over their miserable heads at every turn, the average number of eggs per hen had reached 249; or 123 eggs per bird more than the average production for the state.

"The banker says the thing to

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do is talk it over with the hens, and leave the decision up to them," the agent was telling me. "He insists that when you put it up to them in this light, they usually decide to go to work and lay eggs."

When I suggested to Whiteside that perhaps the state's poultry farmers could take a leaf from this banker's book and thus increase their own egg production, he agreed laughingly, and said:

"I suspect, Cousin, that another good reason for this outstanding record lies in the fact that Extension Service recommendations on poultry management were carried out to the

letter. "Good feeding, good breeding, and good management help a lot," he said, as he put on his hat and took off to help a farmer estimate his corn yield.

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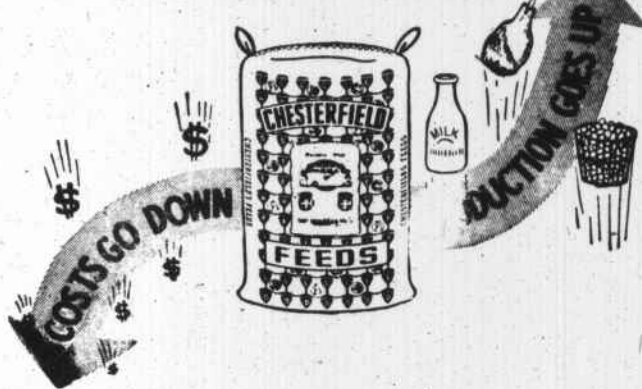
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