

PART II.—THE QUALITY POINTS.

CHAPTER IV.—INTERNAL CONDITION.

The interior quality of eggs is of greater ultimate importance than exterior features such as appearance and size. Interior quality may be tested in various ways, and these will be discussed later. Apart from abnormalities and questions of flavour due to feeding faults, the main consideration is freshness. Freshness should be the principal asset of the home-produced egg in facing competition from abroad, and should be exploited by the home producer to the uttermost. It is his starting handicap. Unfortunately, this natural advantage is not pressed home to the extent that is possible.

Enquiry shows that the condition of eggs from commercial poultry farms is, on the whole, good, and far more dependable than that of eggs marketed from the general farms of the country, though the natural quality of the former is held to be generally inferior. This is partly explained by the fact that eggs from poultry farms are marketed more frequently—twice and sometimes three times weekly being not unusual, whereas farm eggs are, as a rule, taken to a market or collected weekly—and partly by the greater care taken in handling the eggs from the time they are laid until they are disposed of. An instance worth noting in this connection is that of a shop in the North of England which is owned by commercial egg-producers, where the freshness of the eggs offered for sale is made a speciality. All the year round, the eggs command prices of 3*d.* a dozen higher than those obtainable in any other shop in the neighbourhood.

Eggs from general farms have a varying reputation. While evidence shows that there has been a decided improvement in recent years in the quality of home-produced eggs as a whole, many and bitter complaints are made by the trade of the damage and loss sustained in handling farm eggs at certain seasons. The troublesome period begins in the early summer—when eggs from general farms are regarded by the trade as “dangerous stuff to deal with”—and continues into November. Many bad and stale eggs which are received by collectors, or find their way otherwise into the markets, can be traced to the carelessness of producers in marketing “nests” found in the hedgerows. These eggs have been exposed to wet and heat, and many are partially incubated.

Then, again, numerous cases are reported of incubated eggs being sent to market in such large numbers that there can be little doubt that it has been wilfully done. Both addled and infertile incubated eggs are consigned with fresh eggs from time