

Fresh Chicken Meat

survey of retail stores in Los Angeles area reveals prices to be unreliable guides to meat quality

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Individual store prices for fresh chicken in the Los Angeles area are not reliable guides to quality unless the consumer buys fresh chicken only from a quality-conscious store.

This conclusion reveals an important cause of producer and consumer dissatisfaction with the operation of the fresh chicken market.

The relationship existing in a market between the price and the quality of an agricultural product has an important bearing on the confidence achieved by consumers in buying that product. A reliable relationship between price and quality indicates a more efficient marketing process is operating than one in which this relationship is unreliable. An efficient market is one in which consumers get the most satisfaction with the least effort in buying the products they want. To get the most satisfaction the consumers must be able to obtain different products at different prices according to their ability and desire to pay. Different grades of chicken are in effect different products.

The low degree of reliability in association between price and quality for fresh chickens in the retail market is low because: 1, there is no uniform grading system at retail; 2, price policies of retail stores vary widely; and 3, consumers may not be aware of which characteristics of quality in chicken are desirable and which are not.

A one-year survey in the Los Angeles area was made of a representative sample of retail stores carrying fresh chicken.

Each display was graded according to United States Department of Agriculture—USDA—standards although use of these standards is not in effect for fresh chicken in California.

The data collected indicate that the average price for all grade "A" chickens is from 2¢ to 10¢ higher than the average price for all grade "B" chickens.

Such a price premium is not due entirely to the difference in quality because all other factors affecting the difference have not been eliminated. There is a relationship, for instance, between kind of store and quality of chicken handled. Higher quality chickens tend to be han-

dled more by stores which take a higher markup on their products—partly to pay for additional services, such as credit and delivery offered. This has the effect of exaggerating the premium for the higher quality.

The positive relationship between average prices and quality is probably caused largely by differences in wholesale prices for different qualities. Apparently processors consider quality as one of the major reasons for differences in prices they charge. This is because there is a high level of competition among meat buyers for retail stores. They know all the sources of supply and have access to them. They know the factors making up quality in chicken and buy frequently. They have relatively high bargaining power with processors through the threat of transferring their patronage to another processor. A more reliable relationship between price and quality thus exists at wholesale than at retail.

There is a wide over-all range in prices charged for each class of fresh chicken. This remains true even when displays have been classified into different grades of birds.

During one week of the survey two thirds of the Grade A dressed fryers observed were priced between 52¢ and 70¢—the total range being from 45¢ to 75¢. Two thirds of the Grade A heavy hen displays observed ranged from 47¢ to 61¢.

When the total range of prices for each grade is taken into account there frequently is overlapping. Many chickens in the lower grades are sold at prices equal to or higher than those in the higher grades. For instance, during another week of the survey, two thirds of the Grade A dressed fryers observed were priced from 56¢ to 68¢ while two thirds of the Grade B fryers observed were priced from 48¢ to 64¢. There was no consistent association of high prices with high quality and vice versa.

Some consumers may use type of store rather than price as a guide to quality of chicken at retail. Most retail food stores can be classed as either *price conscious* or *quality conscious*.

During the week of July 10, 1950, 12 out of 14 quality-conscious stores in the sample displayed dressed fryers which were Grade A, whereas only four out of 13 displays in price-conscious stores were Grade A. In that same week the price of 55¢ a pound for dressed fryers was the boundary line between these two types of stores. None of the quality-conscious stores carried fryers for less than 55¢ per pound, and none of the price-conscious stores carried fryers for more than 55¢ per pound.

The above situation was rather typical of that existing for the several weeks examined closely.

Since prices and type of store are not entirely satisfactory as guides to quality of fresh chickens, some consumers may desire to use brands as a guide. Only a small proportion of the fresh chicken sold in Los Angeles is offered as a branded product. The branded chicken meat is about equivalent in quality to commercial Grade A, a term used and understood by processors and retailers. It covers a wider range of quality of product than does the USDA Grade A. It includes the

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ROOTSTOCK

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sweet orange or sour orange roots. Trifoliolate orange grows well as a replant and some strains are fairly resistant to nematodes. It grows best in acid sandy loam soils, but is fairly susceptible to injury by high salt content in the soil.

Present use of trifoliolate orange as a rootstock should be restricted to oranges and for limited replanting purposes only.

Cleopatra Mandarin

The Cleopatra mandarin is a stock which has done well with all species and varieties in experimental trials of the Citrus Experiment Station.

Oranges and grapefruit budded on Cleopatra stock are tolerant to quick decline. Cleopatra root is equally as resistant as sour orange to gummosis. No other diseases are known to be a factor. Lemon shellbark seems to be less severe on trees budded on Cleopatra than on Rough lemon, grapefruit or sour orange stock. Lemon decline is less pronounced in trees budded on Cleopatra than on other stocks observed.

Yields of all varieties budded on Cleopatra have been equally as good as those varieties budded on sweet orange. Fruit quality of varieties budded upon it is comparable to that of fruit from trees budded on sweet orange or sour orange. Fruit sizes are average. Trees budded on Cleopatra are equally as hardy as trees budded on sour orange stock. It makes a good growth as a replant. Cleopatra does well on heavy soils and is better adapted for saline soils than sour orange or Rough lemon.

Use of this stock in California for all scion varieties is recommended for commercial trial.

Sampson Tangelo

Use of the Sampson tangelo as a rootstock in California has not been extensive except for lemons. Eureka lemons are less prone to shellbark and lemon decline when budded upon Sampson tangelo than on most other stocks. Yields of lemons have been as good or better on trees budded on Sampson tangelo than of trees budded on sweet orange and have increased as the trees become older.

In California, because of quick decline, Sampson tangelo stock should be used only for lemons.

Troyer Citrange

Troyer citrange rootstock is so new that its ultimate value is somewhat speculative.

The Troyer citrange is a hybrid of sweet orange and trifoliolate orange and

apparently has inherited some of the good qualities of both. It is highly resistant to gummosis.

Oranges budded on it appear to be tolerant to quick decline. The trees come into bearing early and bear good crops of large fruit of excellent quality. The trees are more resistant to cold than trees budded on sweet orange or sour orange. Its ability to grow as a replant in old citrus soils has been outstanding.

Use of this stock should be restricted to oranges and grapefruit. Lisbon lemons are growing well on it, but Eureka lemons have not as yet proved adapted to it.

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BLACKBERRIES

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vigorous five to seven canes per plant need be trellised.

Trellising should be done soon after harvest, and with as little breakage of canes as possible. If tip-pruned to eight to 10 feet at the time of trellising, the supporting canes will force lateral growth over much of their length. Such lateral growth can either be pruned back to eight to 20 buds in the winter, when the plant is fully dormant, or trellised on the wires. The pruning saves labor and results in larger, more uniformly sized berries, the trellising perhaps gives a greater total yield of fruit. Water must be applied during the fall and winter months, and post-harvest fertilization with nitrogen is desirable. Attempts should be made to control the raspberry horned-tail insect. This insect kills the terminal growth of new canes early in the spring. Lateral growth which arises from such canes is always weaker than the original and is believed more subject to die-back.

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CANTALOUPE

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The experiment showed that fruit which drop do so soon after full bloom, though some ovaries may grow several-fold before dropping.

These droppings which showed early growth frequently lengthened at the same rate as fruits which continued on to ma-

turity. They cease to grow suddenly but remain green, turgid, and firmly attached for several days. Finally many of the fruits turn yellow, shrivel, and drop from the vine.

In fruits which drop, abscission always occurs several days after the ovary ceases to grow, and thus appears to have a secondary role in preventing fruit set.

Embryo sac development, pollen-tube growth, and the early stages of seed development were studied in growing fruits and in drops. For the insect-pollinated flowers on unthinned vines, there was no evidence that fruit drop was caused by the malfunction of any of these processes.

The changes which bring about fruit drop apparently first affect the growth of the fruit as a whole and then the development of structures within the ovule. The sequence is just the reverse of what could be expected if processes associated with fertilization or embryo or endosperm development were the cause of fruit drop.

Fruit set in this test did not appear to be limited by the number of ovules fertilized. Counts of fertilized and nonfertilized ovules were made from sections of 13 growing fruits, and from sections from 13 comparable drops.

Of 78 ovules in the fruits growing normally, 13% were not fertilized; of 116 ovules observed in the drops, 10.2% were not fertilized. Although more extensive data are needed, there is no present indication that drops have fewer ovules fertilized.

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CHICKEN

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chickens which would meet specifications for USDA Grade A and most of those which would be included in the USDA Grade B classification.

A grading system at retail would focus consumers' attention on quality as one aspect of their buying and would serve to reduce the price spread noted for each grade.

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