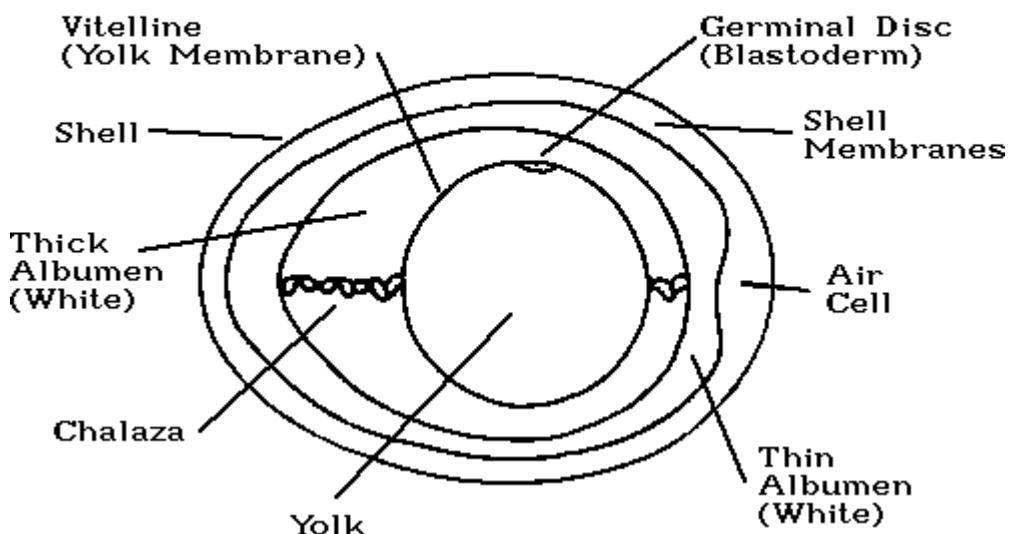


Egg Composition



Checking Fertile Eggs

by Dennis Hawkins

Sometimes it is desirable to determine if an egg is fertile or not. Despite the fact that fertile eggs are better for you than infertile store bought eggs, some people don't like the idea of eating a fertilized egg. One customer even referred to them as being "nasty". He mentioned that he was able to tell apart fertile and infertile eggs because fertile eggs have white stringy rooster semen near the yolk. He went on to say that most store bought eggs weren't "fertile", and that he threw out the ones that were. I laughed because that customer obviously had no idea how to tell if an egg was fertile or not.

First of all, the stringy white stuff near the yolk is present in **all** eggs and is not rooster semen. It is called the *Chalaza* (pronounced *Kuh-Lay-Zuh*). It is basically a "handle" that is attached to the membrane that surrounds the yolk. Its job is to hold the yolk in the center of the egg. If you have ever wondered why boiled eggs always have their yolk in the middle, now you know. It is essentially a short piece of rope. Like I said before, all eggs have a chalaza whether they are fertile or not. In some eggs, it is more easily seen than in others. It has nothing to do with fertility.

Ironically, because the chalaza decomposes before any of the rest of the egg, it is more likely to be seen in fresh eggs than in older ones. I just couldn't contain my laughter after hearing that customer essentially telling me that he was tossing out the one or two fresh eggs that he got from the store and eating all the rotten ones.

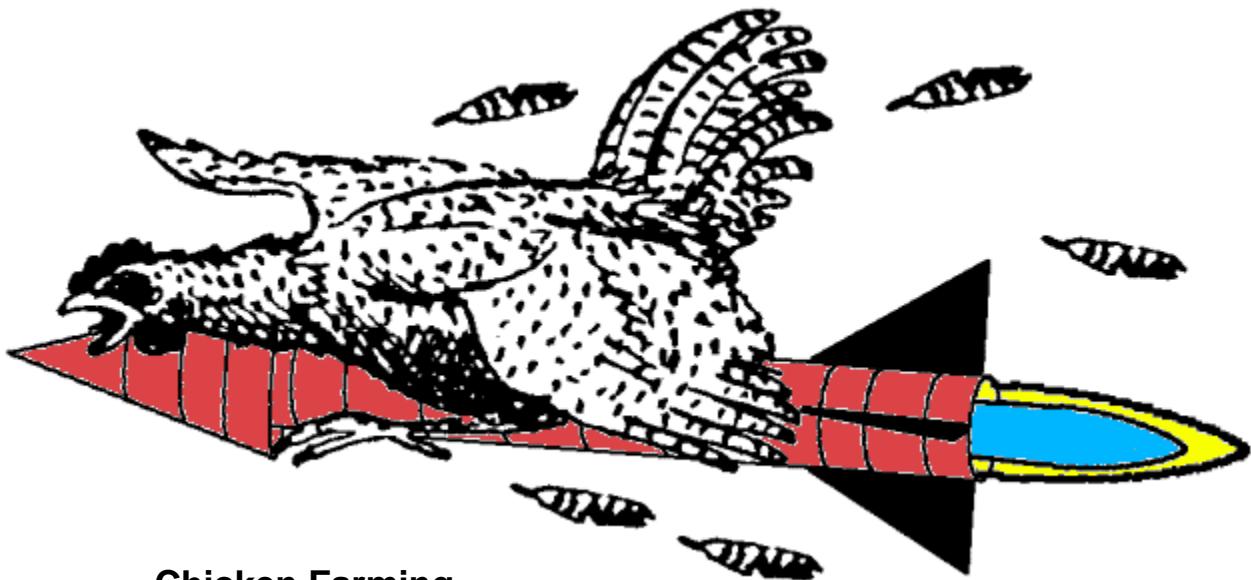
There are two ways to tell if you have a fertile

egg. The most obvious way is to put it in an incubator and see if there is any growth. However, this is not the most practical way when you are selling eggs for human consumption. In that case, the best way to tell a fertile egg is to examine the germ on the egg's yolk to see if it has divided.

The germ is also called the *Blastoderm* and is where the baby chick begins to grow. The germ is located on the surface of the yolk and appears as a light spot. Sometimes the spot lands on the underside of the yolk when you crack it, so you may have to play with the egg to get the germ where you can see it. A strong magnifying glass and a bright light really help a lot.

Since the ovum is fertilized and incubated by the hen's body heat at least a day before the egg is actually laid, fertile eggs will always exhibit several cell divisions of the germ at the time they are laid. You can verify this by looking at the size of the germ on the yolk. An undivided germ is about the size of a sharp pencil point. An egg with a germ of that size is not fertile. Germs that have divided are much bigger and are about $1/8$ " wide. Eggs that have germs of this size are fertile. If you had incubated the egg instead of cracking it just now, the germ would have continued to divide until it finally grew into a chick. The chick, by the way, is made up from the white of the egg. The yolk gets absorbed into the chick's belly just prior to hatching. This yolk serves as food and water for the first three days of the chick's life and is why chicks can be humanely sent through the mail at that age.

This technique for testing fertility has been used for centuries by breeders to check the fertility of particular hens before incubating their eggs. It works. Try it.



Chicken Farming

Tom was tired of working and decided to retire down south and become a farmer enjoying the great climate and easy lifestyle. He knew he needed to farm something so he decided he'd be a chicken farmer.

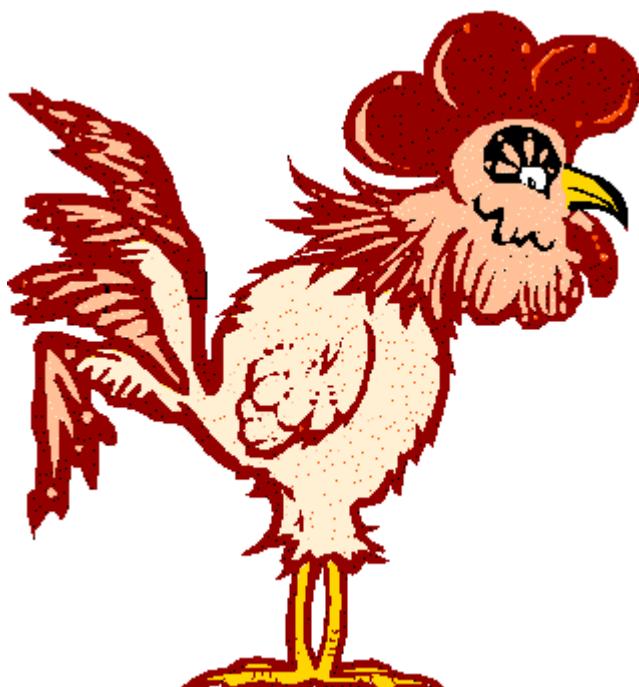
After getting settled into his house he went up to the feed store and said he wanted 300 of them little bitty chickens. He took off back to the farm but the next day he was back again and said he wanted 300 more of them little bitty chickens.

The merchant was amazed at this new farmer wanting 300 more baby chicks and asked if he was sure that's what he wanted.

"Yeah," Tom said. "I need 300 more chickens. The first 300 died."

"Died?" asked the merchant. "They all died?"

"Yeah, I think I must of planted them a little too close together."



Something for the Birds

The Arizona Highway Patrol came upon a pile of smoldering metal embedded in the side of a cliff 125 feet above the road at the apex of a curve. The wreckage resembled the site of an airplane crash, but it was a car. The type of car was unidentifiable at the scene.

It seems that a guy had somehow gotten hold of a JATO unit (Jet Assisted Take Off ... actually a solid fuel rocket) that is used to give heavy military transport planes an extra "push" for taking off from short airfields.

The facts as best as could be determined are that the operator of the 1967 Impala hit JATO ignition at a distance of approximately 3.0 miles from the crash site.

The JATO, if operating properly, would have reached maximum thrust within 5 seconds, causing the Chevy to reach speeds well in excess of 350 mph and continuing at full power for an additional 20-25 seconds. The driver, soon to be pilot, most likely would have experienced G-forces usually reserved for dog-fighting F-14 jocks under full afterburners, basically causing him to become insignificant for the remainder of the event. However, the automobile remained on the straight highway for about 2.5 miles (15-20) seconds before the driver applied and completely melted the brakes, blowing the tires and leaving thick rubber marks on the road surface, then becoming airborne for an additional 1.4 miles and impacting the cliff face at a height of 125 feet leaving a blackened crater 3 feet deep in the rock.

Most of the driver's remains were not recoverable; however, small fragments of bone, teeth and hair were extracted from the crater and fingernail and bone shards were removed from a piece of debris believed to be a portion of the steering wheel. The Arizona Highway Patrol was quick to point out that if cars were meant to fly, they'd have wings.

Good Friday Meeting a Success

Our last meeting was held on Good Friday, March 28, 1997. Despite the holiday, several families came for what turned out to be a very good meeting. We had our "Name the Turkey" contest. There were several names entered, but Linda Wright had the winning name. Our turkey is now officially named *The Colonel*. Arvis and Rick prepared some special treats for us. Arvis shared with us some important chicken research that she had collected. Meanwhile, Rick helped her prepare our club's first Taco Buffet. They had a whole table stuffed full of just about everything "Taco" that you could think of. It was delicious and there was plenty of it. If anybody left the meeting hungry it was their own fault. However, I don't think anybody did. You never really know what to expect at the meetings, but if you missed the last one, you really missed out. Maybe we will see you at the meeting this month.

Mini Membership Application

Send your name, address, telephone number, and dues to:

Rose Greggs, PBCPFA Treasurer
8643 El Paso Dr.
Lake Worth, FL 33467-1109

Include the names and ages of your children (if any). The dues for the PBCPFA club are \$12 for families and \$8 for individuals and run from January 1 to December 31. New members joining after June 31 are eligible for an initial half price rate. For existing members, all renewals are due December 31 and are for one year.

Refreshments served and a raffle at every meeting!

Chickens Do the Craziest Things!

by Dennis Hawkins

When I feed my cats, I do so in a hiding place so that the chickens and other animals won't steal it. Also, I usually give them a huge helping so that I only have to feed them every few days. A while back, I gave them an extra large helping. The next day, the cats were acting like they were starving. I figured that they must have been play acting to try to get a treat or something. I ignored them because I knew that I had just put a bunch of food out for them. The day after that, the cats were acting like they were even hungrier. I went back to check to see how much food was left. To my surprise there was none, however, the thief left her calling card - an egg in the middle of the cat's empty dish.

Chickens Seeing The Light

Chickens require 12 hours or more of light per day for high egg production. Longer daylight periods stimulate sexual maturity and production. Shorter daylight periods delay sexual maturity and decrease production. The time of dusk determines, in part, the time during the day that eggs can be laid, and some aspect of the light pattern determines, or "sets the clock" of many other biological rhythms. If enough light is present to read newsprint, it will stimulate egg production in chickens, whereas lower levels such as moonlight and starlight are not stimulatory. Red, yellow, and white are the most effective colors of light for stimulation. The chicken perceives a dark period of 5 hours or more as "night". Short periods of light (e.g., 15 minutes) alternated with periods of dark less than 4 hours are perceived as continuous light. Following long periods of light exposure, chickens become less responsive.

Killing Oocysts

The product of choice is OO-cide (Antec International). Virtually all disinfectants have none, or insufficient activity, against oocysts because they cannot act on the surface of the oocysts. Although available in many parts of the world it is not registered in the United States.

Classified

FOR SALE:

PBCPFA T-Shirts, excellent quality, beautiful logo. Small, Medium, Large, and X-Large sizes are available for \$10.00 (members), \$12.00 (non-members). Contact Richard Greggs (561) 433-8157. Don't be chicken, get yours today.

Baseball caps with our PBCPFA logo on them. They look fantastic and sell for a low \$5.00! Contact Richard Greggs (561) 433-8157.

Rhode Island Red chicks. Available in ages from one day to several months old. Contact Richard Greggs at (561) 433-8157.

FOR LOAN OR RENT:

Don't let your flock fall victim to predators! The poultry club owns a trap that members may use free of charge. Your neighbors may rent the trap for a small fee. To reserve your time to use the trap, contact Richard Greggs (561) 433-8157.

WANTED:

Newsletter articles for the PBCPFA newsletter. The deadline is the fourth Friday of the previous month. Submit articles to the editor by mail, email, or in person at the meeting.