# EggNotes

## Board of Director

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780-674-6297
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780-722-3238
**EFC Director:** Joe Kleinsasser
403-653-4480
**Director:** John Hofer
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**Director:** Peter Waldner
403-795-8621
**Director:** Bernadette Vandenborn
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Marketing & Comm. Manager: David Webb
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Marketing & Social Media Coordinator: Angie Lang
ext: 103
Farm Programs Manager: Christina Robinson
ext: 125
Industry Development Officer: Jenna Griffin
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Office Manager: Laurel Martin
ext: 121
Logistics Coordinator: Brandy Addai
ext: 101
Farm Services Administrator: Erin Johnston
ext: 127
Business Manager: Kari Buijs
ext: 132
Fields Services Coordinator: Dave Lastiwka
ext: 128
Fields Services Coordinator: Murray Minchin
Application Support Specialist: Kelly Pow
ext: 105

## EFA Vision Statement

Healthy Food, Healthy Farms,
Healthy Families

## EFA Mission Statement

Cultivating a sustainable egg industry together with farmers, consumers & other stakeholders

## EFA Office Hours

Office will be closed Monday, July 2 for Canada Day

## Egg Price Update
## Effective May 27, 2018

| Canada Grade | Size | Price Per Dozen | |
|---|---|---|---|
| A | Extra Large | 2.20 | ↑ |
| A | Large | 2.20 | ↑ |
| A | Medium | 1.970 | ↑ |
| A | Small | 1.600 | ↑ |
| A | Nest Run | 2.073 | ↑ |
| A | Pee Wee | 0.270 | - |
| B | | 0.750 | - |
| C | | 0.150 | - |

Note: From the minimum paying price, processors can only deduct charges as authorized by the EFA Board. Farm-gate pickup rates were set in August 2010, and no increase in individual freight rates have been approved since that time.

EggNotes is the official newsletter of Egg Farmers of Alberta.
Submissions should be sent to:
info@eggs.ab.ca

Next Issue: August 10, 2018
Note: EggNotes can be accessed on the EFA website (both full issue PDF and blog posts) or EFA's producer website

50 YEARS Egg Farmers of Alberta

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# EFA Board Update

The Egg Farmers of Alberta Board of Directors would like to thank producers for an excellent turnout at the recent completed June round of regional meetings. Producers were highly engaged and provided the EFA Board and staff with tremendous input and feedback on several critical issues. The Board would also like to thank EFA staff for all their hard work to plan and execute the meetings effectively.

As a reminder, the EFA Board recently sent out a letter to all producers about the Quota Allotment Policy, along with a draft version of the policy itself. The intention is for producers to review the policy and provide feedback, via the questionnaire provided. Per the accompanying letter, the Board would appreciate it if completed questionnaires can be submitted to the EFA office by no later than July 23, 2018. The Board will use the results from this survey as a basis for finalizing the policy.

All presentations and feedback documents are on the producer website - information center - meeting presentations.

HEALTHY BIRDS
HEALTHY FARMS HEALTHY EGGS
HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

## Nielsen Update

The Nielsen retail sales data is available up to May 26, 2018, and indicates that in the latest 4-week period 3.24 million dozen eggs were sold in Alberta; a 2.5% increase from the previous 4-week period (ending April 28th), and an 10.2% increase in sales compared to the same period in 2017.

Nielsen retail sales in the last 52 weeks are up 4.4% over the previous 52 weeks in Alberta, to 40.8 million dozen eggs. Specialty eggs (excluding Omega-3) have seen the largest sales growth; a 5.5% increase over the previous 52 weeks, to 3.5 million dozen eggs (8.5% of the total eggs sold in Alberta). All up to date stats can be found on the producer website.

## EFA's 50 Anniversary Celebration

Mark your calendars so that you can join EFA in celebrating our 50th Anniversary!

The event will be held Wednesday, **August 29, 2018 from 11:00am to 3:00pm** at the Wild Wild West Event Centre in Calgary. There will be lunch, entertainment and games! Each registered farm is welcome to bring 2 people to this event at no cost. Please contact EFA's office to register!

# Healthy Farms

## OH&S Update

The Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) Act sets minimum standards for protecting waged, non-family farm and ranch workers.

On June 27, the government announced the detailed technical rules that reflect the unique aspects of farming. The OH&S Code now includes some provisions that are unique to the agriculture sector. This means there are rules for all other provincially regulated industries, and modified rules for farms and ranches to reflect the unique nature of agricultural work. These rules will come into effect on Dec. 1, 2018. The new rules are the result of extensive collaboration with farmers and other members of the agriculture industry via the AgCoalition.

Special provisions are related to legacy equipment, front-end loaders, lifting devices, rollover protective structures, fuel transfer, fall protection, seatbelts, riding on loads, noise control, scaffolds, biological hazards, and recapping needles.

For more details farmers can visit https://www.alberta.ca/farm-and-ranch-ohs.aspx.

Moving forward, AgSafe Alberta will continue to provide resources and information to help farmers and ranchers implement these rules. AgSafe is the industry-led safety association for the agriculture sector and already provides many detailed resources on farm safety.

If you have questions you can call OHS at 1-866-415-8690, or email farmandranch@gov.ab.ca.

## FEAP Extension Officers

The Farm Energy and Agri-Processing Program (FEAP) shares costs with the agriculture and agri-processing sector on energy efficiency investments. FEAP is designed to encourage energy management, which will result in cost savings, energy conservation, and ultimately, reduced greenhouse gas emissions It is funded via the climate levy.

Farmers can access application support and information about the program via a local extension officer:

Wetaskiwin County and North:
Amber Kenyon
groextension@telus.net
780-307-7849

East of Camrose to the Saskatchewan border:
Lyle Lawrence
lyle.lawrence@lakelandcollege.ca
780-581-8403

Ponoka and Clearwater County down to the U.S. border:
Vern Steinborn
vern.steinborn@southgrow.com
403-894-0050

## Pilot Program Launched for Unregulated Farmers to Take Part in SC-SC

Egg Farmers of Alberta, in partnership with Egg Farmers of Canada, is pleased to announce that we will be offering an opportunity for unregulated egg farmers in Alberta to take part in the Start Clean – Stay Clean™ (SC-SC) on farm food safety program. Through participation in this program, unregulated egg producers will have the chance to learn about the best practices for food safety in egg production. This program is being offered with the goal of further strengthening food safety throughout the egg supply chain in Alberta.

The program is currently being offered as a pilot, with a maximum of 10 unregulated egg farmers participating each year. Participants will be accepted on a first come, first serve basis. The program will run as a pilot until the end of 2020, at which time EFA and EFC will review the success of the program and determine if the program will remain in place.

By agreeing to take part farmers will benefit from the following:

- Receive a one on one session with an Egg Farmers of Alberta Field Coordinator to review the SC-SC program and record keeping requirements. A paper or excel based record keeping form will be provided to aide farmers in maintaining program records.
- After 6 months of maintaining SC-SC records, an Egg Farmers of Canada Field Inspector will complete a SC-SC assessment on farm.
- Farms scoring 90% or higher will receive a certificate for the SC-SC program from Egg Farmers of Canada.
- Participants will have an opportunity to resolve any identified corrective actions and improve their SC-SC score

Interested participants are encouraged to contact Egg Farmers of Alberta

## New Resources Explaining the Egg Industry Available

At our June regional meetings we heard from some of our farmers that they would like more information to support their learning about our Canadian egg industry. EFA has published 6 information sheets on our producer website under http://www.albertaeggproducers.com/all-about-quota/ on the following topics:

- The Federal Provincial Agreement
- Quota Allocations
- Pricing and the Cost of Production
- Industrial Product
- The Service Fee
- Levy

We hope that these resources will help farmers gain a deeper understanding of how the Canadian egg industry operates. If there are any other topics you'd like to learn more about be sure to let EFA know so we can continue to expand our resources.

### Upcoming Events

July 8 - 11 - EFC Summer Conference (Calgary)
July 17 - AB Production Management Committee Meeting
July 18 - AB Research Committee Meeting (Edmonton)
July 18 - EFC Research Committee Meeting (Edmonton)
July 31 - Grader Advisory Committee Meeting
August 1 - Mass Depopulation Meeting
August 2 - EFA Board Meeting (Calgary)
August 29 - 50th Anniversary Celebration

# Healthy Eggs

## Shell Quality

A hen's ability to create an egg is quite miraculous. Hens form each egg over a period of about 25 hours. Approximately 21 of those hours are used to form the eggshell – the egg rests in the shell gland where initially some water is added, making the outer white thinner, then shell material, mainly calcium carbonate is added. There is an average of 2.3 g of calcium in each eggshell. If the hen is producing brown eggs, pigment is added in the shell gland as well.

While the vast majority of eggs produced are smooth, uniform in colour, clean and free of cracks, issues with shell quality can arise and when they do, they can have a significant impact on an egg farmers' bottom line.

Reduced shell strength causing large cracks and holes in eggs can be caused by a wide variety of factors. We've listed some of the most common to aide you in prevention and troubleshooting shell quality issues:

**Nutrition** - The eggshell is made up of more than 90% calcium carbonate. Calcium is absorbed from the feed in the intestine. Provided that enough calcium is present in the feed, the process of calcium uptake, deposition and excretion is regulated by vitamin D3. It is of utmost importance for optimum eggshell quality to optimize calcium supply and secure sufficient vitamin D3 available to the laying hen. There is a complex relationship between calcium, phosphorus, Vitamin D3 and the hormonal system of the layer – work with a nutritionist to determine the birds' nutrient intake is correct for optimizing egg production and eggshell quality.

**Water Quality and Supply** –water shortages can result in rough shelled eggs. Ensure that your water supply is adequate, that there are no blocks in the water lines and that drinkers are functioning properly. Many studies have showed that saline drinking water has an adverse effect on eggshell quality - desalinate, dilute or do not use drinking water containing problem levels of salt.

**High temperatures** – when it gets hot in the barn (above 25°C), hens will start to pant to cool

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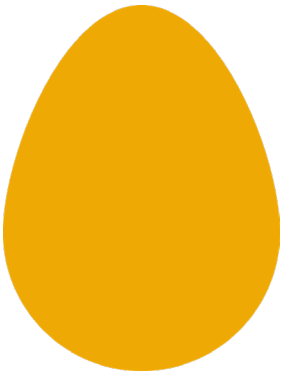
themselves. When birds are heat stressed they also reduce their feed intake. These factors both reduce the availability of calcium for egg production, causing an increase in thin-shelled and soft-shelled eggs during the summer. As much as possible, maintain temperatures in the lay facility below 25°C.



**Mechanical damage / rough handling** - your equipment can have a significant impact on your undergrades. Read our April Eggnotes article on egg handling for tips on how to assess your systems for improved egg quality and reduced undergrades. (http://eggs.ab.ca/about/eggnotes/apr2018-eggquality/)

**Diseases** – disease such as infectious bronchitis can cause shell quality problems including shell-less egg syndrome and rough shells. Work with your veterinarian to establish an effective vaccination program to protect your flock from disease and to maintain healthy shell quality.

**Stress and Disturbances** – a multitude of shell quality issues can arise if a hen is stressed or disturbed during lay. If a hen is disturbed before calcification of the shell is complete it can result in a shell-less or misshaped egg. An egg that is cracked while still in the body of the hen is referred to as a body check. The hen repairs these cracks by adding an additional deposit of shell over the cracked area, resulting in a ridge on the shell and an egg that is more likely to crack once it's been laid. Disturbances at the time a hen is due to lay can cause the egg to be held over for another day - causing rough spots. Minimize activities which can create disturbances in and around the layer barn. If you begin to see shell quality issues that can be stress related, spend time watching your flock - consider what may be causing stress (for example flashing lights, loud sounds, etc) and take appropriate steps to adjust.

**Changes in lighting** – there should not be sudden increases in day length as pullet s come into lay, or lighting changes during lay as this can lead to rough shells.

**Shell size** – the bigger the egg, the more prone they can be to cracks. For optimum returns farmers should be aiming to produce large eggs, not extra large or jumbo. Egg size can be managed through nutrition and lighting management.

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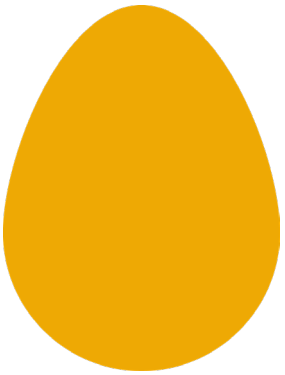
**Aging flock**– Hens are genetically capable of placing only a limited amount of calcium in the shell of their eggs. With age, the hen also loses some ability to obtain calcium from the bone. As a result, soft and weak shelled eggs can be common in older birds.



You can monitor your eggshell strength yourself on farm using a specific gravity test. Measuring specific gravity can help you determine if your shell problems are most likely due to weak shells, or handling issues. For a complete guide on specific gravity, visit this link (http://www.albertaeggproducers.com/userfiles/files/Specific%20Gravity(1).pdf) on the producer website.

Sources: Optimum Egg Quality, A Practical Approach
http://www.thepoultrysite.com/articles/1003/factors-influencing-shell-quality/

## Feather Cover

Laying hens have more than 8,000 feathers and feather tracts cover over 75% of their skin. Feathers help hens regulate their temperature and protect their skin from injury and infection. Maintaining good feather cover is important for bird welfare, egg production and feed conversion.

In 2018 Egg Farmers of Alberta have been focusing on providing farmers with tools to monitor and manage feather cover. In January EFA introduced feather cover monitoring in your record keeping books. In April's Eggnotes we included an article on Managing Feather Cover. We have also added a feather cover page to our Producer website: http://www.albertaeggproducers.com/animal-care/BestPractices/Feather_cover/. This month, we continue the discussion of feather cover with an article focused on raising your pullets with a view to improve feather cover in your flock through to the end of lay. Once extreme feather loss has occurred in a flock, it is challenging, if not impossible to remedy. Supporting good feather cover development and preventing feather pecking by encouraging good behaviours during pullet rearing are important steps for any egg farmer wishing to improve feather cover throughout lay.

The tips below outline steps you can take while raising your pullets that will support healthy

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feather cover throughout the life of your flock.

- Quality pullets that are calm, robust, uniform in size, at target body weight, in good health and from a single source have fewer issues with feather pecking.
- Lighting in the pullet barn can impact behavior. Ensure that light intensity is even throughout the barn. Avoid sudden changes in light levels.
- Ground pecking is a natural behavior in hens. If chicks are raised without appropriate litter, they may begin to peck at other objects, such as other birds, instead. Allowing access to good quality, friable litter from day one and throughout the whole laying period is the single most important strategy to encourage foraging behavior and reducing feather pecking, particularly the severe forms.
- Maintain a consistent climate – sudden or extreme variations in temperature can be a source of stress to birds. Avoid large variations in temperature, humidity and air quality. Prevent draughts as this can drive pullets into small areas and trigger stress and feather pecking in the birds.
- Studies have shown that providing access to perches before four weeks of age can reduce the likelihood of feather pecking.
- Get birds used to disturbances by walking the barn at least 3 times a day as pullets. Try and have a variety of different people, wearing different coloured overalls and using various routes while walking through the birds. This will help socialize the birds so that they are more prepared to deal with unexpected or sudden changes in the barn.
- Avoid subjecting pullets to multiple stressors at the same time – some stresses are unavoidable, but for those you can control, try and stagger them. For example avoid changing diet at the same time as vaccinating.
- Monitor your flock for conditions such as mites, coccidiosis and necrotic enteritis. Contact your veterinarian and work to address issues early if they arise.
- Feeding Pullets
    - o Carefully monitor protein levels in the diet. Work with a nutritionist to determine a plan for achieving optimal levels.
    - o Extra fibre in the diet has been shown to reduce feather pecking. When pullets don't get enough fibre, they may consume feathers in an attempt to replace the fibre. Adding fibre can also increase the time spent eating, in turn reducing the time for birds to start feather pecking.
    - o Feeding finer grain food can also increase the amount of time birds spend eating and reduce levels of feather pecking.
    - o Make as few changes to the diet as possible.

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- Match pullet and lay facilities as closely as possible. From the type of feeder and waterer, to the litter and lighting, the closer you can match the pullet growing environment and the layer barn, the more likely you are to prevent feather pecking. Keep in mind factors such as light and feeder timing, as well as temperature should also be line up in the pullet and layer barns.
- Some studies have shown that onset of lay before 19 weeks increased the risk of feather pecking. Delaying lay to 20 weeks while focusing on uniformity can help.
- Birds are transported from the pullet to the layer facility in a way that keeps them as calm as possible (ie move them at night). Consider providing extra feed following placement to support their transition.

For more detail on managing your pullets with the aim to improve feather cover, we encourage you to read the complete FeatherWel Guide for Improving Feather Cover that is available on EFA's Producer Website.

Sources: FeatherWel Improving Feather Cover Guide

**BC Egg Takes Action**

On July 12th, BC Egg released a statement that outlines their actions since they became aware of undercover video captured on BC Egg Farms late last month.

This incident serves an important reminder that it is the responsibility of each and every farmer to uphold the high animal welfare standards of our industry.

Please find the full statement attached.

# BC Egg’s Response to Hen Welfare Issues

The BC egg industry has a zero tolerance policy for any mistreatment of animals, and strict policies and procedures that must be followed. We take any and all complaints or suggestions of wrongdoing extremely seriously.

**Third-Party Audit**

Upon learning of the PETA video, an investigation was immediately launched. This investigation included an Animal Care Program audit completed by an Egg Farmers of Canada inspector and an independent third-party auditor, as well as a visit from an investigative team that included senior staff, peers, and veterinarians to ensure the hens are in good health and the facilities are maintained to expected standards. The following areas were examined:

- Feather condition
- Bird cleanliness
- Sick or injured birds
- Mortalities
- Condition of the cages
- Condition of and access to feeders and drinkers
- Barn ventilation and temperature
- Manure removal system
- Air quality; and

- Management practices (employee training, inspection procedures etc.)

To be clear, there were three farms included in this investigation. On two of the three farms, independent analysis has determined that there is no risk to the welfare of the hens, in fact, the birds are in good health.

On the third farm, we are extremely disappointed that the farmer in question did not uphold the strict standards required as there were risks to hen welfare.

The hens on this farm will be removed and relocated. The facility has been decommissioned. It should be noted that as of June 21, 2018, all eggs from this farm were removed from the market.

**CCFI Expert Panel Video Analysis**
Egg Farmers of Canada and BC Egg asked the Canadian Centre for Food Integrity (CCFI) to put together an independent expert panel to examine the PETA video. The panel was made up of animal welfare specialists and veterinarians. Their report is available on the CCFI website.

**Conclusion**
Our industry has a zero tolerance policy for any mistreatment of animals, and strict policies and procedures that must be followed in order to be an egg farmer in this country. While we are disappointed that one of our farmers has fallen short of those expectations, we are confident in our ability to act quickly and decisively in the best interest of animal welfare.