



HOW WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S EGG INDUSTRY WAS HATCHED



FROM GOLDEN STATE TO A STATE OF 'GOLDEN EGG FARMERS'

Perth, in Western Australia, is often dubbed the most isolated capital city in the world, due to its southerly location facing the Indian Ocean.

But the so-called vastness of Australia's largest state was no set-back in the development of WA's important egg industry.

Known for its mineral gold, 'The West' is also known for its protein gold: egg yolks.

This feature looks at the development of WA's egg sector over the past seven decades beginning post-war 1946 - including a time when the WA Egg Marketing Board marketed its brand as: the Golden Egg Farmers of WA.

Egg Marketing Board 1946

The Western Australian Egg Marketing Board or 'Egg Board' was constituted on March 22, 1946

by the appointment of four members nominated by the state's Minister for Agriculture (under Section 7 of the Marketing of Eggs Act 1945).



Image: Perth Royal Show (WA Egg Board/State Library of WA)

1950s

After World War II, the WA egg industry lost its export market to England, mainly because of the expansion of the European Common Market.

This caused an oversupply of eggs and drop in egg prices, as a consequence. Some farmers left the industry whilst others became more efficient in egg production.

1960s

During the 1960s most poultry farms were located in the outer Perth metropolitan area between 15km and 35 km from the city. At that time, it was estimated that there were about 400 commercial egg producers with flock numbers anywhere from a few hundred to several thousand birds.

A property of two to four hectares in size with around 2,000 laying birds would support the average family providing an income of about £2,000 per year.

A survey revealed that WA had a very high backyard poultry population in the 1960s. More than 225,000 birds were kept in backyards with an average house flock of 11 birds. From a total of 90,000 homes that were surveyed 25.5 per cent kept poultry.

Egg Marketing Board 1973

In 1973 the Egg Marketing Board decided to use a new name for its advertising and marketing opportunities in WA. The new name was to be Golden Egg Farmers of WA.

It was to appear on all advertising, cartons and delivery vehicles. The Board would retain its original title for all other purposes.

The Board believed that the new name would improve the public image of WA eggs. improve the public image of WA eggs.

Cost of Egg Production Committee

In September of 1973 the State Government announced that was going to set up a committee to advise the WA Egg Marketing Board on prices and production costs. In the initial stages, the committee was charged to look only at current information on hand and later to consider the results of a survey of egg production costs to be made by the Department of Agriculture.

The first meeting of The Cost of Egg Production Committee was held on September 17, 1973 at the WA Egg Marketing Board.

At the Committee's third meeting held on November 19, 1973 the first cost of production

was calculated at 49.74 cents per dozen eggs (\$8.21

per bird) based on hens being housed for 22 weeks producing 16.5 dozen eggs per annum. The model was constructed starting with 5,600 one day old chicks (Egg Marketing Board 1973). Cost of production was derived by using a formula.



Image: WA Egg Board/State Library of WA

Input costs were sought from producers through the Poultry Farmers Association, which undertook a periodical survey of its members as well as the committee staging independent surveys.

At a committee meeting held on July 11, 1991: the Chairman was instructed to write to the WA Egg Board asking 'whether the Cost of Egg Production Committee still fulfilled a

necessary function considering the pricing policies were becoming increasingly market driven.' The Cost of Egg Production Committee finished in 1991.

Egg Licensing

WA was the first state in the Commonwealth to introduce a licensing system to control the egg industry in July 1971.

De-Regulation

- The Poultry Industry Trust Fund Committee was abolished in January 2005.
- The Western Australian Egg Marketing Board was deregulated on July 2, 2005 with the egg production licence being abolished at the same time.
- The Western Australian Egg Marketing Board, trading as Golden Egg Farms, became a private company on July 3, 2005.

Pioneering Families

Pioneering Families involved in the WA egg industry include the Bell, Wilson, Fenton, Harcourt, Newing, Ward, Woodard and Rae families.