

Packing Eggs on the Farm for Direct Sales

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There are limited opportunities, particularly in the less populated areas of the state, for small flock owners to process and sell their eggs directly to consumers, institutions, restaurants or retailers. However, with a little marketing savvy, niche markets could be developed from which small egg producers could derive extra income. Also, large distributors are less interested in supplying eggs to small accounts such as in remote areas.

Direct marketing of your eggs can be profitable, but it also can be time-consuming. Be sure that you have the facilities, the time, the salesmanship ability, a consistent supply of high-quality eggs, and the market outlets before entering direct marketing. Potential producers should identify and reach an agreement, if possible, with customers prior to starting the flock.

Small flock owners should consider developing a specialty egg for a niche market. A “niche” market is one that is generally small but more profitable. This product must be different from the ones offered in large superstores. Examples include organically grown eggs, free-range eggs, hand-gathered and processed eggs, or colored eggs.

Organically produced eggs are obtained from hens fed naturally grown grains. There are strict limitations for the use of drugs in the feed rations as well as sprays in the hen house. There are specific guidelines for the production of organically grown produce that should be consulted before marketing organically grown eggs.

Free range eggs are from hens that are allowed access to pasture or yard. The hens are never caged and are allowed to lay eggs in nest boxes. Access to fresh grass usually increases the yellow-orange color of the egg yolk but does not change the nutritional quality.

Most eggs marketed in the Midwest have white egg shells. There may be small numbers of consumers who prefer brown-shelled eggs or even eggs with green or blue tints. Egg shell color is an inherited genetic trait, so a small flock owner could easily choose a breed that lays colored eggs for a niche market. With a little hard work, other niche markets may be available which could increase the income from egg sales.

Producers often underprice their eggs and fail to count all processing and marketing costs. Base your selling price to customers on a local market or nearby graded market. If you are selling a specialty egg, remember that consumers will expect to pay more for these eggs. Add to this quoted market price your processing and marketing costs above production costs, plus the amount of profit you expect to make. Cost will vary, depending on *volume, type of equipment, distance from market, number of deliveries, and labor efficiency*. Using these cost items as a guide, insert your actual costs.

Don't forget, these costs are in addition to the cost of producing eggs, which includes facilities, feed and the cost of replacement stock. Miscellaneous costs include electricity, water, refrigeration, taxes and processing equipment.

Type of Cost	Cents per Dozen
Cartons	_____
Cases or boxes	_____
Labor in egg room	_____
Truck expense	_____
Delivery labor	_____
Miscellaneous	=====
TOTAL	=====

The Kansas Egg Law regulates the sale of eggs to consumers. A producer selling eggs of his or her own production direct to the consumer is exempt from this law. Thus, a producer may sell eggs to consumers at the producer's farm or on a route to individuals or to institutions such as nursing homes.

Local health requirements may take precedence over this law in the case of institutions. All other transactions fall under this law.

Some major provisions of the Kansas Egg Law include:

- Eggs must be "Grade B" quality or higher.
- The container (carton) must plainly show the size, quality, and name of vendor, retailer, or food purveyor and the inspection fee stamp. A producer may simply use a permanent ink stamp to affix this information to a generic egg carton.

Information about the Kansas Egg Law and a free copy can be obtained by contacting the Division of Inspections—Meat and Poultry, Department of Agriculture, 109 W. 9th Street, Room 102, Topeka, KS 66612 (785-296-3511).

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