

# Push button hen house for chicken farmer

By Jennifer Barr  
When you collect 24,000 eggs a day, you certainly need an efficient method of handling them. George Lindblad, an Eramosa chicken rancher, has just moved thirty thousand hens into his new super-deluxe, super-modern egg production house.

The egg production business is no new venture for George who has spent the past 20 years building his farm into one of the largest in the area. The former director of the Ontario Egg Marketing Board has had as many as 60,000 hens laying at one time.

Faced with a need to update his facilities, and a quota of 35,000 birds, George investigated the alternatives, coming up with a system tried and tested extensively in England.

The enormous 268' long building housing 30,000 hens was built by Johnston Brothers of Rockwood. Entirely automated, the system is the epitome of efficiency, saving 16 - 20 man hours in collection alone per week. The cost per bird has been significantly reduced in this high density laying operation featuring four tiers of cages.

Four hybrid Leghorn birds occupy each pen, laying eggs that roll from the slanted floor onto a belt in front of each row. When the buttons are pushed for egg collection, the belt moves the eggs to a special egg elevator placed at the end of each tier. Finely synchronized, the elevators transport the eggs to a cross conveyor which supplies the operator with a continuous flow of eggs.

A special vacuum lift, manually operated, picks up 30 eggs at a time for placing in special sterilized plastic trays. Carts capable of holding over five thousand eggs, are filled with trays and are trundled into the storage room awaiting pickup by a truck. Only the entire cart is handled, minimizing breakage.

Feeding is also entirely automated with special feed carts operated by sophisticated time clocks dispensing two types of scientifically designed food. George describes this as the latest type of technology adaptations. Formerly stored in liquid manure pits requiring frequent emptyings, the hen wastes are now collected automatically and stored in the completely cement-lined basement of the building. Under extreme conditions the ventilated storage area is capable of holding three to four years' worth of manure. However, George explains, his manure is recycled more frequently as required.

This method eliminates ground pollution and ventilation significantly reduces odors. The dry fertilizer is more easily spread on the corn fields at a time when odor and pollution can be kept to a minimum and the nutritive qualities are at their peak.

"This way, we control the manure, the manure doesn't dictate to us," says George, referring to the frequent mad rush to pump out full reservoirs in earlier years.

Low pressure nickel waterers ensure constant water while time-controlled lighting provides 18 hours a day of "daylight". A complicated ventilation system utilizing 30 variable speed fans maintain the inside temperature to within one degree of 70 degrees at all times in any part of the building.

The old hen houses will be used to grow the thousands of replacement pullets needed. The hens lay for 12 to 14 months before going to a soup plant so new hens are required every year-and-a-half. One old building is still in production, housing the remaining five thousand birds needed to make up George's quota.

Marketing board savior George Lindblad feels the egg marketing board, by encouraging supply management, has given egg production business men the confidence to invest in sound business practices and therefore expect a fair return for their dollar.

"The egg industry is now a respectable industry," says

George, who states that a decent return on investment was not possible until national marketing came into being.

Many egg farmers used to let their buildings run down, according to George, because there was no opportunity to allow for even depreciation on the buildings.

Now the marketing system is "worthy of the application of sound business judgment," says Lindblad who continues, "Supply management has given the industry respectability and stability to warrant investment of this nature."

"The potential efficiencies for the application of the latest technologies... have made us (Canada) competitive with U.S. egg production," George explains.

When asked if the human being doesn't feel superfluous in this push button plant, George's wife, Di, grins, "Yeh, isn't it marvellous!" Looking at the rows of gleaming machinery, conveyors and switches on the Lindblad farm, one cannot help but wonder why we still need the hen.



GEORGE LINBLAD of Lindhill Farms, Eramosa, shows rows of gleaming cages holding the 30,000 hens currently occupying his new super-modern egg production building.

Marketing board saviour

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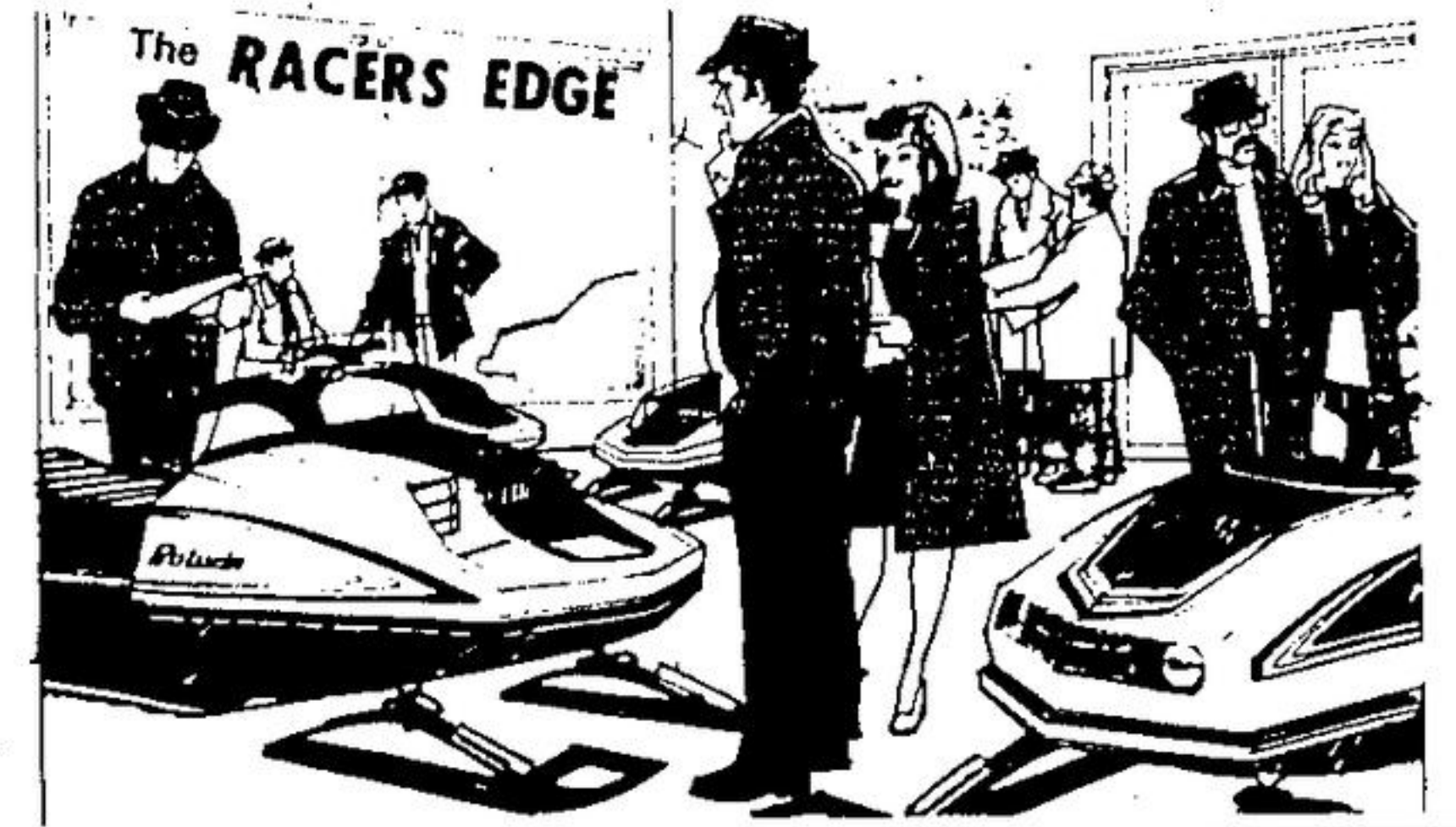
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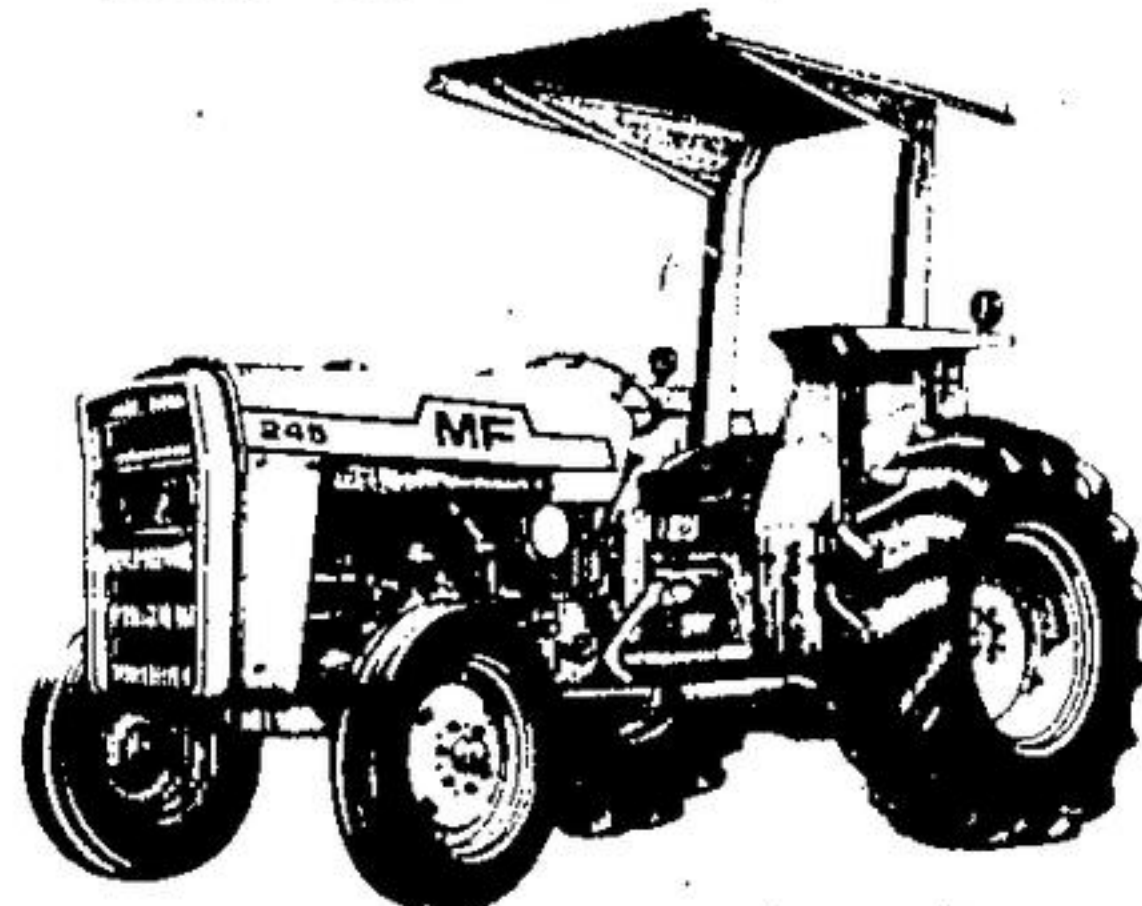
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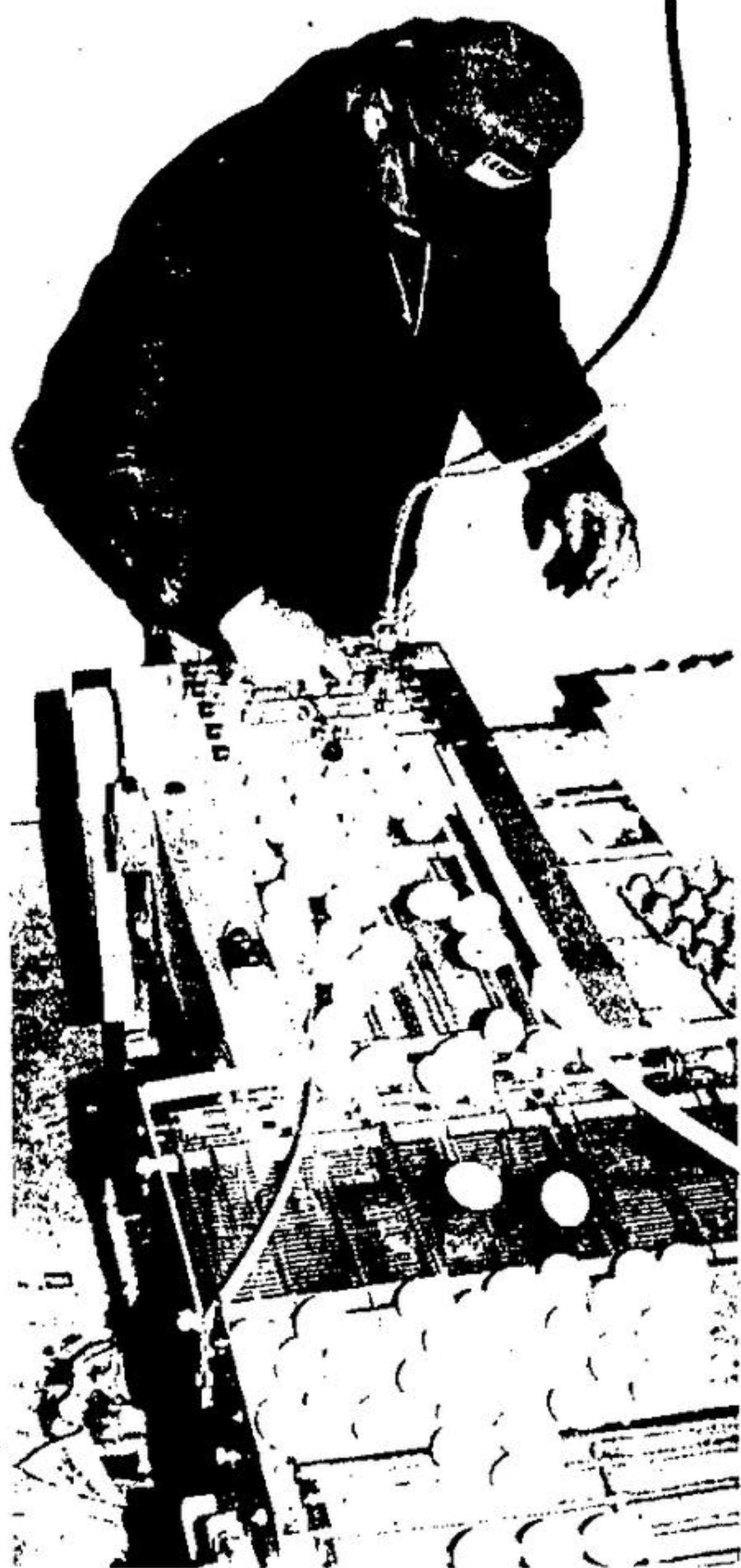


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ROLLING INTO the pickup chute, eggs are conveyed from the cages by automatic belt. The operator is able to pick up 30 eggs at a time by suction. Eggs are then placed in sterilized plastic trays.



EGG ELEVATORS transport eggs from the upper levels of pens down to the cross conveyor where they travel to the collecting room for pickup.

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