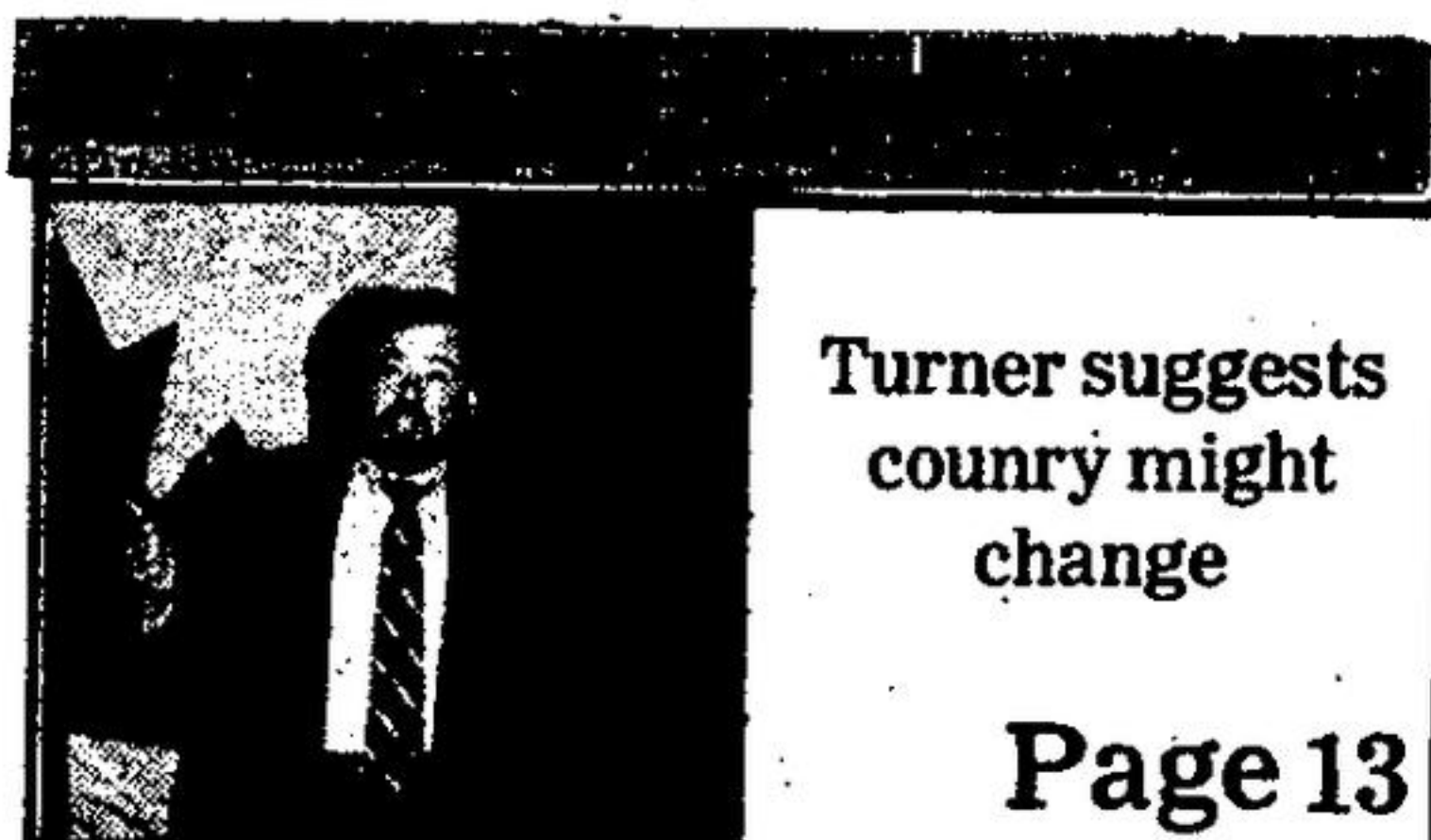


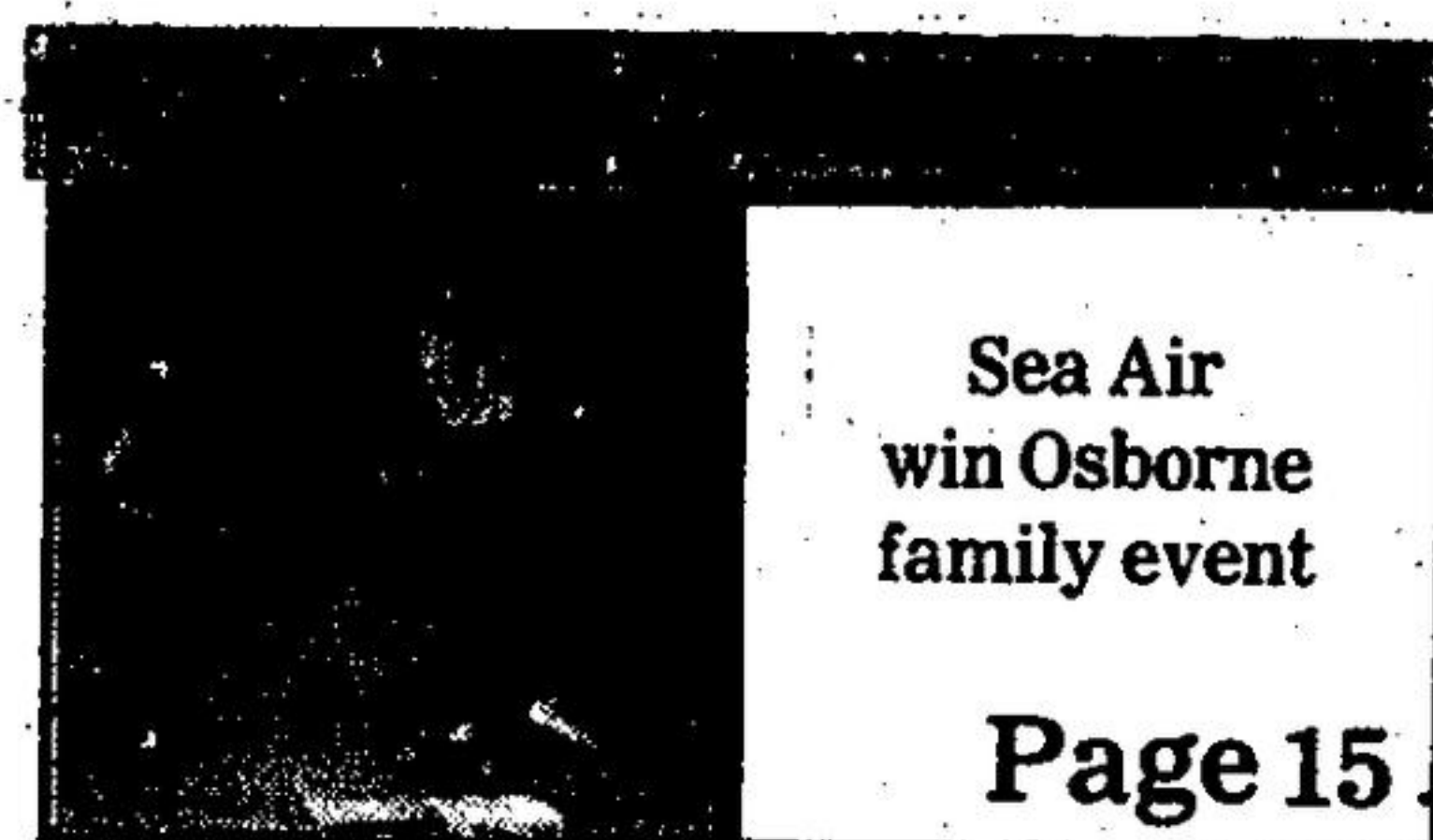
Mixed reaction
as stores open
legally

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Turner suggests
country might
change

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Sea Air
win Osborne
family event

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Chicken buyers beware

Consumers warned about advertising gimmicks

By LISA RUTLEDGE
the Herald

If Halton Hills consumers believe they're buying safer poultry by paying premiums for "green", "natural", "organic" or "free-range" chicken, they're victims of clever marketing tools, says the Ontario Farm Animal Council.

The OFAC has issued warnings to consumers that they should understand they are not paying extra for poultry that is of higher safety quality but for different processing methods.

INCREASING CONCERN

The public is becoming increasingly concerned with food and environmental safety concerns and many major grocery chains are capitalizing on those concerns, says Leslie Ballentine, management secretary for OFAC. "They're all getting into the act," she said, "playing on public fears."

Two major poultry promotion campaigns have been identified by the Ontario Chicken Producer's Marketing Board as leading the public to believe their poultry is safer or more friendly to the environment.

The marketing board's communications manager, Roy Maxwell, has identified Loblaw's Green Natural Choice chicken and Miracle Mart's Organic Free-range chicken as misleading promotions which are "scaring the people away from other perfectly safe poultry produce."

Miracle Mart's organic chicken promotions state the chickens are raised on organic feed, given clean well water, raised on free-ranges with sunshine and claim no antibiotics or growth promotants are used.

There is no federal government regulation to define what being organic really involves so "people can define organic any way they want," said Mr. Maxwell. However, the marketing board's major concern is other claims Miracle Mart's promotions make. The board is concerned these claims are tarnishing the images of other poultry producers.

Advertising regulations require the advertiser to prove all claims to be true, however, promotions claims don't have to be proven true, said Mr. Maxwell. If someone were to read free-range on chicken promotions they would believe those birds were running free outside, he said. This may leave consumers, especially animal rights supporters, with the impression other producers raise chickens in cages. But there is not one poultry producer in the country who raises the birds in cages, Mr. Maxwell

said. He insists the idea of raising mass poultry outdoors is ridiculous because the chickens become susceptible to any number of diseases, especially when they are not given feed containing antibiotics.

STATING THE OBVIOUS

Promoters are stating the obvious when they claim their chickens were raised without growth hormones because the hormone use is illegal in Canada, Mr. Maxwell maintains.

They're not saying anything inaccurate but they are implying other producers are using growth hormones and the consumer doesn't know the difference, he argued.

Mr. Maxwell insists consumers may be paying extra for poultry because they genuinely believe the chicken is safer.

Mr. Maxwell said two board staff inspectors visited the Roth Family Farms, Miracle Mart's organic poultry producer, and reported the chickens were raised in a boarded barn similar to all other producer's barns and couldn't verify sunshine even touched the birds.

On two separate occasions board inspectors went to the Roth farm, said Mr. Maxwell, and not one of the supposed 63 windows could be found. He said one inspector was told the windows were boarded-up because there were loud trucks passing disturbing the chickens.

MARKETING BOARD'S PROBLEM

Rex Roth, of Roth Family Farms, said the public believes chickens are raised in cages, and by promoting free-range chickens the public is being told the Roth farms don't raise their chicken in cages. He said the onus is not on his farm or even Miracle Mart to tell the public that no farmers raise chickens in cages. It's the marketing board's problem if it can't do its job properly and inform the public, he said.

Mr. Roth claims inspectors from the marketing board don't announce their visits and the windows may be boarded up. Passing trucks break up the sunlight and excite the chickens, he said. Mr. Roth insists anyone can tell his chickens are raised outside because their combs are bright red and don't look anemic like chickens untouched by sunlight.

Mr. Roth claims when the marketing board came to look at his farm they missed it by two miles and took pictures and wrote about a neighbor's barn, despite Mr. Maxwell's assurance the board visited the barns twice. He said he has spotted many people "snooping" around his farms looking through binoculars. "We're

trying to quarantine the farm and keep people out so we don't contaminate the buildings," he said.

Mr. Roth said that if his chicken

isn't organic then the Consumer and Corporate Affairs wouldn't allow him to sell the chicken as organic. He said his chickens are

raised without using growth promotants, such as Virginia Miacin, which other producers use.

Continued on Page 5



Juggling show visits library

Magician and juggler, Craig Douglas and his Travelling Juggling show stopped off at the Georgetown Library Thursday morning to entertain children and parents with a show that not only included props such as bowling pins, but also a rubber chicken and unicycle. The show kicked-off the summer children reading program, which runs until the end of August. The program is open to children of all ages. For more information call either the Georgetown Library at 873-2861 or the Acton Library at 853-0301. (Herald Photo)

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