

SEPTEMBER 7, 1972

Included in a recent summary of the commodity report in the Wall Street Journal was a story of a 17 year old kid who'd developed a string of super chickens. The kid's herd rooster, so the story said, weighed 22 pounds.

To further describe their size, it said that the hens laid eggs that were about 12 inches long by two inches in diameter, which by my way of thinking is an egg that'd make an ostrich pullet nest-shy for the rest of her life.

Learning of these super chickens made the news of the fat cattle market sadder. As you well know, the unsuper-chicken business has been giving us more trouble than a forest full of wild lions could have.

Chickens have stayed so cheap that folks who didn't own but three cars and a speedboat could eat it every meal. Hombres forced to travel at economy rates to Europe were able to eat fryers and leave the beef alone. Supermarkets, so it seemed, were more than eager to run specials on chicken just to make the hamburger look high priced. Without ever thinking of super chicken competition, plenty of cow and sheep herders were already allergic to feathers and poultry products.

I feel that we were having enough trouble before this idle kid started raising a bigger chicken. Ranchettes were becoming so numerous that I was expecting any day to hear that the packing companies had made a big deal to package Shetland pony chops.

Everybody from the 17 year old kid on were after our trade. National magazines were keeping their presses warm bragging on soybean substitutes or criticizing high meat prices.

I blame industry leaders for part of that trouble. The big shots never would concede that beefsteak should be sold at about what it brought after the Revolutionary War. It's unreal to ask a truck driver making \$450 a week to give more than six-bits a pound for choice sirloin steak. He can afford to buy a beer for, say, a couple of bucks per six-pack, but his pocketbook is too tender to pay off for a piece of steak.

When cattle do sell good, the herders aren't given the peace to enjoy the boom. Vote getting politicians are the main critics. Each and every elected and appointed official takes on beef prices as his personal cause. The blabbermouths extend from constables to the President's office. No other country on this earth could start to field as many worthies who feel so dedicated to blabbing over the price of red meat.

I understand that least of all the mysteries of our plight. Just where, pray tell, does a two-bit politician get the license to attack a steer calf bringing 45 cents a pound? That sounds about as reasonable to me as a high-kicking chorus girl telling a football player how to make a field goal.

If serving in the legislature or on a board will make a man an expert on the price of range raised commodity, I'll bet everybody in the state of Rhode Island a cup of coffee that flying a box kite will qualify you to fly a spaceship to the moon.

You are not going to get me to be fair about idle kids who invent giant chickens or meddling politicians who devise schemes to gain votes at the expense of the herder's livelihood. Fair I may be at the domino hall, but fair I don't pretend to be about the 10 dozen enemies that are after our hides.

Fat cattle prices have broken. One politician is screaming for the redistribution of wealth. I sure hope he loses. But if he does win, I hope every one of his supporters end up with at least one cow of their own.