

Effect of Stock Foods Act on Poultry Producers

THE Stock Foods Act, 1946, which places certain obligations on sellers of stock foods, came into operation on June 1. As the Act is of importance to the poultry industry, the main provisions of it which affect poultry producers are outlined in this article by F. C. Bobby, Superintendent of Poultry Husbandry, Wellington, who deals with the responsibilities of buyer and seller and the part taken by the Department of Agriculture in the operation of the Act.

THE Act offers protection to a poultry producer who in normal times can purchase any of the foods commonly used on a poultry farm by requiring that certain information be supplied to him regarding the food or foods purchased. From this information he can form an opinion of the food offered for sale, and judge its monetary value by comparison with the nutritional and monetary values of other foods. Previously a producer might be sold foods which were incorrectly named or labelled, or purchase a food such as a fish oil for its vitamin content, when, in fact, those vitamins were absent or in insufficient quantity to be of value. No check was made upon the quality of the foods sold, and little in the way of redress was possible. The buyer had to rely on the seller and this was not always satisfactory.

When stock food is purchased the seller is now required to supply the following information on an invoice or a label (part may be on the invoice and the remainder on the label):

1. The seller's name and address;
2. The name of the food sold;
3. The number of packages sold;
4. The gross weight;
5. The name of each ingredient, if the food is a mixture; and
6. Certain particulars regarding the chemical composition, except in the case of a grain or a mixture of grains.

Moreover, if the food purchased contains more than one ingredient, and can be said to have been manufactured, each package supplied must have marked on it, or on a label attached to it, the name and address of the manufacturer. Thus, if A manufactures a poultry mash, and B sells it (after purchase from A) to a poultry producer, each bag will carry the name of A and also of B, but the latter's name may be on an invoice only.

Items 1, 3, and 4 are straightforward, but the remaining items require explanation.

Name of the Food

The name of the food will be straightforward in the vast majority of cases, but for meat meal the Act gives the producer additional protection. If the meat meal contains not less than 60 per cent. of protein, it may be labelled meat meal, but if it does not contain that percentage of protein, it must be labelled meat-and-bone meal, thus preventing low-grade meals of this type being sold as meat meal. A tolerance of error of 3 per cent. is allowed in meat meals; thus, if challenged, a vendor selling a meat meal which shows on analysis to have only 57 per cent. protein would have no case proved against him.

The Act further protects a poultry producer purchasing either pollard or bran by making it necessary for the manufacturer to name the grain or seed from which the pollard or bran is made, for example, wheaten pollard, oaten pollard, or linseed bran. No other food ingredients may be added to a pure food such as bran, pollard, or ground oats without this fact being stated, because when another food or adulterant is added the food becomes a mixture, and each ingredient must be named.

Mixed Foods

If stock foods are mixtures or contain more than one ingredient, the name of each ingredient must be stated. Many poultry producers desired that not only should this information be given, but also the percentage of each ingredient. The Act does not require the percentage to be given, mainly because no check could be made if doubt was cast upon the accuracy of information supplied by the manufacturer. No form of chemical analysis will directly disclose whether a mixture contains wheat, oats, barley, pollard, bran, etc., quite apart from the percentage in which these are present. A close inspection, particularly with a magnifying glass or microscope, will reveal most of the ingredients in a mixture of meals, but not the percentage in which they are present. It is quite obvious, for example, that it would be impossible to separate pollard from bran in a

mixture containing these two meals. The poultry producer is now informed of the names of all the ingredients included and can avoid in normal times mixtures with which he does not agree, or he can add a favoured ingredient which is not included in a bought mixture.

Chemical Composition

The requirement that particulars of the chemical composition of a stock food be supplied to a buyer is perhaps the most important item. As the particulars of the chemical composition vary with the class of food bought, it is necessary to deal with each class separately.

Grains

No particulars regarding the chemical composition of grains will be supplied. The poultry producer can judge by sight the quality of any grain or the grains in a mixture. He knows by experience the relative feeding value of common grains such as wheat, oats, barley, and maize. The Act does, however, define "cracked grains" such as cracked or kibbled maize. The pieces of grain must not be able to pass through a metal sieve with round holes having a diameter of 1/16in. This places a check on the inclusion of any appreciable quantity of unwanted dust, particularly in chick feeds.

Brans and Pollards

The maximum percentage of fibre must be stated in brans and pollards. This is limited information, but the buyer may assess the value of wheaten bran or pollard by sight and touch. Obviously, poorer samples will contain comparatively high percentages of fibre, and these will have to be shown. Thus, the lower the maximum percentage the higher is the quality of the food.

Meat Meal or Meat-and-bone Meal

Only meals containing 60 per cent. of protein (after allowing the 3 per cent. tolerance provided by the Act) may be labelled meat meal, and those of a lower protein content must in future carry the name of meat-and-bone meal. Manufacturers must also state:—

(i) **The minimum percentage of protein in the meal.** The buyer is thus advised of the minimum amount of the nutritional ingredient for which the meal is bought. This should assist poultry producers where they wish, or are forced, to purchase the lower-grade meat-and-bone meals in which the protein content can be low for poultry feeding.

(ii) **The maximum percentage of fat.** Poultry do not require appreciable quantities of fats or oils, and, in fact, may easily suffer digestive troubles if these are present. Thus, meat meals or meat-and-bone meals should be low