

Higher egg prices are the new normal in 2023

Record-high egg prices are making headlines right now, but when can consumers expect some relief? Oklahoma State University Extension specialists say several factors are to blame for the significant price spike, and the sticker shock is expected to continue through the first quarter of 2023. “At this time in 2021, eggs were \$1.47 a dozen, in 2022 they were \$1.93 a dozen and today we’re still at \$4 a dozen,” said Rodney Holcomb, OSU Extension specialist in food economics. “The line chart just goes straight up.” Data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture shows egg prices typically jump during the holiday season, and the cost of eggs has historically increased during times of economic strain such as the recession in 2008 and the spread of COVID in 2020. However, today’s record prices reflect the nationwide impact of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza and a booming demand for egg consumption. “In the food research I did 30 years ago as a grad student, eggs were always the lower-cost animal protein option,” Holcomb said. “They were a good protein source that was available, cheap and easy to fix. Over the past couple of years, as the price of beef, turkey, bacon and chicken skyrocketed, people chose to eat more eggs.” In states where HPAI decimated commercial poultry flocks in 2022, the demand for laying hens outpaced egg supplies. Holcomb said it takes time to rebuild those operations. “The price of chicken also went up



last year because of avian influenza, but the rebound is faster for broilers,” he said. “It only takes about six weeks to go from a hatched chick to a broiler that’s ready for market. With laying hens, it takes months for them to grow to sexual maturity, start laying eggs and provide a consistent supply at peak production.” The worldwide phenomenon of egg consumption also relies heavily on the fact that eggs are an essential ingredient in many prepared foods. While eggs are more budget-friendly than beef, pork, turkey or chicken, the rapid climb of egg demand in 2022 does not run parallel to a price hike in other markets. Derrell Peel, OSU Extension livestock marketing specialist, said retail beef prices are 2.4% lower than they were a year ago and have remained steady for the past 15 months. “There is no doubt of some substitution of eggs for other proteins, although I don’t believe it to be a major factor,” Peel said. Eggs are well established as a breakfast item and are complementary for meats like sausage and bacon. Higher egg prices are more likely due to supply issues than those that are demand driven. In 2022, 44.4 million layer chickens were depopulated because of avian influenza. I expect

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that is the major driver of higher egg prices.” Holcomb said inflation across the board will influence the 2023 egg price outlook because the egg industry’s new normal is yet to be determined. Higher fuel, feed and fertilizer costs as well as additional avian influenza outbreaks could potentially increase prices. Holcomb hopes for a steady decline but said prices

are going to be higher than expected through the second quarter of this year.

“It’s still a relatively inexpensive protein source, but you’d have to get back down to the \$2.50 to \$3 range per dozen just to be somewhere in the same category as an inflation-adjusted normal price relative to every other food product,” he said.

OSU Extension on call for calving season questions

As cows and heifers have their babies over the next few months, Oklahoma State University Extension is a trusted resource for ranchers with any calving questions.

Oklahoma’s winter and spring can be a roller coaster ride of sporadic temperatures. No matter the weather, Rosslyn Biggs, an OSU Extension beef cattle specialist and veterinarian, said ranchers should be ready to assist during labor or delivery.

“We only need to wait 30 minutes on mature cows, and we shouldn’t wait any longer than an hour with first-calf heifers,” Biggs said. “If they’re not making any progress during that time frame, then we need to be able to intervene.”

Expecting cows and heifers should be penned in section pastures in case one needs to be hauled to a barn for closer observation or to the veterinarian. Having a trailer ready to go and a working chute nearby are also helpful in emergencies.

In extreme cold, wintry conditions, new calves are not able to thermoregulate their body temperature on their own. Biggs said even in temps as high as 55 degrees, the wind chill can impact calves still wet from birth. Providing windbreaks, barns or other shelters for expecting cows and heifers can reduce the impact of frigid weather in extreme conditions.

Ranchers should keep towels or old blankets handy to warm up the calf.

“Every producer needs to keep on hand an inexpensive digital thermometer from the drug store,” she said. “If a calf is running a fever, or if they have diarrhea, they can get dehydrated quickly. We want to get them fluids if dehydrated.”

Biggs has compiled a calving kit checklist for babies who need a little extra attention. Ranchers should keep the following items clean, functional and readily accessible:

- Veterinary emergency number in cell phone
- Breeding dates and due dates with associated sire
- Calving book
- Thermometer
- Flashlights with batteries
- Eartags with marker
- Tag applicator
- Dilute betadine or chlorhexadine for navel
- Catch pen and functional chute
- 5-gallon bucket
- Calf puller in working order

- Obstetrical chains and handles
- Calf sled
- Syringes and needles
- Exam and obstetrical gloves
- Obstetrical lubricant
- Clean towels
- Straw or hay for bedding
- Esophageal feeder
- Colostrum or colostrum replacer
- Medications prescribed by your veterinarian such as pain medications
- Halter
- Lariat
- Sorting stick
- Large trash bags
- Disinfectants

Once a calf is born, Biggs said they should be standing on their own and nursing within one hour. Otherwise, a rancher may need to help the calf up and encourage the connection between mother and baby. This is easier said than done, depending on the protective or aggressive manner of the cow or heifer. “I like to see a calf get colostrum from the cow in four to six hours after birth,” Biggs said. “If a producer questions whether or not the calf got colostrum, they need to administer it.”

Biggs also said ear tagging is best in the calf’s earliest days of life. Cows will sometimes swap calves, and making future genetic selections is most effective when based on accurate offspring data.

“We want to keep good records starting with simple things like birth date, sex and, ideally, a birth weight to hopefully make some long-term decisions once we get through the calving season,” she said.

Biggs discusses the **causes and treatment** for calves with persistent scours and provides a **step-by-step set of calving instructions** in the OSU College of Veterinary’s Veterinary Viewpoints column.

Biggs noted an extreme climate event can trigger stress in cows, which is why some may calve during winter storms. Ranchers on the calving clock can attempt to help their cows and heifers deliver during the day instead of those cold nights by applying a proven feeding technique. **Feeding the herd at night** is suspected to have a hormonal effect on expecting cows that causes them to give birth during daylight hours.

See the Jan. 23, 2023, edition of OSU’s Cow-Calf Corner for tips on raising an orphan calf.

Annual Forages Meeting

Chisholm Trail Expo Center, Enid OK

Wednesday- March 15th, 2023

- 9:00 am Registration
- 9:30 am Making Wheat, Rye, Tricale and Oat Hay
Harvest for Quality or Quantity?
Paul Beck, Extension Beef Cattle Specialist
OSU Animal & Food Science
- 10:00 am FSA Cover & Forage Crop Programs/ The Next Farm Bill
Dr. Amy Hagerman, Extension Specialist for Agriculture & Food Policy
OSU Department of Agriculture Economics
- 11:00 am Forage Sorghum & Sudangrass
Planting for Success– Seedbed, Fertility, Seeding Rates
Rick Kochenower, Outreach & Contract Specialist, National Sorghum Producers
- 11:45 am Forage Sorghum & Sudangrass Variety Selection & Availability
Brandon Douglas, NW Sales Representative , Johnston Seed Company
Andrew Grantz, Alta Seeds
Tanner Antonick, Alta Seeds
Lena Garrison, Alta Seeds
- 12:15 pm Lunch
- 12:30 pm Forage Sorghum & Sudangrass Hay Quality
Mark Kirk, Alta Seeds, Forage Specialist
- 1:00 pm Forage Production Budgets
Does it Pay to Grow it?
Trent Milacek, CEA Risk Management Advisor



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**Please register by calling the Garfield County OSU Extension Office
at (580) 237-1228 by Thursday- March 9th, 2023
Cost is \$10 and includes lunch**

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Stay busy this winter with spring garden planning

Although it's too early in the season for gardeners to plant any seeds in the ground, the winter months are the perfect time of year for spring and summer garden planning.

Taking care of a few tasks before the glory days of gardening begin will help ensure gardeners have ample time to grow their vegetables in the warmer days ahead, said [Casey Hentges, Oklahoma State University Extension](#) associate specialist and host of the weekly television show, "[Oklahoma Gardening](#)."

"What do you want your garden to look like? Map out your plan by writing it down," Hentges said. "Make a list of the plants you love and want to grow. It may help to walk your garden space and make note of where the sunny and shady areas are located. This information will help with plant selection."

Seasoned growers need to keep in mind what did and didn't work last year. Hentges said not to let a previous failure deter this year's plans. Take that information, learn from it and correct the problems or try something different.

"It can be easy to get in over your head and become overwhelmed. Start small this year with just a few plants or containers. You'll be able to adjust as the season moves along," Hentges said. "Our growing season can go well into the fall, so there's plenty of time to adjust your plan."

It's easier to start the growing season with a tidy space, said [David Hillock](#), OSU Extension consumer horticulturist. Raking up leaves and removing fallen branches provides gardeners with a clean slate. The organic matter can be [composted](#) and later used to improve the soil in traditional garden beds, raised beds and containers. "High-quality soil provides essential nutrients and the right texture for roots to spread out," Hillock said. "Your landscape soil can vary, so it's a good idea to boost its capabilities."

Adding organic matter whenever possible improves [soil structure](#), and soil tests every few years can provide guidance on nutrient supplementation and fertilizer application timing.

Gardeners who may have been in a hurry to store tools at the end of last year's growing season should take time over the next few weeks to tune them up. Sharpen hand tools and loppers to make pruning easier. Check spark plugs and oil levels on motorized tools to ensure they're in good working order.

Hillock said winter is a good time to [prune deciduous trees](#) because they're dormant.

"Wait as late in the season as possible to [prune fruit trees](#). Pruning allows more light penetration to the growing fruit," he said. "Also, keep in mind younger trees are more likely to suffer freeze injury than older trees," he said.

Early spring is a good time to get a jump start on weed control. Apply a pre-emergent weed spray to help prevent new weeds before they appear.

"For gardeners who can't wait to get some dirt under their fingernails, go ahead and get some seedlings started. Once the temperatures are consistently above 45 degrees, harden off these seedlings to prepare for outdoor planting," Hentges said. "Container plants brought indoors last season can be moved back outside after dangers of frost and freezes. Also, after it warms up a bit, divide and transplant fall-blooming perennials to promote more blooms. It's a good idea to keep frost blankets ready in the event of unexpected freezing temperatures."

OSU Extension offers more [gardening information](#) online. Check out the [Oklahoma Gardening website](#) for show segments, links to gardening resources, featured recipes and more. "Oklahoma Gardening" also has a [channel on YouTube](#) and can be found on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#). The new season of "Oklahoma Gardening" begins Feb. 11 on OETA.



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