

### **Poultry production**

This school education video, which is aimed at 7-12 year olds, has been produced by the National Farmers Union (South West Region) in association with the Wessex Poultry Committee. Its intent is to describe the realities of the poultry industry to school children and it has, seemingly, been made to counter the anti-intensive farming material freely available from other sources.

Inevitably, a short video which has to cover a wide range of material is going to be accused of being superficial. It has been produced by the poultry industry and therefore, of course, it will by some be labelled as a cover-up. This video is not perfect, but neither is it superficial or a cover-up. It tries to be informative and fair. It emphasizes the size and some of the economic realities of the industry; it points out the nutritional value and relative cheapness of eggs and poultry meat; it states that most eggs are obtained from battery cages and that free-range eggs are more expensive to produce. It does show crowded broiler houses and indicates that the birds are to be killed and eaten. It mentions the problems of aggression and disease in free-range flocks but it also suggests that battery birds can not move around as perhaps they should.

The video might have been strengthened if there had been discussion of the belief, held by some people, that birds should not be used by man in these intensive farming ways. Perhaps more notice might have been taken of some of the practical problems eg the transport of spent hens to the slaughter plants, leg weakness in broilers, and what is and should be done about them. It might, however, be inappropriate to raise these matters before 7-12 year olds unless there is, in addition to the teacher, a technically informed (and fair-minded) person available to help answer the inevitable questions and to guide any discussion.

The classroom leaflets 'Welcome to Chicken 'N' Eggs' and the Teachers Notes are helpful but limited in what they can cover.

This video deserves wide usage - it tries and, within its educational limitations, largely succeeds in its intent to describe the present day poultry industry.

*The Chicken and the Egg* National Farmers' Union (1993). Colour VHS c12 minutes and two leaflets. Obtainable from Poultry Department, NFU South West Region, Regional Office, Agriculture House, Pynes Hill, Rydon Lane, Exeter EX2 5ST, UK. Price £7 including postage.